

Enhanced involvement of religious communities in combating corruption not a choice but an obligation

BY MARY KADOKO

TRANS PARENCEY 2015 Corruption Index revealed that Tanzania, which is one of the East African countries, was ranked among the top 20 countries in Africa with the worst corruption and is also placed 117th out of 168 countries.

However, President John Magufuli since assuming office in November 2015 has been rebuilding lost trust with Western donors by firing public officials deemed to be incompetent and corrupt.

Nicknamed "the bulldozer" for his style of leadership, Tanzania's President John Pombe Magufuli has earned himself credibility and acclaim, both in and outside Tanzania, for his fight against corruption.

He has started to sweep away the country's reputation for endemic corruption and poor public service.

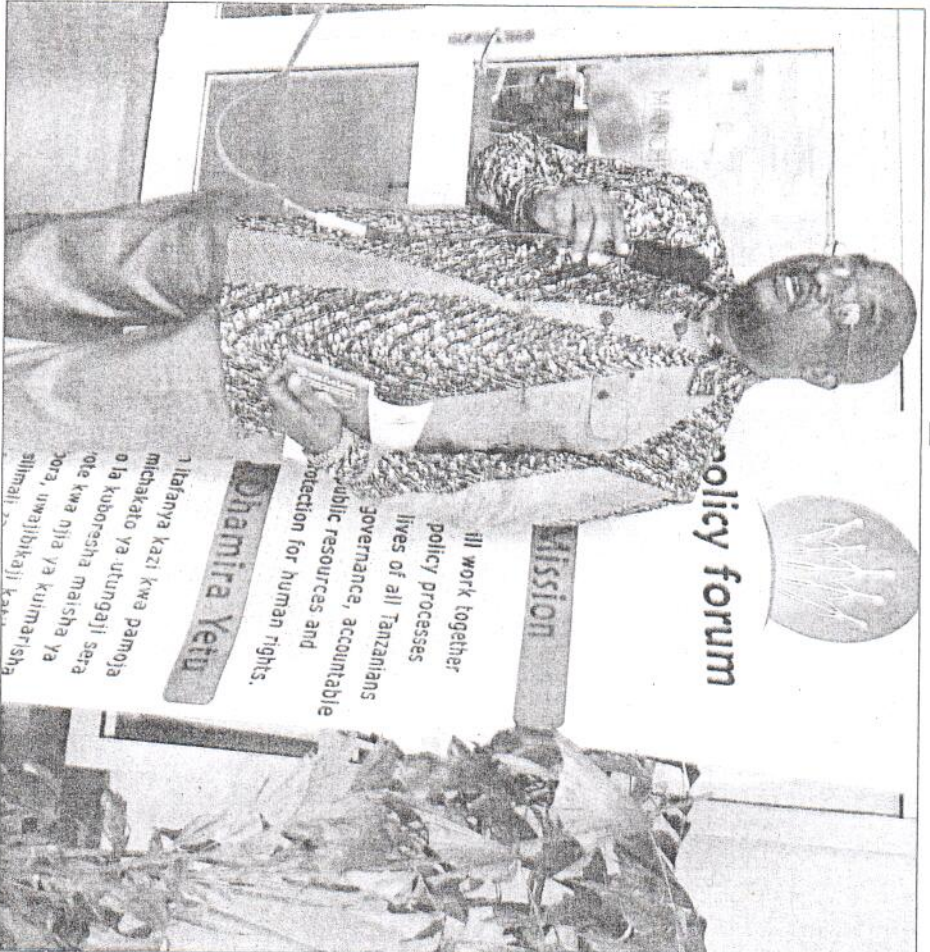
Both grand and petty corruptions are serious problems in Tanzania yet various comprehensive laws are in place to prevent corruption.

It is largely due to a weak internal control and low or non-compliance with anti-corruption regulations within different government agencies.

