

## **African Indigenous Knowledge and Social Security of the Elderly in Rural Tanzania: The Case of Bukoba Rural District**

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### **Abstract**

*This article explores the possibility of utilizing the local knowledge in social policy development in Tanzania and its potential for improving the welfare of the elderly in Haya society in Bukoba rural district. Since independence in 1961 the development of social policy in Tanzania has marginalized and at times completely ignored the usefulness of cultural and social fabric of indigenous societies. As a result, the policy framework of the country lacks much input from rural grassroots communities specifically on issues around old age and social insecurity. Based on first hand ethnographical field data gathered in Bukoba rural district this article attempts to demonstrate some of cultural sensibilities and traditional practices as preserved in Haya society like in many other ethnic groups in Tanzania. These cultural sensibilities and traditional practices are referred to in this article as indigenous knowledge or local knowledge. In doing so, the article demonstrates the potentiality to identify features in the cultural heritage of the rural peasants in Bukoba district in an attempt to draw from them social underpinnings for improving the Tanzanian social policy. The author recognizes the ideological theoretical approach in the effort to revitalize an experience from the historical period in which national-romantic ideas influenced strongly the creation of nation's identities. It is assumed to have relevance since Tanzanian nation misinterpreted her initial ideal efforts to build on its own heritage of Ujamaa, which partly drew some ideas from cultural heritage of indigenous societies.*

### **Introduction**

Information on the development of social policy in Tanzania is limited. Available studies include works by Tungaraza (1990) and Mchomvu *et al.* (1998). These studies have identified three different types of social policy

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regimes in Tanzania since the country got her independence in 1961. Firstly, from 1961 to 1967 the Tanzanian social policy was urban based and oriented to influence economic growth. Secondly, from 1968 to 1986 the social policy regime was oriented to the broader population due to the influence of Arusha declaration and national policy of Ujamaa and self-reliance. Under this regime some scholars have indicated that by that time Tanzania was struggling to define her national policy from traditional practices, cultural heritage and modern ways of life (Swantz, 1970; URT, 196; Swantz and Tripp, 1996). After 1986 onwards, the social policy regime was characterized by IFM/World Bank conditionalities through Structural Adjustments Program and Neo-liberal policies (Campbell and Stein, 1992; Shivji, 1992). In other words, the latter social policy was imposed; it was not a homegrown policy that developed organically from within an independent post-colonial African country.

Accordingly, this third regime on which the current policy framework of the country is based, has completely ignored inputs from the cultural heritage of indigenous societies in Tanzania with regard to social insecurity and old age. This partly explains why indigenous societies in rural Tanzania have suffered a lot in recent years from international land grabbers and new policies and laws pertaining to environmental conservations, and the management of natural resources such as forests, wildlife and minerals. Environmental conservation claims have been used to justify formulation of policies that have had far-reaching negative impacts on the livelihoods of the pastoral societies in Tanzania. Pastoralism is a towering example of an indigenous livelihood option and economic activity that cannot be implemented within the context of the mainstream thinking of modernizing rural Africa without affecting lives of the rural populations due to its dependence on traditional knowledge.

However, policy makers and development planners have not made an effort to contextualize their policymaking process in line with the traditional livelihood systems and as a result livelihoods of these indigenous communities have suffered greatly. There are several policies that have resulted into unintended negative consequences especially to pastoral communities. These policies include: The National Livestock Policy of 2006, the Wildlife Policy 1998, and the National Environmental Policy 1997. These policies by and large sideline the pastoral societies who have depended on their traditional economic activity for ages. As a result, the said policies have

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displaced the nomadic and pastoral communities in northern part of the country. This serves as an example of the negative influence of Neo-liberal policies to rural communities in Tanzania.

Pastoral communities apart, other ethnic groups in Tanzania as well have also experienced negative consequences of the hostile nature of the current policy framework that ignores indigenous knowledge and traditional practices that define their livelihoods. For example, the Haya society like other ethnic groups around Lake Victoria has been banned from practicing traditional fishing methods (URT, 2006). Consequently, livelihoods of many people especially the elderly have been seriously affected. It is important to note that these indigenous people have always depended on Lake Victoria for their livelihoods. Against this background, some scholars have argued that the development of social policy in Tanzania has been determined by economics and politics (Tungaraza, 1990; Mchomvu *at el*, 1998) as opposed to social considerations that take into account traditional knowledge and viability of traditional livelihood options for groups such as the elderly (Kashaga, 2013).

Available literatures pertaining to the examination of the development of social policy in a country falls within the same dominant research tradition that attributes to the development of social policy solely either to the level of economic growth or political factors (Tungaraza, 1990, Cutright, 1965; Fenton 1966; Wilensky, 1975; Castles and Mc Kinlay, 1979). In addition, it has been argued that there is no global consensus so far on which factors determine the development of social policy (Tungaraza, 1990). As a result, there has been a tendency to use the same factors and determinants applied in western developed countries to study the development of social policy in the third world countries, Africa in particular.

This can explain why many studies on the subject in the developing countries have been conducted in line with factors that are better suited to the western developed countries and as a result their respective empirical underpinnings fail to reflect the social policy in poor developing countries especially in Africa (Ibid). This article is a contribution to the discussion on the use of local knowledge in the improvement of social policy development in the contemporary Tanzanian society.

Rural communities are the main custodians of indigenous knowledge both in developed and developing countries. For example, during the struggles by

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the Finnish society for nationhood and national identity; the country benefited from rural communities in the countryside who had preserved useful indigenous knowledge. This was revealed in the large collections of Finnish folklore, widely known from national epos as Kalevala. Specifically, the rural peasants in Karelia played a fundamental role in the collection of Finnish folk poetry which is widely acknowledged among Finns as a foundation of modern Finland in its literature, music, arts, humanities and social sciences.

In the similar way, during the reign of European romanticism in 19th century, the rural communities played an important role in creation of national identity of European nations. However, the rural peasants in Africa have suffered social, economic and cultural oppression for many years since the end of the Second World War as they have been regarded to have nothing to offer in defining not only socio-economic development but also their country's social policies. Against this background, this article inspired by ideas from historical romanticism and the academic debates of African moral economy explores the potential for the utilization of local knowledge that is still preserved by the Tanzanian communities in rural settings. The ultimate goal of the article is to establish the much needed inputs from the grassroots communities themselves for policymaking in Tanzania, specifically to improve the country's social policy for the well-being of the elderly in rural areas and the nation at large.

Most African countries got their independence in 1960s. The newly independent countries faced several challenges in fostering socio-economic development of their citizens, the rural societies in particular. Literature shows that of all the post-colonial African countries, Tanzania had a good start as she adopted a people centered development approach (Swantz and Tripp, 1996). This is attributed to the good leadership of the first Tanzanian president Julius Nyerere who united more than 120 ethnic groups as Tanzanians with a common Bantu language Swahili. This gave impetus for ideological stance of mass participation in the development process (Ibid). However the good intentions of the leadership were not enough to translate the theory into practice. The mass participation in development by combining traditional forms of life with another language and modernizing life style was a challenging task (Swantz, 1970; Freyhold, 1979). As a result, there was a mismatch between the policies articulated in public sphere and the practices on the ground, specifically in the rural grassroots communities

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(Hyden, 1969; Swantz, 1970). The grassroots rural communities in Haya land faced similar challenges in an attempt to identify themselves with a national political system (Hyden, 1969). This meant that the country had to pass various phases of policy experimentation in implementing its social policies. To include the detailed history of provision of social services since 1961 and their respective policy regime is beyond the focus of this article and its scope. The fundamental point is that in all the regimes the issue of social insecurity for old people in rural communities in Tanzania has been seemingly sidelined. This went hand in hand with marginalization of indigenous knowledge in social policy development.

