

**CULTURE AS A BASIS FOR PROMOTING
PROSPERITY FOR ALL**

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A Personal Experience

It is a pleasure for me to present this paper to you in view of sharing some views which will lead us into a debate. It is important that I first tell you a little bit about myself to give you an idea about from what perspective I am writing in relation to the topic for our debate today. My life is grounded in a rural setting in Bushenyi District. I came into this world in 1951 and had the joy and privilege of literally bathing in what I can call an authentic African culture. I grazed cows, had a chance of going through all the processes of Kinyankore marriage when my two elder sisters were marrying. I never questioned what to be African is: I took it for granted and there was no reason to question it.

When grazing I knew what herbs cured what disease; the bush was my pharmacy. For the first time I took what one could call European medicine when my sister made me laugh and I fell sick when I was about 6 years old. I was hospitalised in what we call in our place Nwanga Hospital, maintained and managed by Seventh Day Adventist, in Ishaka, not far from Bushenyi. The second time I remember taking tablets was in 1966, when I was 15 years old. We were in a Minor Seminary and we were given bitter tablets to prevent us from getting malaria. I experienced my first attack of malaria many years later in 1971 when I was doing HSC. I invite you to compare this experience with babies who get malaria a few days after coming into this world! What has changed in our lives to come to that? It is not by chance that I took a long time before getting a malaria attack: the way we lived, the food we ate, the warmth human personal and social relations, all contributed towards reinforcing our immunity and resistance to the effects of the bite of that nasty mosquito. Can we say that this has nothing to fighting against physical and mental diseases, and therefore is related to promoting Prosperity for All (PFA).

In our family, if we wanted to dance, there were no generators and disco groups to be hired to entertain us. My father was a self-made musician and could play the flute and the fiddle. My mother would accompany her on the drums. And whenever we brewed banana beer, which should be rightly called wine, all the neighbours would come and we would produce our own music and dance. In this context one would never hear of a counsellor: it is almost impossible to translate this word into many of our African languages.

I have to add that while young we did not use many clothes, and when we went bathing in rivers whose water was not polluted, we had no bathing suits. I did not hear boys saying that girls were tempting us because we did not have bathing suits! Nakedness was hardly ever identified or associated with invitation to have sex. There were no specific classes on sex education because the whole context educated us to respect others and ourselves. We felt secure and up to now I have not had of cases of rape in our village.

Before I close this short piece on my CV, I have to add two things. When I was young we had a grass-thatched hut, and of course we had nothing one could call a door as we know it today. Whatever structure we put on the entrance to our house was intended to keep out animals and not people! So, please do not talk of "private property: don't trespass" because neighbours could come in and help themselves from anything we had even when we were not at home. No need for electric fences, burglar proofing, armed guards, *mbwa kari* (fierce dogs), gates etc. We felt secure. The other thing I want to mention is that when I went to do senior secondary school in the Minor Seminary of Kitabi, I arrived late by one month because daddy could not afford to pay something like 100/= I was given a scholarship of half that amount and because of that I managed to finish my O'level in 1970. My father managed to pay the rest because my other relatives accepted to contribute. There was no paying back. I am who I

am thanks to the generosity and solidarity of all these people. These are values that can be imitated to promote PFA.

It is important that before I share with you my views on culture and development, that you have a rough idea about where I am coming from. I am not nostalgic but I will never apologise for saying that I prefer that experience to the one where I have to go and buy and use poisonous pills when I get a headache or stomachache. Nor am I suggesting that we have to reproduce what has passed, but there is no reason why we should not relearn the values and principles that were operating then. If I have any theories to share with you it is not because I need lectures about African cultures. I will try to desist from making any commentary on what I said above because it speaks for itself, especially in relation to what development and prosperity are. I will use this short introduction to underscore the fact that there can be no development or prosperity outside one's culture. An old woman in South Africa told me that when one loses one's culture one becomes a slave forever.

