

# REMEDYING INJUSTICE IN INDIGENOUS CLIMATE ADAPTATION PLANNING

Climate ethics, inequality, and Indigenous knowledge



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## SECTION 1. INTRODUCTION

Climate change has the potential to negatively affect many communities around the world in profound ways. Inhabitants of low-lying areas face the risk of seasonal or permanent flooding; communities relying on agricultural output may see their crops diminished as a result of increased droughts and desertification and urban populations might find food chains cut off; and the increase in average temperatures fosters the spread of infectious tropical diseases. In short, climate change puts the lives, livelihoods, security, and well-being of millions of people around the world at risk, especially in low- and middle-income countries, which lack the resources to adequately safeguard against these threats. As experts predict that at least some irreversible climate change will occur with potentially disastrous effects on the lives and well-being of vulnerable communities around the world, it becomes paramount to ensure that these communities are resilient and have adaptive capacity to withstand these consequences.

Many Indigenous communities are especially vulnerable to climate change and urgently need the implementation of responsive and sustainable adaptation strategies. There are two particular reasons for the vulnerability of Indigenous communities. First, many communities live in fragile areas that are likely to be impacted the most by climatic changes, such as mountain regions, rainforests, coastal regions, and small island developing states (Oviedo and Fincke 2009; Salick and Byg 2007; United Nations 2009, 87, 95–96). Secondly, as the IPCC (2013, 2014) stresses, many Indigenous communities are socioeconomically disadvantaged and lack the institutional and economic resources to foster an adequate response to climate change. Given these vulnerabilities, it becomes especially important that Indigenous communities be able to express their experiences and knowledge within international and national climate adaptation processes. Yet, the inclusion of Indige-

nous experiences and Indigenous knowledge within current climate adaptation policies is still underdeveloped.

This raises the questions: how are Indigenous communities especially vulnerable to climate change in a way that non-Indigenous communities are not? How can these injustices be remedied?

In this report, we present the findings of our research project ‘Remediating Injustice in Indigenous Climate Adaptation Planning’. Funded by the British Academy’s UK International Challenges programme, the project was conducted by Dr. Keith Hyams, Dr. Morten Fibieger Byskov, and Dr. Poshendra Satyal at the Department of Politics and International Studies, University of Warwick, throughout 2018 in collaboration with Dr. Shuaib Lwasa at the Department of Geography, Makerere University, Uganda, and Prof. James Ford at the Priestley International Centre for Climate at University of Leeds, UK. The authors are grateful to the individuals interviewed and Batwa community members who participated in our focus group discussions. We also thank David Mwayafu and Joy Bonjyereire for their help and support during the field-work in Uganda.

The report is structured as follows. We first provide an introduction to the methodology employed by the project (section 2). In the subsequent section, we proceed to detail the lessons learned and how they can be used to influence future climate adaptation planning for Indigenous communities (section 3). In section 4, we provide a case study of Uganda’s Batwa people and their opportunities and experiences for influencing climate adaptation planning. We finally conclude the report by sketching out the future of how Indigenous peoples can contribute to national and international climate adaptation planning (section 5).

## SECTION 2. METHODOLOGY

The project employed a novel methodology that integrated philosophical and empirical analyses. While the philosophical part of the project focused on using ethical theory to analyze what inequalities and injustices that Indigenous peoples experience within international and national climate adaptation planning processes, this theoretical work was informed by a qualitative study of the Indigenous Batwa community of South-West Uganda. In the following, we detail the contribution of each part of the project and how they provided different insights that could be integrated to give a fuller picture of inequalities and injustices experienced by Indigenous peoples and communities in climate adaptation planning.

### *Ethics and climate adaptation*

Ethical theory has the potential to provide fundamental insights about the root causes of why different communities have unequal abilities to adapt to climate change. Just as climate change poses an ethical issue, how we adapt to climate change similarly raises questions that require ethical analysis and

input. While climate threats have often been addressed by promoting the use of more efficient and resilient crops or by introducing alien species into the ecosystem, such initiatives might create unintended negative consequences, including monocropping, the loss of biodiversity, and the disruption of local ways of life. In order to prevent merely creating new issues and challenges when considering how to adapt to the threat of climate change, it is important to engage with ethical theory. That is, by taking the ethical issues that arise from the need to adapt to climate change into consideration upstream at the planning stage, it is possible to preempt many unintended negative consequences downstream at the stage of implementation of climate adaptation policies and practices.

