

**DOSSIER:**

# **The Role of Leadership in the Achievement of Ecological Vision in the Context of Diminishing Environment in the 21st Century Uganda**

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## **Abstract**

The study addresses the research topic, the Role of Leadership in the Achievement of Ecological Vision in the Context of Diminishing Environment in the 21st Century Uganda. The main objective of the study was to explore the role of leadership in the achievement of ecological vision in Uganda. The organization of the paper is as follows introduction, understanding the concept of ecology, the place of ecology in the universe: a religious perspective, theoretical framework of the study, factors that influence achievement of ecological vision in Uganda, the role of leadership in the achievement in the context of shrinking environment in the Uganda, in the 21st century, and conclusion and recommendation.

The research utilized desktop methodology. Desktop approach involves data collection and analysis from a desktop. The study reviewed books, journals, and internet sources as primary means of collecting raw data. The main finding of the study was that leadership plays a critical role in the achievement of ecological vision in Uganda.

The study concludes that leadership, as a divine institution, is central in the achievement of ecological vision in Uganda. Leaders derive legitimate authority from God to lead and govern the Ugandan public. Further, the research revealed that leaders are drivers of socio-economic transformation. The critical ecological issues of great concern which the Uganda leadership has to play an important role in addressing among other things include: (1) meeting human needs, (2) greed for wealth, (3) government public policy on agriculture modernization, (4) population increase, (5) deforestation. The theoretical frame work informs leaders of how they can promote social transformation and facilitate economic growth while ensuring sustainable development practices. The study makes two recommendations in the way forward.

## Introduction

The reality of a groaning world is being seen, felt and heard by Ugandans of all calibers. Recent media reports show that in some parts of Uganda especially Karamoja, people are starving and dying to famine resulting from extended drought lasting over four months. In Soroti and other eastern areas maturing crops were scotched by intensive heat causing serious food scarcity. In areas like Kasese and Busia, lives and property worth millions of shillings were lost due to torrential rains causing severe flooding. As a result of massive displacement of the population abject poverty is compounded. <sup>1</sup>

The prevailing extended dry weather demonstrates that reliability of tropical rains which supported agriculture all year round is no more. The issues raised in this paper suggest that human activities such as deforestation, farming, population increase, meeting human needs are derived from lack of sustainable utilization of the environment. The study asks the question, what is the role of leadership in the achievement of ecological vision? Before discussing the place of ecology in the universe, it is important to provide a brief definition of key variables: Universe, environment and ecology.

## Understanding the Concept of Ecology

From the English Dictionary, the universe: space and everything existing in it including the Earth and all the other planets. According to the Encarta Webster's Dictionary, the earth and humanity refers to the Earth along with the human race and the totality of human experience. Ecology in the context of academics pertains to the study of the relationships between living organisms and their interactions with their natural or developed environment. Ecological research is expected to address life processes, interactions and adaptation, movement of materials and energy through living communities, succession development of ecosystems, and abundance and distribution of organisms and biodiversity in the context of the environment. <sup>2</sup>

Ecology is as much a biological science as it is a human science commonly known as human ecology. <sup>3</sup> Human ecology is defined as: (1) from a bio-ecological standpoint as the study of man as the ecological dominant in plant and animal communities and systems; (2) from a bio-ecological standpoint as simply another animal affecting and affected by his physical environment; and (3) as a human being, somehow different from animal life in general, interacting with physical and modified environments in a distinctive and creative way. <sup>4</sup> This paper focuses on definition three where human beings as higher animal species interact

with the natural and in some cases modify the natural environment creatively thus impacting the social world positively or negatively. The study reveals that the ecosystems of the earth are critical to human ecology because they provide basic needs ranging from food, medicine, water, and the capacity for trade exchanges. Therefore, it can be argued that ecosystems relate greatly to human ecology because of their foundational significance to socio-economic and the potential for business exchange in the market place.

