

Sixteenth session of the United Nations Forum on Minority Issues, 2023

Statement by Women's Organisation for Promoting Unity (WOPU), Rwanda

Agenda Item 3: Socio-economic empowerment

Thank you Chairperson,

I am Bella UMURERWA from Rwanda and I work in an NGO called WOPU

I stand before you today to draw attention to the historic marginalization, and entrenched discrimination faced by Batwa women in Rwanda. This statement refers to "Voices Silenced: A Study on the Marginalization of Batwa Women" which highlights the socio-economic, cultural, and structural challenges contributing to their vulnerability particularly those with disabilities who are deprived of essential economic and social support. The Batwa are disproportionately affected compared to other communities, facing barriers to education, healthcare, and employment. Batwa eviction from ancestral land has denied them access to their traditional and sustainable means of livelihood. Which means that now they rely on daily work for others with low pay and insecurity, which along with continuing racism prevents them from contributing to Rwanda's economy in the society

In light of this, I urge international NGOs to collaborate with the Rwandan government and existing NGOs in Rwanda to find more effective ways of implement targeted initiatives that have been agreed address the specific needs of the disabled Batwa population. This includes the provision of accessible healthcare, vocational training, and economic empowerment programs. Furthermore, I recommend the establishment of a comprehensive monitoring and evaluation system to ensure the effectiveness of these interventions. Together, let us strive for a more inclusive and equitable future for the Batwa people, leaving no one behind in our collective pursuit of sustainable development.

Thank you.