

## Case study: African Revival Ministries, Burundi

The Batwa are a group of pygmy people in Burundi. They used to be nomadic, until government policy meant that they had to settle in local communities with other ethnic groups. However, this has been difficult because they are discriminated against. All people in Burundi have the right to primary education, but some school teachers refuse to take Batwa children because they do not dress neatly and because classes are overcrowded. The Batwa people have no history of land ownership, and local authorities have been reluctant to provide land for them. This has meant that they cannot build houses or farm any land to provide food for themselves.

ARM has worked with the BATWA in many ways to address their problems:

- They have lobbied local authorities and schools to accept Batwa children. This has involved fighting for their right to education, as well as helping to provide uniforms and school equipment so that the Batwa children are not discriminated against when they are in school.
- ARM has also lobbied the local authorities to provide the Batwa with land. They started in Gitega province and in 2001 the local government agreed to provide a plot of land for each Batwa family. ARM is now planning to lobby the local authorities in Kayanza province.
- ARM has worked with churches to address their prejudices and encourage Christians to care for the Batwa in their community. Some churches are now helping them to build houses on the land they have been provided with.

This whole process has enabled the Batwa to have dignity within Burundi. They are now advocating for their own rights to equal treatment and equal access to services.

Source: *ROOTS 1: Understanding advocacy*, Tearfund 2002, page 28