The concept of natural environment, that is, natural surroundings in which living things grow and interact on earth. Where human interference is minimal, complete ecological units operate as natural system including animals, plants, rocks and natural phenomena as well as air, water, and climate among others.<sup>5</sup> The concern of this paper is that environment which refers to the natural world is at great risk largely as result of the harmful influences of human activities. Therefore, this paper focuses on the impact of human activities that put the environment at a high risk, that is, the threat of extinction of the natural world which the essence of God's created universe.

### **The Place of Ecology in the Universe: A Religious Perspective**

The human race has a God-given mandate over the utilization of the natural environment. There is clearly an authorization for humanity to rule over the three spheres of the universe: Firstly, the solar system populated by the moon, stars, and other planets in the solar system as well as the birds that traverse between the skies and the earth. Secondly, the sea world inhabited by various fish species and thirdly, planet earth occupied by both animals and plants.<sup>6</sup> This mandate further underscores the importance of human beings in the whole universe. The human race is the epic of God's creation resembling God so closely as his own image and likeness. Significance of human beings to God is emphasized. God created human beings a little lower than the heavenly beings such as Angels etc.<sup>7</sup> Humans exercise and occupy a fundamental leadership position in the entire universe. The leadership of human beings of the God created environment is divinely legitimated. Thus, leadership and authority is approved by God for development of humanity.

However, the importance of human beings in God's creation comes with great responsibility of overseeing the universe which is God's own creation comprising flocks, herds, wild life, birds that largely live in space and all manner of fish and aquatic organization in bottom of seas and oceans.<sup>8</sup> As stewards of environment, human beings are expected to 'work and take care of the earth which is God's garden commonly referred to as Eden. While it is right of human beings to utilize the

available resources in the ecological system for their sustenance, sustainability of the ecosystem is extremely necessary. Therefore, humanity is essentially custodian of natural resources in the natural environment. The discussion of the place of ecology in the Universe leads to theoretical framework of the study.

## Theoretical Framework of the Study

As mentioned before, responsible stewardship has to be guided by a theoretical framework. In this study, two theories namely sustainable development and transformational theories were used. Sustainable development is defined as development which meets the needs of present generations without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Sustainable development concerns the socio-economic and environment development.<sup>9</sup> Sustainable theory informs the study that all levels of local leadership need to recognize their significant role in achievement of development which resonates with realization of ecological vision. Leadership at national level is responsible for formulating public policies and legislating laws for purposes of regulating human activities. Good leadership practices at local level can ensure compliance of citizens to regulations concerning sustainable utilization of the natural environment in an effort to promote development.

Transformational leadership theory supports sustainable development theory. According to James Burns (1978) transformational leadership is a process where leaders and followers engage in mutual process of raising one another to higher levels of morality and motivation. Transformational leaders raise the bar by appealing to higher ideals and values of followers. In doing so, they may model themselves and use charismatic methods to attract people to the values and to the leader.<sup>10</sup> In relation to Burn's transformational theory, Goli (2012); Bass and Riggio (2006), argue that transformational leadership is based on four constituents including: (i) inspirational motivation, (ii) idealized influence, (iii) intellectual stimulation, (iv) individualized consideration.<sup>11</sup>

(i) Inspirational motivation: Transformational leaders are those who have capability to inspire and motivate followers. In so doing, the culture of team work is inculcated as well as optimism and enthusiasm.

(ii) Idealized influence: The leaders lead by example and become role model for their followers. They develop common vision which is shared by followers. The shared vision serves as common goal for people to identify with and cultivate a sense of commitment.

(iii) Individualized consideration. The transformational leaders demonstrate empathy and sympathy to the needs and emotional concerns

of the followers. The leaders recognize individual differences and needs. The leaders engage in dialogue with the individuals and use effective communication maximally.

(iv) Intellectual stimulation: The transformational leader encourages followers to be creative and innovative in solving problems encountered.