### **Fact-box 1. Climate adaptation planning would benefit from integrating aspects of ethical analysis.**

Climate adaptation planning raises a range of distinctly ethical questions. Attempts to formulate policy without engaging directly with these questions are likely to result in the creation or exacerbation of injustice, and may risk violating fundamental human rights. Moral and political philosophers think explicitly about ethical questions and have developed reasoned views about ethics and justice for a range of applied situations, including climate adaptation.

Local stakeholders, including Indigenous peoples, may be subject to unethical and unjust climate adaptation practices in many different regards. Our research has shown that there are five general categories of ethical research questions in the context of climate adaptation, namely conceptual, methodological, distributive, normative, and practical. The ethical issues within each category must be addressed within adaptive practice in order to avoid unethical, unsustainable, and unjust climate adaptation. *Conceptual questions* ask how we should conceptualize vulnerability to climate change and what climate adaptation should aim to achieve; *methodological questions* ask which descriptive and normative methods that are appropriate or necessary for the ethical analysis of climate adaptation; *distributive questions* ask how we should distribute the risk and exposure to climate change and the goods and resources necessary for successful climate adaptation; *normative questions* ask what is required from the perspectives of different justice theories in relation to climate adaptation, including questions of duty and responsibility; and *practical questions* ask how these ethical considerations can be turned into practical guidance for adaptation policies and practices.

While climate threats have often been addressed by promoting the use of more efficient and resilient crops or by introducing alien species into the ecosystem, such initiatives might create unintended negative consequences, including monocropping, the loss of biodiversity, and the disruption of local ways of life. In order to prevent merely creating new issues and challenges when considering how to adapt to the threat of climate change, it is important to engage with ethical theory. That is, by taking the ethical issues that arise from the need to adapt to climate change into consideration upstream at the planning stage, it is possible to preempt many unintended negative consequences downstream at the stage of implementation of climate adaptation policies and practices.

How, we need to ask, can we achieve climate adaptation that is ethically sound and morally justified? What values should be taken into consideration when setting out climate adaptation policies? What concerns should be addressed and what undesirable consequences should be avoided when implementing adaptation strategies? Who should be involved in formulating climate adaptation policies and strategies and who is responsible for bringing about sustainable adaptation? Answering these questions requires ethical

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analysis, reasoning, and argumentation on climate adaptation.

### *Injustices among the Batwa*

The philosophical part of the project was applied to an empirical case study of the Indigenous Batwa community of Uganda. The Batwa are one of the marginalized Indigenous groups, now living in forest fringes of South West Uganda. They are believed to be one of the original inhabitants of the Equatorial Forest in the Great Lakes Region (consisting of Uganda, Burundi, Rwanda and Democratic Republic of Congo) who lived as a hunter-gatherer community inside the forest. The field-work consisted of semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions with a range of actors at the national, district

and community levels. During the field-work, we conducted 4 national level key informant in-depth interviews with both state and non-state actors in Kampala, involving representatives from organizations working on issues of marginalized people, Indigenous communities and Batwa groups (e.g. from Civil Society Coalition on Indigenous Peoples in Uganda and the Ministry of Youth, Women and Social Development). Additionally, 6 district level and 4 community level (sub-county and village) key informant interviews were conducted with a number of actors working on Batwa issues in Kisoro, Kabale and Rubanda districts (e.g. officials from the United Organization on Batwa Development Uganda, Kisoro District Government).



The main focus of the community level field-work consisted of site visit to Batwa communities and conducting focus group discussions with them. In

total, 6 focus group discussions were held with Indigenous Batwa communities living in 5 different sites in South West Uganda: Birara village, Getebe

village, Nyagakyenkye village – near Mgahinga Gorilla National Park, Rukeri village, and Nteko Batwa village – near Bwindi Impenetrable National Park. The focus group discussions consisted of mixed group (male and female, young and old) as well as separate ones (female only or male only group). Altogether, we interacted with 64 Batwa community members (28 females and 36 males) through focus group discussions. Additionally, we also did participant observation of a one-day workshop (number of participants = 30) organized by the Nature Uganda for partners working on conservation and development, including on Batwa issues.

