

LEADERSHIP CHALLENGES IN KENYAN CIVIL SOCIETY

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A research report submitted to the Faculty of Commerce, Law and Management, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Management (Public and Development Management).

June 2008

Declaration

I, Agutu Otieno Cecil, declare that this research report is my own unaided work. It is submitted for the degree of Master of Management (Public and Development Management) at the University of the Witwatersrand – Johannesburg.

I certify that it has not been submitted for any other degree or examination at any other university.



Signed

June 1, 2008

Date

Dedication

To Michael, Andres, Diego, Fidel, Thiago, John, Inigo, Pascal, Thomas, Andrew, Bruno and Emmanuel. Their prayer, love and unwavering support saw me through my studies.

Acknowledgement

I express my gratitude to Dr. Johannes Matshabaphala. He was my supervisor and a good friend. He worked tirelessly giving clear and timely direction that led to a successful conclusion of this research project.

Secondly, I thank Dr. Collins Miruka for his continued support, constructive and critical contribution at all stages of the research project. It added the last strokes of a master to the piece of work.

Lastly I thank my family and friends both in Kenya and in South Africa whose encouragement, prayers and material support saw me through Masters Studies. May God bless all of them.

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List of Abbreviations

Ksh – Kenya Shillings

NI – Networked Idealists

Abstract

Kenya and Africa continues to grapple with many development challenges. Civil society, the government and the private sector all play a critical role in tackling development challenges in Kenya. For civil society to play the rightful role in the development it has to overcome many challenges which include poor leadership and corruption, lack of capabilities to fulfill the desired roles, approaches to development that are not responding to the needs of communities among other challenges. Yala Swamp community in Kenya was chosen for this case study as it experienced challenges that hamper their effort to address the adverse farming activities of an American multinational corporation. The key challenge they were experiencing is leadership. This stems from the personalities of the leaders, challenges from within and without their new social movement. The purpose of this study was to explore and understand the leadership challenges in new social movements, how they are being addressed and how they could be addressed in the future.

This research was qualitative in nature and aimed at gaining an understanding of leadership challenges in new social movements and how best they can be addressed from the perspective of community members who are experiencing development challenges. The research findings concluded that leadership challenges that hamper the work of new social movement attempting to address development issues at the community level emanated from personalities of leaders; community members; and opponents of the movements or forces outside the movement. The key recommendations include using a leadership system known as relay leadership which is amenable to realities of new social movements working at the community level. Civil society also needs to be grounded on the needs and aspirations of the people, guided by values and clear principles and establish relationships from the local to the international levels where necessary and appropriate to tackle the development challenges of communities.

Chapter 1.0

1.1 Background of the Study

Development is the process by which people increasingly take charge of their destiny so as to enjoy their human rights. For it to take place people have to be the protagonists of and the primary goal of development. The three sectors of society namely the state/government, civil society and private sector have to work together and each has to play its role for development to be realised.

1.1.1 State, Civil Society and Private Sector Relationships

Different schools of thought have different ways of viewing the relationship between the state/government, civil society and the private sector. In this section the liberal and the Keynesian welfare state perspectives will be considered to explore the nature of the relationships between the three sectors of society.

In the liberal perspective civil society is viewed as consumers and human resources. The private sector in turn provides jobs for civil society and pays taxes to government. The government is seen as the legitimate political sum total of societal interests and a provider of public services. Emphasis is laid on the commercial aspects of society. Civil society is also viewed to be concerned with individual welfare and a minimalist concern for law and order. In its most extreme versions the private sector is concerned with efficiency, maintaining a competitive edge and maximising profits without broader concern for society. The supplier–consumer relationship between the private sector and civil society is more pronounced than the employer-worker relationship between the private sector and workers (Midttun, 2005: 161-62).

The role of the government should be limited as far as possible to core governance issues like maintaining law and order and to framework issues like macroeconomic stabilisation. The relationship between civil society and the government is that of a voter and taxpayer who then receives services. The regulatory role of the government is reduced to a

minimum and preferably executed by independent regulatory agencies. It sets some minimum rules that facilitate pursuit of private sector interests (Midttun, 2005: 162-63). On the other hand the Keynesian welfare state perspective provides for a more active state intervention in the economy and in ensuring the welfare of society. It advocates a broader welfare oriented and active participation of civil society in the economy. The supplier-consumer and employer-worker relationship between private sector and civil society complement each other. The government provides services widely and the political sphere acquires a stronger influence on the economy. The government also plays an active regulatory role in which industrial and other policies are pursued to enhance industry and also to achieve social objectives. There is a drive to integrate the three spheres of society through “politically negotiated intermediation” (Midttun, 2005: 164).

In defining democracy as a political system Keane (1998: 8) identifies civil society and state institutions as the two necessary components and does not separate the private sector as an additional component as is the case with Midttun (2005) and CAFRAD (2005). He notes that most discourses right from Plato in the *Statesman* looked at power from the perspective of rulers and that since power is pervasive and tends to be abused it should be shared between civil society and state institutions. As such the state institutions and actors should respect and uphold the role of civilian actors and institutions sharing power with them. Civilian institutions and actors should also do the same for their counterparts in civil society (Keane, 1998: 11). Further it is to be noted that the relationship between civil society and state institutions is not necessarily a zero-sum game as attested to by the South Korean case which shows that a weak civil society is not the product of a strong state and inversely that a strong state does not necessarily produce a docile civil society (Keane, 1998: 26).

Keane (1998: 33) attributes the current popularity of the language of civil society to a loss of energy for state-centred visions in which the territorial state claims a monopoly on the ethics of shaping and ordering the identity of people. Such visions include the ‘Third

World Liberation, the Keynesian welfare state, fascism, socialism, nationalism, modernization,' among others. The state should play an active role in supporting civil society and private sector. The state can also intervene in a direct way to ensure development takes place when the private sector and civil society are not able to perform some of their roles in society. For the purpose of this study private sector comprises enterprises of varying sizes and nature that produce goods and services to make profit and meet the needs and wants of people. These enterprises are both formal and informal (Cloete & Wissink, 2000: 182 – 183; CAFRAD, 2005).

1.1.2 Role of Civil Society in Kenya

The new social movement to be studied is found in Yala Swamp to the North-West of Kisumu City in Kenya. Kenya is a member country of the East African Community. It lies between latitude 4.21 0 N and 4.28 0 S and between longitudes 34 0 E and 42 0 E. It covers an area of approximately five hundred and eighty square kilometres. Kenya's neighbours include Uganda, Tanzania, Ethiopia, Sudan, and Somalia. It shares Lake Victoria with Uganda and Tanzania having 7% of the water in the Nyanza Gulf. Kenya is divided into eight administrative provinces namely Coast, Central, North Eastern, Rift Valley, Eastern, Western, Nairobi and Nyanza. The provinces are further divided into districts.

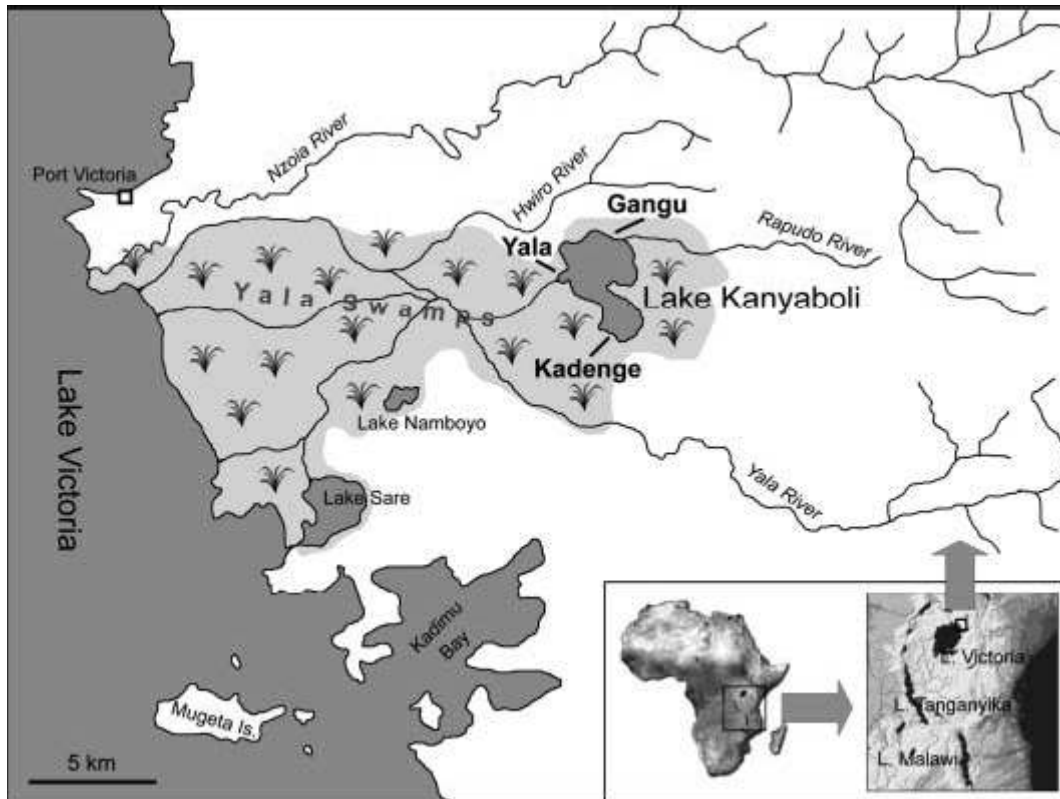


Fig. 1 Map showing the Yala Swamp area at the Kenyan shore of Lake Victoria. Source: Abila *et al.*, 2004.

The main economic activity in Kenya is agriculture with the main foreign exchange earners being flowers, tea and coffee. The tourism sector is also a major foreign exchange earner. There is also an informal sector dominated by small and micro-enterprises that provides the basis for survival for many people.

Civil society plays a fundamental role in development. It is the channel of the voices of the people. It creates space for civic action under authoritarian regimes (Barber, 1995). It also provides goods and services, which are aimed at people enjoying their human rights and a life of dignity. The three pillars of civil society are individual, civil, and socio-economic/group/cultural rights. These pillars have to strike a balance (Beyme, 1999: 255).

In Kenya civil society has played an indispensable role in ensuring the development of the country. This it has done in various ways ranging from the liberation movements that

fought for independence from British rule to modern day struggles and initiatives to ensure government upholds human rights. Civil society has also provided the space in which people participate in the life and development of the country. It has served as a voice of the people, especially the poor, by bringing their concerns and issues to bear on the making and implementation of policies and laws. Civil society has also complimented the efforts of the government to provide services that ensure people enjoy their human rights and a life of dignity. An example is in the health sector where civil society and the private sector provide up to 49% of the health services (Wamai, 2004: 5).

For civil society to perform its rightful role in the development process of Kenya many factors come into play. The factors include the need for civil society to be concretely linked to local communities and address the local development needs. They need to use reliable information on development needs of communities and how such needs can be addressed. The information should be widely shared in communities using the most appropriate media and in forms that can be easily understood and used by local community members. There is also a need for knowledge and skills to address development needs. Financial and non financial resources form a critical component that enables civil society play its role in addressing the development needs of local communities. Lastly civil society needs good leadership. Leadership can play a critical role in setting direction and aligning people to achieve set goals. It also serves to motivate people to work towards their goals especially when faced with discouraging difficulties. Lack of good leadership adversely impacts on attempts to address the development needs of local communities by civil society.

1.1.3 Leadership in Civil Society in Kenya

A leader is one who creates a vision and articulates it in such a way that the followers are committed to the vision. It is important for the leader to build legitimacy, which is necessary for the organisation to achieve its objectives. This is done by cultivating an environment which creates legitimacy (Schmidt, 2006: 181). Over time scholars have developed theories of leadership that range from those focusing on traits of the leader to

those focusing on situations in which leaders and organisations find themselves. Other perspectives have attempted a hybrid of the two.