Introduction

Today we meet to discuss an important topic regarding the role of culture in promoting development and prosperity for all in Uganda in the context of the World Culture Week 2009. We all know that the Prosperity for All (PFA) programme, also known under its Luganda version as *Bonna Bagagawale* (BB) is a government programme which aims at fighting poverty and promoting prosperity in the lives of our people. The programme has an ambitious but attainable end: namely that all may be prosperous. The term prosperity has several shades of meaning but in our case I would like to use the explanation that President Museveni gave of it when he launched the BB programme on 8 October 2007. He said:

In ensuring the successful implementation of PFA, we focused its implementation on six main pillars...:

1. Each household must have a daily income;
2. Every household must have a periodic income (3-4 months);
3. Every household must have a long-term income (1 year and beyond);
4. Households be organized in marketing and savings/credit cooperative groups for purposes of achieving enough volumes to attract buyers, processors and for financial intermediation;
5. Every household must have food security;
6. Every household must use improved seeds, improved breeding stock and use modern agro-practices.

The concept of Prosperity for All is, therefore, intended to translate the NRM vision into an agenda of action.¹

It is clear from this extract that the PFA programme is essentially an economic one. A document found on the website of the Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development, but which is not signed or dated, reinforces this view. It says, among other things:

It is important that all Ugandans understand that this is a full-fledged government effort to address the entire range of the value chain that encompasses production, micro-finance, marketing and processing. At the same time as we address these

¹ Presidents speech on official launch of Prosperity for all - "Boona bagagawale" programme, 8 - 10 - 2007 on:

<http://www.statehouse.go.ug/news.php?catId=2&&item=64>

essentially private sector problems we will also be addressing the public sector matters regarding security, law and order, education, water, energy and transport.²

Therefore, if one considers the way the PFA programme is presented, one has to stress an economic approach, although the other factors are not excluded. However, along these remarks, one must also consider a very important document of the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development, entitled “The Uganda National Culture Policy: A Culturally Vibrant, Cohesive and Progressive Nation”.³ The policy is detailed about where culture is catered for in the different laws, plans and policies of Uganda. More specifically with regard to the topic under discussion, the policy refers to the PEAP [Poverty Eradication Action Programme] of 2004 which “recognises culture as being intrinsically valuable and an important dimension of identity and as a form of capital which, when well harnessed, can help to move people out of poverty”.⁴ The policy is also detailed in the way it outlines how each government ministry is expected to promote culture. Uganda’s laws, plans and policies generally recognise the contribution and role of culture in promoting development and eradicating poverty. What has to be asked is whether culture is effectively drawn upon, or whether resources are availed, to ensure that it fulfils the function attributed to it. If we take the Budget Speech of the Financial Year (FY) 2008/09 as a reference, we find that the Minister of Finance, Planning and Economic Development under no. 32 “Strategy for Prosperity for All” announces that “the budget must address both the private sector concerns, as well as the provisions of public goods and services such a Security, Law and Order, Energy, Roads, Education, Health and Water”.⁵ Furthermore, when the Minister mentions the priority areas in the FY 2008/09, culture does not appear among these. This is not to suggest that government does not recognise the importance of culture in the PFA programmes. I am only saying that in the concrete steps taken to implement the programme, especially in the area of allocation of funds, culture does not receive explicit attention. One can of course argue that the mother ministry which receives funding from government is supposed to cater for culture.

The PFA programme therefore tends to stress the economic dimension. However in this presentation, I would like to emphasise the fact this economic understanding must be taken with other aspects to have a holistic understanding of development and prosperity. One has to consider the need to have a society where there is harmony, security and values. I would also like to stress that there can be no development of any kind, if one’s culture is not respected and promoted.

If in the case of Uganda, and in many other African countries, culture does not receive full attention, there is a historical examination to this. I would also like to argue that if we have failed to create a situation where all Ugandans can satisfy their own needs, it is not due to lack of economic means and resources. On the contrary, Uganda is a very rich country, endowed with immense human and material resources. In many parts of our country we can have more than one harvest. Near Kamengo, on the Kampala-Masaka road, you can get fresh beans each

² See Understanding Bonna Bagagawale, http://www.finance.go.ug/docs/BONNA_BAGGAGGAWALE.pdf From the content of the speech, it would appear that whoever was talking was addressing sub-county chiefs.

³ See Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development, The Uganda National Policy: A Culturally Vibrant, Cohesive and Progressive Nation, December 2006, on <http://www.mglsd.go.ug/> under publications.

⁴ Ibid., p. 15.