The focus of the field-work was to inquire how and to what extent Indigenous communities, in particular the Batwa, are consulted when translating international climate accords to national and local adaptation planning and actions: what routes for consulta-

tion do they have; what concerns would they like to have addressed? The integration of the philosophical and empirical analyses was a two-way process. On the one hand, the philosophical analysis provided the groundwork for the focus of the empirical work, identifying potential causes for inequalities and injustices that the Batwa might experience. On the other hand, the conclusions of the philosophical analysis were then tested in practice against the reality experienced by the Batwa: to what extent were the causes of inequality in climate adaptation identified by the philosophical analysis present among the Batwa? In that way, the empirical work, in turn, provided valuable input to the philosophical analysis with the potential to alter our initial conclusions. This had the effect of providing a comprehensive analysis that is not only theoretically grounded but is also sensitive to and inclusive of the empirical reality.

## SECTION 3. INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE, ADAPTIVE CAPACITIES, AND EPISTEMIC INJUSTICE

Indigenous peoples hold valuable knowledge about their local socioeconomical and environmental circumstances (Raygorodetsky 2017). This knowledge is essential to ensure that adaptive strategies are both responsive and sustainable and adequately address local needs and challenges. Ignoring this knowledge will disadvantage Indigenous communities from influencing adaptation policies that are likely to influence their ability and capacity to adapt to local environmental changes.

### *Indigenous knowledge and vulnerability*

Indigenous knowledge can contribute in important ways to sustainable and responsive climate adaptation policies and initiatives. For example, while increased rainfall contributes to soil degradation by washing out essential minerals, for example, Indigenous Bolivian farmers, having faced this issue for generations, avoid this issue by planting their crops on raised farms that protect them from seasonal flooding (Swartley 2002).

Conversely, where Indigenous knowledge has been disregarded, problems have commonly arisen. In the Andes, for example, the introduction of genetically modified potatoes threatened the diversity of crops that holds a significant cultural importance for the Indigenous population (Marris 2007). In Lesotho, Botswana and South Africa, the implementation of grazing restrictions to combat soil degradation resulted in the weakening of local, traditional land management institutions, further exacerbating soil degradation because the restrictions did not take into account already existing land management practices (Rohde et al. 2006). These unforeseen negative consequences of otherwise sensible responses to climate risks could have been avoided if the local knowledge and Indigenous communities had been consulted and their knowledge about the local social and cultural norms and institutional and economic practices had been taken into account and implemented within the adaptation initiatives.

Yet, Indigenous communities remain some of the most vulnerable to climate change. There are two particular reasons for the vulnerability of Indigenous

communities. First, many communities live in fragile areas that are likely to be impacted the most by climatic changes, such as mountain regions, rainforests, coastal regions, and small island developing states (Oviedo and Fincke 2009; Salick and Byg 2007; United Nations 2009, 87, 95–96): inhabitants of low-lying areas face the risk of seasonal or permanent flooding; communities relying on agricultural output may see their crops diminished as a result of increased droughts and desertification and urban populations might find food chains cut off as a result thereof; communities in mountain regions might see increased exposure to natural hazards, such as mud slides, due to increased rainfall; and the increase in average temperatures fosters the spread of infectious tropical diseases. Secondly, as the IPCC (2013, 2014) stresses, many Indigenous communities are socioeconomically disadvantaged and lack the institutional and economic resources to foster an adequate response to climate change.



communities. Given these vulnerabilities, it becomes especially important that Indigenous communities be able to express their experiences and knowledge within international and national climate adaptation processes. Yet, the inclusion of Indigenous experiences and Indigenous knowledge within current climate adaptation policies is still underdeveloped. If Indigenous experiences continue to be overlooked it will result in climate adaptation strategies that are less responsive to the plights of Indigenous communities, un-

fairly disadvantaging their ability to adapt to climate change.