The traits of a leader combined with other factors determine the effectiveness of a leader. In studies by Stogdill and Bass (1990) and Locke and Kickpatrick (1991) (cited in Daft, 2002: 45), some of the traits that contribute to leadership are physical, social and work related characteristics. The leader's personality and social background also contribute to effectiveness (Daft, 2002: 45).

Dyadic theory on the other hand holds that traits and behaviour theories oversimplify the relationship between leaders and followers. It holds that leaders do not exercise traits and behaviour broadly on all their followers but form "different relationships with different followers" (Daft 2002: 61). The theory has developed such that a leader can form individual relationships with followers thus diffusing the tensions that arise from creating in-groups and out-groups in an organisation. The leader can also develop relationships beyond a unit or the organisation itself into larger systems and networks so as to achieve the goals of the organisation (Daft, 2002: 63 - 65).

The other theoretical perspective is that leadership styles are contingent upon the situations in which leaders and organisations find themselves. Hersey and Blanchard's model looks at the characteristics of followers as opposed to Fiedler's model which looks at the general situation. They are of the view that followers have varying "readiness" and as such leaders can take various approaches to leadership. For followers with low readiness the leader will resort to "telling", giving direction on how things should be done. For followers with moderate readiness the leader will resort to "selling" and "participating." In "selling" the leader provides direction on how things should be done but incorporates the inputs of the followers before making a decision. In "participation" the leader supports the capacity of followers by developing their skills, providing information and advice. For followers who have high readiness the leader uses "delegating". Here the leader gives "little direction and little support." The followers

assume responsibility for their work and the success of the organisation (Daft, 2002: 86 - 87).

These theoretical perspectives explain the nature of leadership in organisations to varying extents. To varying degrees the traits and behaviour of a leader, characteristics of followers and situations in which leaders and organisations find themselves determine the most effective style a leader can use. Working with social movements, advocacy campaigns and community based organisations (CBOs) one has experiences of some challenges with the leadership of these initiatives. Some leaders deviate from the goals set out by the communities to address development needs. They pursue goals which contradict community goals and end up harming the community cause. Some leaders also accumulate and abuse power. They pursue personal interests which are adversarial to wider community interests.

This situation usually creates some instability in the group and takes valuable and much needed time to resolve. During this time the group will not fully pursue its set objectives. In some cases the leader totally jeopardises the people's initiative. It is for these reasons that this study will explore the possibility of a leadership style that can better serve in these initiatives. The leadership style proposed is amenable to issue-based new social movements which operate in concentric circles. The people who are affected by a development issue are at the centre or the inner circle and they interact with other players and the environment in general at local, regional and international levels so as to tackle the development issue at hand. Such movements also operate in a chaotic environment or one which is largely non-supportive of their cause.

The proposed leadership system similar elements of which are outlined by Lowy, Hood and Singer (2005: 4-9) is referred to as "Relay Leadership." This borrows from the relay race in which one runner passes a baton to the next runner in a team and the effort of each runner in the team contributes to the overall success or failure of the team. Relay leadership has a number of characteristics. Firstly leadership here is viewed as a space as

opposed to a position occupied by an individual or a group of people. People step in and out of leadership depending on circumstances, capabilities or just purely on a regular basis so that others also have a chance to exercise leadership. It seeks to bring capabilities of different individuals and institutions to the achievement of the overall goal, to serve the interests of the community.

Secondly relay leadership assumes that all the people affected by a development issue have a certain critical minimum understanding of the issues affecting them and there is need for constant information and education to more fully appreciate the issues and dynamics. It is recognized that issues affect people and communities in different ways and magnitudes. These differentiated groups can all work to address the issue at hand so long as there is a “Core Group”. The core group is the one which is most directly affected at the start of addressing the issue.

Thirdly the people affected by an issue have to agree to address it. The way of addressing the issues at hand is organic in nature. This leaves room for innovations, flexibility and the use of indigenous knowledge and other forms of knowledge to advance the cause of the community. This approach is primarily centred on the people who are directly affected by a development issue and have decided to resolve it.

This study has considered the case of Yala Swamp communities in Kenya who are organised as a new social movement to address the land, livelihood and environmental problems that they face as a result of the large-scale commercial farming activities of an American multinational corporation. Yala Swamp is found at the mouth of river Yala where it drains into Lake Victoria to the North West of Kisumu City.

1.2 Problem Statement

There is an increase in globalisation and rapid changes in the society coupled with increasing levels of poverty in most developing countries. This is coupled with inadequate governance systems that do not effectively play their role in addressing

problems affecting the people. Civil society therefore needs to come up with more innovative ways to address these problems so as to uphold the human rights and dignity of people. New social movements are one way in which civil society is addressing problems affecting local communities. The Yala Swamp community in Kenya is one such community which is organised as a new social movement to tackle the negative impacts on their land, livelihoods and environment caused by the commercial large-scale farming activities of a multi-national corporation.

Leadership plays a critical role in new social movements and it has an impact on achievement of community goals. The problem with leadership in new social movements is that it is built around personalities and positions and faced with challenges it fails to perform its role thus hampering the attainment of community goals. Many leaders tend to pursue individual interests and easily succumb to pressure from their movements and opposing groups at the expense of local communities. The challenges facing leaders in new social movements range from those related to their capabilities and values to those posed by the environment they operate in and the followers in the movements

Many studies have concentrated on leadership in formal organisations and conceived of leadership as a role played or a position occupied by individuals or a group of individuals as opposed to leadership conceived of as a space in which individuals or organisations step in to serve the needs of communities. This study, by using a case study approach, attempts to answer the following research problem: By treating leadership as a veritable serving space, how do we address the challenges faced by new social movements in order for them to effectively complement governance shortcomings in the target communities?

1.3 Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study is to explore and understand the leadership challenges in new social movements, how they are being addressed and how they could be addressed in the future. Specifically the study seeks:

1. To investigate leadership challenges and how they are addressed in new social movements in Kenya.
2. To interpret and analyse findings so as to contribute to relay leadership system that will be used by new social movements in addressing problems at the community level in Kenya.
3. To make recommendations on improving leadership in civil society in Kenya.

1.4 Research Questions

1. What are the leadership challenges in new social movements in Kenya and how are they being addressed?
2. What factors contribute to relay leadership in new social movements in Kenya?
3. In which ways can leadership in civil society in Kenya be improved?

1.5 Significance of the Study

Leadership plays a critical role in ensuring civil society plays its rightful role. Challenges in leadership have continued to hamper the critical and indispensable role that civil society plays in ensuring development of the Kenyan people. This study has illuminated and explored the challenge to leadership in new social movements and how they are being addressed in Kenya. This will help build “relay leadership” which can be used by such movements to address some development challenges affecting them as some previously used methods are not as effective as they used to be in a fast changing and globalising world. It will also help organisations and other actors including policy makers working with such movements to understand them and relate with them in such a way that development is achieved. It will also shade light and ask questions that will assist in leading other scholars to consolidate the proposed new system of leadership.

Chapter 2.0: Literature Review

This chapter will link the theoretical framework used with the research problem (leadership in civil society) and the research design used for the study. It will define the key concepts used in the study namely civil society, new social movements and leadership based on a concentric circles theoretical framework. It will then explore different debates around these concepts and how they relate to the research problem.

2.1 Civil Society

There is recognition that the state and the market each acting alone or acting together cannot by themselves achieve development and decent life for society. This introduces civil society as a concept with a long and uneven history. The political philosopher G.W.F. Hegel held that civil society was a realm characterised by competition and contract resulting in divisions which could only be remedied if the citizens entered the realm of the state. For him the state was superior to civil society. Contemporary use of civil society in some political debates however holds that civil society refers to the sphere of “associational life” which goes beyond the family but is also not government. Consequently the state exists to serve civil society and not to “transcend” it (Elshtain, 1999: 208 - 209). Civil society promotes the solidarity of people, their freedom and equality (Keane, 1998: 80-81).

The former Malaysian Prime Minister Dr Mahathir bin Muhammad (cited in Keane, 1998: 3) defines civil society as “a community which is self regulating and empowered through the use of knowledge, skills and values inculcated within the people. Such a society will allow [people] to live a life of managed destiny and dignity, not just in the here and now, but also in the hereafter.” In a view that could exclude formations that are legitimate expressions of the people’s will and wishes and which are not provided for in the law, Keane (1998: 6) defines civil society as “an ideal-type category that both describes and envisages a complex and dynamic ensemble of legally protected non-

governmental institutions that tend to be non-violent, self-organizing, self-reflexive, and permanently in tension with each other and with state institutions that ‘frame’, constrict and enable their activities.”

Civil society is then, for the purposes of this study, any association or social formation that lies between an individual and the “formal structure of state power.” A robust civil society is necessary to prevent concentration of power in a few individuals, groups, arms of the state or the state itself. It also provides a space to nurture democratic civic virtues in citizens and for them to participate meaningfully in the affairs of the society. It also has the capacity to provide political alternatives and monitor the state and government (Keane, 1998: 48; Elshtain, 1999: 209; Beyme, 1999: 229; Friedman, 2003: 6-7; Nchabeleng, 2003: 5). Because of the complex and fast changing nature of social, economic and political life, civil society also develops in a way that it is not subject to being created by social engineers nor explained by linear models. It has resulted and benefited from many interactions in history and is an open system whose use has varying impacts on society (Elshtain, 1999: 210).

An increasing emphasis on individualistic life of the modern world militates against civil society because it stresses independence. Civil society in contrast affirms interdependence as a way of achieving development and a decent life for all in society. Neither the individualistic nor collective approaches to life can sustain civil society (Elshtain, 1999: 210, 215). It is sustained by many factors among them authority. One of the challenges to civil society today is the function and meaning of authority. This confusion and error stems from John Stuart Mill who posed liberty against authority unlike posing liberty against tyranny, dominion or authoritarianism. Mill is wrong because we need authority to sustain a decent liberty which has regard for others. The failure to distinguish authority from various forms of coercion and even violence throws the society into an abyss. Legitimate authority was historically bound by law, tradition, forces of past example and experience. It is this bounded freedom that creates the space

within which people can achieve development and a life of dignity (Arendt, 1980: 95; Elshtain, 1999: 215-16).

John Paul II (1988: 650) introduced the idea that civil society also needs to be formed and act at the international level. One of its critical elements is “solidarity.” This is not a “feeling of vague compassion or shallow distress at the misfortunes of so many people” but instead, a determination to work for the common good of others because people are responsible for each other. To build a sound civil society Minnerath (cited in Elshtain, 1999: 221) argues that the autonomy of the family, conscience and culture has to be respected. Zubrzycki (cited in Elshtain, 1999: 221) argues that participation in civil society can be hampered by many factors including inequalities in education and the negative aspects of globalisation. He further argues that reciprocity, amicability and solidarity offer a great potential for civil society to build social capital.

2.2 New Social Movements

The new social movements are non-economic and non-ideological. They are restricted in the issues they deal with and have a floating group of supporters but no membership or membership fees. They are characterised by unconventional behaviour and participation is seen as a means to achieving an end. They are more difficult to handle because some groups in them do not want co-option or participation in the centre. They want autonomy as opposed to representation (Beyme, 1999: 236, 255).

A social movement consists of people who make claims targeted at certain object(s) or authorities by use of varied performances that lead to public representation of their cause. The use of a repertoire in sustained campaigns distinguishes social movements from other forms of political action (Tilly, 2004: 4, 7). From their origins social movements do not exist as “solo performances, but as interactive campaigns.” They are best understood by looking at the actors they interact with like their allies, rivals, constituencies and authorities as opposed to focusing on the main claimant (Tilly, 2004: 12).