⁵ Honourable Dr Ezra Suruma, Budget Speech, Financial Year 2008/09: Strategic Priorities to Accelerate Prosperity for All (12 June 2008), Kampala: Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development, 2008, p. 13.

day of the year! People around there do not need refrigerators to have fresh beans. When we walk the streets of Kampala and we find fellow Ugandans whom we now call street children, and of recent we also have street families, it is not because we are so poor that we have Ugandans who are competing with scavengers which feed on what we have discarded in dust beans. These hungry and abandoned Ugandans who extend their hands crying “Kikumi, kikumi”, meaning “Give me 100/=”, are on our streets because as a nation we have lost our cultural values which used to be the foundation of our communities, and these values include sharing, solidarity, all of them grounded in a communitarian ethics. These abandoned Ugandans share the same nation constitution, flag, anthem and coat of arms of Uganda.

Moreover, in practically all our African languages we do not have a concept to translate beggars” or “street children”. The word “*masikini*” to translate the latter is a very recent word in our vocabularies. This is a very clear indication that in our pre-colonial societies to which I referred in the beginning of this presentation, our societies were organised in such a way that most of the people’s needs were satisfied. The food we throw away in the luxurious and other hotels in Kampala is enough to feed those who go hungry in this city. What are lacking are not resources but a heart to share and to be attentive to the needs of the others. We need to recapture and live what Professor Dani W. Nabudere calls “Ubuntu philosophy”. For Nabudere,

...Ubuntu [humanness] philosophy, in its different settings, is at the base of the African philosophy of life and belief systems in which the peoples' daily-lived experiences are reflected. In their struggles to survive and exist as a human society on this planet, Africans have had the longest experience since the Homo sapiens had his first home on this continent. The philosophy is used on a daily basis to settle disputes and conflicts at different levels on the continent and is therefore central to the idea of reconciliation. This testifies to the dynamism and vibrancy of this philosophy in whatever African linguistic expression it may be expressed.⁶

This humanness is grounded in African cultures but it has been eroded or tampered with because largely of a school education system, several religious institutions and an economic system which emphasise individualism to the detriment of communitarianism. We have lost, to a certain extent, our ability to be sensitive to the needs of the others and some of us are searching for personal aggrandizement without paying attention to the needs of those around us.

I would also like to argue that if there are obstacles to achieving PFA, it is not because of African cultures as some have cynically insinuated. My strong conviction is that it is because we have discarded our cultures. In order to develop as a country, we do not need to disown who we are. We can become prosperous by remaining African. I would even say that we can only become prosperous if we remain African. The more we try not to be African the more we become heartless. What is lacking in Uganda are values which are grounded in our cultures. Before we look at the historic context which explains why we are not able to achieve PFA, I would like to make some theoretical observations about the importance of culture to give a wider perspective to our debate.

⁶ Dani W. Nabudere, “Ubuntu Philosophy. Memory and Reconciliation”, on <http://www.grandslacs.net/doc/3621> Ubuntu (humanness) here should not be confused with the linguistic concepts among the Bantu-speaking people. The concept has been very well developed in South Africa especially in the context of African Renaissance.

Some Theoretical Remarks about Culture

The following theoretical remarks give a background against which I will base some of my arguments. Culture, according to our human understanding, seems to be the only element which distinguishes us from other animals. Through cultures, especially by using symbols, we are able to communicate, develop, pass on and share values. Culture consists in socialised, institutionalised, and largely accepted behaviour, practices and actions which are repeated and handed over from one generation to another. Culture is a kind of a relay system and memory of a given society. Culture by its very nature must be differentiated: different cultures are distinguished by the very fact that although all human beings share a common humanity, this humanity is differentiated in various historical, cultural and geographical settings. These legitimate differences must be celebrated because they are the ones which enrich human relations. Suppression of these legitimate differences through violence of different sorts including ethnocide (killing of a culture), genocide (systematic elimination of a given people), cultural imperialism and domination, leads to an impoverished humanity. This is why homogenising tendencies and practices like globalisation must be resisted, because first of all they do harm to different people, and secondly, they also have their own cultural distinctiveness, despite claims that globalisation is culture free.