**Fact-box 2. Discrimination of Indigenous knowledge and experiences is a significant driver of socioeconomic inequality, climate vulnerability, and loss of adaptive capacity for local and Indigenous communities.**

Indigenous communities will be affected by and have an interest in influencing international and, especially, national climate adaptation policies and excluding vulnerable communities from influencing these policies constitutes an injustice because they will thereby be epistemically disadvantaged: their knowledge about local socioeconomic and environmental circumstances will be lacking within adaptation policies, leading to less responsive and unsustainable climate adaptation strategies.

Moreover, the underrepresentation of Indigenous knowledge in climate adaptation policy an injustice in two additional ways. First, the systematic discrimination of Indigenous knowledge leads to the underrepresentation of Indigenous perspectives on adaptation and of Indigenous adaptive practices within the collective pool of knowledge that is used to shape climate adaptation efforts. Second, not only does the lack of recognition of Indigenous knowledge, as argued above, increase the risk that climate adaptation strategies will be less responsive to local socioeconomic and environmental circumstances, thus further entrenching the climate vulnerabilities of Indigenous communities, they also often include measures that erode local ways of life and knowledge.

*Epistemic injustice in adaptation planning*

The vulnerabilities of Indigenous peoples, as well as their socioeconomic root causes, are further compounded by a lack *epistemic power*. Epistemic power is the power that someone has to influence a given debate, such as a climate adaptation planning process, by being able to express their knowledge and experiences. Someone with more epistemic power is more likely to have his or her opinion and experiences taken seriously by other members of the debate. Individuals and groups who possess more epistemic power than other individuals and groups can be said to have an advantage within the adaptation planning process, while individuals and groups lacking epistemic power are at a disadvantage to influ-

ence adaptation plans. If an individual or group is *unfairly* disadvantaged in this way – that is, their opinions and experiences are dismissed for no good reasons – they are said to suffer an *epistemic injustice*.

Epistemic injustice occurs when we attribute more or less credibility to a statement based on prejudices about the speaker, such as gender, social background, ethnicity, race, sexuality, tone of voice, accent, and so on (Fricker 2007, 1, section 1.3). An example of this is when “the police do not believe you because you are black” (Fricker 2007, 1).

Excluding or underrepresenting Indigenous knowledge within national climate adaptation planning has various negative consequences. First of all, Indigenous communities will be affected by and have an interest in influencing international and, especially, national climate adaptation policies and excluding vulnerable communities from influencing these policies constitutes an injustice because they will thereby be epistemically disadvantaged: their knowledge about local socioeconomic and environmental circumstances will be lacking within adaptation policies, leading to less responsive and unsustainable climate adaptation strategies.

Secondly, the underrepresentation of Indigenous knowledge in climate adaptation policy is an injustice in two additional ways. First, the systematic discrimination of Indigenous knowledge leads to the underrepresentation of Indigenous perspectives on adaptation and of Indigenous adaptive practices within the collective pool of knowledge that is used to shape climate adaptation efforts. Second, not only does the lack of recognition of Indigenous knowledge, as argued above, increase the risk that climate adaptation strategies will be less responsive to local socioeconomic and environmental circumstances, thus further entrenching the climate vulnerabilities of Indigenous communities, they also often include measures that erode local ways of life and knowledge.

*Indigenous representation at international and national levels of adaptation planning*

We found that epistemic injustice against Indigenous peoples within climate adaptation planning occurs mainly at the level of translating international climate accords into national and local adaptation practices. This is especially the case in places where Indigenous peoples traditionally suffer socioeconomic inequali-

ties and injustices because such inequalities and injustices often determine epistemic power: the extent to which an individual or group is able to influence a particular discourse.

Even where concerns for the environment guide national policies, they often fail to take account of Indigenous peoples, their special vulnerability to climate change due to their close relationship between nature and culture, and their practical knowledge about how to engage with nature and the environment in sustainable ways (Smith and Sharp 2012).

