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**THE EXPERIENCE OF THE TWA PYGMIES OF THE GREAT LAKES REGION**

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**INTRODUCTION**

1. The word “pygmy” is badly interpreted and is not accepted by the Twa (Pygmies) of the African Great Lakes Region, because according to dictionary definitions, Pygmy stands for “African population living mainly in the equatorial forest, who are known and characterised by the following features: short height of less than 1.50 m.” However, this is not a universal reality for Twa pygmies, we often meet Twa who are taller.
2. More importantly, “Pygmy” is a pejorative word most of the time used by other ethnic groups or tribes when they want to mock or marginalise the Twa or even discriminate against them. Therefore, most Twa do not like to use the word “Pygmy” yet Pygmies identify themselves as being the first inhabitants of the Great Lakes region and from this, they desire to show their solidarity with other Pygmies groups of Central Africa.
3. The Twa of the Great Lakes Region speak different languages according to their regional location. In Rwanda, they speak Kinyarwanda, a language spoken by all the Rwandans; in Burundi, they speak Kirundi a spoken language of Burundi by the local Burundian population; in the Democratic Republic of Congo and in Uganda, they speak the language of the tribes that live with them. Similarly, their names differ according to the regions where they reside. In Rwanda and in Burundi they are called Twa. In the Democratic Republic of Congo, they are named Twa, Mbuti, or Bayanda. In Uganda, they are also called Bayanda.
4. Though they carry many different names, all of them recognise their identity as Twa. We notice that the word Twa is also and sometimes used by other ethnic groups or tribal groups not only to protract the group Twa but also as an insult. The Twa of the Great Lakes Region do not have their own land as it is the case with the Massai of Kenya or of Tanzania, they are scattered in the areas or territories, living with other ethnic groups. In the past, these people were living by hunting, by gathering, by fishing and doing pottery. Therefore, we distinguish forest Batwa, the fishermen (living near the lake), and the Madepts. The observation case study refers to the Twa of Rwanda, Burundi, of those of the East of the Democratic Republic of Congo and the

Southwest of Uganda. Their number is estimated to be around seventy thousand to eighty seven thousand individuals.

5. In Rwanda, they are estimated to be between twenty thousand and twenty-seven thousand people. In Burundi, they reach thirty thousand people whereas in the Democratic Republic of Congo, they are estimated to be sixteen thousand; and in Uganda, they are believed to only be four thousand people.
6. The Twa are numerically of small group and they are less represented or even not at all represented in different domains such as politics, the economy, and the government administration. They constitute a neglected social class. Their status is characterised by endemic poverty and deprivation; their children are not educated, their wives give birth at home when others go to hospital. Children are not vaccinated. In case of illness, the Twa are seldom treated at hospitals or at healthcare centres. They go to traditional doctors and are treated with traditional medicine. The Twa also constitute a class of people who are seriously dispossessed, having nothing of serious financial or material value, and they are isolated socially.
7. There has been no specific research about the Twa. Existing research places emphasis on the background aspect of their social structure, their habits or traditions, of their way of governing, and of the area management. It is the reason why the investigations' results of the Twa are often presented under the shape of a given photo album that retakes curious aspects or only insisting on the 'backward' aspect – if not 'wild' or 'savage' – of this group.
8. Instead of awakening the consciousness of the authorities, the research has contributed still more to the marginalisation and discrimination of that group, indirectly further reinforcing the Twa's oppression in their own countries. Indeed, the Twa are abandoned, left to their own account; they neither go to school, have no hospital, dispensary, nursery, or commercial centre. They have only been approached when outsiders want from them some particularities concerning their habits, their traditions, their poverty and even their ignorance.
9. No action has been undertaken to settle them in their state (already marginalised). Moreover, no valuable policy has been undertaken to save them and integrate them progressively towards the global development of their country. The first concrete actions in favour of Twa started in the 1990s with the birth of associations working for the promotion and the protection of Twa rights.