Archer (cited in Elshtain, 1999: 224) expresses doubt as to whether new social movements can act as vehicles for change and development at the community level seeing that they are single-issue movements and lack integration into the wider parts of society that would enable them to fulfil their function. Elshtain (1999: 227) tries to make a distinction between institutions, whose life spans are longer, and which he views as properly constituting civil society and social movements which come and go quickly. He notes that part of the problem with social movements is that they demand solidarity based on internal opinion and that whereas there are some exceptions, their internal solidarity is based on a feeling of hostility against other groups. As such they do not have the primary requisites of civil society of advancing the common good. Keane (1998: 136, 141) also holds that at advanced levels of its development civil society can and does contain violent tendencies which if not checked become the normal way of operating and in extreme cases leads to war. Violence is the antithesis of civil society which prevents it from being a haven of non-violent harmony.

However Bergdall (n.d.: 4-8) citing the example of the Polish Solidarity Movement, Czechoslovakia's Velvet Revolution, organising of anti-Apartheid action in South Africa, Tiananmen Square in China, People's Power in the Philippines, and the Green Belt Movement in Kenya argues that social movements are part of civil society. Indeed they work with existing groups to achieve their goals. The Polish Solidarity Movement sought not to form a political party or capture state power neither was it interested in ideological inclinations to restore capitalism or to see the state wither away. It followed a self-limiting strategy that evolved over time and in 1981 was transformed into the idea of a 'self-governing republic.' Its ultimate aim was to forge solidarity among self-governing civil associations to be able to put pressure on the state using non-violent means (Keane, 1998: 22). Another departure is that the agenda of social movements is not necessarily an expression of opinion but could be based on certain objective truths.

Social movements combine three types of claims. Firstly are "program claims" which involve support for or opposition to actions taken or proposed by the objects of the

movement's claims. Secondly, are "identity claims" which comprises of assertions that the claimants are a unified force that has to be reckoned with and lastly "standing claims" which "assert ties and similarities to other political actors." The nature and understanding of claims vary within and without the movements. It also varies across movements and at the different phases of a movement (Tilly, 2004: 12).

In the initial stages the new social movements use the media for mobilisation. Part of the success of these movements is because of the fact that they apply pressure not only to state agencies but also to private organisations. They do not act along ideological lines but pick on private firms and put pressure on them in such a way that they mobilise ideological support and secure incentives for state agencies to intervene. They are successful only with a capable leadership. Their success also depends on alliances with traditional groups like churches and trade unions (Shafer, 2007: 75; Beyme, 1999: 236, 238-39). Micro-public spheres are a vital feature of contemporary social movements. They are not concerned with grand visions of a utopian future but are focused on the now. They consist of low-profile networks of small groups, friendships, local contacts among others, which are embedded in the daily life of civil society. The movements put a lot of stress on solidarity, addressing of individual needs, and part-time involvement. These networks form laboratories where experiences are invented and popularized. The networks use various means of communication; they question and transform dominant or prevailing ways of doing and looking at things (Keane, 1998: 171-72).

At times these micro-public spheres coalesce into publicly visible media events and demonstrations, though paradoxically the movements draw their strength and momentum from the fact that they are mostly latent. Although they operate in a latent way they in fact have the characteristics of small group public efforts whose effectiveness in challenging the distribution of power comes from the fact that "they operate unhindered in the unnewsworthy nooks and crannies of civil society" (Keane, 1998: 174). By use of public spheres, contemporary social movements have the capacity to monitor use of power from various sites within the state and civil society institutions thus ensuring that

power is not monopolized and is exercised in a way that is more likely to be accountable to the people it affects directly or indirectly (Keane, 1998: 188). Civil society and, for that matter new social movements, rest on three pillars of individual, civil and socio-economic/ group/ cultural rights. A balance is needed between the three pillars. Neglect of any of the pillars weakens new social movements, as was the case with the Polish Solidarity Movement (Beyme, 1999: 255).

The study has considered movements working within a concentric circle framework. The theory of concentric circles is based on the idea that people close to each other build relationships stronger than those they would build with people further away. Geographical proximity is important though other factor influencing the relationship include “mutual knowledge about needs and wishes, mutual impact, mutual agreement about values and goals, [and] common projects” (Arler, 2006: 140-141). Arler (2006: 141) further argues for the primary importance of the outer circle of relationships and interactions and that the inner circle should align its relationships and behaviour to conform to the requirements of the outer circle.

However to put people at the centre of development, for them to be the protagonists, they are at the inner concentric circle. This circle is the most important and it relates with the outer concentric circles (Chambers, 1987: 188-89). The people who are affected by a development issue are in the inner circle and they interact with other players and the environment in general at their local, regional and international levels so as to tackle the development issue at hand. They operate in a chaotic environment or one which is largely non-supportive of their cause.

2.3 Leadership

Leadership is about coping with change. To cope with change, leaders start by setting a direction or vision and the strategies to achieve it. The leader then aligns the followers to the vision by communicating the vision to people who can create coalitions that understand the vision and are ready to achieve it. Leaders motivate and inspire people to achieve the vision. This they do by keeping people on the path to attaining the vision

even though challenges may exist (Kotter, 2001: 4). Leadership involves lifelong learning and can also be viewed as the ability to accept responsibility for “tasks, oneself and others” (Gibson, Ivancevich and Donnely, 1994: 438-39).

Looking at leadership as a function of management Smit and Cronjé (2002: 278) view leadership as a process of directing people’s behaviour to accomplish certain set objectives. Leadership here is the bridge that fills the gap between formulation of plans and attaining of set objectives. Leadership translates plans into reality. In this setting leadership has various components including “authority, power, influence, delegation, responsibility and accountability” (Smit & Cronjé, 2002: 280). However, power and authority are the two foundations of leadership. Power here is the ability to influence other people without resorting to coercion, and does not derive from a manager’s position in the hierarchy or his or her title. It has to be earned (Smit & Cronjé, 2002: 282, 284; Kaplan, 1994: 2).

For people, organisations and movements to excel leaders need to create an environment in which power is used to serve the people and not private interests. Leadership, more than being viewed as a job in the narrow sense, which is reduced to a means of earning income, is a calling. Ultimately effective and credible leadership does not rely on position but on the respect one commands. It requires authority rather than manipulation. For a leader to have authentic authority they must be masters of themselves, sure-footed and have the ability to adapt to new realities. Credible leaders chose to give power to others as a way of serving them and for a course greater than the leader. Acting like generators they take the power that flows to them and direct it to others becoming a source from which people draw energy. A paradox of power which credible leaders accept and practice is that one becomes more powerful when they give their own power away. This notion of power differs from a prevalent view that power is a fixed sum in which if one has more power then another person has less of it. This later view predisposes individuals to accumulate and cling to power to the detriment of people organisations, movements and nations. The more people believe that they have a contribution to make in achieving

the set goals the more effective they will be (Kouzes & Posner, 1995: 182, 185, 186; Kaplan, 1994: 2, 6).

The leadership system proposed for new social movements to achieve their goals is referred to as “Relay Leadership.” It borrows from the relay race in which a team of runners pass on a baton with the performance of each runner contributing to the overall success or failure of the team. Relay leadership has a number of characteristics. Lowy, Hood and Singer (2005: 4) in looking at new leaders in business identify certain aspects that reflect relay leadership. They call these leaders networked idealists (NI). They are the new brand of innovators and businesses that can inflict a quick and sometimes lasting damage on the market leaders. They operate outside conventional engagements sowing chaos by "upsetting market expectation"(Lowy, *et al.*, 2005: 4).

The networked idealist (NI) adopts a guerrilla tactic making it hard for them to be attacked directly. Taking advantage of existing networks, they organise and communicate to address their development needs. Their organisation is loose or amorphous. Leadership entails a journey of discovery and adventure. They focus on attacking the strengths of competitors as opposed to attacking their weaknesses. In advancing their cause, they appeal to a set of ideals as opposed to economic arguments. They tend to grow fast. They lead from the centre making use of the knowledge of their stakeholders as opposed to keeping control at the centre. For leadership to work in coalitions, where it can become difficult to forge consensus and achieve commitment, it is important to keep people informed, nurture personal relationships, involve people in making important decisions and give people credit for their contributions. They avoid unnecessary limelight as a way of retaining credibility as opposed to their competitors who seek publicity and attention as a way of appearing large and powerful (Lowy, *et al.*, 2005: 4 – 5; Kouzes & Posner, 1995: 49, 181).

The NI draw from the unfulfilled needs of their followers. They have five key characteristics, which include firstly the use of guerrilla approaches to go around

traditional barriers. Secondly, they do not desire to succeed by the standards of existing institutions. Thirdly, they are based on values and ideals. Values provide a common standard that people can use to evaluate their decisions and actions. The values need to be clear and agreed upon and this way they bring the best out of leaders and people. Values help people determine what to do and what not to do. Influencing all aspects of life, they set parameters for the numerous decisions we make daily. While clearly articulating their principles, leaders have to be consistent with the aspirations of their people. Leaders are to set an example based on shared values and an understanding of the set goals. Leaders must work to build a consensus on the common cause and set of principles. They must build a community with shared values. Tensions do arise between personal and organisational values. Those who are less clear about their personal values but clearer on organisational values tend to lack a commitment to organisational goals as compared to those who are clear on both sets of values. However, those who are clear on their personal values and less clear on organisational values do not display the lack of commitment like the former group. Values should not be used as a ground to suppress dissent or divergent views. One cross-cutting value is freedom which is to be preferred at all times to enslavement (Lowy, *et al.*, 2005: 5 – 6; Kouzes & Posner, 1995: 212-213, 218-219). Fourthly, they attack the strengths of incumbent institutions directly. Lastly, they involve the knowledge of stakeholders in decision-making.

The failure or success of most leaders arises from their ability to know and understand the people they lead. Being insensitive to people and failing to recognise their needs is one of the causes of leadership failure. Such leaders lack the ability to appreciate other people's perspectives. Other causes of failure include being aloof and arrogant, betraying the trust of people and not delegating or building teams. Looking at executives who had failed, they were found to be loners who operated independently, were highly critical of their staff and unwilling to share power or control. They viewed involving people in making decisions as a waste of time and had poor interpersonal skills. Such leaders were also ill at ease with others, made insensitive and un-diplomatic comments about people and mistrusted them. Such leaders failed because there was a limit to what they could do

on their own. Using power to serve people transforms them into leaders hence to achieving the set goals. Max De Pree (cited in Kaplan 1994: 8) holds that leaders should not complain about their followers or use them as an excuse for poor leadership. Indeed leadership is to be judged by the quality of its followers. NI destroys traditional barriers to entry in a particular sector of society or business in which they want to enter. They then establish themselves while destroying the value of their competitors by attacking their strengths as opposed to their weaknesses. They want to accomplish a lot with limited resources and have an impact otherwise impossible by the use of traditional means (Lowy, *et al.*, 2005: 5 – 6; Kouzes & Posner, 1995: 190-191).

One unique advantage of NI is that being idealistic they are open to forms of expression that are not readily available to established competitors. They develop a diversity based on community resources. The leaders are cognizant of the need to involve followers in decision-making and the value creation process. NI are organised in an organic, cellular and distributed manner. They are organised in concentric circles with founders at the centre. Power is hierarchical as in traditional structures though decision-making is based on expertise and not on position. However, Albert Camus in his work *The Fall* (cited in Kaplan, 1994: 15) commenting on leadership styles notes that when one has character then one need not apply method. Thus the development of leadership capacity is about developing substance and character as contrasted to assuming certain techniques and skills suited for certain leadership styles. “Leadership then, is fluid, flexible, responsive, innovative; the image which arises is one of movement and change” (Kaplan, 1994: 22). While Camus correctly points out that leadership cannot be reduced to acquiring certain skills and techniques it is true and offers great potential and advantage for people to have skills and knowledge to be able to make good judgements (Kouzes & Posner, 1995: 180).