Cultural changes and development can only take place if there is minimum stability and availability of resources. A given people use the material and historical conditions to evolve a way of life unique to them and which answers their needs through appropriate values, beliefs, practices and approaches. Some of these may seem strange to outsiders, like the belief by some Africans that they talk to their ancestors, or that they can make or stop rain. The principle of cultural relativism which posits that in order to appreciate the significance of the cultural practices and beliefs of an individual, you must try to understand them from her/his point of view, should guide us in judging the cultures of other people. This anthropological principle which is attributed to the American anthropologist Frans Boaz should not be interpreted to mean that anything must be accepted in a given culture. The issue to discuss is that whenever a trait of a given culture is seen as something to be changed, who decides on what to change and how to change it. This should not be confused with the principle of moral relativism, although of course the two are related.

Under normal circumstances one does not have to learn one's culture like a lesson in a school. Through a process called enculturation, an individual learns the language, customs, values of his/her people spontaneously, and to some extent arbitrarily, because s/he has to make choices. At one time the child finds that s/he knows how to greet according to the cultural norms, speak her/his mother tongue.

Changes in culture also take place through a process called acculturation. Through this, people borrow some cultural practices of other people, but more or less on equal footing. They influence one another by borrowing some words or practices from the other group. Through these two processes, one can see that there is no culture which is static, and there is no culture which is inferior or superior to another. All cultures develop and change. The main question to ask is how they change. We will see that in the case of Africa, the normal processes of cultural change and development were brutally interrupted by imposition of foreign social institutions and belief systems, and the consequences of these can be seen in some practices and behaviour which are obstacles to the development of Uganda.

When the Uganda National Culture Policy says that the Ministry of Education and Sports "shall integrate culture issues and concerns into educational policies, plans, programmes and curricula",⁷ it is a clear indication that something went wrong somewhere because culture is

⁷ Ministry of Gender, labour and Social Development, The Uganda National Policy..., p. 30.

not learned at school but spontaneously at home. People who have not been colonised study in their own language, learn their geography, history, and the other topics come as supplements. In Uganda, reference to culture, if ever it is made, is minimal. This is why most Ugandans do not know how to write their mother tongues well, and we are beginning to get cases of people who cannot speak their mother tongues. After making these remarks, it is important to spend some time on why culture does not seem to receive sufficient attention when it comes to eradicating poverty to promote PFA and development.

The Historical Context and Its Consequences

The Uganda National Culture Policy to which I have already referred can serve as an entry point in our discussion in this regard. It says:

In the pre-colonial times, traditional communities in what is now Uganda were closely knit units. Their social, political and economic organisation revolved around the family, clan and/ or the institution of the traditional leader. The daily activities of men, women and children, whether as individuals or as groups were intrinsically linked to, and determined by their cultures.

However the exposure to various influences, cultures as well as foreign rule at the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century led to the weakening of traditional socio-political setups. Aspects of culture such as indigenous knowledge and traditional health care systems were ignored or belittled. In this way, innovativeness and the whole social fabric were undermined. In spite of this, many communities continued to attach great value to their cultures and endeavoured to conserve, inculcate and sustain it.⁸

This brief historical reference does not only show how African cultures in Uganda came to be marginalised; it also points out that in the pre-colonial times African societies were closely knit. I have referred to this fact in the preamble. The break down or erosion of this well organised social fabric went with other values. I would like to argue that there can be no development or PFA if one's culture is not respected and promoted. Culture refers to "who we are": it is the individuals in their particular historical and cultural context that are agents of development and prosperity. This produces what we can call "what we have". It is very clear that what we have must be linked with "who we are".

Cases of Stereotyping and Demonising

Because of this erosion of our cultures, we find a lot of stereotyping and demonising of African cultures, mainly coming from outside, but many of us Africans have also internalised a lot of this stereotyping. It is not uncommon to hear Africans themselves saying that blacks are not intelligent, are not capable of managing things, are not able to keep time, are lazy etc. While there are some Africans to whom one can attribute one or several of these traits, it is not at all true that they are universally applicable as if Africans are genetically coded to be like that. The above-mentioned stereotyping can go further than that, and we get very serious external and internal misconceptions about Africans cultures which block the processes and policies of development and achieving PFA. Let me refer to a few.

Let me start with a quotation in relation to gender.

When a woman got married during ancient times, her role in the relationship was clearly spelt out. She cooked, looked after the home and had babies.

⁸ Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development, The Uganda National Policy..., p. 7.

She was never expected to say a word when an argument arose. A wife lived in her husband's shadow. Period!

