The Batwa Indigenous People in Uganda and their Detachment from Forest Livehood: Land Eviction and Social Plight

Norman Mukasa*

Abstract

With an aim of examining consequences of eviction and restriction the Batwa's access to Bwindi and Mgahinga protected areas, the paper reviews available literature on the Batwa indigenous people's statuses, rights and socioeconomic livelihood especially following the 1991 Bwindi and Mgahinga eviction instrument. The review indicates that their eviction exemplified failure by the government to consult, compensate and involve the Batwa community as indigenous people before expropriation of their land. Secondly, the paramilitary nature of eviction disconnected them from their forest dweller lifestyle spontaneously without a clear resettlement plan or restitution agenda. The paper conclusively recommends for further research to evaluate the increasingly contentious competition between conservationism on one hand and upholding the appropriate property rights of indigenous people on the other.

Key words: Batwa, Indigenous people, land eviction, Social plight, Bwindi and Mgahinga National Park.

Resumen

Con el fin de examinar las consecuencias de la expulsión de los Batwa y la restricción de acceso que se les impuso a las áreas protegidas Bwindi y Mgahinga, el artículo revisa la literatura disponible sobre el estado de la población indígena Batwa, sus derechos y su sustento socioeconómico básico, especialmente tras la orden de desalojo de Bwindi y Mgahinga en 1991. La revisión indica que su desalojo ejemplifica el fracaso del Gobierno en consultar, compensar e involucrar a la comunidad Batwa como pueblos indígenas antes de la expropiación de sus tierras. En segundo lugar, el carácter paramilitar de su desalojo les desconectó espontáneamente de su estilo de vida forestal y ligado a la tierra sin una agenda clara de reasentamiento o plan de restitución. En el artículo de manera concluyente se recomiendan más investigaciones para evaluar el creciente conflicto entre conservacionismo por un lado y la defensa de los derechos de propiedad de los pueblos indígenas por el otro.

Palabras clave: Batwa, Pueblos indígenas, Desalojo de la tierra, Situación social, Parque Nacionaes de Bwindi y Mgahinga.

^{*} Norman Mukasa is a PhD candidate at Deusto University - International and Intercultural Studies. He owes a debt of gratitude to Felipe Gómez (Dr.) and Prof. Leslie Lieberman for their guidance and encouragement.

1. Introduction

1.1. Background

"The people who have identified with the worldwide indigenous peoples' movement in their struggle for recognition of fundamental human rights are mainly different groups of hunter-gatherers and pastoralists, etc...Among hunter-gatherer communities, the ones that are best known are the Pygmies/Batwa¹ of the Great Lakes region..."²

Across the globe, while indigenous people (IP) are fighting for recognition of their right to own, manage and control their inalienable land resource and territories, paramilitary and conservation plans ordering their eviction are numerous.³ Denial of IPs access to their collectively owned or ancestral land is a violation of indigenous rights.⁴ It devastates their social economy, deprives their freedom and capabilities to enjoy their collectively owned environmental resource. This study adopted the definition of IPs according to the African Commission – its articulate indigenous people's plight in an African context. They are those people whose culture and way of life is subject to discrimination, contempt and livelihood depends upon access and rights to natural resources.⁶

Clearly, the African commission advocates for the use of the term indigenous as per the international convention(s), not ac-

⁵ ACHPR, (2006): explains that 'indigenous' and 'minorities' have different ascribed type of rights in international law with major implications, but one of the clear distinctive is that minority rights are formulated as individual rights whereas indigenous rights are collective rights, pp. 13-14.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 10: The work of ACHPR on indigenous peoples rights is based on a thorough report of its Working Group on Indigenous Populations / Communities in Africa established in 2000.

⁷ The ILO Convention 169 on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, 1989 defines characteristics of indigenous and tribal people in Articording to individual country's discretion. Additionally, the paper is indebted to the definitions of International Labor Organization Convention 169 and the United Nations Declaration on rights of Indigenous people rights. For purposes of clarity, and given the precarious nature of ethnic and indigenous group rights to the *land in Africa* - use of the term *land* referred to the concept of *territories* — *inclusive of traditional resources* – in this discussion, land enveloped the forest as the total environment that the Batwa occupied or otherwise used.⁷

The argument is that the forest as natural resource is robustly connected to social, economic, cultural, spiritual and psychological livelihood of the Batwa people of Uganda⁸ than land as normally used in reference to farmers and agricultural communities.⁹ Finally, the paper does not attempt to exhaust all the tenets underlying the topic of the Batwa; but, it endeavors to unravels devastative consequences of eviction that ruined (perhaps continue to ruin) the means and livelihood of the Batwa IPs over a long period.

1.2. The Methodology

Based on a three stage (Exploratory; Focused; Refined) literature review, study questions and document sources regarding the eviction of Batwa indigenous people of Uganda were identi-

cle 13, Article 14, and Article 15. Article 16 focuses on land as total environment of the area that Indigenous people occupy or traditionally occupied or otherwise use at http://www.ilo.org/indigenous/Conventions/no169/lang--en/index.htm.

⁸ ACHPR (2006): The highly marginalized Batwa/Pygmy people live in the equatorial forests of Central Africa and the Great Lakes Region- the name of this community differs in correspondence to their geographical location, thus they are *called Batwa in Rwanda, Burundi, Uganda and the eastern region of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)*. They are called Bambuti in the Ituri Forest in DRC and Baka in the Labaye Forest of the Central African Republic (CAR) and in the Minvoul Forest of Gabon, p. 15-16.

⁹ ACHPR and IWGIA (2005): In reference to Batwa in Uganda, DR Congo and Rwanda after being shattered from the forest land, impoverishment in cultural and psychological ways ensued, absence of food resources or medicinal plants, and the forest place of worship rendered their forest economy destroyed with no consent and compensation, p. 22.