They create systems and structures that are responsive to the needs of their stakeholders. Closest to the founders is the inner circle where one finds the "advisers, mentors and often funders"(Lowy, *et al.*, 2005: 7). The next circle comprises of stakeholders who are active and co-create the content of the organisation. The outer circle comprises of the

public supporters of the NI. The relay leadership adopted by the study differs from that of NI in that as opposed to a primary emphasis on a hierarchical structure it is viewed as a space and not a position occupied by an individual or a group of people. People step in and out of leadership depending on circumstances, capabilities or just purely on a regular basis so that others can also exercise leadership. It seeks to bring the character and capabilities of different individuals and institutions to the achievement of the overall goal, to serve the interests of the community. It is recognised that characters and capabilities are diverse and that capabilities of different people can compliment each other in leadership. This leadership is based on the spirit of service to achieve the set out community goals within defined principles and values (Lowy, *et al.*, 2005: 7; Kaplan, 1994: 15).

In describing leadership in state institutions Keane (1998: 43-44) notes the “politician of retreat” which has some characteristics that point to relay leadership. “Politicians of retreat” dismantle dictatorships from the top and exhibit certain characteristics, which include not being driven by a lust for power nor grand visions of conquest. They are skilled at opening up despotism and enabling civil society to grow mainly by making compromises between state institutions and people and withdrawing from unworkable positions. The art of political retreat is difficult to learn and requires one to be able to make distinctions between foolishness and magnanimity, to know the correct moment to blow the whistle on one’s opponents and when to abandon untenable positions and retreat. It “always requires mettle, acumen, nerve, toughness and patience” (Keane, 1998: 44).

In analysing the African public services, Blunt and Jones (1992: 228) point out that one of the biggest leadership challenges is that many leaders focusing on the crucial need to build cohesive nations or organisations compromise the pursuit of democratic ideals which involve decentralising the very authority they feel is indispensable for ensuring cohesion. Secondly, there is an emphasis on control rather than performance. This leads to the creation of elaborate bureaucratic systems and structures but with little attention to

performance. This view on leadership continues to hamper development and progress in Africa.

‘Politics of retreat’ is delicate and dangerous with its protagonists constantly treading on political quicksand and risking their careers and lives. They are surrounded by enemies wielding state power and are treated with ingratitude from both their rivals and their followers. However, they understand from the outset that they have to be ruined for the good of their people. Leaders here create room for self-organizing civil society and in so doing create the very conditions for their downfall as leaders because they are usually unnerved by rebellion and clattering of civil society. They learn slowly that effective leadership involves winning the trust of people and goes beyond the mechanics of dismantling despotism. They end up being the victims of the political and social forces that they helped unleash (Keane, 1998: 44-45).

Uphoff, Esman and Krishna (1998: 45) in studying the successes in large-scale rural development initiatives note that leadership plays a crucial role in which leaders act as catalysts. They propose that leadership should be expanded from a fixation with an individual to a collective vision of leadership. This vision of leadership does not undermine the contribution of visionary personalities. Collective leadership has accomplished the successes of rural development as in the example of Iringa Child Nutrition programme in Tanzania where successes are attributed to no particular individual as the principal source of ideas and leadership. This is in contrast to the case of Muhammad Yunus with the Grameen Bank in Bangladesh (Uphoff *et al.*, 1998: 47).

Some characteristics of leaders in rural development consists of persevering and being persistent in the face of opposition that comes early in the initiatives and a willingness on the part of leaders to incur personal costs so as to achieve the greater common good. This drive comes as a result of the people reinforcing to the leader that the path taken is indeed the correct one and is working. Leadership is also open to contribution of people at different levels and capabilities (Uphoff *et al.* 1998: 50). For rural development efforts to

succeed they have to be driven by participation and egalitarian ideals. A participatory style of leadership is important. Further, at the beginning of such efforts an agreed upon and satisfactory set of practices and principles should be adopted to guide the efforts because this enhances the chances of achieving set goals (Uphoff et al. 1998: 51, 57, 59).

Relay leadership assumes that all the people affected by a development issue have a certain critical minimum understanding of the issues affecting them and that there is need for constant information and education to more fully appreciate the issues and their dynamics. It is recognized that people and communities are affected by issues in different ways and magnitudes. These differentiated groups can all work to address the issue at hand so long as there is a “Core Group”. The “core group” is the segment of a local community that is most affected by a development issue and is located at the inner concentric circle.

The people affected by an issue have to resolve to address the issue. The way of addressing the issues at hand and organisation involved is organic in nature. This leaves room for innovations, flexibility and the use of indigenous knowledge and other forms of knowledge to advance the cause of the community. As noted by Kouzes & Posner (1995:51) leadership is inseparably connected with the innovation, bring new ideas, methods and solutions to the issues affecting people. The people affected by a development issue and have decided to resolve the issue are placed at the centre of this approach to tackling development issues.

Incumbent competitors have various options of dealing with NI. Firstly, they can "eliminate" NI, which involves the use of legal resources to intimidate NI or a variation, which involves buying them out. Secondly, they can resort to a more promising strategy of "joining" their cause. Thirdly, they can "barricade" the NI, which involves a mix of legal action, and the regulatory frameworks which tend to favour incumbents. Fourthly they can "align" the NI by varying methods of co-option and cooperation (Lowy, *et al.*, 2005: 9).

The leadership of these new social movements face other challenges, which are related to the above-mentioned challenges posed by competitors. The capacity to protest of these movements can be reduced by "counter-mobilisation and élite co-optation" (Beyme, 1999: 236). Competitors can strive to mobilise other sections of the society to counteract the activities of the movements. The leaders of such movements are also a target of high pressure and co-optation. Many times when the leaders stand their ground they are subjected to a first line of attack that targets their personality and reputation. When this fails then the second line of attack is intimidation, legal action mostly in terms of trumped up charges in areas where courts do not work properly, threats of violence, violence itself and even death. This was the case with the poet Ken Saro Wiwa of the Nigerian Ogoni people struggle for human rights.

In many community organizations, the leaders are not democratically elected and often represent the voice of a smaller self-appointed group, which may not accurately reflect the "views and perspectives of the broader community" (Botes & Rensburg, 2000: 46). Another related challenge is that different interest groups may perceive or actually lose access to scarce resources hence causing conflicts that derail development efforts. Conflicts also arise when different interest groups have different reasons for engaging in a development effort thus they do not share a common vision of the effort and of the community. Such differences can stem from the diversities in the community. For this reason, it is critical for a leader to focus. He or she should focus their thoughts, the organisation, the diverse and scattered energies, thoughts and interests of different people (Botes & Rensburg, 2000: 48; Kaplan, 1994: 11).

Uperty, Rai, and Sedhain, (2005b: 22) further note the use of social divisions to perpetuate divide and rule tactics so as to hamper the works of new social movements. These divisions include among others tribalism, racism, and caste. The caste system was used as a basis of divide and rule to suppress the Dalits. Sometimes the competitors attack the fact that some community leaders do not have high education levels as compared to other members of the community and say they are not worth leading.

Sometimes their social status, which may be lower than that of leaders in established organisations or government agencies is attacked and used as a basis of undermining their leadership.

The making of decisions at the community level sometimes falls into the hands of a small and self-preserving elite which acting in its own interests go against the interests of the wider community. The possibility of local elites usurping leadership positions to serve their interests is sometimes made possible by the absolute or relative poverty of community members. Such elites monopolize information channels and other decision-making instruments while community members are more concerned with the struggle to meet basic needs (Botes & Rensburg, 2000: 49). One of the biggest challenges to leadership is the demand for quick and tangible results from development efforts usually at the expense of useful processes that build institutions and ensure that the community participates adequately. Conversely, sometimes there is an overemphasis on processes at the expense of tangible results. The ideal would be for leaders to try and create a balance between processes and tangible results depending on their specific realities (Botes & Rensburg, 2000: 50).

Other challenges to leadership include the ability to link with players at different levels in society to be able to advance the cause of the community. This is coupled with the challenge of managing relationships with multiple players and stakeholders who usually have varying interests some of which are antithetical to the community goals. Leaders also face the challenge of unreliable funding to support their activities. They are also faced with personal weaknesses like corruption, greed, and selfishness among others. They may also lack the capabilities required to perform their leadership roles as is expected. This is usually in contrast to the much needed and intentional role modelling by leadership so as to focus the energies and efforts of people to achieve set goals (Uperty, Rai and Sedhain, 2005a: 20; Kouzes & Posner, 1995: 220).

In conclusion, the state and the private sector cannot, by themselves, achieve development and a life of dignity for all people in the society. Therefore, a robust civil society is needed to provide space for people to participate meaningfully in development and to counter-balance state power. The new social movements form part of civil society. They use unconventional and new ways and have a great potential for addressing development issues at the community level. However, they face many challenges one being that of leadership. This calls for a leadership system that is suited to their nature and operation and which may optimise their effectiveness and efficiency. Relay leadership proposes a system, which holds great potential for assisting new social movements. It needs to be studied, developed and practiced and its experiences used to improve its practice to address the development issues at the community level.

Chapter 3.0: Research Methodology

3.1 Research Approach

In order to address the research problem an appropriate methodology has to be adopted. There are methodologies that are suited for both quantitative and qualitative research studies. This study being a qualitative study used methodologies that are amenable to such kind of studies. Among the methodologies that are available from which one can choose depending on their stance are “grounded theory, phenomenology, narrative, ethnography, case study, or just a basic interpretive study”(Merriam, 2002: 4). The method amenable to the exploratory and explanatory nature of this study is the case study. The case study research design was adopted because it gives an in-depth description of a phenomenon or social unit that in this case was the leadership challenges experienced in the new social movement of the Yala Swamp community (Merriam, 2002: 26).

The research problem was identified from the researcher’s work experience with and interest in community organisations and social movements. With the need to understand and better deal with the leadership challenges in new social movements, a qualitative research approach was employed to the study making use of the case study of Yala Swamp community in Kenya. Yala Swamp community was purposively selected because their endeavour to address the problems affecting their community follows the typology of a new social movement. The researcher had also worked with them in the past and had a good relationship with the community and first hand experience of many of the movement’s activities (Yin, 1994: 38; Merriam, 2002: 11).

3.2 Data Collection

According to Merriam (2002: 12), there are three main sources of data for qualitative research studies namely interviews, observations and documents. The data needed to answer the research questions was collected primarily using interviews. This involved focus group discussions and in-depth individual interviews. Other secondary sources of

data for the study included the use of documents such as photos and newspapers. Direct observation in past periods by the researcher and during the interview was also used. The use of these methods is amenable to a qualitative case study approach and helped to triangulate the data collected thus enhancing the validity of the study.

The interviews were unstructured and conducted around topics and themes on leadership like the personal challenges leaders were facing or how they were dealing with challenges from outside the movement among others. The interviews were guided by a set of questions, which helped stimulate discussion taking care not to limit or narrow the contributions of the interviewees. Two focus group discussions were conducted first. The groups consisted of 8 participants drawn from different groups of people affected in different ways by the farming activities of the multi-national corporation in Yala Swamp. This ensured that the unique perspectives of different groups affected in different ways by the current challenges were not lost in an assumption that the movement was homogenous. The selection of the participants also took into consideration the gender and age groups to ensure that there were men, women and the youth thus reflecting the structure of the community. The groups include women who harvest papyrus to make mats and other artefacts for sale, farmers, cattle keepers, fisherfolk, small business owners, church leaders, those whose land has been taken over by the multinational corporation and lastly college going students (Merriam, 2002: 12-13).

The researcher made an initial visit to the community to meet the community members and discuss with them further on the study after earlier initial contact. A schedule was agreed on for the interviews. However, this had to be postponed due to election activities and the post 2007 general election violence that followed in Kenya. Later when interviews were possible one focus group discussion was held in Aduwa Village in the home of the community committee chairman in a round hut (*Abila*) built for meetings. It is in this same location that one community leader also did the in-depth interview. The second focus group discussion was held in Kanyumba Village by the community cattle dip, which was used as a meeting place for the community. To get to Kanyumba Village

one had to cross the River Yala on a canoe. An in-depth interview with another leader of the movement was also held here and another at the home of one of the leaders. The focus group discussion lasted for about two and a half hours each. The in-depth individual interviews lasted about one and a half hours each.