Some studies have shown that Tanzania has used three different approaches to administer the welfare of the citizens. These approaches include, the residual, institutional and basic human needs approach (Mchomvu *et al*, 1998). By definition, residual approach as a concept of social welfare signifies that any government assistance is temporary, minimum and requiring evidence of need. This type of assistance is always available when all other means have been exhausted. The second approach, the institutional concept of welfare can be defined as the welfare programs to protect an individual from the social cost operating in an industrialized capitalist market. The aim is to help those who experience the risks of industrial community from unnecessary costs. The Human basic needs approach is one of the approaches used to measure poverty and to assess the minimum resources necessary for long-time physical well-being. This was introduced by ILO in 1976 (Tungaraza, 1990; Mchomvu *et al*, 2002). These approaches have not included the majority of rural communities in Tanzania.

In light of the above, this article encourages the utilization of indigenous knowledge in social policy development as illustrated clearly in the empirical findings. For clarity, the author of this article uses Jonathan Bradshaw's<sup>1</sup> definition of social policy. He defines social policy as the scientific study of the institutions of welfare state and it is neither the description of social services provision in a country nor the branch of social work. It entails the institutions for welfare states such as housing industry, social security agency, health insurance and others whose main objectives are to improve the well-being and livelihoods of all the members of the country. This paper is divided into the following sections: The first part is introduction which provides the background information and the research problem. This is followed by the theoretical framework which prepares the reader to understand the empirical data. From the theoretical vantage point, the reader

locates the subject matter of this article. Next is the section of methodological issues which addresses important elements on how the research that has produced this article was carried out. Both ontological and epistemological standpoints are reflected in this section. This is followed by Findings and discussion. Finally, the recommendations and conclusion end the article.

### **Theoretical Framework**

This article has been inspired by the theoretical approach based on an experience from the historical period in 19th century in Europe when the national-romantic ideas influenced the creation of nation's identities. This theoretical approach illuminates the ethnographical data on the importance of rural communities as they have demonstrated to preserve the wealth of the most valuable indigenous knowledge that societies around the world have accumulated for ages. There is more evidence today than ever before about the contribution of rural peasants or communities in contemporary music, arts, humanities, social sciences, literature, language and environmental science just to mention a few.

In Europe for example, during the reign of European romanticism in 19th century, the rural communities played an important role in the creation of national identities of European nations. Most people in Central European nations consider romanticism as a remarkable cultural revolution that inspired their emancipation movements in 19th century. Evidence shows that organic models of community based on the affinities between nature, culture and language became the foundation of the rise of mass consciousness and nationalistic ideologies (Ferber, 2006; Berlin, 2001; Ferber, 2010). At the highest, level of consciousness and the rise of nationalism led to emergence of grand narratives of national history that created the contrasts of societies in multilingual and multiethnic communities (Berlin, 2001; Ferber, 2010). Romantic poetry contained indigenous and ancient histories on culture and languages. These ancient histories on culture and languages were preserved in rural communities during the time after the enlightenment period. There are several examples of the European countries that benefitted a lot from the indigenous knowledge that was preserved for many years by rural communities in villages or countryside.

The Finnish experience is a case in point; where the collection of folk poetry in the countryside led to the compilation of the national epic (Kalevala). Finnish researchers and scholars have written about the contribution of

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Kalevala in contemporary Finnish culture. Urpo Vento (1992) attributes the rise of well-defined Finnish culture to the same level of that of Sweden and Russia to the good work of Elias Lonnrot and his predecessors. The study by Hannes Sihvos on Karelianism<sup>1</sup> that specifies basic myths as recorded by Lonnrot provides the theoretical insights of the relevance of Kalevala to contemporary rural communities in Africa. Moreover, the early field works on Kalevala runes indicated that both oral and written sources in the rural countryside led to the creation of a national culture (Ilomaki, 1992). Some African scholars have described Kalevala as an excellent expression of the Finnish national spirit, identity and cultural heritage (Mulokozi, 1992; Sengo, 1992). Mulokozi (1992) has provided evidence that Kalevala experience is very relevant to Africa. He argues that for a meaningful and sustainable social development in Africa, Kalevala is inspirational to revolutionize the rural African societies where indigenous knowledge and science is preserved in folklore and cultural heritage (Mulokozi, 1992). In the process, there will be greater participation of rural communities and hence the social welfare especially for the elderly as the custodians of indigenous knowledge will greatly improve.

Against the above background, the inspiration from both national-romantic ideas and the experience of Kalevala are relevant to the subject matter of this article. As illustrated in aforementioned discussion in this theoretical reflection, Europe and Finland in particular embrace the rural citizens as a source of knowledge. However, Tanzania and Africa have done very little to embrace the rural communities as one of their source of knowledge. Though little has been done, they have not been included in mainstream policy making. Among the reasons for marginalization and suppression of rural communities in Africa and Tanzania in particular is the predominance of western knowledge which is widely regarded as universal education. African scholars, policy makers and researchers ought to learn from the experience of Europeans during the reign of romanticism that there were many European scholars who teamed up with rural communities to create romantic poetry and national histories. Likewise in Finland, during the early field work of Kalevala runes evidence shows many educated nationalistic workers and Finnish researchers teamed up with rural peasants in Karelia.

I argue in this paper that now is the time for African scholars to research and utilize the wealth of indigenous knowledge accumulated in rural societies for centuries. As alluded in the introduction, some studies indicated that Tanzania had a good start based on Ujamaa policy that drew some of its

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underpinnings from traditional cultures. However, the dominant research paradigm by the time was the illusion of Marxism that undermined the research on indigenous societies. This is partly attributed to the negative connotations that were attached to the field of anthropology leading to not considering it as a subject of worthy teaching at the University. Accordingly, anthropology as a subject was not taught at the University of Dar es Salaam until recent when it is partially accommodated in the department of sociology. Nevertheless, this article locates the above theoretical insights within contemporary academic discussion of African Moral Economy. The moral economy theorists are grappling with the problem of underdevelopment of rural communities in Africa.

The stagnation of rural development in Africa has created a puzzle among researchers, policy makers, development planners, media pundits and international community (Kimambo *et al*, 2011). In an attempt to investigate the underlying causes of such situation in post-colonial Africa, some scholars are involved in academic debates of what they term as African Moral Economy. Within this moral economy debate, Hyden argues that stagnation of Africa is a result of failure to integrate into the capitalist economy due to indigenous cultures, which are counter-developmental (Hyden, 1983). He uses the term “economy of affection” to refer to a subsistence economy that predominantly exists in many rural communities in Africa and Tanzania in particular. He argues that rural development will not be attained if indigenous culture is not changed to integrate fully the society into a commodity economy (Hyden, 1980; 1983 ;). However, other scholars have challenged the above view on the basis of both its ontological and epistemological stances. For example, Maghimbi argues that peasant capitalism in Africa has developed organically from within but the government has failed to put in place the right policies and other incentives for its growth (Maghimbi, 2011). This means that to assume that rural African peasants are uncaptured within the capitalist system is illusive and moral economy is not the cause for the lack of development in rural communities (Ibid).