¹ Lewis, Jerome (2000): The term 'pygmy' has a derogatory meaning; it's widely used by non-Pygmy but rarely the pygmies themselves, p. 5.

 $^{^2}$ For details see the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR), 2005, p. 15.

³ ACHPR and IWGIA, (2005): Dispossession of land and natural resources is one of the major violation of IP rights – rampant cases of IP eviction have threatened their live and culture rather than improving it, p. 20.

⁴ OHCHR, Fact Sheet No. 25: Articulately discusses issues of forced eviction and Human Rights, at <http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Publications/ FactSheet25en.pdf>

fied, selected and tackled. The paper approached the challenge of limited literature on the topic by including published and unpublished works. It also included reports and legal documents. With those sources, the research questions were focused on unveiling the historical background, social status, and livelihood situation of the Batwa after their detachment from the forest.

Official documents reviewed included the following; the Uganda Wildlife Policy 1999, the Uganda Wildlife Act 1996, and the 1995 constitution of the Republic of Uganda. Additional, case studies reviewed on Batwa and Bwindi Impenetrable and Mgahinga gorilla National Park provided a basis for understanding previous research on the topic. Analysis and counteranalysis was based on both national and international reports, web pages on IP related issues, international legal convention and United Nations Declaration on the Rights of IPs. Specifically, the paper considered, among many works the following; the World Bank (Safeguard policies: IPs), Forest Peoples Program

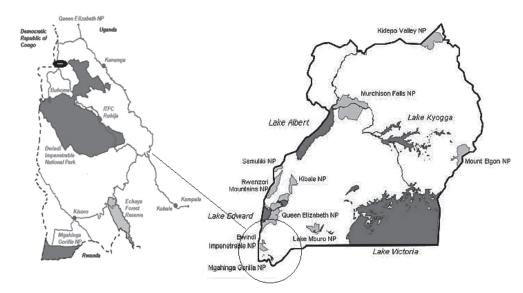
(FPP), United Organization for Batwa Development in Uganda (UOBDU), Household Census Survey 2011 report by CARE Uganda, the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR), International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs (IW-GIA), and ILO convention 169 and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. In order to include more recent developments, local newspapers and blogs were searched based on the following keywords; Batwa IPs' rights, conservation approaches, compensation of IPs, World Bank and IP, Bwindi and Mgahinga National Park. Therefore, a multiple source approach of this kind provided a firm foundation for analyzing the required literature.

1.3. Historical Context of the Batwa

Historically, the Batwa are forest-dwelling hunter-gatherers who lived in the high altitude forests around Lake Kivu and Lake

Figure 1

The location of the Batwa in Uganda (extraction on the left shows the protected area-Bwindi, Mgahinga National Parks, Echuya forest reserve and its neighborhood)



Source: Diyatanzania tours and modified by author.

Anuario de Acción Humanitaria y Derechos Humanos Yearbook on Humanitarian Action and Human Rights © Universidad de Deusto. ISSN: 1885 - 298X, Núm. 10/2012, Bilbao, 71-84 http://revista-derechoshumanos.deusto.es Edward in the Central and East Africa. In a very elaborate historical account of Zaninka¹⁰ various events and scenarios are illustrated to support the view that the Batwa are claimed to be the only inhabitants of the South-western Uganda region and its surrounding areas of DR Congo, Burundi and Rwanda until they were later joined by incoming farmers and pastoralists - such as the Batusti and Bahutu from Rwanda among others.¹¹ They are cited as dancers and hunters in the ancient Tutsi kingdom of Rwanda founded in the 15th century.¹²

In Uganda, most of the Batwa reside in the present day districts of *Kisoro, Rukungiri and Kabale* surrounding *Bwindi impenetrable National Park (BINP) and Mgahinga Gorilla National Park (MGNP)* in south-western Uganda. This region of Uganda is endowed with a wide range of flora and fauna, ranging from Savannah grasslands to high altitude wetlands and to alpine vegetation. Abundance of biodiversity - includes the endangered mountain gorilla - making the region a focal conservation area. There are five National Parks and four Central Forest Reserves: Bwindi Impenetrable National Park and Mgahinga Gorilla National Park¹³ are two of the preciously undisturbed Afro-montane forest a home to almost half of the world's endangered mountain gorillas. (See the figure 1).

The Batwa population in Uganda is about 6,700 – concentrated in remote portions neighboring the Bwindi Impenetrable Forest in the southwestern region of Uganda.¹⁴ According to the Uganda national census of 2002, about 66 percent of the Batwa never migrated from their region to the central or other regions as it's the custom among other ethnic groups in Uganda. Precisely this may allude to the distinction in lifestyle and identity of the Batwa as a collective people. The graphical the representation below shows the distribution of Batwa by re-

¹³ Republic of Uganda (1999): Bwindi is classified as category "A", world heritage site because of the mountain forest and mountain gorillas plus biodiversity in it while Mgahinga is of regional importance as its adjoins mountain gorilla areas of Rwanda and DR Congo.

14 UBOS (2002).

¹⁵ The Parliament of the Republic of Uganda- *Equal Opportunities* Committe's Working Visit to Bundibugyo and Kisoro in 2007.

gions; note that the capital city is in the *central* region while the Batwa are located largely in the *Western*:

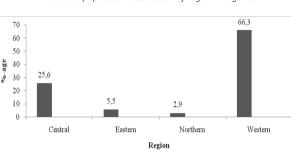


Figure 2 The Batwa population distribution by region in Uganda

Source: UBOS Census data, 2002.