For instance, public procurement, taxation, and customs service are areas that are prone to corruption. Foreign companies have identified that corruption within those sectors poses potential obstacles for doing business in Tanzania as bribery is often demanded.

If corruption and impunity are to "be a thing of the past" as stated by the African Union in Agenda 2063, then African governments need to take bold steps to ensure rule of law is the reality for everyone.

Prosecuting corruption will restore faith among people who no longer believe in the institutions that are supposed to protect them.



Dr Alfred Sebahene, the Ag. Director of Research, Innovation and Consultancy, St. John's University of Tanzania, Dodoma Tanzania.

"Transparency and accountability must go hand in hand when tackling corruption - as these results show, this is still far from the norm in Africa.

Speaking in Dar es Salaam on Friday at policy forum monthly breakfast meeting whose main theme was "Salvation of Tanzania: The role of faith based communities in tackling corruption", Dr Alfred Sebahene concurred with various findings by saying that corruption

"is the number one enemy to the country's development."

Dr Sebahene, who is the Ag Director of Research, Innovation and Consultancy, St John's University of Tanzania, Dodoma Tanzania further reiterated that corruption could only be won if the government would collaborate with faith-based communities (FBOs) in tackling it. Being also a specialist consultant (ethics, integrity, and anti-

corruption strategies), Dr Sebahene further noted that FBOs have a great role in addressing Corruption in Tanzania if are brought on board by the government to wage war against corruption.

"(Religious) ideas, leaders, institutions and communities are missing links in much of the public conversation about public integrity. That is not as it should be," he urged. He said it was high time for

the government and other key stakeholders in the war against corruption to reflect on the role of faith communities as a new and potential avenue of inquiry in addressing the harsh realities of corruption in the public domain in Tanzania.

According to him, corruption has for many decades been understood as a political, economic, legal, developmental issue. This is true but there is more to it!

"Corruption is a result of moral failure and it is a moral challenge. It vandalises justice and peace and is an obstacle to human dignity and human flourishing"

Adding "We all know that Corruption is eating our Tanzanian societies in so many ways."

He revealed that religion and faith communities have already played part BUT space provided is limited.

Since the task of most religions is to bear witness in the context of moral transformation, fighting corruption is one of its key responsibility!

Anti - corruption efforts in Tanzania: Why religion? Why faith communities?

Religion in public square is considerably gaining prominence in terms of faith communities' membership.

Faith based institutions' historical role in engaging in various problems facing humanity is not a new phenomenon!

Religious Leaders have remained faithful as a community of character, speaking the truth to power, prophetic witness, reconstruction and public policy advocacy.

"It is good that anti-corruption work by FBOs is already well underway, but more needs to be done"

Religious communities' involvement in combating corruption is not a matter of choice;

It is an obligation that stems from the teaching of the books.

FBOs have had a longtime, faithful and fruitful partnership with government, local, national and international NGOs!

Former UN Secretary General Kofi Annan speaking at the World Conference on Religion and Peace in 2001, was quoted as saying "Faith communities, organisations and their religious communities are, without question, the largest and best-organised civil institutions in the world today, claiming the allegiance of billions of believers and bridging the divides of race, class, and nationality." Annan also insists that "faith communities are uniquely equipped to meet the challenges of our time: resolving conflicts, caring for the sick and needy... promoting peaceful co-existence among all peoples [and fighting corruption]."

For his part, Executive Director of The Good Samaritan Social Services Trust, Elisha Mwanikiga who was among the participants to that meeting said that all human beings are corrupt.

"The war on corruption will end if only people will understand corruption as not the way to become rich but through sweat or hard work," he urged.

You can't escape the fact the faith remains the best component of our life. Where is the entry point, modality of engagement," noted Mwanikiga.

In the same platform, Grace Masalakuwangwa from the Interfaith Standing Committee on economic justice and the Integrity of creation said that corruption, ghost workers was the result of moral failure.

"The remedy for moral failure is moral transformation. And the only people to ensure moral transformation takes place are more than the religious leaders," she explained.

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