The Haya society epitomizes rural peasants in Tanzania. These peasants have preserved indigenous knowledge which can be manifested in the form of Haya-oral literature, songs, myths, riddles, symbols, rituals, belief systems, traditional religion, cultural history, skills for subsistence economy and folklore. All these are useful in the development of social policy in Tanzania



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for the well-being of the rural citizens, the elderly in particular. On the contrary indigenous knowledge as whole is surprisingly not taken into account in the above academic debates despite having the potential for improving social development.

Similarly, moral economists have attributed the backwardness of rural peasants in Africa to their traditional culture and called for its eradication or transformation in order to modernize villagers (Hyden, 1980; Kimambo *et al*, 2008). On the other hand, other scholars have challenged the position in favour of African peasants (Maghimbi *et al*, 2011). In the final analysis however, it appears that many contributors engaged in the debates are still trapped in defining African development in dichotomies of traditional vs. modern, informal or formal, Marxist ideology or Neo-liberal thinking. As a result neither Marxist nor Neo-liberalist scholarship has helped to unravel the issues relating to the indigenous knowledge still preserved in many rural post-colonial African societies.

I argue in this article that the central problem in the debate is that it is framed wrongly within the contested discourse of modernity. Since its inception in western countries, modernization project is bent on wiping out all forms of indigenous knowledge and culture in order to emulate and imitate the former colonial masters. On the contrary, the modernization project has failed to de-Africanize rural communities as demonstrated in the empirical evidence in this article. Despite powerful forces for over five decades, until the time of writing this article, the rural societies are still strongly attached to their traditional economy while practicing and cherishing their cultural heritage. Indigenous societies in Haya-land have defied external forces but have been subjected to chronic rural poverty resulting partly from a poor social framework. The Haya elders continue to struggle to survive while depending on increasingly weakening traditional social safety nets for their well-being.

#### **Methodological Issues**

This article is part of ethnographical research carried out for six months 2010/2011 in Kagera region-Bukoba district, in Tanzania. The region shares borders with Uganda to the North, Rwanda and Burundi to the West, then Kigoma and Mwanza Regions to the South and Lake Victoria to the East. The region was formerly known as West Lake region. It was renamed Kagera region after the Uganda-Tanzania war when Idi Amin attempted to annex it in 1978. The region takes its name from the Kagera River, which flows from

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Rwanda through northern Tanzania before it enters Lake Victoria to emerge as the Nile River.

Ethnographical method was applied in this research topic which required investigating indigenous knowledge and the cultural heritage of rural communities in an African context. The type of knowledge is transmitted through oral tradition of which the elders are the holders. This method helps to identify and analyze unexpected issues. Unlike other research methods, ethnography through participant observation entails interacting with target audiences in their real-life environment. In doing so, the researcher identifies and analyzes issues embedded within social and cultural fabric of indigenous societies. Applying participatory observation, the researcher uncovers issues that relate to local cosmology, people's worldview, behavior, attitudes, and emotions, their symbolic interpretation of life, rituals, nature, their belief system, cultural history and other indigenous socio-economic activities. Using this approach the researcher is in the field and able to gather extensive information.

Bantu-speaking Haya inhabit the studied Bukoba district. These Haya-Africans were largely divided into two groups "*the Bairu*" known for crop farming especially bananas and the "*Bahima*" pastoralists. In the pre-colonial regime local chiefs known as "*omukama*" administrated them. The local chiefs came from few specific "*Balangira*" clans which produced local rulers. These clans were *Bahinda*, *Wabito* and *Wankango*. Their traditional belief system is based on tribal totems and in many deities known as *abachwezi*. Every clan is named after its founder and each has own taboos, for example they are not allowed to eat a particular food item which is known as a clan totem, *omuziro* in Haya language. Also in each clan they have a special animal as a tribal emblem that was known as *ekyerumuno*. In their settings mothers and aunts taught their young girls about the domestic chores and how to become good housewives when they reached the marriage age and fathers and uncles taught the young boys. Marriage was forbidden between members of the same clan. This prohibition also covered members of mothers' clans.

Participant observation while sharing life with the villagers and gathering selected representatives of various social and age groups in focus group discussions were the main methodologies employed. Participation meant engaging in the social activities of the villagers such as attending burial ceremonies, rituals performed at shrines, sacred places in forest, in caves, and

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at village huge trees *ebigabiro*. It meant also attending rituals performed near the shores of Lake Victoria or Lwelu Kishanje village in Bugabo ward and taking part in various village meetings. I attended a total of eight clan meetings in five different villages. The permission to attend was granted by the clan head on behalf of his clanspeople, *banyaruganda*. Several in-depth face-to-face interviews were carried out to gather ethnographical field data. Eight of the focus group discussions were conducted in selected villages targeting only the key informants, the elderly.

The selection of the villages was done randomly, out of 161 villages in the study area 20 were sampled. For several reasons the sample of 20 villages was selected. One was to get equal representation of four divisions (Taarafa) that constitute Bukoba rural district, namely Bugabo, Kyamutwara, Katerero and Rubale with 161 total numbers of villages. Each has 40 villages except Bugabo division with 41. The villages were selected taking in consideration the time frame, distance, representation and including the village with traditional palace for former local chiefs, *ekikale*. The researcher employed also quantitative research technique to gather information from 150 general informants through questionnaires.

The young, middle aged and educated Haya informants were selected randomly in various working places of Bukoba urban area and the district headquarters to supplement the data collected from the key informants. The questionnaire aimed at verifying the extent of continuity of the traditional core values among the young and educated generation. The demographic characteristics of Haya people in Bukoba rural district were considered during field research and in addition data on household characteristics for different types of economic activities including fishing were collected. The research gathered information on traditional institutions, mechanisms, kinship and clanship social relations, agricultural practices, land type uses, inheritance rules, farm production, homestead composition, livestock, age, sex, and household incomes in Bukoba district.

The author of this article chose to carry out the study in Haya society out of over 120 ethnic groups in Tanzania because Bukoba district was studied by Professor Goran Hyden one of the main proponents of African Moral Economy debates which this article seeks to contribute to. Secondly the selection of Haya society was influenced by the ability of the author to use indigenous language Ruhaya in interacting with elderly whose main language was vernacular. Ethnographers have used the vernaculars since

Malinowski<sup>2</sup>. However, the author had to avoid bias because he was born and raised in the city by working parents as civil servants. Also, the key informants of the research were mainly elderly of the age ranging from 70 years and above. The issues of ethical considerations were taken into account including getting all research permits and consent of the respondents.

### **Findings and Discussions**

In this section the author presents the ethnographical data collected from the field which relates to the subject matter of this article. For clarity, the presentation is divided into five sections which help the reader to follow the main research problem and relate it to the policy recommendations outlined at the conclusion of the article. The first section with a sub-title "*Indigenous fishing Strategies, Livelihoods and the Haya Elderly*" provides a description of the use of indigenous knowledge in subsistence fishing as effective means of providing the livelihoods for the elderly around Lake Victoria. The second *Indigenous Knowledge and Livelihoods for the Elderly* provides information on how local knowledge can be useful. The third section is *Haya Cosmology, Nature and Livelihoods* followed by *Haya System of Thought and Livelihoods for the Elderly* the topic of the fourth section. Finally the *Haya-African Indigenous Sociology for Livelihoods* as a last section provides a description of social underpinnings obtained from Haya traditional institutions, networks and mechanisms that used to play a vital role in providing the livelihoods of the Haya people, elderly in particular during old age.