## **CRITICAL ISSUES**

10. The most critical issues facing Twa pygmies in the region are grouped into the following categories (in no particular order of priority):
  - Poverty,
  - Land,
  - Health,
  - Housing,
  - Education,
  - Marginalisation,
  - Lack of gender awareness,
  - adaptation to change,
  - environmental problems,
  - loss of forest and prohibition of hunting,
  - ignorance of rights (minority, indigenous, women),
  - integration (cultural, economic, political, social service),

- prejudice, marginalisation as “impure” by others,
  - majorities’ ignorance,
  - lack of recognition of way of life by governments,
  - lack of self-esteem,
  - stigmatisation, and
  - lack of access to justice.
11. Most of the above stated issues are identified as a crosscutting, affecting all the Twa/Pygmies communities throughout the African Great Lakes region.

## **THE ECONOMIC MANIFESTATIONS OF RACISM**

12. Economically, the Twa of the Great Lakes Region have lagged behind in their relationship with other ethnic groups or tribes, and this is noticeable for several reasons.

### **Absence of formal education**

13. The coloniser – and even the missionaries – have played a considerable role in teaching but the crown of misfortune is that at the time the schools started, missionaries and even the coloniser neglected the existence of the Twa, refusing to send them to school. From this fact, we notice that almost all the Twa are illiterate and this has brought about the non active participation of the Twa in the economic sectors or life of their respective country. The consequence will be that no Twa would be involved in commerce and trade and in various entrepreneurial activities as it is the case to all the other tribal and ethnic groups.

### **Lack of land**

14. In the Great Lakes Region, the majority of the population lives essentially by agriculture and animal rearing. The important economic sectors of the region are agriculture and animal rearing. It is disappointing to see that the indigenous Twa of the region do not have their own land. Many of them live by begging; others survive on working hard on the rich people’s fields who have taken to themselves all the good lands. Though every state of the Great Lakes recognises the right of equality of all the citizens before the law, the Twa do not enjoy the same rights as other citizens. In particular, they do not enjoy the right to the land (their motherland). A form of discrimination then takes places whereby there is land distribution but oftentimes people forget that the indigenous Twa are part of the land and that they cannot be deprived of it.
15. With the speeding up of the global economy, deterioration and the political situation that prevails, it is expecting that the Twa of the Great Lakes Region will face further economic marginalisation.

### **Negative stereotypes**

16. By and large, in the Great Lakes Region, the Twa/Pygmies are regarded as inferior people. Indeed, the Twa is looked upon as stupid, without intelligence, unable to realise or to do a given thing or objective, a person with whom we cannot share, whom we cannot get married to, a Twa pygmy as an individual good only for work, and bad work at that..... This is noticeable through many words used by other ethnic groups or tribes in their language. Then, we have the following expression as “*Nta bwenge bw’umutwa*” that means “*a Twa is devoid of intelligence.*” Or yet again the

expression “*Uri umutwa,*” “*you are a Twa,*” an insult which actually means “*a person of no reason.*” That is why the Twa pygmies who wanted to undertake certain economic activities have suffered from failures because of the neighbouring prejudice, others to succeed decided to change their place and live where they are not recognised yet.

17. As an example, one of the people interviewed for this research made the following comment:

I am a woman of thirty years old. Until now, I am still discriminated, marginalised despite my own and personal efforts I have tried to make. When I was young, my parents who were very wise sent me to school. They did everything so that I can be a child like others by providing me with all the necessary things: school uniforms, school materials to attend to my physical health. In spite of this all the other children at school used to call me Twa, refusing at any time to share with me some food, I always had problems to see my classmate accepting to sit beside me, using the same book. The teacher also didn't do anything in order that I could be easily accepted by classmates but sometimes he was throwing insults and some words showing that I was not like others; and at that time I was very confused, I felt confused. Because I had been seriously frightened, I could not go ahead and continue with my studies so that I could get a secondary school diploma [six years] after the elementary studies, or even a certificate of primary school. At present time, in my village, even though I try to be clean, to put on good clothes, to improve my lodging I am still discriminated, marginalised when there are other people who are in worse life conditions than me. It means, even if I am in a good position, the community marginalises me. At ours, here in hills, many of us live by selling beer but when myself I tried to sell the same beer nobody liked to buy and I was forced to stop.