The social status of Batwa characterized marginalization embedded in the social, economic and political structure up to today.¹⁵ Discrimination espoused their physical appearance and life style as forest dwellers among others.¹⁶ They settle in small separate settlements of approximately 10 households within more than 40 villages in the southwestern Bwindi and Mgahinga area.¹⁷ But studies related to their contemporary lifestyle have found changes in their social lifestyle.¹⁸ Perhaps under difficult turbulences, they lost most of their native language (Lumbuti, Luyanda and Lutwa) – an indicator of subordinate platitude from non-Batwa.¹⁹ Although that is the case, norms and customs related to marriage and spiritual heritage are still held among the Batwa.^{20, 21} – were the men hunted, collected honey

¹⁶ Kabananukye & Wily (1996): The Batwa are said to be physically identifiable from their neighbors by height., on average they generally measure about four feet high.

¹⁷ Tumushabe & Musiime, 2006.

¹⁸ Lewis, Jerome (2000): shows the Batwa transformation to squatterdom, fishing, immigrant farmers and other living on donations or begging.

¹⁹ Lewis, Jerome (2000).

²⁰ Scott & Carol Kellermann, Pygmies.net (2002-2004).

²¹ Their marriage costums, unmet needs and socio-cultural attachment to the forest is covered in the report of the Parliament Equal Opportunities Committe's Working Visit to Bundibugyo and Kisoro in 2007.

¹⁰ Zaninka, Penninah (2001).

¹¹ Lewis, Jerome (2000) pp. 6-7.

¹² See Zaninka, Penninah (2001): for a detailed historical description of the social relations and organization of the Batwa from 15th century.

and other forest products to exchange for village goods while women gathered vegetables, mushrooms and fruits.

Figure 3 Gender role and Livelihood strategies of the Batwa



Source: Batwa Experience webpage and Batwa Pygmies: Forgetting the Bwindi Forest, Uganda by Marcus & Kate on 22 June, 2012in People & Culture, Photography.

The Spirit connection of the Batwa to the forest can be exemplified by their cultural attachment to the *Garama cave* – an underground lava tube hidden in *Gahinga Mountains*. All Batwa see this cave as an important part of their cultural attachment to the forest. Secondly, one of their cross generational stories about their culture, reaffirms that – *Gihanga*, the legedary father of three sons: *Gatwa*, *Gahutu and Gatutsi*; after putting his sons to task, and rewarding them accordingly – *Gatwa* and his tribe, the Batwa received bows, spears and arrows for hunting –deeming their survived to hunting small game using poison-tipped arrows or nets, and gathering plants and fruits that the natural forest has to offer. Construction of small, temporary huts with leaves and branches served as their temporary dwellings²². (See Figure 3 below photos tracing the Batwa cultural livelihood: the tree house and women walking up a dense mountains vegetable – as part of the joint tourism, wild life authority, and Batwa collaboration – through the Batwa trail²³, and gorilla tracking projects).

Note that currently, separation of gender roles among that Batwa still exist. Although for adaptability, new livelihood revolves around pottery, fishing, and squatter laboring for non Batwa groups etc.²⁴ some authors have underpinned the history of eviction of these concerned people as immensely influential to their social status.²⁵ Clearly, with reference to their basic endowment, national conservation policies are central stage of re-determining traditions, norms, culture and entire life opportunities and choices among Batwa and non Batwa neighbors.^{26, 27}

1.4. Social amenities, Health and Impoverishment of the Batwa

This section will relied on one of the latest surveys (with a total of 529 households which represented 90.9% (529/582) of all identified Batwa households in the two districts Kabale and Kisoro) by CARE Uganda combating child mortality among the Batwa (CCMB) Household Census/Survey 2011²⁸ and the Bwindi community Hospital Annual Report 2010/11:

We will start here by stating that if indeed the Uganda Poverty Eradication Action Plan (2004) values the integral nature of culture and development – in term of capital generation and poverty alleviation²⁹ – then ancestral land for indigenous group as a cultural identity would be at the center stage of development for the IP groups.³⁰ Based on this CCMB survey, evic-

²⁷ This discrimination takes many forms including outright discrimination, stereotyping, consideration of them by others (non-Batwa) as primitive, backward or underdeveloped (ILO, 2009).

²⁸ This is one of the largest sample survey and most recent survey among the Batwa after the census that was done in 2007 by UOBDU prior to the development of the CCMB project.

²⁹ PEAP, 2004 summary and main objectives - Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development, IMF, 2005 http://www.imf.org/external/ pubs/ft/scr/2005/cr05307.pdf

³⁰ Kabananukye & Kwagala, 2007.

²² See Article Batwa: A Spiritual Relation to the Forest, Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization at http://www.unpo.org/article/13750>

²³ Officially, on July 1st, 2010 – A joint tourism venture (Batwa trail) between the Batwa organization - organization, the United Organisation for Batwa Development (UOBDU), and the Uganda Wildlife Authority was launched. at <htp://www.forestpeoples.org/region/uganda/news/2010/10/batwa-south-west-uganda-officially-open-their-new-joint-tourism-venture>

²⁴ Zaninka, Penninah (2001); Kidd & Zaninka, (2008).

²⁵ Kabananukye & Kwagala, (2007).

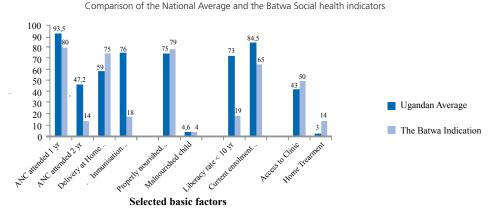
²⁶ Zaninka, Penninah (2001).

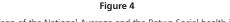
tion of the Batwa exacerbated directly and indirectly the social status of the 'pygmy' society. The ratio of alcohol consumption among Batwa without land to those compensated was at $2:1.^{31}$ See figure 4.