### ***Indigenous Fishing Strategies, Livelihoods and the Haya Elderly***

Haya society is one of the fish-dependent rural communities in Tanzania. The indigenous fishing activities in the Lake Victoria, Lwelu have always supported the livelihood of most villagers. This lake carries broad socio-cultural meaning for the Haya-Africans' well-being and their natural environment. In pre-colonial era the lake was regarded as a sacred place where some clans performed complex rituals to appeal to the divine intervention of ancestral spirits or deities during any social upheaval (Weiss, 1996; Byabato, 2010). Inadvertently, the lake had enjoyed indigenous means of environmental protection of various species found in it. There were numerous species of fish that are no longer readily available according to several elderly informants who had been former fishermen. For instance, on the 15th October, 2011 in Ibosa village a group of elders lamented and described the names of fish that have disappeared<sup>3</sup>. This was partly

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attributed to the introduction of a new species of fish Nile perch, locally known as *Sangara* (Kakulwa, 2007). The indigenous People had their own traditional knowledge of preserving the lake in its natural state maintaining the vegetation and ecosystem around the Lake.

The co-existence of Lake Victoria and the rural communities surrounding it started since time immemorial. Kakulwa's study indicates that there are more than 500,000 local fishermen who use indigenous fishing techniques along the Lake Victoria in Kagera region alone (Kakulwa, 2007). Also, more than a million indigenous people across the area are direct beneficiaries of traditional fishing activities in the lake (Ibid). This means that livelihoods of the vast majority of the inhabitants of many villages, *ebyar* have been entirely depending on the indigenous fishing. This was forcefully expressed by an elderly man aged 85 years, Evarista Philipo in Kishanje village, in his own words; "...We do not want handouts from the government, but we want the government to give us back our Lake Victoria,...the lake is our inheritance from our ancestors and our lives depend on our lake.." This is translated from Haya language<sup>4</sup>. According to the National Bureau of Statistics, Kagera has a population of 2,033,888 as per 2002 National Census Data. This implies the vast majority of the people are seriously affected by the new policies imposed on rural communities by the government.

The problem began when both local and foreign holders of western education despised local knowledge as primitive and attacked rural communities with the illusion of modernizing them. Indigenous knowledge that had sustained rural societies for ages was considered counter-developmental (Hyden, 1983). The old people with wealth of indigenous knowledge were and in some places still are considered uneducated and illiterate. Due to this, researchers, policy makers and development planners often blame these indigenous people for lack of social development due to their illiteracy and their traditional culture. Furthermore, rural communities are blamed for water pollution and environmental destructions without any attempt to learn and understand their worldview and indigenous science. These local people were and often still are considered ignorant of their own environment. In most serious cases, some people even the ones educated in western knowledge, tend to oppress and humiliate these old people with witchcraft related accusations (Mesaki, 1993).

As a result, the elderly in rural Haya communities have been denied the opportunity to effectively utilize their indigenous knowledge accumulated in their society for ages for their own well-being. The same applies to other

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ethnic groups in Tanzania with rich cultural heritage with an exception to the attempts made by the first Tanzanian President, Julius Nyerere. Nyerere outlined in some speeches during the early years of independence, the need to consider indigenous knowledge not only in development planning but also in the policymaking process (Swantz and Tripp, 1996). However, there was no serious attempt to mainstream indigenous knowledge in the development planning and policymaking process as reflected in the contemporary Tanzanian policy framework. There are many sectoral policies and development plans that have been formulated since independence to-date but none of them accommodated organically from within indigenous cultural sensibilities.

The above understanding partly helps to explain why indigenous fishing strategies around Lake Victoria became illegal when international trade in fisheries was introduced in late years of 1980s. The introduction of commercial fishing was supported by the neo-liberal policies and affected the livelihoods of these fish-dependent communities catastrophically. This is why, several informants in almost all the villages included in the Bugabo division attributed their rural poverty to new policy that has completely banned indigenous fishing methods in Lake Victoria locally known as “*Nyanja ya Lwelu*”. The elderly were the main traditional scientists of this type of fishing. The young generations had to learn the knowledge, skills and belief systems pertaining to the fishing business through oral tradition method, which is a chief source of indigenous knowledge.

This was revealed on the 18<sup>th</sup> November, 2011 in Ibosa village where twelve elderly informants narrated countless stories on how the fishing industry has been a source of their livelihood and how currently the industry is not on their side. The Environmental Policy 1997 and new National Fisheries Policy 2004 have sidelined indigenous fishing knowledge. The term is not even used (indigenous fishing) instead the term illegal fishing method, in Swahili *wovoi haramu*, is the term applied to ban the fishing strategies that people used instead of calling it indigenous fishing, *wovoi asilia* in Swahili. The use of the word *haramu* simply demonizes the indigenous fishing strategies and closes doors for possible policy dialogue with grass roots communities so as to undergo what other scholars have termed as Afro-modernity (Comaroff, J. & J. 1991).

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In view of the above, the need to critically analyze the language usage is of vital importance. This is no longer a pre-occupation of only linguists; it is increasingly getting recognition in social sciences research. Accordingly socio-linguists through Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) promote the application of the approach in various social sciences research traditions (Dijk, 1993; Fairclough, 1995; Wodak and Meyer, 2001). The reason is the recognition that language contributes to the domination by one group of people or society over the other (Fairclough, 1995). In the same vein, some scholars in the field of language and history, specifically conceptual historians study history of concepts in terms of their translations, migrations, context and meanings. Many of these experts argue that many of the concepts used in social sciences are used as political weapons to justify intervention and to legitimize the workings of the dominant ideology (Fairclough, 2001; Koselleck, 2006). In the case of fishing, the dominant free market ideology has resulted in a kind of privatization and liberalization of Lake Victoria, which used to be a source of livelihood and ownership to local communities surrounding it.

The execution of the aforementioned policies has resulted in many people's loss of lives while fishing using indigenous knowledge. All the villages have experienced scarcity of fish as they have not been able to buy the fish when the price has gone high. It was observed in 15 villages out of 20 in this study that people could no longer afford to buy a small fish. That small fish would cost up to 2 dollars and more while the purchasing power of my informants was very low. With the level of poverty, which was conspicuous in all the studied villages more than 90 percent of my respondents could not afford to spend even one dollar per day. The government machinery acts through police force and some local environmental activists, NGOs, make sure the ban of indigenous fishing practice is implemented. The NGOs activists are hundred percent funded by international agencies and the donor countries where the foreign companies which export fish originate. These International agencies and donor countries are the new beneficiaries of fish from Lake Victoria. Before 1990 there were no fish processing industries in the area around Lake Victoria in Tanzania (Kakulwa, 2007). During that time, fish were mostly consumed by domestic market both in rural and urban areas (Ibid). The introduction of fish processing industries in 1990 intensified the implementation of neo-liberal policies through privatization and liberation of the economy, in this case in Lake Victoria. This is reflected in the third regime of Tanzanian social policy, which became hostile to indigenous people who had no sophisticated technologies for fishing.

