



Ethical Leadership in Africa: Beyond the Covid-19 global health Crisis

Leadership: [Toussaint Kafarhire](#) and Odomaro Mubangizi

Languages: English. But also, those who desire to use and write in French can do so.

Purpose: This current Covid-19 global pandemic clearly reveals not only the cracks in global health but also poses some challenges to the existing leadership models in their various incarnations in Africa and the rest of the world. Global and local leadership has been defined by a spirit of capitalism (Weber) produced for and within the neoliberal ethics of a money-can-solve-it-all perspective or mentality. As all the sectors of our lives, from religion to politics, public health to business, academic to social, as well as technological are being affected – and although the developed countries are the ones heavily hit in numbers of casualties – the most vulnerable continent, Africa’s future is threatened by these factors.... Indeed, the current context of the Covid-19 global health crisis, and the prospects of the world that will emerge thereafter, seem to paradoxically allow a return of negative and pessimistic tropes about Africa. All of us remember vividly the negative and apocalyptic framing of Africa during the Ebola epidemic in 2015 in spite of the hopeful economic prospects proclaimed by *The Economist Magazine* Issue of the March 2nd 2013 that presented Africa in the aftermaths of the 2008 global financial crisis as the “hopeful continent.”

What does it mean to be defined by the outside? Is this crack also exposing the deficit in thought leadership besides the failure of African political leaders to develop healthcare systems and allocate appropriate chunk of national budgets to health? What does the debate on the hypothetical testing on Africans of the Covid-19 vaccine yet to be developed tell about the moral leadership within the continent? Is all this a reminder that the problem isn’t about addressing the public health catastrophe cause by an adventitious virus as it is about the provision of leadership that is morally fit, intellectually informed, and socially practical within the framework of Africa’s history and future beyond the present crisis?

As Catholic Theologians and Ethicists, we want to be a part of the ongoing conversation that is redefining the world we live in and shaping a new social imaginary? by which we will live tomorrow. We want to be part of those representing Africans in the making of a new paradigm and the narrative that will redesign the world beyond the current Covid-19 crisis. What tomorrow holds as a promise is indeed in the making today. And if African leaders are absent, again, like when the world’s boundaries were being reshaped at the 1885 Berlin Conference, it might be too late. The problem isn’t only about whose health matters but also about whose voice get heard. The conversation should not include only those with greater

financial, technological, scientific, and political resources but also should include the voices of those whose lives are presently being impacted in the face of this growing pandemic and other sicknesses which often have a preferential option for the poor and the powerless. We already see this in the frighteningly disproportionate rate of African Americans, and other minorities who have died of complications from Covid-19 in the United States, the elderly population in Italy, and the painful suffering of the poor in most African countries today where the shutdowns have left the poor and the vulnerable without any food security or social safety net. If the existing the neoliberal capitalistic ideology, global economic system, and the faith we placed in medical technology are showing their limits, African voices need to be part of the ongoing conversation. The Africa CTEWC network can provide this leadership on behalf of our continent.

Hence, we offer this VT to be inclusive in its approach to leadership. All areas of our social interactions are concerned – political, economic, cultural, medical, business, religious and all other sectors affecting our living together.

Questions for participants:

- What is the kind of leadership that Africa needs for the 21st Century?
- How does the Covid-19 global health crisis reveal a deficit in African leadership?
- How does Covid-19 reveal the resilience of African communities and the lessons learned by local and national leaders in Africa’s fight against Ebola, HIV/AIDs, and Malaria?
- What should be our Africa Region CTEWC Response to the current global crisis?
- As the crisis is affecting our way of celebrating the sacraments and liturgies, are there innovative ways of reinventing our being Africans and Catholics?
- What can Religious leaders learn or discern as a new way to become involved in society?
- Is it enough to compete for technological advancement and virtual development for Africa or can a truly “African spirituality” (L. Magesa) offer an alternative solution to the inherited Western perception of the Catholic identity?

Goals: This will consist of a 4 – 5 months scholarly discussions. Given the interest that the topic has aroused, our final goal is to produce a book that can serve as a teaching resource, training material, or policy guide in the African context for church hospitals as well as for public healthcare agencies and beyond.

Reporting methodology:

- **A monthly** meeting shall be convened to discuss papers’ main arguments and bibliographies.
- We hope to enrich each other through questions and suggestions of what to cover in specific areas.
- Those with particular interest will submit a topic or pick up one that is proposed in the general brainstorming as an important area to cover.
- The group will remain open to members of CTEWC who want to attend discussion, even if they did not sign for presentation
- Our First Zoom meeting will pick up from where our WhatsApp discussion will leave the conversation. Work will continue from May through November 2020.

A monthly report of the VT will be shared in the First zoom meeting. I would like to establish a list of themes or topics to be discussed and the calendar mapping these discussions so that any member of the CTEWC who wants to join as a listener can feel free to send his/her email and would be welcomed at our VT.

If all the remarks cannot be exhausted during the virtual session, I will request that participants forward their views/suggestions by email to the concerned author.

Call for members: All members of the African Region and those from outside the region interested in the Ethical Leadership discussion are welcome to send their emails to be integrated in our VT. However, only Africans can write a paper for we want to produce a book for Africa by African ethicists.

- This is an opportunity for Africans to encourage collaborative work, share about their progress, and make a contribution towards training a true ethical leadership in all sectors of life including politics, religion, business, academia, etc.
- This requires agreeing on what “ethical leadership” means in the African context. Hence participating in a conceptual clarification and normative prescription on leadership for Africa
- Be open to collaboration. Two or more people can agree, for instance, to work on the same chapter – an opportunity for elder scholars to cooperate with junior scholars and make our network more real.

Duration and meeting frequency:

- Communication will be held regularly via emails and whatsapp groups, and monthly on Zoom
- Zoom “virtual” meetings every 4 weeks, for one hour, will include a two-15 minutes presentations and reactions and feedback from members of the VT. *This is an initial suggestion that can be amended by consensus during our first Zoom meeting.* We will request that presenters send their drafts in advance to the group Coordinator who will share it with others. Feedback will include oral remarks during the zoom discussion and written remarks afterwards.