Indigenous peoples have been explicitly recognized within international climate policies since at least the 1992 Earth Summit, but the integration of local knowledge and Indigenous knowledge into national and sub-national adaptation policies has been and in many cases continues to be underdeveloped (J. Ford et al. 2016). The United Nations notes that “Indigenous peoples have invested enormous efforts in the work related to the different processes within the Committee for Sustainable Development, the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Forest Forum and the Framework Convention on Climate Change” (United Nations 2009, 119), yet it has not yet been able to translate these gains into representation of Indigenous knowledge and interests at local and national levels.<sup>1</sup> This situation is the result of several factors:

*[...] structural discrimination of indigenous peoples at all levels in many countries, a lack of political will to prioritize indigenous issues and provide*

<sup>1</sup> Some of the problems with translating international climate policies that take into account of the needs and knowledge of Indigenous peoples into national and sub-national strategies comes down to the shortcomings of the current treaty-based framework of international environmental law, which is based on state sovereignty (United Nations 2009, 98). The emphasis on state sovereignty means states have the right to exploit their own resources, which often is found on Indigenous lands. The problem here is that Indigenous peoples and communities are not recognized, internationally, as state actors and, on a national level, often “have a distinct legal status within their countries, are barely recognized as equal citizens, and face multiple constraints when trying to claim the rights that international law grants them” (2009, 120). Yet, as the United Nations report further argues, by ratifying international human rights conventions, states have an obligation to adhere to the UN Charter, which affirms equal human rights for all, including Indigenous peoples, regardless of race, sex, language, and religion.

*funds to address them, the low level and efficacy of indigenous participation in national policy formulation and implementation, and a lack of awareness of international commitments amongst government officials as well as among indigenous peoples themselves (except for a minority who work in leading indigenous organizations).* (United Nations 2009, 108)

Many climate policies at the national level have led to unforeseen and undesirable socioeconomic outcomes for affected Indigenous communities, including loss of lands, jobs, and homes, marginalization, increased food insecurity, morbidity, and mortality, and loss of access to public and common resources (forests, water) (United Nations 2009, 93).



Barume (2010, 69–79, 81), for example, describes several cases, such as the Batwa in Uganda, DR Congo and Rwanda, the Bagyeli in Cameroon, the Masaai and Hadzabe in Tanzania, and the ǀKhomani San of South Africa where the establishment of protected conservation areas have led to the eviction of Indigenous peoples from their traditional lands without any consultations with nor consent of members of these communities.

The introduction of cash-crops, such as GMO maize in Mexico and GMO potatoes in the Andes, have priced out Indigenous farmers, reduced their access to the market economy, and threatened the biodiversity that is culturally important to many Indigenous communities (Commission for Environmental Cooperation 2004; Fox 2005; United Nations 2009, 88). Efforts to have their voices heard have also led to legal backlash against Indigenous communities.

Consider, for example, the legal actions taken against the Ardoch Alonquin First Nation of Canada protesting against uranium mining on their lands (United Nations 2009, 205) or, more recently, the arrests of Native American and Native Canadian protesters of the Keystone XL oil pipeline that will run through Indigenous lands and threatens contaminations of essential and culturally important sources of water, putting the health Indigenous communities at risk (Levin, Woolf, and Carrington 2016).

*Remedying epistemic injustices against Indigenous peoples*

There are at least four actions that can be taken to promote the inclusion of Indigenous communities within national climate adaptation planning. First, because many Indigenous communities suffer from additional social, economic, and democratic inequalities and injustices that negatively influence their epistemic power to influence the agenda on climate change and climate adaptation it is necessary to address structural and socioeconomic inequalities at the national and local levels. Second, Indigenous communities should use platforms and partnerships at the national and regional levels in order to enhance the engagement of local communities and Indigenous peoples through the exchange of knowledge and best practices on climate mitigation and adaptation. Third, the international community needs to put pressure on governments and businesses to end exploitation and oppression of Indigenous communities and promote peaceful and inclusive societies through the strengthening of a rule of law. Most fundamentally, fourth, it is necessary to recognize the equal rights

and voices of Indigenous peoples as equal stakeholders in addressing climate change, and to recognize their distinct history, identity and value of the knowledge that they possess. In some national contexts, giving due recognition to the rights and voices

**Fact-box 4. Epistemic injustices against Indigenous peoples are especially problematic when Indigenous communities also suffer from additional structural and socioeconomic inequalities.**

Disregarding or underrepresenting Indigenous voices within national climate planning constitutes an epistemic injustice for three reasons: (i) because Indigenous knowledge is relevant for developing responsive and sustainable adaptation policies; (ii) because Indigenous peoples are especially affected by climate adaptation policies; and (iii) because Indigenous peoples are epistemically disadvantaged due to existing socioeconomic inequalities. In this way, epistemic power and socioeconomic (in)equality are mutually reinforcing and it becomes imperative to address these inequalities in order to ensure epistemic equality.

on Indigenous peoples requires attempts to actively combat racist stereotypes of Indigenous peoples and their knowledge as 'primitive'.

