

## THE EDUCATING, ADJUDICATING, COMMUNICATING AND EXECUTING ANTS

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My name is Chief Telepathist. I am a chief of a tiny chiefdom in Zimbabwe. On the first day of June this year at the annual dance and as the local drum thudded the atmosphere, I fell into a trance. Perhaps more realistically an epiphany. “Gu-ga ... Gu-gu-ga” the syncopated beat of the drum enthralled the folks of the village as its heavenly crescendo suddenly took me away, to strangely ponder about four ants that I saw emerging from a crevice present on the ground I had trampled on. Elimu, I thought the first one was called, seemed to be chasing after three other ants, perchance named, Aliiomba, Mawasiliano and Kufanya. Suddenly the four stopped. Their antennas and mandibles were moving in haste. “These insects are saying something about our merrymaking” I inaudibly muttered. Instantly, the audible voices of these ants began to play themselves loudly in my head as I continued to watch them.

Elimu, the wittier one said to the three, “I wish we were African people. They merry make without an end.” “Hush!” Kufanya objected, “Unlike us ants who work all day, Africans do not know the importance of their renewable natural resources such as water, solar energy, plants and soil.” In a parrying way, Elimu quickly defended his sentiments, “But they can receive **education** on the importance of sustainable use of their natural resources.” “Indeed!” Mawasiliano concurred. She added, “Every African must be taught the importance of sustainable use of renewable resources. For example, Africans continue to overharvest their forestry and illegal logging of timber remains rampant and yet forestry contributes 6% of the African GDP.”<sup>1</sup> Aliiomba added, “So Africans need to be educated on the effects of overharvesting and illegal logging. Similarly, they need to be educated on the ways they can conserve their fishing resource.” Elimu broke through, “You have just reminded me that the fishing industry contributes at least US\$ 2.7 billion to African economies.”<sup>2</sup> Delightfully he further said, “That means if Africa as a continent takes good care of its natural resources we get to benefit from the bread crumbs that will drop from all their tables.”

“Old Hekima told us that in the past Africa was a vast forest of life.” “So what happened?” asked Mawasiliano. Elimu then hopefully quipped, “It is really just human negligence! African folks need to educate one another on **afforestation**. They must know the importance of forests and rudimentary skills of wildlife conservation.” “Well looked after natural resources communicate a delightful story” said Kufanya. “It is true” Mawasiliano concurred. “In fact, lush forests and exuberant wildlife have the silent potency to expand Africa’s tourism industry.” Aliiomba, while laughing, broke a serious message, “Increased tourism will allow me to meet the so called white ants from the West and the hot ones from the Middle East.” Undeterred, Elimu continued by saying, “Additionally, afforestation enhances rainfall, creates oxygen and fresh air and preserves wildlife.” But once again Aliiomba joked, “Hurray to more oxygen ... away to stinking carbon!”

“Do Africans educate themselves on the need to have clear policies on the good use of renewable resources, just as it is our policy that in winter we rest and in summer we gather?” questioned Kufanya. Elimu replied, “It is vital to inform Africans on the creation and execution of clear national policies, focused on the use and conservation of renewable resources.” He added that such education is incomplete without training for improved capacity development. He argued, “When good policies have been put in place, the impartation of education to enlarge the capacity to execute these policies is an imperative result.” Kufanya frothing with questions then asked, “Isn’t it boggling that with the technological advances replete in this age, Africans barely exploit technology to their advantage?” There was no response to this question but I still thought that it is. I am aware of the use of Geographic Information Systems to aid the management of renewable resources in Western countries but hardly find African countries that strongly depend on these. It will thus be commendable for Africans to step up and rope in technology to their advantage in the sustainable use of renewable resources. It is certain that education will benefit African people and will, with impact, lessen the problems arising from poor management of natural resources.

The preceding conversation engaged my mind. I thought, as an African leader who is at the bottom of the rung, what can I do to contribute to the good use of renewable resources by Africans. It is obvious that I have to blossom where I am planted and that is in the **adjudication** of disputes. I often preside over disputes relating to the use of renewable resources. Likewise, national courts and government institutions that carry the same duties on a wider scale and with greater authority, must properly govern and adjudicate over disputes relating to the use of natural resources. Good governance and adjudication

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<sup>1</sup> See National Geographic, Africa: Resources, NATIONALGEOGRAPHIC.org  
<https://www.nationalgeographic.org/encyclopedia/africa-resources/> (Accessed June 1, 2019).