The researcher facilitated the interaction of participants by posing seven general questions to stimulate discussions about leadership challenges in new social movements. The questions were around the nature of the movement, the leadership challenges that were being experienced and how they were being dealt with or could be handled in the future and how civil society could be improved. In total three in-depth interviews were conducted with the movement leaders. An employee of a non-governmental organisation working with the Yala Swamp community was also interviewed in Kisumu town. During the discussions and the interviews notes were preferred to electronic recording which could intimidate or inhibit some respondents, thus compromising the quality of the data collected.

The use of direct observations by the researcher in past times and during the interviews generated first hand data in contrast to interviews which generated second hand data. The use of visual documents such as photos was also important because they already existed and as such did not intrude or alter the study setting in the way an investigator would do. The photos used in the study were taken by the researcher and his colleagues at work. The combination of these methods helped triangulate the data collected hence enhancing the validity of the study (Merriam, 2002: 13, 20, 21).

Validity was also enhanced by asking participants in the study to comment on the tentative research findings and getting comments from seven peers with whom he had worked in the past. These comments were then incorporated in the findings. The reliability of this study which makes it replicable, while noting that human behaviour is not static, derives from the consistency between the data collected and the results. The researcher is committed to upholding the human rights of people especially those who are

poor and are experiencing human rights violations. The researcher believes such people have to be at the centre of solving their problems to achieve development and a life of dignity. The researcher holds that all initiatives to achieve development and a life of dignity for all people but most pressing for the poor has to start from a correct understanding of the human being that they are the end for which all these initiatives are carried out (Merriam, 2002: 26, 27).

3.3 Data Analysis

A broad strategy was adopted to analyse the data collected through focus group discussions, in-depth interviews, observations and photos. The data is presented along emerging themes and patterns (Yin, 1994: 103 - 104). The themes are broadly the nature of the movement, the leadership challenges and civil society. These themes were partly generated from the literature review and largely from the responses of the participants in the study. The analysis will rely on the theoretical propositions made in the study which revolve around leadership in new social movements operating within a concentric circles strategy, its challenges and how new social movements can use “relay leadership” in such movements to help in achieving the desired goals. One of the basic techniques used is to combine the voice of the participants with what literature says and with the voice of the researcher. The unit of analysis is the community committee that plays the leadership role in the Yala Swamp new social movement (Yin, 1994; Merriam, 2002: 21).

3.4 Delimitations and Limitations of the Study

The study was done from the perspective participants in the new social movement that address various development issues affecting their community. Being a case study, the scope of the study was limited to the Yala Swamp community in Kenya. It focused on generating features of a leadership system that can shed more light on an effective and new leadership style at the community level. No attempt was made to investigate leadership challenges in other new social movements in Kenya. Since the Yala Swamp community had a variety of existing methods by which development challenges were addressed such ways were not investigated due to the position of the Yala Swamp

community that such methods were less effective than the new social movement. The study focused on the leadership challenges and how they were being addressed or could be addressed in the future. It focused on the earlier phase of the movement that covered the period of September 2005 to September 2006.

Due to limited time and resources, one case was used hence it is not statistically representative of leadership challenges in new social movements and the wider civil society in Kenya. This, however, was a deliberate choice. The study was intended to be useful mainly for its ability to be replicated rather than to be representative. The intention was to describe and explain the phenomenon of leadership challenges as accurately as possible and to determine how it were being addressed and it could be addressed in the future so that communities could achieve their development goals.

The main reason for choosing the case study method for this research was because it allowed for the study of leadership challenges in a new social movement in its natural setting and from the perspective of the participant (Merriam, 2002: 12). Examining leadership challenges in a natural setting, it employed focus group discussions, in-depth interviews, observation and documents to collect data. Yin (1994) suggests that case studies are appropriate to a practical situation of a current phenomenon within its real-life dynamic context, especially when the boundaries between the phenomenon and its context are not clear-cut and various sources of data are used.

Chapter 4.0: Presentation of Findings

It is one year since I last visited Yala Swamp. It is mid-morning as I arrive in Aduwa, a small village at the epicentre of the Yala Swamp residents' struggles to secure their livelihoods, environment and land from the adverse activities of an American multinational corporation. The site of my first interviews is the home of a widow who receives me joyfully but with a sigh of relief. I am later to learn that only a few days ago one of her sons was released from police custody after being arrested on grounds the police could not clearly explain: "causing a disturbance." The air is fresh and the vegetation is green, with crops standing in the farms unlike several months earlier when the farmlands were submerged in a man-made lake that had washed right to the doorsteps of the many homes bordering the expansive Yala Swamp.



Figure 2: A house previously flooded by a man-made lake in Aduwa Village, Yala Swamp.

4.1 New Social Movements

With the commercial farming activities of an American multinational corporation in Yala Swamp the residents of the area found that their livelihoods, lands and environment were being undermined. They organized themselves to address the problems they were facing. Asked in what way they were organized, the people defined themselves as just residents of Yala who are affected adversely by the activities of the multinational corporation. “We are born here. We are villagers living on our land around Yala Swamp” responded one community elder. They were struggling to uphold their livelihoods. They did not have a formed agenda to create a group. At the outset of the problems people gathered in a community meeting to ask whether the activities of the multinational corporation benefited their community or only benefited the multinational corporation.

The people held clearly that they were not a group after the usual community based organizations but were a “movement.” But why did they refer to their initiative as a movement? It consisted of men and women, the young and the old. It was started as a result of the problems posed by the multinational corporation. It is not registered by the government but is a collection of people with one goal. People are not enrolled into the movement. Its activities and goals were not limited to the affairs of a clan but to the entire community of all the people affected by a common issue and having one goal to address the adverse effects of the activities of the multinational corporation on their livelihoods.

It consisted of people affected directly and indirectly by activities of the multinational corporation. These people were interrelated because the problems affect the entire village economy. An officer in one of the non-governmental organizations that worked with the community called it “a movement of people. It is a movement because of people and the issues they had. The movement directing its activities to the multinational corporation and its supporters contested the agricultural projects being run in a manner that was detrimental to their livelihoods, land and environment. One of the activities was the spraying of pesticides using an aircraft which led to complaints of respiratory complications and deaths of livestock as the aircraft strayed into their villages. They also

reaffirmed that they were legitimate owners of their lands and were human beings who needed to be treated with dignity. They also held that they had legitimate issues and were a force that could not be ignored. The movement had no structures and rules but people come together because of the problems they are facing. It is a protest, education, an appeal.” Some people in the community view the activities of the multinational corporation as being beneficial to them and view those objecting as spoilers while the later group views the former as traitors and it is hard to reconcile the two positions.

Why villagers oppose project

We are alarmed at a story in the *Nation* of February 27, titled: ‘Yala Swamp firm to open new rice mill’.

We in Budalang’i constituency in Busia District, join our counterparts in Kadenge Sub-location of Siaya to reject Dominion company’s plans to remove villagers from their ancestral land to create room for the project.

As many are aware, on November 15, 2006, MPs debated and passed a Motion in Par-

liament tabled by Nominated MP Peter Oloo Aringo. We, the Abanyala aware of the value of courage, must stand up and say a big NO to the MPs who supported Dominion’s expansion project into the Yala Swamp in Busia.

We don’t want to be caught in a similar situation to that which has afflicted our neighbours in Siaya District. The residents within and bordering the one-third of Yala Swamp in Budalang’i with a population of 19,239 know that they stand to lose if it is leased for 25 years to a private foreign investor. -

We are not in Yala Swamp

by choice. We have more than 45 villages, with homes, schools, health and shopping centres.

We suspect that deals may have been cut in this plan to alienate our land. As much as we want the promotion of farming by irrigation and the expansion of commercial farming, we are opposed to an investor who does not apply community-driven approach.

The people of Budalang’i prefer a project which aims at ending the perennial flooding and supports community-based projects with direct benefits to the locals. Success comes from not giving up on

the journey. Plans are underway to lobby like-minded people to support a peaceful demonstration to be held on March 20, as a sign of solidarity to resist forceful eviction from Yala Swamp.

After extensive soul-searching and consultations in the area, our solemn plea to our local leaders and to President Kibaki is to reject the plan for the expansion of the Yala Swamp project by the American company. This is the cry of the majority, who do not see how this project is going to benefit them.

LINUS OUMA OGONGO,
Budalang’i.

Figure 3: A letter by an affected resident of Yala Swamp to a newspaper editor. Source: Daily Nation, 2007.

Differences with other community-based groups

The differences between this initiative and other community based groups was that it is “looking for the truth” as stated by an elder in the community. He said their solidarity is strong and that they are against corruption. They love each other and the suffering of one’s neighbour is taken to be one’s own suffering and that of the community. The

movement had waged a sustained struggle, campaign and stood firm on what it believed. This had united the community which was previously divided and had also enabled people from outside Yala Swamp to benefit from the resources of the Swamp. Other groups in the community like “merry-go-round” (popular small welfare based groupings in the community organized predominantly by women) had only a few members and were aimed at individual benefits. The movement was all inclusive with youth, women and men all playing an important role. It encompasses the entire community and not just a few people. A widow whose house collapsed due to flooding caused by a man-made lake created by the multinational corporation said they were united because they were being “robbed.” She added that they were trying to secure their livelihoods.

People in the movement are not necessarily relatives. Unlike other groups it is not registered because this would make it easy for its leaders to be victimized by government authorities. Leaders in the movement can come from any direction. The constituency and the people the movement works with vary according to situations. The movement has no bureaucracy. Leadership is loosely organized as a committee and does not operate like the usual committees, which have a chairperson, secretary, and treasurer who perform certain prescribed roles. The committee is not skills-based like the usual committees where leaders are picked based on certain criteria like knowledge on how to manage and raise finances, literacy and ability to take minutes at meetings, among others. The committee is based on the understanding of the community and its needs and on who can lead them to the set goals. The committee does not operate on its own so it facilitates activities.

The movement operated at different levels and this helped the community reclaim its lands and stopped the licensing of some farming activities that were detrimental to the livelihoods of the community. It primarily acts through a committee, which uses the ideas of the people. The movement works with community decisions passed after deliberations at community meetings. The movement has also collaborated with an international human rights non-governmental organization among other local civil society

organizations and groupings like, vegetable farmers, cattle keepers and handicraft makers. This collaboration helped especially in fighting corruption, which had pervaded many government offices so that the problems of the community were not adequately addressed. However the community constructively collaborated with some government ministries at the district level which included the Ministries of Environment and Water. The community noted that they could now drink “clean water”, and plough their farms as a result of their movement.

4.2 Leadership

4.2.1 What is leadership?

In describing leadership or what it takes to be a leader the community came up with varying positions. One businesswoman whose food business was destroyed after flooding caused by the man-made lake submerged her business premises described leadership as “a hen protecting her chicks or an umbrella covering people.” This meant to take care of the community so that people have a common understanding. A leader is a servant and should listen to what people want and be impartial. He or she is placed ahead by the community and works with the ideas of community members. A leader’s ideas are to be treated like the ideas of any other community member. Leadership was viewed not as something one imposed on others but as chosen by people for a cause. Leadership was described as a centre, which received information and facilitated people to deliberate on issues.

A leader was also one who led and helped people. He or she was one who was not hot tempered and corrupt. He or she had to like and love both the “good” and “bad” people in the community. Elected by the community to guide people, the leader united the thoughts and ideas of the community. He or she was diplomatic and resolved conflicts or consoled and won over people (*Ja mhoi*). The leader was an elected spokesperson and had to do the bidding of the people. In a case where the leader had views divergent from those of people, then he or she should think and consult the people before making any decisions or taking any actions.

Leadership was also viewed as a personal direction one could give the community to achieve a certain objective. Apart from being an overseer, a leader also had to visualize the possible futures and the direction in which things should move. One vegetable farmer described a leader as the “nucleus of society” and leadership as the “nucleic government of society. It is the steering wheel.” When people came together to tackle a development issue, not everyone could do everything. Therefore, roles needed to be assigned based on people who could perform them. Leadership was about earning the trust and confidence of people to be able to direct their affairs and enhance a process of consultation.