The philosophical part of the project was applied to an empirical case study of the Indigenous Batwa community of Uganda, which yielded several lessons. Our research especially revealed a range of systemic injustices experienced by Indigenous

Batwa community in Uganda, resulting from their continued social-economic, cultural and political marginalization after their forced eviction from forest reserves and national parks. Indigenous Batwa communities still lack fulfillment of very basic needs (food, clothing, shelter, access to education and health) and face serious discriminations by others. As a result, they lack voice, agency and influence in climate adaptation planning and actions, both at the national and local levels. While there have been small-scale projects focusing on Batwa issues (e.g. provision of land, housing, income generation, tourism etc.) run by a range of non-state actors (NGOs, CBOs and charities), there is a lack of coordination among these actors and activities, often resulting in duplication of efforts and non-transparency and lack of accountability and sustainability. In section 4, we discuss the case of the Batwa people in more detail.



## SECTION 4. CASE STUDY IN ADAPTIVE INEQUALITY: UGANDA'S BATWA PEOPLE

The Batwa are one of the marginalized Indigenous groups in Uganda (besides IIK, Benet and Karimjong), with a total number of their population estimated to be 6,705 individuals, which is about 0.3% of Uganda's total population (Tadie 2010). It is generally believed that the Batwa were one of the first inhabitants of the equatorial forests of the Great Lakes of central Africa; they are now found in South West Uganda, parts of Rwanda, Burundi and Democratic Republic of Congo.

The Indigenous Batwa community used to live in the forests and their survival and livelihoods depended on forest resources. They have been discriminated against and exploited due to their physical appearance and simple life-styles.

Historically, they were pushed deeper into the forests when early settlers and farmers cleared these forests for agriculture, taking the land from the Batwa (Tadie 2010). In the 1930s when the British colonial government declared the areas as forest reserves, the Batwa's access to forest was only restricted for livelihood purposes and practicing their culture. In the early 1990s, the declaration of conservation areas (e.g.

creation of national gorilla parks in Bwindi and Mgahinga areas as well as Echuya Central Forest Reserve) led to the eviction of Batwa from these forests, resulting in their further impoverishments and lack of human and legal rights.

### Fact-box 5. Demographic, geographic, and historical information on the Batwa

The Batwa Indigenous community used to derive everything from forests and their low impact on resources made them able to live a self-sustaining life based on principle of sharing (due to their non-hierarchical social structure). Many reports suggest that the number of Batwa has decreased since the eviction, with the population estimated to be of 6,705 in 2010 (Tadie 2010; BMCT 2016). They are now scattered in small communities at the edge of national parks in South West of Uganda, often living in remote, hilly and isolated locations in group of 10-20 households with 4-10 family members in each household. They used to walk long distances hunting in the forests, they are now confined to small geographical areas. The areas where the Batwa live are often prone to climatic and other hazards such as flash floods, soil and land erosion, and incidence of diseases. They live in temporary huts that are very poorly constructed, made out of shrub branches, banana leaves and grass, and thatched with plastic or rubbish bags. Many of the Batwa still live as squatters on other people's land, paying with their labour in return for permission to live on their land. They lack basic standards of living, such as food, clothing, shelter, health, education and paid employment. For example, the Batwa population suffers from extremely high infant and under-5 mortality (57%); their life expectancy is very low (about 28 years); and only 51% Batwa children attend school (with very high dropout rate when they reach secondary school) (Tadie 2010; BMCT 2016). Batwa's vulnerability is also exacerbated by lack of social capital network, as they do not have sufficient resources to help each other (such as with loans, food or property) in the time of climatic and non-climatic stresses.