18. One must point out that the President of the commission of Unity and Reconciliation, through the meeting he held with Twa associations in order to prepare the National Conference on Unity and Reconciliation, promised that, to uproot such prejudices, himself and his committee would visit areas like the hill where the interviewed woman lives, and that he would invite the people of that area to share food with his team.

19. Another TWA expresses himself:

In 1959, we left our country for a refuge in Uganda. We were together with the Tutsi. Although we had the same problem, that of being refugees, we were marginalised, discriminated as well. The Tutsi, whom we lived with, were cattle keepers, and they had many cows. I was seriously concerned with having cows, but it was difficult for me to find income-generating activities so that I could buy myself a cow. Whatever I could do, wouldn't have any achievement when I was still living with the people who were still marginalising me. To succeed, I was forced to move out. In another place, where I was not recognised as Twa, I began working and my business improved. Nowadays, I have more than fifty cows. I have already changed status. They are not accustomed to call me Twa these days, or it is at low voice saying “*Would you once recognise that this man is a Twa?*”

20. To be certain, there are a few Twa from the Great Lakes Region who have had the opportunity to attend class and, once their studies were completed, found a job in the administration or elsewhere. Yet they automatically and directly deny their ethnic or tribal identity in order to avoid being marginalised or discriminated against. This being as it may, they have not contributed to the development, the welfare or to the promotion of the Twa or to their rights to protection.

## Segregation

21. The Twa of the Great Lakes Regions face heinous segregation. They are considered as unclean or impure beings because of their living habits, and the food they eat which is not accepted by their neighbours. There are times when the Twa cannot fetch water at the same spring as their neighbours, or they have to wait for nightfall so that they can fetch. They are deprived of social

relationships with their neighbours. It is the reason why they are forced to live isolated. They suffer frustration as well. At marketplaces, Twa have no rights to join with others; there is a place reserved to them. During great feasts, if they are invited, it is only for the admiration of their way of dancing; they cannot be received with other guests, they are received separately, which also shows segregation. The misfortune is that this segregation is seriously practised usually by the authorities as well.

22. The Twa women of Kanzenze in Rwanda experienced such a segregation during the Women International Day of the year 2000. All the women, especially their associations, were invited to celebrate and demonstrate their forms of dance in the Kanzenze commune in Kigali. Uniforms were supposed to be handed out to all participants. When the Twa women presented themselves to be given the uniforms, the assistant Bourgmestre chased them saying that they had not any right to sit near other women. In the face of such official rejection, it is clear that the socio-economic integration of the Twa is not to be realised soon.

## **Denial of rights**

### *The right of hunting and gathering*

23. As stated in the introduction, the majority of the population of the Great Lakes Region live mainly by agriculture and animal rearing. There are also Twa hunters whose economic activity is hunting and gathering. This is another source for subsistence.
24. As it stands, the Twa hunters cannot dare go into the forests – which used to be their domains, their life resources, and economic resources. These forests have now been constituted by the Great Lakes Region states as national reserves, forests, military domains, and national parks. Others have been declared universal heritage by UNESCO. The Twa's right of hunting and gathering has been refused to them and no compensation or allowance was foreseen.
25. From an economic point of view, excessive poverty characterises the condition of the Twa. They are close to being beggars. No economic activity was foreseen by the states in power just to save them from that critical situation.