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

of resources is key in the implementation of policies on sustainable use of renewable resources. At this instance, Aliiomba's imaginary voice heckled within my head. "African legislators must bestow on courts and government institutions the power to sanction inefficient use of renewable resources. Likewise regional and continental bodies such as the African Union and the African Commission on Human and People's rights are not spared of the duty to equip their institutions with the power to address infractions on attempts to sustainably use renewable resources." Kufanya then rhetorically asked, "Human folks do not have good taskmasters as we ants have?" Mawasiliano interjected having waited long enough to contribute to the discussion, "Strict border controls and laws on sustainable use of resources make the point. But more importantly, large corporates that abuse renewable resources must pay punitive compensation for poor use of natural resources."

I was embarrassed to hear Elimu say, "Africa suffers deforestation at twice the rate at which the rest of world does."<sup>3</sup> Resultantly, I quickly recalled that as a leader, I possess jurisdictional powers. Armed with these, I resolved to commit to jail anyone who destroy forests. I will encourage my people to plant fruit trees until they burgeon into forests because nobody chops fruit trees down. Our forests carry immense life and I will be legislating that in my chieftdom wealth ought to be reckoned using the number of trees planted. The richer people would of course be the ones tending forests. Put differently, African communities must richly reward everyone actively participating in afforestation.

Elimu, as his practise, reminded Mawasiliano to share with the gang snippets from their private discussions about humanity. "What are these about?" Kufanya inquired. "Snap, I forgot to hint! They have to do with the **communication** of information, strategies and policies on the sustainable use of renewable resources" said Elimu. I was drawn to the manner in which Mawasiliano prefaced her suggestions. She began by saying, "Humanity has the cogent tool of being able to communicate with each other before the occurrence of tragedies. Notwithstanding this, human beings must learn to warn one another about bad policy choices just as we never follow a poisonous scent." I drew inspiration from Mawasiliano's wise words. I have since learnt that communication of ideas and opinions relating to sustainable use of renewable resources is a conduit and active catalyst for public participation. Public participation is key as it allows the combined efforts of communities to mitigate the scourge of poor use of renewable resources. This reminded me of the axiomatic African proverb that says, "If you want to go fast, go alone, but if you want to go far, go together."

"You guys overshadow me!" complained Kufanya. "I have hardly made any contributions of my own." "You are free to say whatever you want" replied Mawasiliano in a motherly way. "Thank you. **Execution** of everything you said can never be over emphasised to African people" began Kufanya. "In fact, execution of clear national policies and proper application of the sciences that have to do with management of renewable natural resources is the only reason why the barns of all ants are always replete with food." All the other three ants made convincingly concurring remarks. Elimu began, "The fundamentals to execution of methods of sustainable use of renewable resources are; good governance, communication and communal participation. For instance, in the city from which we migrated where water was in short supply, it was an observable trend that most households had a borehole within their compound. This tends to destroy the water table. Had these communities simply decided to build a single borehole from which they all drew water, underground water resources would have been preserved." Elimu, by movement of his mandibles invited Mawasiliano to speak. The two had hitherto impressed me as a couple. Mawasiliano modestly submitted that, "The execution of policies is inchoate without adaptive management. Steps must be taken to respond to developing problems such as climate change." Aliiomba as if in conclusion, then readily provided instances of such adaption by remarking that, "the preference of geothermal sources of energy and afforestation are good ways to mitigate climate change as well as to create jobs and entrench socio-economic benefits."

The epiphany drew to an end. I immediately became alive to the need for all African leaders from chiefs to those who are protective convoys to rise to the occasion and promote sustainable use of the renewable natural resources as they are capable of achieving socio-economic transformation in Africa. This epiphany, though seemingly trivial, left me with a good memory of my mental friends, to wit, Elimu the educating ant, Aliiomba the keen adjudicator, Mawasiliano the advocate for effective communication and Kufanya the diligent executor. Education, adjudication, communication and execution are thus good principles of sustainable use of renewable resources.

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<sup>3</sup> See Wikipedia, "Afforestation", WIKIPEDIA.ORG, [www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Deforestation\\_by\\_region](http://www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Deforestation_by_region) [Accessed June 1, 2019].