Forced eviction of Indigenous Batwa community from their original habitat where they purely lived as a hunter gatherer lifestyle without putting in place any alternative livelihood options or compensatory mechanisms for them is perceived by many Batwa members as a case of serious 'historical injustice' by the state. The claim by the Ugandan Wildlife Authority (UWA) officials that Batwa owned nothing whilst they still lived in the forests and hence not eligible for compensation is considered in itself injustice, lack of empathy and gross violation of human rights by Batwa members and those working on Batwa issues.

On the other hand, state agencies such as the UWA officials would see that the eviction was inevitable due to the mandatory provisions for creation of national parks and that they had to help 'modernize' the lifestyle of Batwa community, who were

'living wildly in terms of mannerisms to the extent of forcefully stealing food from surrounding homes' and 'were threats to the lives to UWA employees,

private operators and tourists’ (interview, UWA official 14 December 2018).

*The Batwa are subject to systematic injustices*

A range of systemic injustices is experienced by Indigenous Batwa community, resulting from their continued social-economic, cultural and political marginalization. They still lack fulfillment of very basic needs (food, clothing, shelter, access to education and health) and face serious discriminations by others. They also lack voice, agency and influence in political decision-making, both at the national and local levels. Further, there is a lack of recognition of specific identity, history and rights of Indigenous peoples in Uganda (Batwa and other Indigenous group such as IIK, Benet and Karimojong), as exemplified by a quote from few interviewees that “everyone in Africa is Indigenous”; Batwa are rather referred as marginalized groups (in official documents too, they are often couched under marginalized groups).

The lack of enabling conditions (e.g. democratic ideals of fairness, equity and justice in national policies and programmes, supportive policies and legal frameworks on rights of Indigenous peoples) and lack of operationalization of international frameworks and provisions (e.g. ILO-169, UN Declaration on Rights of Indigenous Peoples, or Free, Prior Informed Consent) in Uganda mean that there is a long way to go for enhancing their effective representation and participation, in decision-making, including in climate adaptation planning and actions.

Our findings thus reveal a very complex dynamics of epistemic injustices at play in the case of Indigenous Batwa community and highlight the influence of wider processes of socio-cultural marginalization and the role of certain conditions – e.g. democratic, epistemic and justice – shaping senses of (epistemic) injustice to the affected group and also, more broadly, the public perceptions of justice and injustice.

*How can the Batwa claim their rights?*

While there have been small-scale projects focusing on Batwa issues (e.g. provision of land, housing, income generation, tourism etc.) run by a range of non-state actors (NGOs, CBOs and charities), there are a large number of Batwa members who still live as landless labourers (often in non-Batwa’s farm). Among the activities done by a number of organisations, there is a lack of coordination among these

actors and activities, often resulting in duplication of efforts and non-transparency and lack of accountability and sustainability. There were also contradictory claims and counterclaims among the actors claiming to work with Batwa, accompanied by conflicting information on certain issues.

Reluctance by government to cater for Batwa as equal citizens of Uganda has resulted into some non-state actors taking advantage of the laxity to deliver piecemeal programmes to Batwa. Additionally, concerns were raised by some organization such as the United Organization for Batwa Development in Uganda that Batwa illiteracy and critical impoverishment has been used by some charities and NGOs to ‘use Batwa as a ladder to improve their own livelihoods’. For example, in one location near a national park, a private Safari company bought land and resettled Batwa strategically as their tourism marketing tool, tourist attraction and entertainers for the foreigners. In another case, one charity would consider that they own the Batwa group there, as they would even go to the extent of blocking another charity from constructing permanent houses for at least six households in the same settlement.



Abject poverty and illiteracy among Batwa have contributed to furthering injustices. The Bawa would accept anything without questioning, as they responded that ‘it was better than not having any shelter before’. For example, in a Batwa village site, we found a single-room narrow box like houses built by certain charity for a Batwa family. A community level key informant told us that these activities in the name of Batwa are a case of ‘violation of Batwa rights to decent accommodation, proper family life and privacy’. In another location, we found that

Batwa are resettled on barren land in steep slopes (half-acre area) where they are expected to live and do farming.