As aforementioned, almost all indicators show the Batwa below the national average –notable these differences exit; in child immunization coverage, home treatment and Antinatal care (ANC) attendance in the last 2 years. The survey indicates that social amenities among the Batwa are characterized by low access to safe water, and high level of illiterate at 19 percent for person over 10 years. Many Batwa children of school going age drop out of school for the reasons various reasons, like; *refusal to go to school (42%), too young to walk to school (12%), lack of food (10%), lack of money (9%), and early marriage (9%).*³² Over a half (55%) of the total

households had one child aged below 5 years; yet, the majority (74%) of these children had no health card. More astoundingly, 82 percent of children had never had full immunization – and lower rate than national standards.³³ Other sources support the claim, for instance; the Bwindi Community Hospital's annual reports note that one out of every fourteen Batwa women is on family planning compared with one out of four of their Bakiga neighbors.³⁴

Finally, most of the literature reviewed underpins that land is still the vicious problem to the Batwa. Additionally, the role of NGOs and the church founded charities are at the helm of social livelihood of the Batwa like; establishment of school, purchase of land, and provision of water tanks. However, sustainability of such system of social services offered by charities and Church are neither guaranteed nor centrally coordinated.





Source: CCMB survey, (2011).

³¹ The CCMB survey found that 32% of landless Batwa drinking alcohol excessively compared to 16% with land.

³² CARE Uganda, 2011.

³⁴ For details on health campaign and program to the Batwa see community health hospital web page at <http://www.bwindihospital.com/ batwa-bymba.html>

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³³ C.f WHO immunization profile of Uganda-last updated 18-May-2012: at <http://apps.who.int/immunization_monitoring/en/globalsummary/ countryprofileresult.cfm?C=uga>

1.5. Conservation and Eviction of the Batwa

With regard to the history of conservation, the colonial legacy construed and continues to linger around conservation history and policies in Uganda: First, since the British colonial government's ordnances of the 1900s,³⁵ the Batwa have grappled with exclusion, marginalization as squatters and landless wanders. Secondly, the 1995 constitution of Uganda as a supreme national legal reference fails to provide clarity on the status of IP groups distinctively from other ethnic groups³⁶. Therefore, the above legal repugnance limits potential emancipation of IPs – like the Batwa – this will be discussed later in this paper. On the other hand, the African Commission of Human and people's Rights expert's report prudently devoid all the conservation and/or other plans on the continent that neglect the voice of IPs.³⁷

Returning to the previous pre-colonial era, customary rules and practices of the local communities regulated hunting, collection of medicinal plants and other forms of resource extraction until colonial legislation of the 1900s – (for instance the 1926 game ordinance and the 1952 National park Ordinance) – Ordinances were the starting step to limitation of access to wild flora and fauna.³⁸ Conversant protectionist policies started in the 1930s with a top-down control strategy where local communities were limited to forest resources. The transition is summarized into phases below:

- Pre-gazette era (absence of forest boundary and people accessed forest resources)
- Forest reserve or reserved era (beginning of state sanctioning of access to forest resources)
- And post-gazette/national park era (with strict policing and de linking the people from the forest resource).³⁹

 Challenges of management the two national parks (BINP and MGNP) placed by Uganda Wildlife Authority (UWA) under the same management unit called *the Mgahinga* and Bwindi Conservation area.⁴⁰ see table 1.

Under the watch of the Uganda National Parks (UNPs) and the games department now called the Uganda Wildlife Authority with support of international resources (e.g. the Global Environmental Facility), forceful eviction distorted the forest economy of the Batwa. The process and procedure of protectionist and paramilitary conservation ensued in 1991 without free consultation of the Batwa in particular. Bwindi forest and Mgahinga Gorilla Game Reserve were upheld by law as restricted national parks.⁴¹ This debacle left the Batwa with no chance, but to surrender to the government forced eviction in the name of conservation.⁴² Unfortunately, it shut doors to their known livelihood; led to economic collapse in the region and hitting hard those evicted, especially the Batwa.43 It also dragged them into a new sedentary lifestyle of landless and displaced squatters.44 Studies have categorically stated that radical creation of protected areas - including forest resource was not an effective conservation policy.

Empirical research has shown that Batwa families without land are worse off than those with land; at a ratio of 2:1 respectively.⁴⁵ Some reports also showed that restrictions created conflict between the park staff and the local communities – a total of 16 fires were set in and around the park area as a reaction to the government denial of local people access to the forest resources and wild food.⁴⁶ Further evidence has shown that the government failed to single handily conserve the protected areas forcing it enactment of a wildlife statute and collaborative management with local communities.⁴⁷ Therefore, the government was ill-prepared, thus facing diminishing human, material

- ⁴⁰ Tumushabe & Musiime, 2006.
- ⁴¹ Republic of Uganda, (1999).
- ⁴² According to Zaninka, Penninah (2001), p.170.
- 43 Blomley, Tom (2003).
- 44 Kidd & Zaninka, (2008).

⁴⁵ See studies by Dr Scot &Carol Kellermann -an American missionary couple working on health issues and living among the Batwa.

⁴⁶ Nowak, 1995 cited from Ahebwa, Van der Duim, & Sandbrook, (2012), p. 381.

⁴⁷ Namara, Agrippinah (2006), p. 41.

³⁵ Republic of Uganda (2008): For instance; the 1926 game ordinance and the 1952 National park Ordinance, p. 1.

³⁶ See, ILO&ACHPR, (2009): The third schedule of the Ugandan constitution uses the term indigenous communities to encompass all ethnic groups in Uganda a matter that noticeably differs from international and regional use of the term, p. 5.

³⁷ Resolution on the Rights of Indigenous Populations/Communities in Africa was adopted by the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights at its 28th ordinary session.

³⁸ Republic of Uganda, (2008), p. 1.

³⁹ Namara, Agrippinah 2006, p. 44.