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As a result, local people are alienated from Lake Victoria and the elderly have been even more adversely affected. This was revealed in the following villages, namely Buzi, Kaagya, Kishanje, Katangalala, Rushaka, Mwemage and Ibosa. In these villages the elderly informants showed few traditional instruments that they kept in their villages for fear of being destroyed by the government police force and local environmental activists. One old man described the Haya traditional instruments for indigenous fishing strategies as indicated in the endnote.<sup>5</sup> The English translation from the Haya language.<sup>6</sup> This implies that indigenous knowledge had all the needed vocabulary of traditional fishing techniques and none of them constitute things that amount to illegal fishing. The Haya indigenous fishermen never used poisonous materials, never used explosive materials and other dangerous chemical materials.

It was observed from the field that most Haya indigenous fishing techniques were environmentally friendly but few NGOs activists interviewed in this study had no clue about the indigenous expertise. The Haya fishermen had acquired their traditional calendar of annual seasons and the timing for season of catching more fish. The informants continued to describe the seasons as follows; January to March is called *Akanda* which means spring, April to June is called *Etoigo* meaning rainy season, then the period from June to September called *Ekyanda* translates as summer, and from October to December is called *Omusenene* which is grasshoppers' season. In all aspects of social life, the indigenous knowledge had its own way of describing things that now are taken for granted as mere translations. These things were defined metaphysically by application of indigenous knowledge.

This article reveals that over 80 percent of the informants interviewed in Bukoba urban and district headquarters had no clear understanding of indigenous knowledge. The same thing was observed among the local environmental activists most of whom came from different types of localities or they came from other regions through the umbrella of their NGOs. This suggests that the NGO activists were driven by ill-conceived understanding of indigenous fishing and conceived the issues of environmental conservation from the western perspective. The NGOs activists are obliged to act the way they do in order to be accountable for the money they get from their western donors. This partly explains why most of them were based in



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urban areas profiting from donor money at the expense of destroying indigenous means of livelihoods for the elderly.

In Kaagya village, one 82 years old respondent, Byarugaba, a former local fisherman, explained how he turned into poor person after all his traditional fishing instruments were destroyed by government forces. He described his instruments that included *makokolo*, *obwato-amato*, and *engao n'ebyamugasha*. They translate as local fish-nets, traditional canoe and a local spirit for water bodies which is known as *Mugasha*. Similar sentiments were shared by several anonymous elderly respondents as they lost their traditional vessels for fishing. In another encounter, the famous village leader in Kishanje explained how the indigenous fishing knowledge was transmitted or passed on from one generation to another. Upon the death of an elderly person, one would inherit the traditional instruments, skills and spiritual guidance of fishing. As a result of this cultural practice many young people had to care for their elderly expecting to be rewarded.

Fishing methods related also to the traditional spiritual beliefs. The role of *Mugasha* permeates all spheres of Haya world-view about Lake Victoria. By definition, *Mugasha* is a Haya deity that is responsible for water bodies. There is a belief that if this deity was unhappy with societal behavior, he would punish them through thunder storm locally known as *enkuba*. The deity would cause critical shortage of rainfall, grasshoppers locally *senene*, or droughts and cause strong winds to uproot plants and destroy houses. To appease the deity, all the people who go to the Lake to fish had to consult an elderly person or a traditional priest *embandwa* to perform a certain ritual at either a family shrine or in a big tree called *ekigabiro*. The ritual was accompanied with a practice that one who comes back from fishing had to offer some to *Mugasha* at a village big tree *ekigabiro*. Then the vulnerable people in the village especially the elderly and children would go at a village big tree to collect the fish left there praising the *Mugasha* for the offerings. They would say in Haya language *Mugasha yabega*, which translates as deity *Mugasha* has offered us a meal. My anonymous elderly informants, narrated that offering the fish to *ekigabiro* had been practiced for many years before the coming of Christianity, the Catholic Church in 1890 in the area.

The intertwine of subsistence economic activity in the form of indigenous fishing with the Haya belief system re-affirms the widely held view among scholars of African traditional religion, history, philosophy and theology that Africans are religious and no separation is made between the spiritual and

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the secular aspects of life. These scholars argue that within the African system of thought about life and nature no separation is made between the spiritual aspects of life from the secular world (Mbiti, 1967; Kibira, 1974; Kilaini, 1990; Kwasi, 1992). By the time of this research, the practice was still going on at the family and clan level as members of the same kin continued the practice of what Kibira (1974:14) describes as syncreticism, even if this cultural practice of performing rituals and giving offerings is increasingly disappearing as the old generations are also disappearing. The future generation may lose the cultural heritage that could inspire policy makers but the spirit of sharing could continue if the meaning of it would be brought out as a great social value. It is imperative to argue that the article does not intend to romanticize the past but rather to address the subject matter under study as stated in the introduction. In the views of the author, the world needs to learn more from these indigenous societies in search of an alternative and a more viable socio-economic system that works better for the majority.

In modern times, there are few countries in the world that have a system which cares for the vulnerable and this is reflected in their social policies. The Nordic model is a classic example of the modern welfare state which draws its social underpinnings from the Nordic sensibilities of collectivism and universalism of the social policy agenda. This partly originated from their indigenous societies in the past. Likewise, this article urges policy makers in Tanzania to emulate the Nordic model because most pre-colonial African societies embrace the idea of collectivism and universalism of well-being of all the members of their indigenous societies as illustrated in this section from the Haya-African experience.

Contrary to the above Haya-African experience, the new policies have changed the livelihoods of indigenous societies around Lake Victoria without government taking into consideration their well-being or replacing it with a new formal social protection mechanism. This means that the policy framework favours the foreign companies in the name of getting foreign currency. This is evidenced also in literature that shows the transition from the tradition-based subsistence fishing practices before late 1980s to a commercialized fishing industry controlled by big fishing companies based in Mwanza city and Bukoba Town (Kakulwa, 2007). Kakulwa argues that the fish processing factories financed from international sources have impoverished the rural communities around Lake Victoria (Ibid). The

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factories are driven by maximization of profits as a lot of fish is exported from Tanzania to the developed world in order to get much needed foreign currency. As a result, most vulnerable individuals especially children and the elderly are suffering from malnutrition due to lack of enough proteins which came from fish.

Literature shows that all the regions surrounding Lake Victoria did not experience starvation or even malnutrition before 1980s as fish were readily available. This implies local communities are starving as their main source of proteins is out of their reach. Haya elderly suffer most as their livelihoods have always depended on the Lake for many usages including the spiritual aspect. When international trade on fisheries was introduced it was assumed that it would alleviate poverty and solve the problem of food insecurity for fisheries-dependent communities. This study reveals that the Haya elderly who lived the years before the introduction of international trade on fish have confirmed the increase of poverty and destitution. This explains why the concept of poverty, which the current policy framework of Tanzania is based, is wrongly conceptualized and illusive. Accordingly, there is a need to redefine it within the context of rural communities in Tanzania so as to improve social policy for indigenous societies.

#### *Indigenous knowledge and Livelihoods for the Elderly*

For the purpose of this article knowledge, is defined as skills acquired through experience or education, both formal and informal. It entails familiarization with descriptions, ideas, explanations, facts, narrations, information, communication and representation. Knowledge may also refer to the practical or the theoretical understanding of a subject matter. There are two categories of knowledge, namely western knowledge and indigenous knowledge. The latter is transmitted mainly through oral tradition as a method by which individuals and groups acquire knowledge through observation, experiences and inference. This category of knowledge is inherently embedded in the socio-cultural fabric of community practices, traditional institutions, social relations, symbols, folklore, arts, literature, the natural environment and rituals in a particular cultural context.