Most of the Batwa groups have been resettled in designated isolated locations, with very limited chance of integration with the rest of the non-Batwa communities. Furthermore, the Batwa members do not have property rights and land titles and they live in fear that their settlement would be taken away. Organizations working for Batwa and Kisoro District Local Government would argue that if land titles were given, 'Batwa would sell of lands and waste

the money'. Although it has been almost three decades of their eviction from their ancestral lands and forests, the concerns of Batwa have not been heard nor they have been able to benefit directly from the growing tourism trade, such as gorilla trekking in the region. Due to these cases of systemic injustices, stereotypes and discriminations, the representation and participation of Batwa and Indigenous groups in national and local decision-making, including in the context of climate adaptation planning and actions cannot be enhanced without addressing the pre-existing socio-economic inequalities and historical injustices.



## SECTION 5. CONCLUDING REMARKS

Our project, *Remediating Injustice in Indigenous Climate Adaptation Planning*, shows how socioeconomic factors and issues of representation coalesce to generate systematic injustices for Indigenous peoples. This is especially so in response to climate change, where Indigenous communities are some of the most vulnerable populations, and they lack the ability and capacity influence climate adaptation planning process. Although Indigenous peoples often hold valuable knowledge about and experiences with the local socioeconomic and environmental circumstances - information that is essential for sustainable and effective adaptation planning – their knowledge and experiences are often excluded from or underrepresented within national climate adaptation processes.

We have illustrated this issue through a case study of Uganda’s Batwa people. The Batwa are often subject to systematic injustice and inequality, including the lack of provision of basic needs such as adequate nourishment, housing, and clothing, with little to no way of having these injustices addressed due to a lack of political representation. Hence, the Batwa people’s vulnerability to the negative effects of climate change is both reinforced by a lack of basic goods necessary to withstand these effects as well as a lack of opportunity to rectify this situation due to social, cultural, and political marginalizations.

The underrepresentation of Indigenous knowledge and experiences at the national level stands in sharp contrast with the opportunities for and efforts of Indigenous peoples to influence climate adaptation planning at the international level, in particular through the recent establishment of the Local Communities and Indigenous Peoples Platform (LCIPP).

The main takeaway from our project has been to emphasize the importance of providing adequate representation of Indigenous peoples and vulnerable communities within climate adaptation planning at all levels. At the moment, such inclusion of Indigenous peoples is underdeveloped. In order to remedy this situation, we recommend that the following four actions be taken within climate adaptation practice and planning:

**1. Decision-makers, practitioners, and academics working on climate adaptation must recognize the value of Indigenous knowledge and experiences.** Indigenous peoples possess valuable knowledge about the local socioeconomic and environmental circumstances, the impact of climate change on local lives and livelihoods, and social and cultural norms that enable or impede adaptation strategies. Hence, in order to ensure effective, sustainable, and responsive climate adaptation, it is necessary that this knowledge be taken into account within climate adaptation planning.

**2. Indigenous communities must be given equal and equitable representation within climate adaptation planning.** The lack of representation underwrites Indigenous climate vulnerability by denying them the opportunity to have their knowledge and experiences taken into account within climate adaptation planning. It is thus necessary that policymakers and climate practitioners respect the rights of Indigenous peoples to equal and equitable representation.

**3. Structural and socioeconomic inequalities and injustices experienced by Indigenous peoples must be addressed.** The power of Indigenous people to have their voice heard and taken seriously – what we have called *epistemic power* – is often undermined by the fact that they are subject to several structural and socioeconomic inequalities, including social and political marginalization. In order to enhance the epistemic power of Indigenous peoples, and thereby minimize the risk of epistemic injustice within climate adaptation planning, it is necessary to address the structural and socioeconomic inequalities experienced by Indigenous peoples.

**4. Indigenous communities and organizations at local, national, and regional levels should mirror the progress made by international Indigenous interest-organizations.** Organizations representing Indigenous peoples have had a lot of success influencing international climate accords by lobbying the UNFCCC. In 2018, the Local Communities and Indigenous Peoples Platform (LCIPP) was launched to promote the voices of Indigenous peoples within

international climate adaptation planning. However, Indigenous peoples are systematically underrepresented within efforts to translate these accords into national, sub-national, and local adaptation strategies. In order to enhance their voice and influence in

this process, Indigenous groups, organizations, and communities should organize in similar umbrella-organizations and platforms for the sharing of Indigenous knowledge at the national and regional levels.



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