Table 1

Summary of trend of conservation policy on BINP and MGNP

| Year | Policy and parties involved | Remark |
|---------------|---|--|
| In the 1932 | Bwindi and other forests first gazette as Kasatoro and Kayonza crown forest reserves by the British colonial power. | The forest continued to be economically and culturally important and accessible by the Batwa. |
| 1942 | The BINP & MGNP were combined and gazetted as impenetrable central crown forest | The colonial office strategy was conservationist but respected the IPs rights and access to the forest. |
| 1961 | The forest reserves were additionally gazetted as a gorilla sanctuary | The report by FPP and UOBDU finds no clear effects of the policy to the Batwa at that time |
| 1964 | The forest and game Act were introduced in Uganda which had considerable effect on the access of the Batwa to the forest resources | Use of hunting dogs, possession of hunting weapons, residing, hunting, and farming in the forest was made illegal |
| 1988- 1989 | After a civil war the UNPs and Games department presented to cabinet a report that made BINP and MGNP | Bwindi would become BINP and Mgahinga would become MGNP |
| 1991 | The 13 th August 1991 resolution made the two forest and game reserves become BINP following the earlier May 1991 resolution that had gazette MGNP | The Batwa was definitively evicted, restricted from access to the forest, without any resettlement and compensation |
| 1996 | In 1996, the conservation body (UNPs) which was implementing TRS merged with the Game Department to form the UWA | UWA realized the 1994 revenue sharing arrangement lacked an institutional and a legal framework |

Source based on: FPP reports; UWA policy, 1996; Ahebwa, Van der Duim, & Sandbrook, 2012.

and financial resources in managing the protected areas amidst resistance may explain the latter turn around in policy and involvement of the World Bank.

The World Bank/Global Environment Facility provided an endowment fund amounting to US\$4.3 million. This made the bank accomplice to Batwa eviction. The fund was meant to support different entities including; the Uganda Wild Life Authority – which was to use 20 percent of the fund for park management, 20 percent was to fund ecological socio-economic research, and 60 percent of the fund was to target local community projects. Appropriate project for funding had to demonstrate a positive impact on the conservation of parks, biodiversity and non consumptive utilization of forests such as eco-tourism.

The compensation funds presented a precarious dilemma in several ways. Firstly, operationalization of this fund started in 1995; about four years after the Batwa had been evicted without resettlement. Secondly, the fund failed to rescue the plight of the Batwa community because benefits served the polarity between the Batwa and non Batwa due to compensation selectiveness in relation to developed land. Thus, implementation fell short of the intended purpose of redress the unique IP minorities. This aspect will be critically analyzed in the sections below to clinch the narrative that Bank's fund failed in implementation.

2. Results based on evidence from Literature review

2.1. Community-based property rights and community collaboration in conservation

The animosity caused by lack of a succinct method of compensation to the indigenous peoples' communities before expropriation of their land is attributable to Batwa plight. Firstly, the customary communal tenure system under which they hold land has legal inconsistencies. Secondly, the constitutional fails to appropriate minority status to indigenous people. These two limitations gave rise to indefinable suffering of the Batwa after eviction. Having said that, overall ignorance of the law is a very common in Uganda – a good number of the peasantry groups are not aware of their constitutional property rights and their right to compensation in case of expropriation. Needless to say, the law system has become so complex and shown rapacity in recent property scandals.

The problem of expropriation of land without following Constitutional provisions has been rampant, and at the helm of prolonged public disputes is the practice of the President and presidency. Over the past decade, allocation of land to private investors under very unclear circumstances took its toll. But, the International Labor Organization (ILO) report alluded to the failure of the Ugandan judicial system. According to the report; "the judicial system in Uganda is weak, characterized by highlevel interference and threats to judicial independence".⁴⁸

Ideally, among modern conservation architects the community conservation approach ranks favorably over protectionist approach. The collaborative approach transforms animosity between communities and conservation managers to local involvement in management of protected resources. It wins minds and makes responsibility of wildlife management a shared goal with shared benefits.⁴⁹ It's also accredited by human right groups, and the international development community.⁵⁰ In the BNIP case, public enquiries by Uganda National Parks authority, the game department were done in 1990; it was a symbolic gesture of protocol as many authors have put it rather than the intent of seeking local but more specifically, Batwa concerns.⁵¹ The enquiry committee document never explicitly showed the reprehensible view regarding loss of land and access to forest resources and demands for involvement of the locals throughout

⁵¹ Zaninka, Penninah (2001); Kidd & Zaninka (2008), p. 6; Blomley, 2003; Kenrick, Justin 2000.

the process. The Batwa views were "neither sampled nor represented anywhere within the public enquiry."⁵² – Recent evidence parades some development joint ventures involving the Batwa organization and UWA have ensued; take an example of the Batwa trail.⁵³

Furthermore, not until after years that the central government came to realize that it was hard to do away with the local communities; not only due to resistance exerted in reaction to forceful government eviction, but also, due to government inadequacies in securing human, material and financial resources to avert the resistance. Hamilton et al. states:

"....local resentment, fed by inadequate consultation and concern about the local people's loss of access to resources. Fires were set in the forest and threats made against the gorillas. Three schemes to provide benefits from the existence of the forest to communities and involve them in park management were then instituted: agreements allowing controlled harvesting of resources in the park, receipt of some revenue from tourism, and establishment of a trust fund partly for community development. Tension between people and park has been reduced."⁵⁴

Evidently, the aftermath of resistance saw enactment of the Uganda Wildlife Statute 1996 and the Uganda Wildlife Policy 1999. These government policies ushered in collaborative management between the local communities and the UWA Uganda.⁵⁵ Reviewed literature illustrated that intervention of government as to little too late⁵⁶ – Compensation was inequitable because of a structure that rewarded farmers with cultivable land in the forest since the 1930s –therefore the non Batwa intruders not Batwa hunter-gather inhabitants received large monetary compensation.⁵⁷ Consequently, much of the Batwa lifestyle and livelihood changed. Clearly, following the eviction,

⁵³ According to the Guardian, 17 July, 2010: For the first time, the Batwa had stake in the conservation and management of the national park.