African indigenous knowledge is as old as the African society itself. Indigenous knowledge plays an important role for historical continuity of rural communities in Africa. Haya-Africans like in other ethnic groups have their indigenous knowledge accumulated in their rural communities for many centuries. Accordingly, indigenous knowledge has abled rural

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communities to survive by dealing with many aspects of socio-economic and cultural spheres. One of these aspects is the livelihoods for the vulnerable members of their communities, the elderly in particular.

The prevailing socio-economic system in 20 villages under this study is predominantly subsistence economy informed by indigenous knowledge. In view of this, there is an inherent interconnectedness between indigenous knowledge and livelihoods of rural communities. It is therefore difficult to separate or conceptualize these communities in terms of their economies without acquiring a deeper understanding of their knowledge base that influences and shapes their local cosmological understanding of the universe.

In line with the understanding above, indigenous knowledge is intertwined with traditional belief system; the two are inseparable in African context. Abundant literature on African traditional religion, philosophy, history and theology attests to this inseparability (Mbiti, 1967; Kibira, 1974; Kilaini, 1990; Kahakwa, 2010).

A focus group discussion in Katuruka village, on 17<sup>th</sup> October, 2011 further testified to this inseparability. Elderly informants tied their explanations about livelihoods to their ancestral protection, spirits and deities. In addition a 92 years old anonymous respondent in the same village attributed low productivity of the land to ancestral curse. According to him, it was a result of failure on the part of the younger generation to fulfil their moral obligation of caring for their living elders. However, in a move that suggests that the youth have not completely abdicated their moral obligation of caring for their elderly, over 60 percent of the elderly informants appreciated the moral supports from the clanspeople and members of kin of young generation. This spirit of togetherness is one of the main features of subsistence economy based on reciprocity and communal sharing. The Haya society like many other ethnic groups in Tanzania has practiced this communal thinking for ages. This communal ideology is based on collectivism and universalism of indigenous social protection for livelihoods of the elderly. Moreover, the ideology is rooted in social relations of clanship and kinship. These social relations have sustained rural communities as means of livelihoods and social safety nets. Accordingly, an effective social policy has to take into consideration these philosophical foundations of rural communities and indigenous knowledge. This partly explains why the World Bank has recognized indigenous knowledge as local pathways to global development

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(World Bank, 2004). To this end, the article examines the Haya Cosmology, Nature and Livelihoods in the next sections as a manifestation of application of indigenous knowledge in the social realities of rural grassroots communities.

#### *Haya Cosmology, Nature and Livelihoods*

By definition Haya cosmology refers to the Haya worldview in which local people construct and interpret the world around them. This is similar to what Breid Weiss (1996) describes as the making and unmaking of the Haya lived-world, commoditization, consumption and every day practices. Through symbols local people are able to interpret the universe for their well-being and for the betterment of the natural environment. The need to study and learn from local people their symbolic interpretation of life is of vital importance if one needs to understand their social world for any meaningful decision in policy making and social policy development. Swantz (1970) argues that the symbolic interpretation of life preceded the scientific explanations; therefore there is no need for the latter to take the place in every aspect of the former.

This section introduces first hand ethnographical experiences of the ways Haya rural communities define their social world for the societal well-being. I found out that there is close interdependence of nature, the Haya-elderly and the village communities at large. For instance, many informants were observed to be close to nature through symbolic interpretation of their social life. In villages such as Kishanje and Katangalala old People still perform their rituals in sacred forests and trees. People in this village strive to ensure that their environment remains natural and is not degraded indicating that there are inherent mutual benefits between people's traditional practices and the natural environment.

Some anonymous informants informed the researcher that within Haya system of thought, respect for nature is embedded within the social fabric of the society. It was a unique experience as a researcher to observe how sensitive old people are in regards to living creatures. In some instances, even a tiny insect is highly respected and protected from a potential danger. In doing so, the physical human habitat remains intact. Among the reasons for protection of every living organism is the belief in tribal totems. It was realized that every informant in the area knew his tribal totem and its history. In line with their traditional mythology, the Haya people refrain from destruction of the environment not only because of social sanctions and

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rationality but also due to the belief that vandalizing it would be severely punished by the spirits.

For instance, there is a belief that ancestral spirits dwell in big trees locally known as “*ebigabiro*”. It is believed that spirits made those who cut these sacred trees mad. This serves to deter others from repeating the destruction. Until now, the area is still benefiting from the presence of huge trees, rivers and fertile soil. However, local experts in environmental science based on western education systems fail to comprehend the interdependence between local communities and the natural environment. Similar examples can be drawn from pastoral societies, the Maasai in particular who have co-existed with wild animals for ages. The environmental friendly lifestyle of Maasai communities balances the ecosystem of the natural environment but not to the extent of extinction of animals. However, the current policy framework does not underscore these social realities of rural grassroots communities. The effects of such policy gap adversely affect the livelihoods of many, the elderly in particular.

The author observed that religious virtues of environmental conservation and preservation of ecosystem were interlinked with hunting. The elderly advise the hunters on the proper game, taking into account the existence of tribal totems. This is accompanied with a traditional dance of courage locally known as “*omutoro*” that has songs that carry the message of protecting creatures such as birds, insects and animals. Some anonymous informants expressed their disappointment by claiming that the younger generation is increasingly abandoning some of these cultural practices. This indicates a visible generational gap within the Haya society and lack of continuity of the said practices at the detriment of the senior citizens. I argue that failure to mainstream such indigenous knowledge parallel in the existing formal education system may lead to the gross misunderstanding of indigenous people and their science. The elderly who strive to maintain their traditional institutions and knowledge are increasing disappearing due to preventable deaths.

A meaningful social policy needs to accommodate the cultural sensibilities of these elderly. The reason for that is the strong attachment between the elderly and social environment that shapes their worldview and their local cosmological understanding of the universe. This understanding may help policy makers to contextualize the livelihoods of the elderly. As the situation

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is today many policy documents fail to foster such an understanding. For example, the National Environmental Policy 1997, National Agriculture and Livestock Policy 1997, National Forestry Policy 1998 and other several sectoral policies related to the environment have failed to consider the aspect of indigenous knowledge that has guided local people for centuries.

#### *Haya System of Thought and Livelihoods for the Elderly*

The Haya like many other ethnic groups in Tanzania have their own philosophical foundations that have guided them for ages. The informants' way of grappling with metaphysical and epistemological questions of social life and universe guides the thinking towards a more comprehensive social policy.

The Haya society has its system of thought without which people's ways of living are misunderstood and misrepresented. One of the core elements within Haya system of thought is the Haya concept of humaneness that is known as "*obuntu*" in local language. This concept goes parallel with the practice of togetherness that is known as "*obumo*" in Haya language. The central idea of these two concepts is for an individual to identify him or herself with the community.

In the traditional way of life, production, distribution and consumption of goods are communal. This communal ideology is the foundation on which the traditional social welfare is based. Therefore, any system of thought or philosophy that dismantles this foundation destroys the social underpinnings of the indigenous social welfare for the elderly. From this Haya conceptual system, the community provides certain safety nets, social protection and livelihood for the needy and elderly.