Compare what I said above with these few lines taken from an article by Susan Muiyiyi, entitled "Should today's woman submit to her husband" which appeared in *Saturday Vision*, of 20 September 2008. The message is very clear as one reads on in the article: the African woman of ancient times was oppressed, had no rights, but today she goes to school, can get a job and earn money and can of course, choose a husband. While not trying to say that there were no problems in the past, at the same time stereotyping Africans has only served to reinforce a negative image of ourselves. We have therefore tried to be who we are not and it is not working. This is why I would like to argue that development and prosperity will never be attained if we do not address cultural poverty, also sometimes called anthropological poverty or impoverishment. Economic and material poverty are grounded, and we should even say caused, by anthropological poverty.

Other cases of stereotyping abound in the area of African sexuality. It is not uncommon to hear that HIV/AIDS is widespread in Africa because of some African cultural practices which include polygamy, early marriages, female excision or circumcision also called female genital mutilation. The latter expression is already a form of stereotyping which conveys images of African women wielding a dirty knife to mutilate young girls!

There are some other cases of stereotyping which I will just mention and can later be taken up in our debate. They include and are related to:

- Mistreatment of African women
- African girls being discriminated against in school education
- Exploitation of African children
- The claim that in Africa there is no sexual education because Africans fear to discuss sexual matters
- Widow inheritance
- African medicine and sacrificing people, especially children
- Marriage gifts ("bride wealth/bride price")

Let me say a few words on the institution of marriage gifts wrongly called bride price or bride wealth and African medicine and its abuses. There is a lot that has been written about "bride-wealth". We would need more time to discuss this, but anthropologically there is no such a thing as "bride wealth" or "bride price". A close analysis of the terms used to describe marriage gifts in our African languages shows no indication of paying, buying, selling, compensation, commercialisation, as some of the expressions used imply. You even hear some people say that they are "going to pay bride price"! In some Southern African languages, they use the word term *lobola*. In some Runyakitara languages they use the term *enjugano*, which is closely related to the verb "*okujuga*", which the sound is made by cows. Some people have suggested that this could be related to the noise made by the *enjugano* cows. In the region where *enjugano* is used, the gifts that the family of the bride gives to that of the bridegroom are called *emihingiro*. The essence of marriage gifts lies in the fact that they are symbolic gestures, which by the very nature of symbols are also equivocal. Among several African cultures, these gifts keep moving between the family of the bridegroom and of the bride. Anthropologically speaking therefore, marriage gifts cannot be situated in the realm of commercial transactions.

However, one must recognise that because of external economic institutions which have been imposed on Africa, the marriage institution has not been spared, and in some cases indeed the marriage gifts institution has been adulterated. You hear cases of families asking for

compensation for money spent on the education of a girl who is going to marry. But this does not in any way mean that marriage gifts should be abolished, even by law, as some have suggested. If this were to be done, it would be the proverbial “throwing out the dirty water with the baby”. If there are abuses in the institution, they should be corrected.

One other misconception about African cultures which has been recently accentuated relates to African medicine and sacrificing people, especially children. Because of the sentiments this horrible practice arouses, you find headlines in newspapers like: “Ban witchcraft!” as if all medicine people are witches and sacrifice children. But the misconception goes beyond this. It extends to anything that is called African medicine, because African practices are seen as evil. While it is true that there are many abuses in this area, one must be critical in this regard to distinguish between abuses of African medicine and authentic African practices from which millions of Ugandans are benefiting. What has to be done is to situate the abuses of African cultures and the related criminal acts in a wider perspective to be able to go to the root causes of these problems. Just addressing the symptoms will not help. It has been suggested that the sacrificing of people could also be related to trafficking in human organs. In other countries, Brazil has been cited as an example, these heinous acts extend to removing organs from dead bodies.