- ⁵⁴ Hamilton, Cunningham, Byarugaba, & Kayanja (2000).
- ⁵⁵ Republic of Uganda, 1996; Republic of Uganda, 1999.

⁵⁶ Tumushabe & Musiime, 2006, p. 13 Living on the margins of life: The plight of the Batwa people of southwestern Uganda.

⁵⁷ Cf. Study by Cernea & Schmidt-Soltau (2003) of six countries of the Congo-basin ecosystem of central Africa-demonstrates that monetary compensation accrued not to hunter-gathers thereby the livelihood of the IPs was ruined; they couldn't generate income to alleviate conservation losses.

⁴⁸ ILO, 2009 http://www.chr.up.ac.za/chr_old/indigenous/country_reports/Country_reports_Uganda.pdf

⁴⁹ Cernea & Schmidt-Soltau, (2003) details six conservation cases in the Congo basin ecosystem of central Africa of 9 national park and illustrate the dilemma facing scholar and professional in upholding biodiversity conservation versus people resettlement where relocation, and denial of access to resources might have un-rectifiable effects on the attitudes of local people towards the protected area itself.

⁵⁰ World Bank Group (2011); ACHPR, 2003 & 2006.

⁵² Kidd & Zaninka (2008), p. 6.

majority of the Batwa worked and camped as landless squatters on non-Batwa farmland⁵⁸ – some classified the circumstance, as that, which made the Batwa conservation refugees, marginalized, and squatters.⁵⁹

Generally, IPs land ownership has generated endless public outcry in Uganda over the past decade. The scenario is emblematic of the colonial era land policy evolutionary predicament. Although the Constitution of Uganda was recently promulgated and considerably a progressive instrument based on the special provisions on protection of human rights, it fails to ameliorate the indigenous people's rights.⁶⁰ In specific terms, article 26 (1 and 2) guarantees every person the right to ownership of property as an individual or with others. It continues to state that a person's property of any kind must not be taken away from him or her, but it leave a caveat. Hence, under state power, exception be reserved where the property is essential for public use, and interest of defense, public safety, order, mortality and health.⁶¹

Parallel to the above, yet emphasizing a point, some studies credit the constitutional provisions as foundational for collective ownership of property. Equally, they highlight inadequacy of policy commitment for community-based property rights to IPs communities.⁶² Perhaps the failure of the 1995 constitution of Uganda to appropriate individual and collective customary land rights is not a coincidence, but notably, the overlapping deprivation of property rights to the Batwa long before the formation of the republic of Uganda.⁶³ With this back ground, it's the pressure from advocates and the international community that can revitalize the need for recognition of IP rights. On the international stage, the ILO convention 169⁶⁴ – (only one African country has ratified this convention) – endeavors articulately to enshrine practical and fundamental mechanism for recognition of IPs rights. Its explicit ability to put forward practical approaches that describe the Indigenous peoples⁶⁵ and underpin the role of government is a functional foundation. Some of these include; IPs self-identification is a fundamental criterion for identification of indigenous and tribal peoples. Possession of culture and way of life different from the other segments of the national population is core to classification of a group as IP. Living in historical continuity and in a certain area or before others "intruders" coming to the area is vital to identification of IP.

More importantly, the convention dedicated a full section part II - to define the right to collective or tribal lands. Article 13 of the convention contends that governments shall respect the special importance of culture and spiritual values of the IPs concerned and their relationship with land or territories which they occupy or use and in particular, it emphasizes the collective aspect. However, it is important to note that ratification of any international agreement on IPs according to various reports has been hard to achieve and so is the implementation.⁶⁶ This calls for debate on the effectiveness of the convention and the UN declaration on rights of Indigenous people.

2.2. Mal-distribution, Equitable, and Affirmative

World Bank's involvement in the Bwindi and Mgahinga conservation project intended to-among other things- ameliorate

⁶⁴ ILO Convention 169 is the most important operative international law guaranteeing the rights of IPs, however, its potential depends on ratification by sovereign nations. But to the precarious state of the IPs in Africa, in context, amongst 22 countries that have ratified this convention only one African country (Central African Republic) ratified it on 30/8/2010.

⁶⁵ International labour standards Department, (2009): Indigenous and Tribal peoples'rightrights in practice-A guide to ILO Convention no 169 notes that the Convention adopted the term "peoples" with general agreement that it reflects the distinctive identity that the Convention could aim at recognition of these population groups, p. 25.

⁶⁶ Many countries ratified a number of treaties, but without comprehensive domestication, thus it becomes hard to enforce the country's international obligations in the domestic courts." ILO;ACHPR, (2009), p. 16.

⁵⁸ By eviction and exclusion of the Batwa from their homeland in 1991 reiterated the previous subjugation of their land by complete repudiation of access rights to the forest.

⁵⁹ Lewis, Jerome (2000), p. 20; Kabananukye & Wily (1996); Kenrick, 2000; Kabananukye & Kwagala, 2007; Hamilton, Cunningham, Byarugaba, & Kayanja, 2000; Nakayi, 2009, p. 5.

⁶⁰ Tumushabe & Musiime, (2006):The constitution not only fails to provide a practical approach to the indigenous peoples land and natural resources but also fails to provide a generally acceptable definition or criteria to describe the "indigenous people".

⁶¹ The 1995 constitution of the Republic of Uganda.

⁶² See Tumushabe & Musiime (2006): For a detailed analysis national policy and legislation on community-based property rights, pp. 34-37.