Therefore, it is clear that sustainable development theory supported by transformational leadership theory are relevant in integrating environmental issues into leadership practices aimed at achievement of ecological vision for Uganda in the 21st century. The discussion of theoretical framework leads to analysis of factors that influence achievement of ecological vision.

### Factors Affecting Achievement of Ecological Vision in Uganda

The research recognizes that there are numerous factors that affect achievement of an ecological vision in Uganda. For this reason, five factors were been identified: (1) human needs, (2) Greed for wealth, (3) Population increase, (4) deforestation and (5) and public policy on agriculture modernization.

**1. Human Needs Theory:** According to theory human being are driven by needs. These human needs are categorized into five groups as illustrated below:



Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (1954)

This hierarchical representation in simple terms suggests the basic human needs which are fundamental for survival such as food and drink, warmth, shelter, and air are core to human beings. An individual is motivated by an inner drive to satisfy these fundamental needs which basically concern the survival of the human species.<sup>12</sup> From the interpretation of Maslow's hierarchy of human needs, it can be argued that in Uganda, majority (about 90%) of the people are largely concerned with survival. To meet their survival needs many rural communities (80 %) engage in tree cutting to clear the way for agriculture to grow food or burn charcoal to generate income to feed their families, pay feeds, buy clothing etc, but all in the short term.

From Maslow's theory of needs, the study reveals that human beings are by nature need to be satisfied. If basic human needs remain unsatisfied, the likelihood of criminal behavior in the community and society looms and in fact threaten to national security of the Ugandan public. The reality of ecological woes have documented by NEMA in a recent report on the ecological state of the country. The report reveals that Uganda:

*Faces severe environmental problems including: soil erosion and declining soil fertility, deforestation, pollution of land, water and air resources, loss of biodiversity and over-harvesting of forests, fisheries and water resources. This continued liquidation of the country's natural capital undermines long-term economic progress and will aggravate poverty. To spur the contribution of environmental resources to national economic development therefore, it will be necessary to improve environmental governance with specific focus on information provision, compliance and enforcement as well as the participation of all stakeholders.*<sup>13</sup>

As a matter of fact, most Ugandans are completely reliant on natural resources to survive. Forests provide firewood and cleared land frees arable soil for agriculture. Uganda loses about 6,000 hectares of forests every 30 days according to NEMA, if no action is registered by 2050, Uganda's per capita forest cover will be zero. Already 28 districts have lost their entire forest ecosystem while another 19 districts have forest cover lower than 1%.<sup>14</sup>

The category of Ugandans who are concerned with meeting basic human needs thus have no time to even think of the other four categories of needs. Many lack knowledge of the utility of the environment as significant but finite natural resource due to high prevalence of illiteracy. These are the people who need to be sensitized on the sustainable use of the environment. Even, then the public awareness effort is often undermined by lack of alternative means for livelihood, making realization of ecological vision in a groaning world difficult to achieve. Over preoccupa-

tion with livelihood in the short term continues to be counter productive to long term goal of sustainable use of the environment as perceived in God's divine plan for an ongoing process of creation through sustainability. <sup>15</sup>

**2. Greed for Wealth:** Mahatma Gandhi observed that the Earth has enough to satisfy the needs but not everybody's greed. In the context of Uganda, once dubbed the pearl of Africa, the natural resources available could meet the needs of Ugandans if used within the context of an ecological vision. However, statistics show that "the per capita income in Uganda in 2012 is approximately US\$490 annually. An estimated 25% (8,750,000 out of 35,000,000) Ugandans live on less than US\$1.00 per day. <sup>16</sup> The figures mentioned above reveal that many Ugandans are poor.