### *The right to education and job*

26. Access to education is a seriously persistent problem that most Twa have to face. Those who have tried to complete their secondary school are less than 0.5 per cent of the Twa population. A very small number of Twa have attended the university as well.
27. The Twa families being very poor have no possibility to pay the school fees and other educational materials concerning their children. Some benefactors support or hold up these poor children in order to give them the opportunity to attend school; but once the support is over those children have no other possibility to go to school. We know that they have no land, and even if they have it, it is not quite fertile. In some cases, the Twa live near the lake primarily to have fish.
28. Other reasons that make the Twa children give up school is that they always say this expression: “*the stomach which is hungry has no ears.*” Indeed, their parents are not able to get food for their children, nor can they supply daily food as well. Children who manage to remain at school always undergo discrimination from their mates even from their teachers. For instance, the children of

other ethnic groups are always curious to see what kind of food a Twa child has brought (to see if the food brought by the Twa is forbidden by the other ethnic groups). Teachers also often threaten Twa children, calling them offensive words in front of their classmates – again, this confuses them.

29. A Burundian girl explains how she has been psychologically affected by the actions of her teacher:

I had a horrible teacher when I was in third grade of elementary school. One day I was late at school. The teacher asked me the reason why I came in late and I explained the reasons. He sent me home refusing to allow me get into the classroom. When he told me to come back, he beat me up, and I wept all day long. He told me that I would be a beggar as other Twa of my ethnic group and immediately he sent me home once again. Today, whenever and wherever I see him I am seriously frightened.

30. These conditions have helped create a great disparity in levels of education between the TWA and members of other ethnic groups.
31. Even achieving a full education has not proved to be enough to escape from discrimination. Neighbours of formally educated Twa are more likely to sit next to them, and sometimes drink with them as well, but discrimination against them remains in full effect. They do not get jobs if people from other ethnic groups apply, colleagues will maintain distance by rarely inviting them to socialise informally and will discriminate against a Twa for a promotion or work-related benefits, such as further education or training, in favour of people from other ethnic groups.
32. Consequently, it is rare and difficult for a Twa to be in a regular salaried employment. One result of this discrimination in employment and being left behind in education and training is that the myth of the Twa's stupidity or lack of intelligence and ability is further strengthened.

#### **HOW ECONOMIC DISCRIMINATION AND RACIAL DISCRIMINATION ARE LINKED AND SUSTAINED**

33. In the Great Lakes Region, the Twa population constitutes a minority within the other ethnic groups or tribes. As a minority group, they undergo serious racial discrimination, their rights are not respected, and they are systematically scoffed at. They have no say when it comes to the decisions that are taken, and they are considered as irrelevant. Nothing good is taken into consideration in their favour, and so, nothing is planned as an advantage. Political decision-makers sometimes forget even the existence of the Twa. Witness the condition of the Twa potters who extract clay from the swamps. Pottery constitutes for these Twa their economic activity. Yet in recent years the swamp distribution to the farmers never took into consideration the Twa, ignoring the fact that these swamps are the important economic resources for the Twa.
34. Everywhere in the Great Lakes Region the number of TWA is diminishing by the day, and this decrease is remarkable. During a discussion that was organised by a TWA association in Rwanda in 1997, the Vice President of the Supreme Court, recognised that, in 1975, there was in his village a group of Twa but that nowadays there is not even one member of that community. Where have they gone? They had all died. Neither the population nor the official authorities worried about that race extinction. They regarded that evolution as normal. Why then did such extinction take place?
35. The major reason was the excessive poverty, i.e., food scarcity, the absence of healthcare, the precarious nature of the hygienic conditions, and the overall lack of support from the authorities. This was compounded by the racial discrimination of which the Twa are victims, and so they gradually died, and eventually disappeared. Natural phenomena such as drought or heavy

rainfalls that destroy houses and kill people also accelerated the process. In case of a region-wide natural disaster, the official authorities put efforts and mobilise all the population in order to help the victims of that community. It is, however, regrettable that such efforts and initiatives were not done in favour of the Twa when different states of the region recognise the right of citizens' equality. Because of the racial discrimination that the Twa undergo, they are not encouraged to fully participate in the society; and it means that:

- capacities and opportunities of Twa are not reinforced when they are still vulnerable and disadvantageous
- TWA organisations are not maintained or sustained by the official authorities where they are the same organisations that struggle for the promotion and the protection of the rights and the interests of the Twa
- the promotion of equality and social justice by the governments of the Great Lakes Region is not existent
- the governments do not recognise manual abilities, talents and the experiences of Twa who are vulnerable and disadvantaged; they do not identify means of preventing the isolation and alienation and they do not encourage the Twa to contribute in the society (as a way of letting them know that the governments do not care about their initiatives)
- the governments do not assure to the Twa any access to work and to the social services through measures such as education and technical assistance
- governments do not support by legislation, incentives, and other appropriate means, organisations of the vulnerable and disadvantaged Twa so that they may promote the interests of Twa and become involved in local and national economic, social and political decision-making which guides society as a whole
- governments do not promote and protect the rights of the Twa, and do not empower them to make choice that enables them to retain their cultural identity while participating in national, economic, and social life with full respect for their cultural values, traditions and forms of social organisation

36. Then, we notice that the respect of human rights for Twa leads to proper conditions for development:

- *Rights as a condition for development.* Here, human rights are viewed as a precondition or basis for development to take place. Thus, where basic human rights are not in place, it is argued true development cannot take place
- *Human Rights as an instrument for development.* Here, human rights are seen as a tool or an instrument for achieving development, they are the means to desired end.
- *Human Rights as an aim or objective per se.* Here the promotion and respect for human rights is seen as an end in itself and an aim of action and advocacy, just as development is seen as an end and an aim in itself.

## **RECENT ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENTS ARE DIMINISHING OR EXACERBATING EXISTING FORMS OF DISCRIMINATION**

37. Although we nowadays notice economic developments in the Great Lakes Region, we cannot really say that there is abolition of existing forms of discrimination against the Twa. We also cannot deny that the economic development has contributed to the decrease in certain forms of discrimination.
38. With the economic developments, the majority population that discriminates the minority Twa comes to the knowledge of the reality of things. For example, the Twa are marginalised because they eat sheep. There is no astonishment, no surprise for the advanced population when they see a Twa undertaking certain economic activities. Also for the advanced people or population, eating sheep does not constitute a problem as others can be tempted to think. The majority are conscious that even a Twa can have abilities and capacities for managing and leading a collective thing.
39. With the economic development, we have seen the birth of organisations or associations, which work for the development and the promotion of TWA in the Great Lakes Region. These associations have also an objective: to struggle or to defend the rights and the interests of the Twa, to fight racism, discrimination and marginalisation practised against the TWA, being the interlocutor of the TWA in their dealings with the authorities and some donors. These associations are pleading for the TWA people, they attend national lectures, international conferences in order to make known the problems that TWA sometimes are facing in the Great Lakes Region. All these processes are facilitated by the present economic developments. Also, globalisation and structural adjustment have had an impact on Twa pygmies. For instance, out of many examples, one could state with some certainty that:
  - to the extent that adjustment policies restrict and limit government expenditures and Twa are already disadvantaged and politically weak, then these policies are likely to accentuate their relative and or absolute deprivation;
  - to the extent that Twa require access to state-sponsored, safety-net measures and funds, then the Twa pygmies will tend to suffer disproportionately vis-à-vis the rest of the population when such funds are reduced;
  - to the extent that adjustment policies encourage governments to introduce user fees for basic services and Twa pygmies are among the poorest, they will find it even more difficult to gain access to education services;
  - to the extent that equality of opportunity for all requires additional resources for deprived Twa pygmies in order for them to be in a position to take advantage of such opportunities, the squeeze on resources is likely to risk downgrading any priority given to proactive initiatives, especially when, as is commonly the case, the political voice of Twa pygmies is also marginalised; and
  - to the extent that globalisation leads to increasing wealth and income inequalities within states and TWA pygmies are already among the poorest and most disadvantaged, their relative position is likely to worsen.