Roles of leaders

The first role of the leader is to ask people what they want. He is a facilitator of community meetings who unites the minds and ideas of people. The leader also floats different but good ideas to enable development take place. Serving as a bridge he also links the community with the outside world for ideas, people and institutions. He can be elected but within his followers there are people who are better or worse than he or she in different aspects relating to leadership and solutions of the problems at hand. He then has to give all these people opportunities to contribute. Since people’s thoughts are not the same, a leader should bring along those left behind so that all have a clear understanding of the direction in which things are moving. A leader needs to consult and cannot make unilateral decisions. However, a representative of one of the non-governmental organizations that works with the movement was of the view that a leader needs to influence the people. This influence of people’s ideas and thoughts should however be done through discussions.

Secondly, once he knows what people want then he should execute it together with the people. He ensures that plans are implemented as proposed. If he cannot execute what people want then he should look for help from others like the government. If this does not work then he can go to another level so as to fulfil what people want. In executing what people want the leader played an important coordination role. He also brought reconciliation where there was misunderstanding. He continuously inspires people’s

confidence in the cause. He has to set an example. An example is given when some community leaders mismanaged the distribution of relief food intended for the neediest members of the community.

It was necessary for the needy members of the community to get relief because they had not planted any crops for two years because their farms were submerged by a man-made lake put up by the multinational corporation. The fact that needy people missed the relief damaged the image of these leaders. Therefore, the leader is the custodian of values that guide the movement and he has to live by the values. He educates people by example. He mobilizes people and encourages participation to ensure set goals are achieved. He serves as a link between the movement and other organizations. He is responsible in generating partnerships that support the community cause.

Lastly, he reports back to the people on the results of planned actions and they decide on what to do. He gets information from other leaders and passes it on to the community to enable them make decisions. One woman known for her millet farming described a leader as the “ear” of the community, meaning he is like a “news reporter.” If he hears something, he has to be fast in passing information and mobilizing people. He motivates and encourages the community. He has to perform his roles. He aligns people and prevents wrong things from happening. Sometimes he can use his discretion.

To perform these roles a leader should not be hot tempered or one who bears grudges. He should be humble and respectful. A leader has to accept praises and tolerate insults. One businessman said that as a leader “you are abused and praised yet you remain constant.” He added that he has been intimidated by some of his family members to abandon the struggle but he was sticking to the struggle. A leader also had to keep secrets. This was illustrated by a Luo saying “*Akuru agoge lach*” literally “the dove has a wide chest.” This means a leader hears many things from many people and should maintain confidentiality. He should also be a clear and good communicator.

4.2.3 Leadership at its best

The Yala Swamp community celebrated times when the leadership of their movement was at its best. This approach was taken to allow the community celebrate its leadership because this is not done in many movements and organizations yet it is an important aspect of leadership. Focusing on the high points of leadership also helps to avoid the community consuming itself in negative energies.

Individual leadership

It was initially difficult for leaders to say when they were at their best because of their humility. It took encouragement from the researcher for them to open their hearts except for one community leader who was upfront on his best times as a leader. The leaders talked of what made them personally happy with their leadership roles and what they had achieved with their communities.

The leader who was upfront was happy that he is good at communicating and writing letters. However since he was not a member of the community committee some people complained that he was usurping the roles of the secretary. He held that he was not a coward and was ready to always be at the forefront whether things were “peaceful or violent.” He was not intimidated by anyone or leader even if the person was more learned than he. Another leader was also happy to be courageous and respectful towards the community members at the same time. One leader gave the example of a visit to the National Environmental Management Authority in which he challenged the government regulators on their facts about what was happening in the Swamp and also their slowness to act on the issues raised by the community. The leaders who earlier felt relatively powerless compared to such an important government agency were happy to be holding it to account for its actions and responsibilities.

One of the devises employed by opponents of the movements was an intense propaganda campaign using the mass media. One of the propaganda angles was that a few “backward an anti-development” people in the Yala Community were against the activities of the

multinational corporation. One of the ways in which the community countered the propaganda was to articulate their problems and issues on local vernacular radio stations and allow listeners to call-in and ask questions. One community leader was delighted with the way he talked in the shows and responded to the challenges posed by the presenter of the programme. Above all he was proud when on his way back home he passed by a village café and “*j’oringi*” (fish traders who go on bicycles) were commenting that he had contributed very good points and this was the same feeling in the rest of the community.

Some community members attended the 2006 World Social Forum in Nairobi. This is a global forum organized by civil society to share ideas, experiences and advocate for dealing with poverty and injustices. One of the community leaders who attended the forum was rated the best judge among those from other communities across the country in a mock court on injustices around land which was part of the preparation for the Forum. He also wrote a good brief on the issues at Yala Swamp which formed part of a brief printed and distributed at the Forum. Because of his good performance one of the organizers of the mock court gave him a “reward” of Kenya Shillings (Ksh) 500. On another occasion, this same leader was taking some visitors around the Swamp and they took pictures in the farm run by the multinational corporation. When the guards noticed they were taking pictures they were locked up and the cameras confiscated but he wriggled out of the situation by saying that white people liked taking pictures. The visitors rewarded him with Ksh 5,000.

Leadership achieving for the group

The community members and their leaders were happier with what leadership had helped achieve for the community. Before their issues and the problems came into the wider public domain the community and its leaders were already struggling quietly. The organization of radio shows to highlight the plight of the community was well done and had a big impact. This is one thing which was highly applauded by most people in the community. The shows were organised in a way that started with discussion of issues at

community meetings, selection of people to present the issues and the logistics of going to the studio to articulate the issues. The themes for information and discussion in the shows were land, corruption, diseases and issues that affected women. All this was generally well executed and even the very old women who attended the shows were well treated without any complaints.

When the issue affecting the community became public it attracted opportunistic civil society organisations like some vernacular radio stations. Such stations saw this as an opportunity to make as much money as possible by making as many shows as possible not considering whether such shows were necessary to address the issues affecting the Yala Swamp community. Coming out into the wider domain also made the opponents of the community focus on discrediting and disorganizing the community leadership.

At the beginning of the movement, leaders were happy to be elected and at how they linked the community with other civil society organisations. There were good elements of personal leadership among individual community members who linked the movement to civil society organisations and made public issues affecting the community. The support of one such organisation helped the community slow down the harmful activities of the multinational corporation. Perseverance among the community leaders united people for the struggle. A committee system was also introduced which made community leadership more coherent. Whenever the community leaders gave feedback to the people they were viewed as good leaders. One member of the community made a big sacrifice, losing his livelihood (posho mill) when the community market was submerged by the man-made lake, but stuck to the cause thus providing a good example and leadership though he was not a member of the committee. This same person also single handedly battled a machination by the multinational corporation to handpick officials of the local water users association. This association is a community organisation that manages the use of water resources in the area and is supposed to be run by the local community yet there was a move to bring people from outside the area so as to allow for its manipulation.

On December 22, 2005 the Yala community mounted an operation to stop the cutting and burning of community pastures to give way to a man-made lake created by the multinational corporation. The operation was well organized, duties assigned and successfully executed to flush out a bigger number of people who were cutting and burning community pastures. On the same occasion, one of the leaders saved a worker left behind and found hiding by some community members. The people were overtaken by anger and wanted to beat up the worker. He stopped them because beating up the person violated the agreement and principle that the movement and its activities were non-violent. A member of the community expressed pride that he led the flushing out of the workers of the multinational corporation.

One of the community leaders referring to his leadership at its best relates a story in which during the World Social Forum in Nairobi he had a chance to go to a meeting venue after being selected and was the “only black person among whites.” As the discussions went on he had a challenge bringing in the Yala Swamp issue into the discussions. When the meeting was over and people were about to close with prayer, he asked for the right to speak and convinced the participants of the Yala Swamp community’s plight and made many contacts. Some of the participants gave him Ksh 5,000 of which he gave some of the community members he had travelled with Ksh 100 each.

This incidence among a few similar incidences generated a tension between this particular leader and some members of the community who now viewed leadership as a position for getting personal benefits. We explored this tension seeing that on such forums this leader was sent to represent the interests of the community and he used his talents to do so. If rewarded, should the reward have gone to the community or to himself? Also seeing that this was a source of tension and an urge for some people to fight for leadership positions, what was the best way to handle such rewards?

The community noted that one of the strengths of its leadership is that it consults when issues come up. The leadership was also largely truthful. They have tried to align some corrupt people within the movement. Whenever leaders articulated their issues on radio, people were happy that they stood by the truth. Their firmness and consistency had mobilized and united people. The leaders had also travelled to cities like Kisumu and Nairobi to help solve the community problems. This took sacrifice and commitment. The leadership was courageous and led from the front. They lead by example. They were good at getting and sharing information with the community. People were also happy with the leadership when they secured relief food for the needy community members because they were hungry after failing to farm because the multinational corporation had submerged their farms under a man-made lake for the last two years.

The movement challenged the position held by a dominant community based organisation in the area. The organisation was big and powerful because its leader was capable of raising funds from donors and running projects to improve the livelihoods of community members. The leader of this organisation took a stand, which was contrary to the movement's position. The community members belonging to the movement and some also belonging to this organisation once took over a meeting, which was organized by organisation, and having in attendance the owner of the multinational corporation to endorse and give legitimacy to the projects. However the movement did not take over the community based organisation or dislodge its leadership, which they could have easily achieved.

Initially women were not fully active in the movement because of the intimidation and violence that was used by the opponents of the movement. The whole initiative was viewed as "*Lweny*" (war) and traditionally it is men who went to war. However this was also used as an excuse by some community members and leaders to hinder the contribution of women to the movement. One of the developments in the movement is that women were now more active and articulated their issues well in the radio shows. Some of the results that the community is happy about include the papyrus reeds which were being destroyed and fenced-off by the multinational corporation are now available

and are a source of income for women who make handicrafts and also used as roofing material; there is “clean drinking water” as opposed to stagnant water from the man-made lake. The leaders also advised the community not to vote for politicians who were corrupt and did not support the community cause and this led to most of the politicians losing their seats in the 2007 general elections.

4.3 Leadership challenges

After celebrating their leadership, the community also noted that there were some challenges. These challenges to leadership arose firstly from leaders as individuals who have personalities, which could hinder their roles as leaders. Secondly, they arose from the followers or from within the movement and lastly they were posed from outside the movement.

Personal or personality challenges

The community and their leaders noted a number of factors and circumstances that were a challenge to leadership emanating from the personalities of their leaders. One community member who is not a member of the committee yet plays many leadership roles in the movement noted that he was not always at home because of his job so sometimes when his contribution to the movement was needed he may not be around. One of the committee members was said to be uncooperative and reluctant to perform his duties. He was said to attend community meetings and “sat in the crowd” instead of sitting in front with fellow leaders and did not take the proceedings of the meeting, which he was supposed to do. This was attributed to a “cold war” he had with a fellow committee members about matters which community members could not decipher. On some occasions due to pressure from problems at hand and from community members a leader would reply rudely or harshly to people thus offending some people. One leader also said he was emotional and that this was a problem to how he related with people. To cope he had developed a habit of keeping quiet when offended by a person. On deeper reflection he was of the view that while keeping quiet had helped him a lot in the past it was also good to face people and correct them if things were wrong.

Poverty and a lack of strong will were noted to make leaders vulnerable to manipulation. Some leaders had wavered making people lose heart and hope. One leader was said to be a coward because he ran away from the community whenever there was a threat from opponents of the movement. Another example was an earlier committee selected at the suggestion of the multinational corporation to mediate between it and the aggrieved people. This committee was later compromised and this discouraged some community members. There were suspicions that some leaders were getting money/rewards from donors and were not transparent about it. A lack of transparency and accountability of some leaders to the people in the movement raised these suspicions coupled with some actions like mismanaging relief food distribution.