However, those who deplete and pollute the natural environment are not the poor rural communities but those who are rich, in power and knowledgeable of the repercussions of human activities. The rapid disappearance of the tropical rainforests in Uganda is the result of few people who over exploitation natural resources to acquire more and more wealth. The tools and equipment and even the methods used do not ensure sustainability. Forests cover in Mabira and Budongo among others which make up the Lake Victoria basin and the Masindi area evergreen, productive agricultural region and providing rich biodiversity as well as medicinal benefits are on the verge of depletion. Sadly, trees which have taken over 50 year to mature are being harvested without replanting in view of replenishing and regenerating the ecological system.

It should be pointed out that majority (80 %) of rural communities are heavily dependent on ecological biodiversity supported by forest cover. Bodeker (1999) and World Health Organization (WHO, 1990) underscored the medicinal benefits derived from the ecosystem in Uganda saying that:

*The Majority of rural populations of developing countries have difficulty in affording western forms of health care. In cases of medical need, rural people may have to travel for a day or more to reach a modern medical clinic or pharmacy. This results in loss of wages which is compounded by cost of transport and the relatively high cost of the medicines themselves. Traditional health systems in developing countries are typically the principal resort of the poorest levels of society when in need of health care. From the perspective of international health policy, they are relevant since they are: (1) locally available (2) sustainable (3) inexpensive and (iv) potential as a means of prevention, early intervention and self medication and a potential source of cost reduction. <sup>17</sup>*

3. **Population Increase** is another factor that has influenced the achievement of ecological vision in Uganda. Recent population report by Uganda Bureau of Statistics (UBOS, 2011) show that there is rapid growth population increase. Wairagala (2006) observed that the birth rate being 3.4 % per annum in 2011.<sup>18</sup> The population has increased from 31.8 million in 2011 to 33.4 million.<sup>19</sup> In just over a decade, the population is expected to hit 51.9 million. Muyambi, Elady (2009) argued that massive population expansion is escalating poverty. With rising poverty levels and a population growing rapidly at over 3 % being one of the highest rates in the world, Uganda is caught between a president who advocates a bigger national population and planners' who are concerned with looking after ballooning numbers of poor people.<sup>20</sup> Whereas the school of thought shared by President Museveni equates big population to high consumerism, growing increase in population also increases people's demand to satisfy their basic needs. This results in increase human activities which not only disrupt but also increases ecological degradation. Natural increase in population is compounded by refugee influx from the DRC and neighboring countries causing injury to the dwindling natural environment. According to Musa Ecweru, Minister for Disaster preparedness, over 20, 000 new refugees have fled into Uganda seeking refuge which in effect increases pressure on arable land and forests.

4. **Deforestation is a serious challenge.** A recent National Forestry Authority (NFA) report indicates that over 90 percent of the population in Uganda uses charcoal and firewood for cooking, which has a heavy toll on the state of the nation's forests. The report maintains that in several villages in eastern Uganda, households are finding it difficult to find firewood, forcing women to walk long distances in search of this cooking fuel. In Palisa as in Nebbi districts women have to walk distances of about seven to eight kilometers to find firewood. In Kampala and Mbale districts, many households, even those in towns where electricity is available, use charcoal for cooking since electricity tariffs are high. In addition, wood is used for baking Bricks by brick manufacturers. The loss of forest over is most serious in districts of Nakasongola and Kibaale.<sup>21</sup> As people cut down trees without replanting in order to replenish forest cover, this causes increase demand for cooking fuel. Although there could be alternative fuel in form of gas and kerosene, the annual national increases of tax by government on fuel renders the alternative fuel unaffordable to majority of Ugandan public. The impact of deforestation on the environment is land slides. In 2010, landslides in the hilly Bududa district killed over 300 people and displaced over 5,000 people.<sup>22</sup> Investigation into the cause of the landslide disaster was found to be human activity on the hills which depleted the tree cover thereby weakening the soils which in effect resulted into a man made disaster triggered by heavy rainfall in the

eastern sub region. Although the landslide remnants were relocated into camps in Kiryandongo district in the Bunyoro subregion, the need for firewood for cooking increased pressure to wood cover.