## **POLICIES THAT HAVE BEEN TRIED TO ADDRESS ENTRENCHED ECONOMIC AND RACIAL DISCRIMINATION**

40. Noticing that different states of the Great Lakes Region were not conscious of the problem of TWA pygmies, there were first initiatives undertaken by some donors such as religious people and missions. But these initiatives have not made a real change. Some associations working for the development and the promotion, and also for the rights and interests, of the Twa Pygmies were also created. Most of these associations were led by Twa pygmies themselves. These associations have tried to identify the different problems that the Twa pygmies always meet, especially the matters having relationships with marginalisation, discrimination, racism, and economic conditions.
41. Once these problems had been identified, the associations of Twa pygmies, which serve at the same time as spokesmen and middlemen, have achieved some results in the sense that these different matters that the Twa pygmies are facing have become better known. These associations went ahead and plead for the welfare of the Twa, at both national and regional level, and for their human rights. That is why workshops at national or international level about human rights and the minority rights have been organised and every time in these seminars, the local authorities were invited to take part. Other workshops in favour of Twa pygmies in each country of the region have been organised. The following notices have been done:
  - contact with the official authorities and international institutions,
  - visits of Twa Pygmies,
  - sensitisation of Twa Pygmies to the participation to meetings and the leadership with other communities,
  - adult education of Twa Pygmies,
  - sensitisation for the schooling of Twa Pygmies children,
  - the teaching or initiation of little projects of agriculture and rearing animals, and
  - the participation to the Working Group of the United Nations on the Indigenous peoples, to the Working Group of the United Nations on the declaration of indigenous peoples, and to the Working Group of the United Nations on Minorities.

## **MIX OF STRATEGIES NATIONALLY AND GLOBALLY THAT ARE MOST HELPFUL IN RACIAL AND ECONOMIC DISCRIMINATION**

### **Legally and politically**

- examining the reasons for which the Twa pygmies are not represented at the high political levels and administrative levels,
- to associate the intellectual Twa pygmies to the elaboration and the execution of some project programmes aiming at the Twa integration and its socio-economic development,
- to inform or sensitise the Twa pygmies to the opportunity of registration and inventory of born children, and
- to invite the Twa pygmies who live in union of fact to regularise their marital situation.

### **Educationally**

- exempting the Twa pygmies children of school-fees so that they can attend school in a considerable number,
- motivate teachers in encouraging the Twa pupils to go on and pursuing their studies instead of neglecting them and considering them as stupid and unreasonable, and
- invite Twa pygmies who have not been to school or have not received any training at school, to follow and pursue some adult education.

### **Economically**

- allow the Twa pygmies to exploit clay with no administrative interference, the work or the activity of clay being a main life activity as it has been stated,
- give or distribute the lands (fields) to Twa,
- create a training school for modern pottery in order to improve the traditional pottery up to now practised by the Pygmies,
- open sale counters for the clay products,
- supervise the illiterate youth in offering them a good training, a professional training proposing jobs which do not necessitate a big or considerable qualification,
- help financially and materially the Twa pygmies who would like to undertake economic activities, and
- help the Twa pygmies who are completely deprived of economic opportunities

### **Hygienically**

- resolve the matter concerning the access of the Twa pygmies to primary care, e.g. prenatal care, and medical care to the unable people,
- inform or sensitise the Twa pygmies to the importance of vaccination of children, and show them the advantages of giving birth at hospital near qualified paediatricians, going at the health centres,
- favour the latrine buildings for more good health, and
- inform the Twa pygmies on proper hygienic methods.

### **Socially**

- the society should avoid any behaviour aimed at marginalising or underestimating the Twa Pygmies
- there should be information about the Twa situation in the mass medias,

- the Twa pygmies should also adopt a social behaviour which marginalises them less, or which does not do it at all,
- the Twa should have facilities to reach some social services which are existing so that they can overcome their chronic poverty, and
- the training of all the population on the respect of human rights.