In talking with people many of them used various proverbs, adages, riddles, ancient stories, sculptures, arts pieces and songs as expressed in their Haya language to elaborate the moral obligation of young people towards their senior citizens. For example, in Kabale village, Leonard Mjaki, 82yrs, used an adage in local language "*amagezi muliro gataurwa njweri*" which translates to "knowledge is like matchbox you can borrow from your neighbor". In Kanyangereko village, Leverian Bambanza, 84yrs, used a local proverb to emphasize the role of elders in relation to the young ones; he said "*Omwana aina ishe tayekomera nkwi*" which implies that "respect of elders is more valuable than material wealth". These proverbs are used to educate the young ones on the importance of seeking advice from the elders and

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upholding them. Through informal education the young ones are taught this Haya sensibility and later passed on to the next generation for the betterment of the society. However, about 70 percent of elderly informants expressed their disappointment claiming that there was a decline in traditional values of family, moral decay and lack of fear for spiritual punishment, antithetical to the traditional value of communal cooperation to the traditional community values and their corresponding acceptance by the large society, the nation-state could carry the responsibility of taking care of the elderly. Over 90 percent of the informants believed that the government could in that way better fulfil its obligation which she neglected they claimed.

The Haya people traditionally had different social mechanisms that provided them with a safety net. For example it was common among the Haya males to institutionalize brotherhood via blood pact. The blood pact implied that men of different clans could seal their friendship and bond to belong to the same kinship by performing respective ritual, which involved two beans of coffee and a cut of blood beneath the umbilical cord. The two men to be bonded exchanged blood mixed with a bean of coffee and swallowed it. This practice in Haya language is known as "*kushara amukundi*". The social significance of this practice among other things was that the children of the bonded brothers became by implication the children of the other party. In case of infertility or lack of children, the other party could get help at old age from the children of his bonded partner. In return, the children of the bonded partner would inherit his wealth if he dies.

However, due to advent of Christianity, education and modernization compounded with the widespread cases of diseases, especially HIV/AIDS, the practice of blood pact has been abandoned and classified as outdated without taking into consideration its social cultural value. Some of the respondents lamented at the extinction of the practice and fear that the younger generation will not perform it. In another encounter, Christian Rwechungura, 72years, from Kilele village undertook the ritual and still sees its positive value since the bonded families are still enjoying benefits of the bonding.

#### ***Haya-African Indigenous Sociology for Livelihoods***

Sociology is a scientific study of human society. The Haya-Africans have used indigenous science to describe their society for many centuries before the advent of western knowledge, in this case western sociologists namely



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Karl Marx, Max Weber, Emile Durkheim and numerous other western great thinkers. Haya *sociologists* use oral tradition as a means to share knowledge and study their societies. The Haya elderly are main sociologists who explain various ways in which their society has cared for the people in need of welfare support. The Haya society is organized in clans and other forms of kinship each of which has its deity generally known as “abachwezi” in Haya language. However each clan names its deity after their founder. Famous names of deities in the area include *Wamara, Kimuli, Mabuye, Kashasira, Mugasha, and Bwogi*, to mention a few. The word for clan in Haya Language is “*oruganda*”. It was further observed that the continuity of the clan lineage is sustained by the belief in ancestral spirits. Some claimed that the ancestors dwell after death in nature. Due to this, Haya people have maintained a tradition of preserving their ancestral spirits in small houses thatched with grass and known as “*Nyaruju*” within their domestic compound.

On 5<sup>th</sup> November, 2011 in Rushaka village the researcher encountered a live traditional priest, locally known as *embandwa*<sup>7</sup> mediating with ancestral spirits. Many villagers visited the area to consult *embandwa* to find out what was wrong in their families. Several other anonymous elderly informants re-affirmed the belief as they claimed to communicate with ancestors through a traditional priest “*embandwa*” in the event of any social problem within the clan or society in general.

My anonymous elderly informants demonstrated to me how they offer sacrifices to their ancestors before they eat or drink. For instance, after brewing their local beer, the first drop is taken aside to be offered to the ancestral spirits in “*Nyaruju*”. In cases of calamities or social upheavals, people believed that it was as a result of offending the ancestral spirits. This is due to the belief in the continuity of clan lineage that lies on ancestral powers to protect, bless, curse, increase productivity and fertility of both beings and plants.

The notion that the ancestral powers can affect members of the clan continues to permeate even many educated members of Haya clans when they experience misfortunes and illnesses. Some anonymous informants re-affirmed that they survive because of the protection and blessings of their ancestors. The living elders are the immediate subordinates who communicate with ancestors at times by visiting the ancestral graves. Due to these noble societal and spiritual functions, the elderly used to enjoy various privileges from their communities and accorded high esteem.

The above sentiments were reinforced by the only surviving local chief of Ihangiro named Petro Nyarubamba aged 82 who explained to a focus group how he had to consult the ancestors because of critical shortage of rainfall and grasshoppers. He was installed as a local chief in 1958 and served until the abolishment of chiefdoms in 1963 after which he served as a ceremonial chief until his death at the age of 82 years. He died two months later after the interview. During our encounter he explained to me the extent of hunger and the curse that had come from Haya ancestors because of what he referred to as “*obutaka mwa buagaza*” in Haya language. This translates to “we have caused the land to be cursed”. The phrase *Obutaka mwa buagaza* has a broader meaning including marriage between members of the same clan, theft, lack of respect to elders and other evils in Haya society. He claimed that evils contributed a lot for misfortunes in the society including the fatal diseases like HIV/AIDS. He further claimed that without his intervention to perform complex rituals the area would not have received rainfall and grasshoppers that is important foodstuff to the Haya people. Traditionally, grasshoppers come once a year during a rainy season between November and December in Kagera region. About 78 percent of all informants acknowledged preserving their traditional belief. This was clearly observed by the presence of shrines, sacred trees, Nyaruju and small houses for different deities.

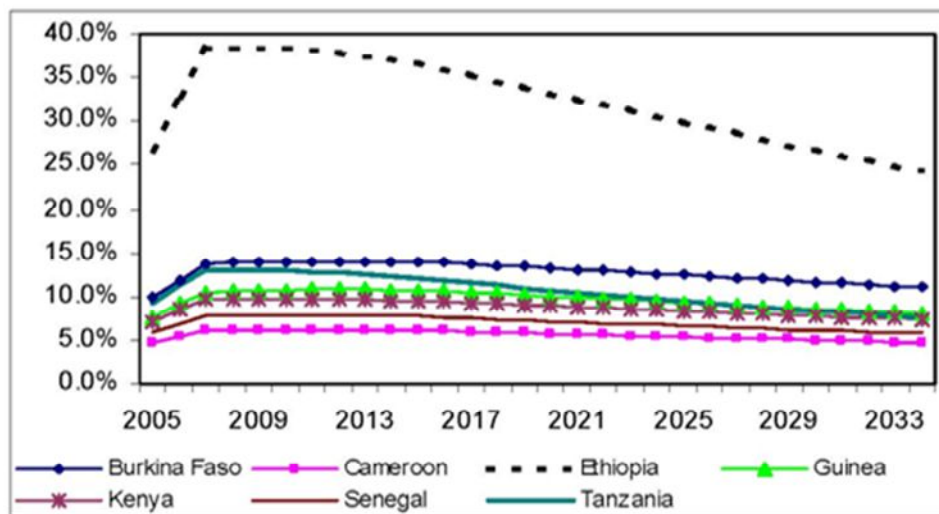
### **Conclusion**

Tanzania lacks a well-defined and home-grown national social policy system for the social welfare of her vulnerable people in rural communities, the elderly the case in point. This is largely due to the failure to utilize the wealth of indigenous knowledge preserved in more than 120 of the country’s ethnic groups. Policy makers and development planners have instead been using the western model of social policy formulation whose empirical underpinning fails to represent the realities of grassroots rural communities. Indigenous local communities are nowhere to be mapped within the western model because of unique nature of their subsistence economy that does not exist in any modern western welfare state or institutions. Similarly, available studies in social policy research and practices in Tanzania have not considered indigenous grassroots communities (Tungaraza, 1990; Mchomvu *et al*, 1998). More importantly, these studies provide clear evidence of non-existence of formal institutions for social welfare of the elderly in rural communities. This article recommends the government to establish a kind of