Some leaders scrambled for relief food and failed to distribute it to the needy people in the communities and when this came to light such leaders accused their fellow leaders of having reported the matter accusing the offenders to a civil society organisation that had supported the relief effort. In the view of one of the leaders, accused of mismanaging the relief effort, there was a challenge in distributing any little resources they had. "If I distribute resources sometimes I do it unfairly due to pressure hence complaints." The same leader experienced misunderstanding between the community and himself because of his view that some community decisions would not help the movement. He would then overrule such decisions and people held him to be at fault.

This same leader is said to have divided interests of working for the multinational corporation and serving in the movement which were viewed by the movement as contradictory and mutually exclusive because people were struggling to uphold their livelihoods and human rights which they were not ready to exchange for doing seasonal and insecure jobs at the farm run by the multinational corporation. He is said to have once worked as a watchman after being cheated that he would be the head of the security department something about which he was not happy. He was caught sleeping on the job and sacked. After this incidence, he vehemently opposed the multinational corporation but still harboured desires to benefit from the multinational corporation. Community

members referring to this same leader said a leader had to respect people and not dictate. This leader once became too powerful because he took up the powers of other officials in a sub-committee he chaired after some leaders were co-opted by the multinational corporation. He started deciding things with one or two people. He increasingly overruled community decisions. He strayed from his earlier good conduct because he was misled by different interests like those of people who wanted jobs at the multinational corporation, which were contrary to community interests.

One of the factors that posed a major challenge to some leaders personally is the introduction of a welfare scheme. It created a rift between the community and one of the leaders who imposed the leaders of the welfare scheme on the community. The welfare scheme started competing with the movement for people. The leader unilaterally decided to end the welfare scheme yet people perceived that this was a ploy to cover-up the mismanagement of distribution of relief food and the possible future relief food. People also paid a membership fee of Ksh 50 for the welfare, which is said to have been embezzled under the guise of being used to meet transport costs while carrying out work on behalf of the movement. The community living in one district of Yala Swamp where this problem was protracted were unanimous that “welfare cannot go alongside the movement.” In summary these challenges arising from the personalities of leaders had contributed to a lack of internal cohesion in the movement and the failure of leaders to influence people to make trade-offs.

Challenges from within the movement

One of the challenges emanating from within the movement is a power struggle waged by some residents of some districts in the movement. They demanded for an election of the officials in the community committee that brings together all the affected people yet they were unable to substantiate the faults they found with one of the leaders they wanted out of the committee. After the elections those who were complaining differed among themselves as some of their candidates lost elections. They had also hand-picked people the residents of their area did not approve to be the new leaders. As the infighting

continued it slowed down the agenda and activities of the movement. This had also resulted in the community committee not meeting regularly yet the protagonists had not opened up to bring out the issues about which they were fighting.

One of the reasons for the rifts was unsubstantiated claims and complaints that some leaders were receiving money from a non-governmental organisation working with the movement. This particular non-governmental organisation did not give any allowances or monetary benefits to individuals but would only support community development initiatives. However, this tension arose due to the fact that some community members already knew that on some occasions at least one of the officials already mentioned above received “rewards” while attending forums on behalf of the community. Another challenge related to this one was managing expectations. For example, there was a perception by some people in the community that a non-governmental organisation working with the movement and the multinational corporation would bring money to the community and they would benefit from this money personally. This resulted from dependency that had been entrenched in many communities through methods used by development, government and private sector agencies who gave hand-outs as a way of addressing community development needs.

As all this was happening, some committee members were now not consulting the community on issues and decisions as required in the movement. Some community members resorted to talking behind the backs of leaders whom they felt were not performing their roles as expected while others repeatedly brought up the complaints in the community meetings in tirades, which paralysed some of the meetings. One leader was of the view that these were misunderstanding on actions that need to be taken. Sometimes they would sit and deliberate on issues yet action was not taken. They kept coming back to the same issues in subsequent meetings without action and on realising this trend he tried to put it to an end though some community members complained that he was trying to muzzle them to cover up for his weaknesses.

Some of the challenges that have affected the movement over time and varying in their magnitude and nature are co-optation, bribery and defections of leaders and some community members. The opponents of the movement were always trying to induce leaders with favours and bribes of many kinds. A leader was once asked to take Ksh 100,000 for which he would not account and after which he would be compensated for his properties that were destroyed by the man-made lake but he declined the “generous offer.” Leaders are also offered jobs and lucrative contracts to deliver goods and services to the multinational corporation. All such tactics were used to entice leaders and community members to abandon their cause. Poverty had made some people susceptible to such manipulation. However as time passed the movement had managed to win over most of the people who had earlier succumbed to manipulation. The community was more united around the issues affecting their livelihoods.

However another form of disunity in the movement existed which had divided the people into two. There was the welfare scheme and the wider issues pursued by the movement, which are conflicting. One leader was of the view that many people sided with the welfare scheme at the expense of the greater good and when he tried to stop the scheme people said he was disbanding a community organization. He attributed this reaction to the “fact” that in the welfare scheme people contribute money and expect returns yet as for the movement “it is a journey that since it started it is going on and people have not yet returned home and do not know how long it will last.” Some people also wanted to hide behind the welfare because they feared taking action against the multinational corporation. He also added that the welfare scheme has short-term or quicker material benefits.

Since the welfare scheme was registered with the government unlike the movement, it was used as a conduit to solicit for funds from politicians campaigning during the 2007 general elections. He was also of the view that some people thought that if they were in the welfare scheme it would act as a conduit for getting relief food. It was also a way of putting at bay those who did not have land bordering the swamp so that they would not

benefit from relief food since they were not “directly affected.” Such groups included cattle keepers coming from areas far removed from the Swamp but use it for grazing, and handicraft makers. The leaders had a challenge in dealing with such emerging interests.

Another challenge to leadership was the different community resources, for which people were scrambling. One leader in the movement said he also competed for such resources. For example, family land disputes spilled over to the movement causing problems since people involved in a dispute with the leader no longer respected or cooperated with him. Another challenge was dealing with threats to life and property. The community was subjected to intimidation, threats and acts of violence and had a challenge dealing with such situations. These among other factors made it a problem for the community to focus on their goals always. It was also hard bringing women to the centre of issues and leadership in the movement. The leaders had a challenge dealing with diversity.

Lastly, there was a lot of pressure from the community to have the stagnant water in the man-made lake cleared and they felt the leaders were slow while crocodiles were now close to homes and were attacking livestock, farms and grazing lands were submerged, waterborne diseases were on the rise, and there was no “clean” drinking water. The leaders felt powerless compared to the multinational corporation. Hard-pressed with problems and getting no quick solutions the people lost some confidence in the leaders. The movement had also faced difficulties in financing its activities to address the problems the community was facing.

Challenges from outside the movement

Some leaders and community members who appeared on the media became targets of police harassment and also harassment by goons hired by both the multinational corporation and local politicians who supported and benefited from its activities. This was dealt with by different people playing the roles needed at different times and allowing the leaders in the committee to go to the background. The movement experienced police harassment, intimidation and arbitrary arrests. The police harassed

and arrested community members on flimsy grounds and demanded bribes before they could be released. Two days before these interviews were conducted some family members of leaders including a minor had just been released from police cells. The intention had been to arrest the leaders but since they had evaded police arrest, some of their family members were arrested to force them to come out of hiding. These arrests follow an incidence in which the youth in the community organised to protect their leaders, allegedly harassed one of the “collaborators” in the community.

Goons halt villagers' march to DC office

By **BERNARD OKEBE**

DISPLACED families of a Bondo District village were on Friday prevented from presenting their grievances to the area District Commissioner by hired goons.

The Aduwa villagers who have been rendered homeless by ravaging waters from the Dominion Farms Ltd dam in Yala Swamp were intercepted by heavily armed goons on their way to Bondo town to meet and present their pressing concerns to DC David Jakaiti.

The villagers, who have been out of their homes for the last one week, had set off early in the morning with their children and cattle to Bondo town before the group caught up with them on the way.

Armed with crude weapons and whips, the group dispersed the displaced families, sabotaging their march to the district headquarters to meet the administrator.

Jakaiti, who was by then in his office, later received the petitions of the displaced villagers from a team that had arrived in Bondo town earlier in the day.

During the meeting, the DC was told that the dispersed villagers wanted to meet him “together with the animals” which they said were also displaced from their grazing fields by the floods from the dam.

Figure 4. Newspaper reports of community being harassed and intimidated as they try to resolve problems using peaceful means. Source: The People.

The protection became necessary after a gang of unknown people said to have been sent by a local politician sought to eliminate the leaders under the guise of the violence that was taking place during the December, 2007 general election. The community has found it difficult to hire lawyers as they lacked money. On one occasion, a forum organised in the city of Kisumu by the community to brief civil society organisations on their plight and forge collaboration on solving the problems was disrupted by goons armed with crude weapons that were hired and transported to the venue of the meeting by the multinational corporation and accompanied by a local politician.

There was a sustained propaganda campaign by the opponents of the movement. This led to an initial confusion of issues in the wider public domain as it portrayed the matters affecting Yala Swamp community as a struggle between foreign interests. There was also propaganda that a non-governmental organisation was giving money to movement leaders to disrupt the work of the multinational corporation. One leader commented that if he bought anything then opponents of the movement would say that he had been given money by the non-governmental organisation. Another line of propaganda aimed to divide the community along clan lines by saying some of the people in the movement were “*Ochwado*” (“migrants”) and had to go by the bidding of one clan viewed to be the original inhabitants of the area. This propaganda caused conflict and division in the community for some time. It was a challenge to provide leadership under serious disinformation and trying to counter disinformation with truth but within limited means. The other aspect was “politicization of the struggle by local politicians” so as to obscure the real issues. This involved raising diversionary political propaganda to obscure the real issues affecting the community.

The community was victimized by the government, as was the case in distribution of relief food where they were not given relief food because they were said to oppose the multinational corporation. The local chief said they had a lot of food given to them by donors yet this was not true. Many civic leaders and government officials used the plight of the Yala Swamp community to get favours from the multinational corporation. One prominent leader who heads a community-based organisation in the area was used by the

multinational corporation to try to disorganize the community. One time the head of state visited the projects being run by the multinational corporation. The community was expecting him to take a clear stand with the people but his address was “neutral” and he launched a rice mill in the farm which left the community downcast. On another occasion, the director of a non-governmental organisation supporting the movement was under so much political pressure to withdraw support for the movement. Unable to take the pressure the director considered withdrawing support for the movement but later stood firm. In his visit to Kenya in 2006, US Senator Barrack Obama did not visit the Yala Swamp, which partly lies in his ancestral home district of Siaya, to endorse and legitimise the activities of the multinational corporation as was expected, arranged and widely publicised by local politicians.

4.4 Dealing with challenges now and in the future

To deal with the challenges posed to leadership of the movement the community resorted to a number of measures. The community chided the leaders in the community meetings for the wrongs they had done as a way of resolving the leadership problems. They also did a re-election of the movement committee though this did not solve the problem. Some protagonists did not attend the elections but formed a parallel committee prolonging the stalemate. The community observed that “We cannot move while divided.”

One elder in the community also mediated between two antagonistic committee members but this did not work because one of the leaders was not willing to compromise. One of the leaders, in order to resolve the complaints against him, called a few people and discussed with them to establish the causes of problems and established the truth. Some complaints were addressed yet some remained unresolved. The community now looked at the government as a partner especially in one district where a senior government official had tried to address their issues. The partners of the movement were also trying to raise funds to be able to carry out some activities of the movement.

In the Future

Reflecting on how they have handled the leadership challenges and what they could do in the future, the community suggested that when challenges arose people should speak the truth instead of backbiting and spreading rumours about leaders. “Issues should be brought to the table. We should guard our tongues and not spread discord.” Community meetings should focus on the agenda and avoid personalizing things. Village and family feuds or disagreements should also be kept out of movement meetings. The community underscored the need to strengthen the movement and consultation to get solutions to the problems they were facing. “We should reconcile, forgive, love and have understanding among ourselves” was the view of an old woman who is a vegetable farmer.