Anthropological Impoverishment and Loss of Self-Confidence

One of the worst consequences of denial and suppression of one’s culture is anthropological poverty or impoverishment which goes with loss of belief in one’s capability and self-confidence. I prefer to call it impoverishment since it comes about through processes which negate or suppress the cultural identity of other people. When this occurs, there is no way one can speak of prosperity because a people’s culture is the basis and soil in which all the rest are grounded. It is a pity that discussions on poverty and PFA for all hardly ever focus on the fact that loss of cultural identity is one of the worst forms of poverty. The worst form of anthropological impoverishment is when it is internalised by the victims who internalise external negation and denial and start hating themselves. The effects of anthropological impoverishment are seen in the way Black Africans hate and try to do away with their skin colour, texture of their hair, the way they speak European languages trying to hide their accent marked by their mother tongues, and other practices. Frantz Fanon has ably described this condition in his publications.⁹

The concept of anthropological poverty has been developed by the late Cameroonian Jesuit scholar, Engelbert Mveng who describes it as:

. Just because of the colour of their skins, Black people wherever they are in the world, in northern America as well as in Latin America; in South Africa and anywhere else, have to be annihilated, deprived of their dignity and of their all human rights. Here appears the great racial ideology developed by [the colonial] powers, even when some tried to verbally condemn it. The destiny of the Black people under the colonial era leads to their being continuously anthropologically weak. By trying to escape this genocide during slavery times because of their extraordinary physical resistance, Blacks of Africa are now exposed to ethnocide, that is to say the death of their soul, their culture, their identity...¹⁰

⁹ See among others, Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1967, and especially, *Black Skin, White Masks*, New York: Grove Press, 1967.

¹⁰ Engelbert Mveng, “Church and Solidarity with the Poor in Africa”, unpublished article presented at the First Meeting of the African and European Theologians, at Yaoundé, 4-11 April 1984, p. 8.

Mveng ably shows that the cultural impoverishment of the Black African was a result of the combination of the ignoble acts of slave trade and colonisation. While he recognises the positive contributions of evangelisation, and especially of some individual missionaries, he nevertheless concludes that “under the colonial era, although performing marvelous acts of charity and devotion [the Church] did not nevertheless go beyond the paternalistic philanthropy, which was very often oppressive. The Church’s message, at times, was not a message expressing total liberation”.¹¹

We should note that the racial ideologies and their attendant practices is not something of the past. Racial violence against Africans still exists in outside and inside Africa. Several cases of killings Africans linked to race have been documented in Africa in Europe and USA.¹²

I do not think that it is difficult to see how anthropological impoverishment is an obstacle to promoting PFA, because to achieve the latter, we need a cohesive society with people who have confidence in themselves. The Cross-Cultural Foundation of Uganda has this to say about the importance of culture in development:

A more positive understanding of culture in development has however recently started to emerge, accompanied by a growing recognition that culture is a vital dimension of effective and equitable development. “Development” is no longer seen as a material well-being only, but also in terms of human capacity and potential... Perceptions such as these place culture in a constructive light, as essential for genuine development, for social and economic transformation”.¹³

In such a society we have individuals who are able to invent and to be innovative. People who despise themselves, lack confidence in themselves can hardly bring about prosperity. We can even say that it is strange to discuss in the first place if culture can contribute towards development. In countries which are well grounded in their cultures, these questions do not arise. If we take the example of languages, the French, Russians, British, Japanese do not discuss whether their children should study in their mother tongues or whether they should look for an official language other than their national languages. In Uganda we even get car maintenance manuals in Japanese when we buy reconditioned cars! The challenges and obstacles in the way of promoting PFA in Uganda, as I have noted above, do not come from lack of resources, but from lack of values which have been eroded with our cultures. The endogenous cultural institutions which would have helped us to restore sanity and ethical behaviour have either been eroded or disarmed and have been replaced by those which emphasise individual responsibility. This is not to say that we cannot borrow. Borrowing should be done on condition that it enhances what we already have and are. This is what I call respecting the principle of endogeneity which helps us to develop homegrown institutions and solutions which promote self-reliance and sustainability.¹⁴ Lavish spending which characterises the life style of some of the elite in Uganda as seen in hosting or celebrating very expensive parties and weddings, is a symptom of anthropological impoverishment. I would even add that corruption which has eroded institutional and personal credibility at all levels is also a symptom of anthropological impoverishment.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 11.

¹² On this one can see my forthcoming article, “From Negative to Positive Universality: Anthropological and Ethical Implications for Africa” to be published by the Swiss Academy of Humanities and Social Sciences.

¹³ The Cross-Cultural Foundation of Uganda, *Culture in Development in Uganda: Experiences and Prospects*, Kampala, 2008, p. 5.

¹⁴ I have developed the principle of endogeneity in Peter Kanyandago, “African Endogenous Knowledge Systems: A Foundation for Promoting Dialogue among Cultures” in Raúl Fornet-Bentacourt, ed., *The Encounter of Knowledge Cultures in the North-South Dialogue*, Frankfurt am Main: IKO Verlag, 2008.

