

The situation and demands of the Batwa Community in Bundibugyo



The current situation of the Batwa in Bundibugyo

We are a small community of Batwa people in Bundibugyo district, mostly living in Ntandi sub-county. Although we are few in number, we feel that our well-being is as important as any other community in Uganda.

Our community was evicted without compensation from our original home in what is now the Semuliki National Park. Our community is at risk: our unique culture and wealth of knowledge of the forest is disappearing. In our current living conditions, much of our heritage cannot be

seen or passed on to the younger generations. We have limited access to education and other services. We are also exposed to unproductive habits (such as alcohol and drug abuse), exploitation and unfair criticism by neighbouring communities. Many of us have low esteem and feel a sense of loss of our cultural identity.

A few organisations have given us assistance over the years. With support from the Cross-Cultural Foundation of Uganda, we held consultations within our community and generated information on our situation. We take this opportunity to present a summary of our current status (See Table overleaf) and our demands to the district authorities and other development organisations.

Our concerns and requests

a. Population.

We are 125 individuals, within 35 families. We have 74 children and 51 adults. Last year, we recorded 4 births and 4 deaths, so our population is not expanding. There are 4 elderly Batwa, but they do not benefit from the Social Assistance Grant for Elderly (SAGE) programme.

- *Register for the SAGE programme.*

b. Land.

Although there are some organisations that have purchased land for us, the size of land is small and making use of it productively remains a challenge.

- *We need additional land for our families*
- *We also need skills to use the land productively for agriculture and livestock as well as seeds and farming implements.*

c. Health and security.

Our health status is not good. The spread of HIV in our community worries us. We are belittled and exploited by neighbouring communities, who even defile our children.

- *We need community health outreach services to reach us*
- *We need protection from those defiling our children*

d. Water and sanitation.

For the whole community, we only have 1 functioning well and 5 latrines, which are shared by the wider community.

- *We need 2 wells and 3 latrines constructed in our new settlement at Makere*

e. Education.

In our entire community, the highest level of education achieved is Senior Three and seven of us adults have gone to primary

school. More recently, our children have enrolled for primary schooling (47 out of 57), mostly at the Bugombwa Parish Primary School, but we need support to go beyond primary level.

- *We need bursaries for primary and secondary school-going children as well as sponsorship for vocational studies for the adults*

f. Culture.

Our culture is disappearing. Few people speak our language and our access to the forest – the only source of identity and ancestral land – is restricted.

- *Support us to improve on the heritage trail in the Semuliki National Park and allow our children visits to the forest regularly*
- *Support us to document our knowledge of the forest, the plants and animals associated with our culture*

g. Livelihood.

Since our eviction from Semuliki Forest, we have been surviving by begging, entertaining tourists, collecting firewood for sale and digging in other people's gardens. Only 5 of our families have enough land to survive without going hungry.

- *We need affirmative action to make it possible for us to access government programmes for youth and women*
- *We request for 5% of revenue sharing from the Semuliki National Park to support our livelihood*

h. Shelter.

We live in poor housing conditions. Of the 35 families, only 11 of us have a shelter in reasonable condition.

- *Provide us with shelter or materials to construct houses in our new settlement in Makere*

Our pledge

As the Batwa community in Bundibugyo, we shall ensure that all our children go to school and some of the adult dropouts complete their education. We shall take part in local meetings, especially Ntandi town council meetings, to access information on government initiatives. Our leaders commit

to speaking up and reporting cases of abuse to the Police – and where no action is taken, we shall ask the Local Councillors and Community Development Officers (CDOs) (at the Sub-County and District) to follow-up. Through the DCDO, we appeal to the Local Government of Bundibugyo, especially the Local Council-V Chairperson, to improve on our local facilities and protect us from exploitation.

The Batwa population in Bundibugyo in 2019

Below is a record of our population, and our social, economic and political status.

#	Name of Household heads	No. of adults	No. of children	#	Name of Household heads	No. of adults	No. of children
1	Geoffrey Inzito	2	5	21	Balikomanya Alali	1	4
2	Akumenya Digolo	2	2	22	Kamanya Joshua	1	2
3	Manga Boniface	2	4	23	Araferi A	1	1
4	Businge Robert	2	5	24	Asule Jack	1	0
5	Kumomuri John	1	1	25	Bendera Stephen	1	2
6	Kabanako Rose	4	8	26	Tabhabha James	1	0
7	Bhamberiji Annet	1	6	27	Kahombi Fred	1	0
8	Nkabona Jocas	2	6	28	Yombo M	1	0
9	Erinora M	1	3	29	Kafukuno Yofes	1	0
10	Rose B. Katusabe	1	2	30	Nyamayabo Baguma	1	0
11	Nyantaro Olive	1	1	31	Opio Emmanuel	1	2
12	Bhumjeyi Rosette	2	5	32	Friday Nyamabani	1	4
13	Kainta Wilson	2	4	33	Jughujughu Yohana	1	0
14	Babungi Patrick	2	3	34	September Legi	1	0
15	Balyebure Julius	4	6	35	Kijanjabha Amini	1	0
16	Amesi Gertrude	2	2				
17	Nakyanze Grace	1	3				
18	Siida Oliver	2	1		TOTAL NUMBER	51	74
19	Katusiime N	1	1		NUMBER OF HOUSEHOLDS		35
20	Grace Mbabazi	1	1		TOTAL NUMBER OF BATWA		125

The status of the Batwa in Bundibugyo in figures

No.	Social and economic status of the Batwa	
1	Births 2018 (5)	5
2	Deaths in 2018	5
3	Adults between 60-85 years	4
4	Early girl pregnancy	8
5	Access to enough land for food	5
6	No access to land	25
7	Education – University graduate	0
8	Education – Senior 6 /Senior 4 leavers	0
9	Highest education level Senior 3	1
10	Education level Primary 7	1
11	Education level Primary 6	2
12	Education level Primary 5	4
13	Permanent shelter	0
14	Temporary shelter	11
15	Access Health Facilities (use of traditional medicine)	
16	Communal Land	4
17	Access to clean water (No. of wells)	1
18	Access to latrines (No. of latrines)	5

Source: Consultative meetings held on 22nd – 23rd January 2019 in Bundibugyo

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