⁶³ Lewis, Jerome (2000):Its rather less than a current issue but preindependence accumulative crisis of the pygmies land, p. 1.

the compensation dilemma but little did it achieve that goal in the face of suffering Batwa people. The reported results favor a long term biodiversity- sustainable project rather than one sensitive to the Batwa minority group.⁶⁷ Although the model of strategic partnership between the ministries, the Uganda forest authority and local community has been labeled as-*"concrete successes of sustainably financing protected areas;"* to the contrary, the Batwa have been a marginalized group in this attempt.⁶⁸ Ideally, the Bank/GEF provided the trust endowment fund; hence, was involved in drafting the Trust Deed and participated in the selection of the Asset Managers of the BMIFCT.⁶⁹ But, the results of the endowment fund were mal distributed, and unfavorable to the Batwa.⁷⁰

The implications of the endowment fund were inappropriate for addressing the indigenous people's minority status. Local representation for instance at the Local Community Steering Committee (LCSC) are made up of democratically elected community representatives, and representatives of the former forest people (Batwa), local government representatives and NGOs was to the disadvantage of the Batwa. Uneven compensation was a bleeding ground for mal-distribution of opportunities and choices between the Batwa and their non-Batwa neighbors. But more critically, the program benefits were in the hands of government forest representatives, and the private sector. In cases where the Batwa participated; unfortunately, benefits accrued to organized groups where the Batwa as an indigenous marginal community were directly or indirectly dismembered or that their voices were shattered.⁷¹ Skeptically the extent, to which the 60% of endowment meets the Batwa expectation and benefit as a discriminated group is debatable, Zaninka states:

⁷⁰ For composition and structure of the Mgahinga and Bwindi Impenetrable Forest Conservation Trust (MBIFCT) see Geo Z. Dutki-the trust

"... then the funding of project as a whole will simply continue to exacerbate the situation for the Batwa, since it is helping to fund their complete exclusion from the forest and is widening the gap between the Batwa and other local people through the funding of schools, clinics and other projects, from which the Batwa do not benefit due to discrimination."⁷²

That being the case, interventions that need be undertaken to improve the livelihood of the Batwa; restore their dignity or change the precarious state through various forms of affirmative action. Affirmative action is not new to Uganda, and its appropriation is guaranteed by the constitution of Uganda to marginalized groups and the disadvantaged people.⁷³ Unfortunately, this empowerment tool has not benefited minority ethnic groups- under threat and vulnerability of existence and cultural extinction. Such policies if geared to promote equal indigenous people, so that opportunities should benefit the Batwa as a minority group.

The agreement to the justification of quotas and affirmative action is underpinned by the negative stereotyped identity of the Batwa – "…are seen as a subhuman; animal-like people whose sexuality is unrestrained by cultural prohibitions, who feed like insatiable animals on disgusting and taboo foods, and unable to feel shame or a sense of decency, are capable of anything, they are only good for dirty or tedious jobs and are identifiable by their attitude and diminutive physical appearance."⁷⁴

The intergenerational mal-treatment of the Batwa and other IPs in Uganda is exacerbated by denial of access to land resources; it legitimizes their cultural subjugation, exclusion and dispossession⁷⁵. To this end, the Batwa are held with contempt by their community leaders, and protected area managers among others who hold *de jure* and *de facto* power. For

manager's presentation in the Fifth World Parks Congress: Sustainable Finance Stream September 2003. Durban, South Africa.

⁷¹ Report of the parliamentary of Uganda, 2007-equal opportunities committe's working visit to Bundibugyo and Kisoro in 2007.

- 72 Zaninka, Penninah (2001), p. 184.
- ⁷³ Article 32 of the 1995 constitution of the Republic of Uganda.
- 74 Lewis, Jerome (2000), p. 13.

⁷⁵ See Kabananukye and Kwagala (2007) in their report where they examine Uganda's administrative; legal and other structures that threaten the culture and language of minority people highlight the challenges of the Ugandan government to uphold the cultural rights of the Batwa and Ik given the discrimination and exclusion of these groups.

⁶⁷ GEF Impact Evaluation, 2007 -Case Study: Bwindi Impenetrable National Park and Mgahinga Gorilla National Park Conservation Project.

⁶⁸ For a nuance understanding read evaluation reports by GEF at; <http://www.thegef.org/gef/sites/thegef.org/files/documents/Impact_ Eval_Infodoc10.pdf>, and the BMIFCT presentation in Durban, South Africa at; <http://www.conservationfinance.org/guide/WPC/WPC_documents/ Apps_02_Dutki_v4.pdf>

⁶⁹ Mgahinga and Bwindi Impenetrable Forest Conservation Trust (MB-IFCT) was set up in 1994 under the Uganda Trust Act; with a mandate to provide long term funding for the conservation of the biodiversity and ecosystem of Mgahinga Gorilla National Park (MGNP) and Bwindi Impenetrable National Park (BINP) in South Western Uganda.

this bias in structure and leadership, the benefits that accrue to members of small project and association are unattainable by the Batwa community⁷⁶.

In conclusive terms, Batwa communities were victims of maldistribution of all inclusive forms of compensation through the trust fund- marginalization of their community by local leaders imposed polarization and creation of a "second citizen" identity to the Batwa. The protected area managers ignored empowered of the minorities in participation within political and economic project. Thus, indigenous people suffered failed arbitration in the hands of their oppressors. In practice, they (the Batwa) were never represented at Local Councils because elections are only through the majority suffrage. Secondly, their fate in terms of land which is their basic fortune out of 'squatter-dom' under the wrath of their landlord and favor in the hands of social charity and churches. In this regards, the parliamentary committee report explicated that by 2007 the central government starved of specific programs for the Batwa. If any programs-perhaps being catered for under the local government programmes implemented through sub counties.77

2.3. Resettlement and arbitration

The aftermath of eviction was characterized by unequal and failed restoration of normal livelihood to the evicted groups. This is central to rectification of inequalities that plight the well-being of IPs. Thus, absence of free and fair enquiry to ink Batwa people's concerns and desires ignored the urgency of eviction conflict resolution.⁷⁸ The voice of the concerned minorities was prerequisite. To that point, the only Batwa organization that would level the field of arbitration with government was only active by 2000.⁷⁹ Following the formation of an organization representing the Batwa, enormous shift in focus on the Batwa be-

78 Blomley, Tom (2003).

gan to resonate - for instance; revenue sharing and involvement of the Batwa in tourism through a project called the Batwa trail etc. Conversely, the trail literally benefits the private tourism industry and the Government – as *Simon Musasizi* noted in his Observer article⁸⁰ "The trail activity costs \$80 per tourist, of which 70% goes to their fund, 20% in taxes and 10% to UWA".