Way Forward

I would like to end this presentation by suggesting that promoting PFA requires that we go back to the basics and start from who are and what we have. Our cultures and history must be seen as the bases and springboard for PFA if we are to avoid irrelevant and expensive institutions and projects which do not speak to our people. The foreign ones which we adopt without endogenising them are also first and foremost culture-based institutions. This means that our judiciary, economic, educational and religious systems must be endogenised if they are to contribute towards PFA. In our African endogenous judiciary systems, for example, there was no need to use services of highly qualified judges and lawyers. We have adopted a judiciary system which requires this type of personnel without endogenising it and this has encouraged corruption in a system which is supposed to promote justice and order. We have to stop paying lip service to the importance of culture in our policies and practices. We have to stop instrumentalising culture, and not just use it or refer to it because we have to. To give an example of endogenisation, in the school education system the learners should spend more time at home putting in practice what they learn at school. The learners should share what they learn at school with people at home. This approach will obviate separating for too long learners, especially the young ones, from their cultural environment. It will obviate cases of school violence which have become the order of the day and which are linked to some form of violence to which students are subject for about nine months. This will be one of the effective ways of fighting against school fires and violence.

There are many efforts being deployed to show how culture can contribute positively to the development of our country. In this regard the work being done by the Cross-Cultural Foundation of Uganda (CCFU) must be commended. They are among the few who have made an effort to study African cultures in what they are in view of documenting what is on the ground. Their publications include *Drawing on Cultures to Fight HIV/AIDS: Six Uganda Stories*, and *Culture in Development in Uganda: Experiences and Prospects*, and several DVDs.

I would like to refer to and summarise what the CCFU says about implication for culture and development practice:

- Identify and analyse available cultural resources and establish homegrown approaches
- Use cultural role models to highlight principles and values that still apply to present day challenges
- Support cultural institutions to reconstruct the positive aspects of traditional culture as a starting point in learning
- Support the creation of linkages and learning mechanism amongst various cultural initiatives, other developmental institutions, including civil society and government
- Continue searching for, documenting and disseminating experiences that illustrate the significance of culture in development work¹⁵

To these recommendations we should add that the government should give adequate funding to mainstreaming culture in all its ministries and departments, as recommended in The Uganda National Culture Policy. Secondly, educational and other institutions should inculcate their programmes and policies in such a way that culture inspires them and is not just brought in from the outside as a decoration.

¹⁵ See CCFU, *Culture in Development in Uganda*, p. 33.

An example of how to apply the above recommendations can be seen in the area of fighting HIV/AIDS using the endogenous African approach to human sexuality. This emphasises respect for others, celebrating the wonderful gift of our bodies, as portrayed in some initiation rites and the community's responsibility in regulating sexual behaviour.¹⁶ The kind of irresponsible advice and behaviour as portrayed by inexistent self-styled *ssengas* and *shoenkazis* (paternal aunts) in the media, especially, and surprisingly, in the sister papers of *The New Vision* which is supposed to support the fight against AIDS, has nothing to do with African sexuality. Some of these articles encourage unbridled sexual behaviour in the name of promoting human rights of the individuals, and undermines efforts to create responsible human relationships. What I am saying here is not that there are no problems in African cultures. If they are there, they have to be handled at that level, but there is no way one can conceive PFA and development outside one's culture.

Culture is not only how we dress or what we eat. It is not something we may or may not do. Culture is who we are and is manifested in all our attitudes, actions and thoughts. It therefore cannot be separated from our endeavours to fight poverty and promote PFA. We need to revisit our cultural heritage and draw on it to promote holistic development in Uganda and in Africa.

¹⁶ On this see Laurenti Magesa, "Aids and Survival in Africa: A Tentative Reflection", in J. N. K. Mugambi and A. Nasimiyu-Wasike, eds., *Moral and Ethical Issue in Africa Christianity: Challenges for African Christianity*, Nairobi: Acton Publishers, 1999, pp. 197-216 and Peter Kanyandago, "Initiation Rites and Celebration of Sacraments", in Mary Getui, ed., *Theological Method ad Aspects of Worship in African Christianity*, Nairobi: Acton Publishers, 1998, pp. 79-93.