**5. Public Policy On Agricultural Modernization.** According to Joseph Obua, Jacob G. Agea and Joseph Jones Ogwal (2010), the political leadership views Agricultural modernization as means of achieving economic growth and social transformation. They maintain that the policy promotes fast economic growth and rural transformation which is agriculture based. They contend that:

*The majority of industries are agro-based and some like tea processing, sugar production, tobacco curing, bakeries and fish processing require huge quantities of firewood. Although all these indicate the economic importance of forests to Uganda, they at the same time show the detrimental effects of social and economic activities on Uganda's forest and tree cover. The need for agricultural modernization is compounded by expansion in construction industrial sector. The drive for a modern economy has also been coupled with a significant increase in construction of residential, commercial and institutional buildings that use millions of bricks burnt with thousands of tones of firewood. Timber for construction is also on high demand and much of it comes from the natural forest.*<sup>23</sup>

Therefore, the need for economic development has greatly influenced public policy in the creation of forest reserves and the leasing of public land for agricultural modernization and increased production and industrial development. Ecological vision should be futuristic in nature and denotes sustainable utilization of the existing resources. Sustainability calls for conservation and replacement of what have been used up so that future generations might benefit. The discussion of the factors affecting achievement of ecological vision in Uganda now leads to an analysis of the role of leadership in achievement of ecological vision.

## **The Role of Leadership in Achievement of Ecological Vision in the context of Diminishing Environment in the 21st Uganda**

**The Concept of Leadership:** Leadership is the process of social influence in which one person can enlist the aid and peer support of others in the accomplishment of a common task. Leadership is organizing a group of people to achieve a common goal. The leader may or may not have any formal authority. Studies of leadership have produced theories involving traits, situational interaction, function, behavior, power, vision and values, charisma and intelligence, among others. A leader is somebody whom people follow, and one who provides guidance or direction to others.<sup>24</sup>

Leaders are so central to any major development process that can be concluded that transformation equals to leadership. Certainly without strong and capable leadership, reform, turnarounds, and shift in cultural practices do not take place at all. Leadership determines the direction to the future, aligns people with that vision, and inspires them to make it happen despite the obstacles.<sup>25</sup> As mentioned earlier, the important role played by leadership in the realization of ecological vision is derived from God, the creator of the universe.<sup>26</sup> Therefore, it can be argued beyond reasonable doubt that God gave mankind the authority of preside over the whole of creation to subdue, innovate, and transform the universe. Thus, human beings have God given authority to lead, to govern, to reward, and to punish non compliant citizens. Where governing leadership denotes superior authorities who are civil leaders, but not Angels. That is, leaders are human beings having both strengths and weaknesses.

The study reveals that, Paul encourages citizens to give government its due right. This is because a governing authority has a special role under God. Hence a government has a duty to respect this role and accept its God given authorization to govern. It needs to be pointed out that since it is God who sets up leaders, he also overthrows them. So, from this study it is understood that no power exists without God's endorsement. Even the functionality of the leadership of Roman Empire was under divine authority although it was a vicious dictatorship and fundamentally gentile in nature.<sup>27</sup>

Under God, a government functions as God's agent to promote sustainable development through provision of socio-economic services, namely, peace and security, to encourage social interaction, to curb selfish excesses, and to serve justice. This means governments can be expected to promote peace and give freedom of religion to the citizens. The leadership rightly exercises power through its three arms, that is, legislature, executive and judiciary. Therefore, believers must subject themselves to government authority, not just out of fear of punishment, but out of knowing that the state, with all its failures, is a divine institution.

The study further reveals that a state is a divine institution. In that regard the leadership enjoys a divine mandate to administer the nation-but only for the common good. However, the nature of divine authority is delegated power. The point of emphasis is that a leadership that assumes absolute authority by taking to itself divine rights would no longer be a legitimate government under God. Such leadership may no longer rightly demand the compliance of its citizens. It is important to point out that leadership capability is grounded in the premises of reason which clearly distinguishes human beings from other creatures in the animal kingdom. Therefore, leadership and authority of human beings in the created world is sanctioned by God. The God given authority of human beings is service and responsible stewardship over the universe.