Retrospectively, the UWA acknowledged its failure to provide a resettlement plan in 1991. The protected area managers also claim that most of the Batwa – by nature of their way of life – failed to show any development on the land. However, going back to the historical context, IPs like the Batwa people are gather-hunters who sheltered in caves and make shift temporary housing. So the definition of development on land, which was a basis for earlier compensation, isolated these Batwa communities. And yet, the Batwa in Uganda are not an isolated case of IP faced with this challenge-African governments have undermined the social impact of displacement and relocation when residents are forcefully moved. Certain general impacts are predictable but the collective social impact on the average person differs widely from case to case.⁸¹

According to present evidence, the resettlement plan for evictees was unclear and delayed; firstly, the period between 1995 and 1998 did not include specific program targeted the Batwa. Secondly, the initial attempt to purchase land for the Batwa was in 1999 with only 69.7 acres distributed to only 10% of landless Batwa. Thirdly, after collaboration of other stakeholders, over 326 acres were sought to be apportioned in 1.5 acres per household. Unfortunately, based on reviewed literature, these portions are said to be a meager settlement for viable economic generating activities.⁸²

Like in similar eviction cases of IPs in Africa, numerous organizations have come to the rescue homeless Batwa. These organizations include religious groups (the Adventist Development

 $^{\rm 82}\,$ Kenrick, 2000 gives an in-depth analysis of the world Bank policy on the case of BINP & MGNP.

⁷⁶ Tumushabe & Musiime (2006).

⁷⁷ The Equal Opportunities Committee's Working visit to Bundibugyo and Kisoro reveal the marginalization of the Batwa by local political authority and violation of their rights by the UWA (The Parliament of the Republic of Uganda, 2007).

⁷⁹ See the profile of the United Organization for Batwa Development in Uganda (UOBDU) at <http://www.forestpeoples.org/partners/unitedorganisation-batwa-development-uganda-uobdu>

⁸⁰ The Observer article dated Sunday, 15, January, 2012: "longing to return home to the Jungle" at http://www.observer.ug/index. php?option=com_content&view=article&id=16681:longing-to-returnhome-to-the-jungle&catid=34:news<emid=114>

⁸¹ Cernea & Schmidt-Soltau (2003), p. 8.

and Relief Agency (ADRA), Kinkizi Diocese resettlement at Kitariro, and Missionaries Dr. Scott and Carol Kellermen) and NGOs (CARE, USAID etc.). The role of these NGOs became unquestionable support to sustainability of livelihood and well-being of landless households -including survival of the Batwa. So Christian groups and missionary initiatives have played a great resettlement role that demonstrated delayed and inadequacies in the government conservation plan.⁸³

Some reports have shown that the increased role of religious organization came with strings attached. A recent (2008) profile report by UNHCR on the Batwa of Uganda revealed that living on help from religious body ushered in forced adoption of new religions, and participation in modern lifestyles against their virtues. Some Batwa households are coerced by the need for survival to attend all places of worship with a strategy of seeking any religious group that offered better promises of clothing, food, spiritual renewal and other benefits to support their livelihood.⁸⁴.

Conclusion

"I feel great because I am educated - when they chased us from the forest we were afraid, and we didn't have a chance to go back. Now I want to work for my people" ... "I am proud of my education, but I am not proud to be Batwa because they have lost their culture the culture has gone,"⁸⁵

After expropriation of the Batwa from their ancestral land and subsequent loss of their ways of life, most of the Batwa became literally disenfranchised and dislocated from their normal way of life and politically subjugated in the communities. First, the constitution is neither explicit in recognition of the indigenous minority special status nor does customary law occupy the same place as written law. Probably this tries to explain the narrative that compensation and restitution to the Batwa is a tradeoff. Loss of land and access rights redefined the identity of the Batwa IP to squatters with limited capacity to support their well being or participate in all livelihood dimension of the community.

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Therefore, unless communities collaborative approaches take into account the characteristics and rights of IPs, thereby to avoid social mal-restitution (which would enormously increase participation of the Batwa), fairness cannot be aligned. Implying that in practice, forest revenue benefit sharing through the form of association initiatives and competition without recognition of minority rights defeats the Batwa heritage. They also have less ability to compete under adult suffrage voting structure without guotas to them. Given the current eruption of carbon trade and environmental conservation that is at the center stage of industrial development, further research is needed to provide a thorough understanding of land rights, health and ecological threats to indigenous forest-dwelling people. Thus, there is a research gap with regard to analysis government policies in favor of tree planting international corporate and conservation plans with enormous economic benefits at the cost of indigenous people's rights.

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⁸⁵ Vishva Samani-BBC, (2010): A story of the first Batwa university graduate covered by Vishva Samani of BBC News, Uganda on 29 October 2010 http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-11601101

⁸³ See Tumushabe & Musiime (2006):or an explicit detail of church led intervention to the Batwa resettlement crisis, p. 15.

⁸⁴ Minority Rights Group International, *World Directory of Minorities and Indigenous Peoples - Uganda: Batwa*, 2008, available at: http://www. unhcr.org/refworld/docid/49749c92c.html [accessed 4 September 2012.

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