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a welfare state to cater for small population of the elderly in rural Tanzania who constitutes less than five percent of the total population (URT, 2002). As illustrated in the ethnographical data in this article indigenous societies have had moral imperatives to support the vulnerable group, namely the needy and the elderly through the traditional institutions based on clanship and kinship social relations. In the same way, the government has moral imperatives to establish public welfare institutions to provide cash transfer to rural elders registered at each district councils. With an on-going process of national identification cards for all citizens and reports from national census issued by national bureau of statistics, the government can establish a well-functioning database updated on monthly basis. This is supported by a comprehensive study by ILO 2005. Thus, the International Labour Organization ILO, the section of Social Security Department in Geneva in 2005 carried out a study on how Low-income countries can afford the basic social protection for old people.

Figure. 1 Cost of basic social protection package in percent of GDP (Base Case) for selected Sub-Saharan Countries, 2005-2035.



Source: ILO calculations.

Source: ILO 2005.

This ILO study provides clear evidence that costs of providing a universal old-age and invalidity are affordable. For example, at the end of the projection period in 2034, the costs are projected to reach 0.3 per cent of GDP

in Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Guinea and Senegal. Similarly Tanzania will need 0.5 per cent of GDP while Kenya and Ethiopia is 0.6 per cent of GDP. The single most important component in terms of costs in all these countries is the cost of providing basic health care which represents between 48 and 60 per cent of the total costs of the basic benefit package (in 2015). In Ethiopia it represents over 70 per cent of total costs of the basic benefit package. The cost (at its peak in 2010) of providing health care ranges from 4 per cent of GDP in Cameroon to 11 per cent of GDP in Tanzania (with the exception of Ethiopia where it represents approximately 31 per cent of GDP). The share of government expenditure allocated to basic social protection will determine the level of external financing required. It is important to note, most of these ILO projections are based on minimum ability of low-income countries to finance the social protection from their internal sources. As demonstrated in the empirical data of this article, most rural communities have been deprived of their God given natural resources through various policies instituted by the government. Therefore, I argue in this article, the government is obliged to allocate resources to provide the much need social protection for the well-being of the elderly in Bukoba rural and other rural areas in Tanzania. The example of Lake Victoria in the empirical data is a case in point. The Lake was and for some still is the main source of livelihoods among the fish-dependent rural communities in Bukoba district. Accordingly, there is a moral imperative for the government to allocate part of her G.D.P for these old people who die of preventable deaths and who are subjected to chronic rural poverty and destitution. This article recommends engaging the grassroots rural communities on the institutional forms and mechanisms that are effective in the provision of the said welfare state through cash transfer to the elderly. In doing so, the social welfare will be localized and sustainable, and people will contribute to the effectiveness of various policies designed to manage natural resources found in their rural settings.

In light of the above understanding some African countries have introduced the universal access to their old people. This is evidenced in a recent study by ILO which indicates that some middle and low income countries have introduced non-contributory old-age pensions for their elderly population, namely Brazil, Botswana, India, Mauritius, Lesotho, Namibia, Nepal and South Africa. Some countries have schemes that cover only targeted groups of the population, while others Mauritius or Namibia, have developed schemes that are widely applied to all elderly residents in their populations. Evidence from these countries show that such social pensions have a

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remarkable impact on the living standards of elderly persons and their families (ILO, 2008).

In conclusion, utilization of indigenous knowledge in social policy development in Tanzania is possible. This requires more research on indigenous societies in Tanzania for easy utilization by policy makers. Tanzanian intellectuals need to get inspiration from the historical experiences of the period of Romanticism in Europe. The inspiration ought to provide an understanding that indigenous knowledge preserved by ordinary peasants, specifically the elderly in rural areas is a resource for renewed social policy. Similarly the inspirations can be drawn from the Finnish national epic, Kalevala; it was the realization of early Finnish scholars, educated workers and researchers who collected folklore poetry from ordinary peasants in the countryside of Karelia. If scholars and researchers in Tanzania change their attitudes towards rural communities and emulate the above examples, then the country may benefit from the knowledge accumulated in many rural communities for ages. Ultimately, indigenous knowledge will not only be useful in development of social policy but also provide answers to unlock the stagnation of rural societies in their development path.

The author urges the government to mainstream indigenous knowledge to national educational system. Today the knowledge can be transmitted through new means including digital technology in addition to the oral tradition method. Due to this, the social welfare of the chief custodians of this knowledge, the elderly, will greatly improve.

**Notes**

1. Jonathan Bradshaw is the professor of Social Policy, University of York in United Kingdom (UK).
2. Professor, Bronislaw Malinowski is widely considered as a father of western anthropology and ethnography urged ethnographers to learn and use indigenous languages of primitive societies. He argues that even the mind of a savage person has something to learn.
3. The Haya names of the several types of species of fish which have disappeared according to the claims by the informants, these were namely ningu, mbete, nkuyu, ngege, nshoga, nkeije, nkuriti, mboju,

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kashorobana, mpaala, mamba and several others. These types of fish could not easily be translated into English names as it was difficult for the researcher because he does not remember to have their physical shapes.

4. In his own words, Evarista Philipo, 85 years expressed forcefully in Haya Language as follows “...waitu ntwenda eserikali batugalulile enjanja yaitu eyo twasigirwe batata enkuru ichwe no obulola bwaitu mbuluga omunyanja ya Lwelu...”
5. The Haya names of Obwaato, Engai, Eichuba, Olushabuzo, Emigonjo, Obutimba, Ekiso, Oluhosho and Empini.
6. Haya indigenous fishing instruments as translated into English by the author of this article are the following, Obwaato is a fishing boat, Engai is paddle, Eichuba or Olushabuzo which translates as a container that removes water from the fishing boat, Emigonjo translates as fishing trap or ndoano in swahili, Obutimba which translates as fishing net, Ekiso is big knife or panga, Oluhosho translates as fishing spear and Empini translates as special big stick for dangerous fish during fishing.
7. The Haya name for traditional priest is embandwa. On 5<sup>th</sup> November, 2011, the researcher visited the home of traditional priest in Rushaka village. The name of this priest was Rugaimukamu from Batundu Clan. He became traditional priest at the age of 17 years when the ancestral spirits revealed themselves into this young boy. My informants believe when the ancestral spirits reveal themselves through this boy, then he loses his consciousness and acquires divine power. At this time, he can receive order from ancestors how to cure diseases and eradicate any kind of social upheavals inflicted on people in their village. Through this traditional priest, clients are told the kind of rituals they should perform to appease the ancestral spirits.

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