The study recognizes that in Uganda, the higher level leadership has tried to ensure achievement of ecological vision by provision of guidance and regulation by laws. Government organizations such as National Environmental Authority (NEMA) were instituted to implement the realization of the ecological vision by monitoring and evaluation the effect of human activities on the ecosystems. It should be pointed out that the central government adopted decentralization system of governance more than a decade ago. In the context of Uganda, the concept of decentralization is understood as a:

*process by which authority is devolved by the central government to autonomous lower-level units, such as provincial, district, local authorities that are legally constituted as separate governance bodies through devolution, the central government relinquishes certain functions or creates new units of government that are outside its direct control.*<sup>28</sup>

The characteristics of devolution are fivefold including: (1) local units of government are autonomous, independent and clearly perceived as separate levels of government over which central authorities exercise little or no direct control. (2) The local governments have clear and legally recognized geographical boundaries within which they exercise authority and perform public functions. (3) Local governments have corporate status and the power to secure resources to perform their functions. (4) Devolution implies the need to develop local governments as institutions in the sense that they are perceived by local citizens as organizations providing services that satisfy their needs and as governmental units over which they have some influence. (5) Devolution is an arrangement in which there are reciprocal, mutually beneficial, and coordinate relationships between central and local governments. Therefore, as a result of decentralization, much power has been devolved to the lower levels of leadership.<sup>29</sup>

Under the decentralized approach the local governments are mandated not only to implement policies from the central government, but also to make decisions affecting the implementation process. The local leaders are knowledgeable of public expectations to deliver good services such as education, health care. Furthermore, the leaders have some resources such as power in order to provide guidance and regulate through laws and by laws the sustainable utilization of the ecological system for sustenance by local communities.

## **Conclusion and the Way forward**

The study concludes that leadership is central in the achievement of ecological vision in Uganda. Leadership is a divine institution. Leaders derive legitimate authority from God to lead and govern the Ugandan

public. The critical ecological issues of great concern which the Uganda leadership has to play an important role in addressing among other things include: (1) meeting human needs, (2) greed for wealth, (3) government public policy on agriculture modernization, (4) population increase, and (5) deforestation. The theoretical frame work informs leaders of how they can promote social transformation and foster economic growth by utilizing sustainable development.

All the issues discussed in this article are driven by the necessity of satisfying human needs. Need satisfaction is compounded by population pressure. Although a large population is viewed by sections of Ugandan as a potential market in the context of consumerism, an expanded poverty stricken population becomes liability than asset. This is because a large population increases demand for land for agriculture, encroachment of gazetted forest and wild life areas, and degradation of wetlands resulting into destruction of ecosystem and biodiversity there in.

The research underscores leadership as the most important factor in the achievement of ecological vision in Uganda. The leadership of a state has the capability to influence citizens' behaviors, attitudes through legislation and formulation and implementation of public policies necessary for the realization of sustainable development.

## Recommendation(s) for the Way Forward

The study recommends that:

(1) The government reprioritize it development goals such that issues of ecological concern become integral in all public programs. To boost efforts being made by sections of private sector (youth groups, NGOs) would regulate and implement tree planting by the general public. For example, for every tree cut down, 2 trees have to be planted. National Forest Authority as an agent of government should implement tree planting projects and be able to supervise tree planting in their areas under their jurisdiction.

(2) It is recommended that environmental governance be improved with specific focus on information provision, sensitization and awareness creation, compliance and enforcement as well as the participation of all stakeholders.

## Notes

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<sup>4</sup> *Ibid*, 1728

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<sup>14</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>15</sup> Gen 2:3-8. International Bible Society (1984). The Holy Bible, New International Version. East Brunswick, New Jersey, UK, pp. 2, 4.

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