## CONCLUSIONS

42. Almost universally, the Twa perceive their situation as desperate. Rural Twa expressed the problems they feel to be most important and in need of change, namely landlessness, famine, poverty, discrimination (in relation to human rights, education, health, justice and work opportunities), and the breakdown of their communities and internal cohesion. Moreover, in Rwanda the loss of men was considered as a major problem by those remaining, and in Burundi the ceaseless violence between Hutus and Tutsis was regarded as a major problem.
43. To solve their subsistence problems Twa/Pygmies throughout the region expressed the desire for access to sources of clay for their pottery, and for as effective access to good quality land for cultivation and keeping livestock as other local people. The Twa/Pygmies who live near forests asked for effective access to forest resources and those living near lakes and rivers require effective access to fishing. Most Twa/Pygmies see education as critical in their desire for a better standard of living. Like other people in the area, they seek decent clothing, soap, tools, housing and regular meal.
44. They seek equal access to education, healthcare, justice and jobs. Through education, they believe that they will be able to take up new roles in society, as teachers, administrators, officers in the police and the army, and so on. Above all, Twa/Pygmies wish to be recognised and treated as equal to other people, with equivalent rights and entitlements to those of their fellow citizens. Twa/pygmies children share the aspirations of their elders. They wish to be treated as equals, to have the same opportunities as others, to enjoy peace and security.
45. Twa/Pygmies want outsiders to help them in this process. They do not think it is possible to do it without support. But Twa/pygmies want to be involved at every level in their development. They resent how outsiders claiming to help them often impose their views on them. They suspect that outsiders often take advantage of their ignorance to embezzle aid intended for them. Twa/Pygmies want community-based planning, transparency in project funding, and training so they can manage projects themselves. They would like to be able to visit other Twa communities to see how they are coping, to share experiences, discuss ideas, and build networks.
46. The Twa/Pygmies want their own organisations to represent their local communities before external institutions, like state structures, intergovernmental organisations, and NGOs. The activities of the indigenous Twa/Pygmies associations seek to achieve this aim. At present, their roles include tracking national developments to anticipate impacts on communities, assisting all numbers of the local communities to participate in a collective process of decision-making, expression of local view points and needs, negotiating with external structures to get local communities needs on their agendas and defend their rights and claims, and initiating and facilitating development projects wanted by local communities.

47. The skills required of the Twa/Pygmies organisations are therefore great. These include advocacy the promotion of community-owned development, institution-building, conflict resolution, technical development skills, research and so on. In order to assist them to perform these roles effectively support is needed in training, financing office costs, establishing provincial centres where possible, in obtaining access to relevant information at the national and international level and in providing legal, moral and material back-up for advocacy initiatives which may put the organisations of their members at risk.
48. The Twa/Pygmies are unable to enjoy most aspects of modern society: equal citizenship, self-determination, education, justice, health care and property-holding. The severe discrimination and poverty they suffer has alienated many from their traditional culture and values. Most Twa/Pygmies find themselves with neither a viable traditional life nor with access to the benefit of modern society.
49. The Twa/pygmies are probably the most vulnerable group in the Great Lakes Region. Their case is special and requires special and distinctive action to resolve it. The discrimination from which they suffer is based on ethnic identity imposed on the Twa/Pygmies by non-Twa/Pygmies people. Ethnic discrimination is widely recognised as a serious problem in the region.
50. In recent years, international attention has focused on relations between Hutus and Tutsis. However, improvement of conditions for the Twa/Pygmies is likely to be one of the surest indicators of genuine improvement regarding ethnic, social, economic, and political conditions in the Great Lakes Region. It is now time to address the prejudice expressed by other groups towards the Twa/pygmies. To achieve this the Twa/Pygmies will require committed government, international, and popular support.

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