One leader referred to leadership as the centre of gravity but it could “come from any direction.” Referring to the fall-out after the elections, community members held strongly that if a leader had not been re-elected it did not mean they had been chased away from the movement. They needed to participate in the movement just like everyone else. Leaders needed to accept to be corrected and change. People also needed to make the corrections in a civil manner. One leader noted that he dealt with a community, which had different ways and capacity of thinking hence the need for deliberate measures to help leaders enhance their leadership skills. After all these experiences he now better understood the community, and said he needed to respect people and their ideas, and would follow what the community wanted.

A representative of a non-governmental organisation working with the movement noted that from the outset it was critical first for a movement to clearly define the issues it wanted to deal with like the organisation of its leadership and partnerships with other organisations or movements. Secondly, it needed to define the principles it would use to operate. This would go a long way in helping tackle challenges and any person who came to the movement to work with it would know what it stood for from the outset. In addition, power mapping needed to be done early and powerful forces that came into play in the life of a movement identified. Sharing of information with the wider public

immediately was also a good strategy. “Don’t wait until you are hemmed-in.” It was also important to invest in knowledge around the issues at hand.

Note was made of a researcher who gave the value of the Yala Swamp for the communities to counter propaganda that the Swamp was of no benefit hence the multinational corporation was coming in to “develop it.” One courageous university professor broke ranks with many of his peers and contributed a lot to evaluating the Environmental Impact Assessment report of the multinational corporation and highlighted the negative impacts of the projects that were not addressed. It was noted that it is good to involve the government and its officers as allies.

It is important not to ignore any segment of the community as was learnt with the case of churches when the multinational corporation started using some of them to advance its agenda. The movement should also involve clan welfare organizations based in towns and cities, and political parties. It should look beyond the affected people. The community expressed a desire to work with human rights groups since their rights are being violated. These included international groups to check the powerful multinational corporation that had a lot of money. Lastly, the community thought they should get rid of the welfare scheme. Instead, they should revive community meetings bringing together all the affected districts and unite under the Yala Swamp committee. Community organizing which involves working with community organizations to link them up for coherence in a locality then tackle the external environment was proposed as a way of strengthening the movement.

4.5 Advice for New Social Movements

The community affected by an issue needs to be focused, raise their voices, discuss and analyze the issues at hand and see whether they stand to benefit. If benefits are “below 50%,” as expressed by a businessman, or minimal and just designed to lure community to support interests contrary to their advantage then they should not go along. The community had to be brave, vocal and face any eventuality. They should not love money so as to “sell” their lives and community. They should link with other people and stakeholders to help them.

They should be united as people who are suffering. They have to be united and have one understanding. United, they have to keenly assess the situation and derive the pros and cons of the situation and sensitize themselves on how to deal with the project (e.g. multinational corporation project). They have to love one another and know how to wage resistance. They have to respect each other's views, opinions, and ideas. Once united, their thoughts and goals should be focused. They should not talk badly about their leaders as this discourages leaders. People should be selfless and volunteer to achieve the community goals. The community should elect leaders who respect collaborators. They can direct complaints to civil society organisations dealing with human rights and collaborate with them. Human rights issues were successfully dealt with through collaboration with such organisations.

One leader was of the view that for the community to drive its issues well it should be without leadership. This would make people responsible for what was being done. If there was a leader they tended to focus on him. People just needed to meet in the Swamp, coordinate issues, and take responsibilities. People then performed current duties and end there as opposed to depending on leaders. The movement should not have someone as a leader. One should lead at that particular moment and once a task is accomplished then his leadership ended there. Some people may not embrace this idea unless the existence or absence of leadership was weighed and they were educated and convinced to accept this possibility. Though there was no society without a leader, the leader should lead for that particular time. "Even ants have leaders." Even if external contacts are made then the person contacted in the community was not contacted because of their position.

A one-person leadership made it difficult to change the person since he or she created a constituency. "Team leadership" (committee) was what was workable. It needed to be developed. Leadership was not to be vested on one person who then built bedrock of loyalty which he or she used to buttress oneself against community aspirations. There was need for a fluid leadership, which was not skill-based and provided room for changing people. Anyone competent to handle issues that arose should be able to play leadership roles. Even if current leaders were not available someone should take over the

leadership roles. Such leadership provided people the space to play leadership roles. A leader needed to have qualities like courage. One leader who is not courageous in the community was complemented by a community member who is not a member of the community committee.

There was need for a system of leadership that could survive personal and sectional interests. We needed a leader who saw that the movement was not “his thing.” It also has to survive personal tragedies. The leader had to address issues raised by sectoral interests. Fluidity in leadership could allow for addressing sectoral interests and issues without compromising the global picture. Leadership had to be based on certain values cardinal of which was moral uprightness. The leader raised the bar for people to look beyond legalese, personal interests to the level of values.

4.6 Improving Civil Society

To improve civil society in general, there was need to improve linkages between civil society organizations since opponents of movements tended to compromise many local organizations. Some civil society organisations raised funds but did not serve the community. They did not even give feedback on their activities. Civil society organisations were many but some had a problem. Some were formed to make money. They were not open for they carried out activities “behind closed doors.” They used the plight of people to solicit for funds. They needed to be open to the people they served.

Civil society needed leaders with a “clean heart” and who stood by the truth. We should appreciate the work of civil society organisations. Leaders needed respect because disrespect hinders the movement. Leaders had to be transparent, humble and ready to listen to the clever and not so clever. They had to keep their promises and fulfil their commitments. They had to listen to the cry of the people where they are suffering in the community settling disputes amicably to reach the set goals. Civil society could also be improved by its leaders undergoing capacity building to improve their leadership.

For civil society to be improved it was important firstly to identify with and join the causes of poor people. Secondly, they had to provide space for communities to exert

themselves freely without distraction. Such spaces allowed for processes, which were out of the control of such organisations to go on. They had to see communities and their issues beyond an opportunity to raise funds. Any money raised should be seen by the community to have been spent in their cause. Civil society should be seen to create a wider space for problem solving, for discussions to solve problems.

This was seen in the case of one American civil society organisation that took up the Yala Swamp issues and brought it to the international arena by use of the internet and national radio in the US thus “globalizing space for the Yala Swamp movement.” They need to create space to learn from communities. Learning should take place across space and be accompanied by sustained lively debates around issues affecting the community. Civil society should “depoliticize” issues affecting communities by helping people separate propaganda from the truth. There is also a need for popular education on human rights for communities.

The Last Word - “*Wach Mogik*”

In every movement, there is an aim. Even though there were setbacks people should not abandon their aim. The communities should be humble, focused on their agenda and goals and not personalize things. As people of Yala Swamp all districts needed to strongly come together in thoughts and goals so as to succeed. Having committed a lot to the struggle people needed to persevere to the end. Leaders needed to be elected and their powers restricted. Leaders should be trained on leadership to boost their capabilities. There should be a forum for the community and other civil society organisations bring together all stakeholders of Yala Swamp to sensitize them that people are still suffering so as to fuel the struggle. Social movements cannot be ignored in a world with increasing “inequalities, globalization, and ‘commodification’.” We need to focus on movements to add value to the struggles of the poor.

Evening time, the sun is setting in the horizon we walk past the vegetable farms and one community member shows us his fifteen-acre farm from where he once harvested two hundred bags of maize. He tells us that the white looking surface of the farm is the rich

deposits of soils brought down by the River Yala from the highlands of the Kenyan Rift Valley. I walk into the car and drive home after a fruitful visit having enjoyed the time with Yala Swamp community.

Chapter 5.0: Interpretation of Findings

5.1 Civil Society

As G.W.F. Hegel pointed out competition and division may exist in civil society, yet this is not always remedied by resorting to the state as the supreme arbiter. The state is not viewed to be superior to civil society but exists to support it. The Yala Swamp movement goes beyond family and clan ties to serve the wider community making it part of civil society. The movement puts an emphasis on solidarity and operates on the fact that people have a right to decide on how they want to eke a livelihood hence they can organise to defend such rights, promotes solidarity, freedom and equality as articulated by Keane (1998: 80 - 81).

Keane (1998: 6) further notes that civil society is complex. It is also non-violent. The Yala Swamp movement holds non-violence as one of its key principles. Civil society is also self-organising and self-reflexive as observed in the movement which proceeded in an organic manner and there were no prior plans to form it or create an institution but people came up to tackle the problems they were facing. The movement also experienced tensions with the government, local politicians and the multinational corporation, which through a number of devices tried to determine what the movement should focus on and how they should go about solving their problems.

The movement has strived to limit the concentration of power in the hands of a few individuals, groups or institutions. Such concentration of powers provides ground for tyranny. This it has done firstly by looking at itself and trying to put a leadership and way of operating that works with the needs, ideas and decisions of the people who are affected by problems. The use of the committee system and consultations and decision making in community meetings is one way it has tried to spread power. It has also attempted the same by challenging powerful actors in the community and beyond to try get them to serve the community. Two such occasions was when one community member resisted the

handpicking of non-community members to serve in the water users association and the cutting to size the influence of a powerful leader of community based organisation that was opposed to the movement (Keane: 1998: 48; Elshtain, 1999: 209; Beyme, 1999: 229; Friedman, 2003: 6-7; Nchabeleng, 2003: 5).

As noted by Arendt (1980: 95) and Elshtain (1999: 215-16), the threat to freedom is not authority, which has been acknowledged in the movement and expressed as the need to respect leaders, but rather tyranny which is more easily established when leadership is built around an individual and when some people seek to establish their dominion over others. Civil society has to create space for people to learn and participate in the life of society solving the challenges that they face daily. Civil society should account back to the people they serve.

For civil society to achieve its goals, it needs to be established at the international level too as pointed out by John Paul II (1988: 650). A real solidarity has to be established at this level, which is anchored on the needs and issues of the people and goes beyond mere feelings of shallow distress and vague compassion about the ills faced by others. The movement has tried to widen its activities to the outer concentric circle embracing international constituencies by way of the international media, the internet and attending international forums of civil society that seek to address problems similar to the ones they were facing.

However, a number of factors hampered effective participation in the movement. One is the inequalities in education that had caused misunderstanding between the people and some leaders. To resolve such challenges and build social capital the movement had resorted to a number of devices with varying impacts. Firstly, is reciprocity, which had attempted to encourage trade-offs. Secondly is handling issues in an amicable way, which involves respecting leaders who had to be truthful and resolving issues through dialogue. Thirdly was to enhance solidarity among the people that has been stressed as a necessary minimum for the movement to exist (Zubrzycki as cited in Elshtain, 1999: 221).

5.2 New Social Movements

New social movements were characterised as being non-economic and non-ideological. The Yala Swamp movement followed no ideological persuasion. Its goal was to address the problems around land, livelihoods and the environment. The basic motivation and premise of the movement was that they were human beings who had a right to a dignified life. They were protecting what they owned guided by a set of principles and values to achieve their goal (Beyme 1999: 236, 255). Consisting of the youth, women and men, and emphasising a solidarity that goes beyond family and clan ties, the movement did not seek the legitimacy conferred by legal registration with the government but appealed to more fundamental principles and values about human beings.

The movement had an amorphous group of supporters with the Yala Swamp community at the centre in a concentric circles formation. The movement did not have members like more formal groups and did not exact a membership fee. Unlike the formal groups, which were bureaucratically structured, the movement operated in an organic way with emphasis laid on the community goal and the principles and values guiding its attainment. The leadership was also loosely organised unlike in the formal organisations. The movement focused on maintaining livelihoods as opposed to being grafted into an economic venture, which they held to be less beneficial than their current livelihoods (Beyme, 1999: 236, 255). The movement made claims, which entailed contesting the ways in which the projects of the multinational corporation were being carried out to their detriment. They also stood firmly that they were as good as any Kenyan and human being for that matter. For that reason, they had to be treated with dignity and equality. They also held that they were a force that could not be ignored (Tilly, 2004: 4, 7).

The movement waged a sustained campaign, which involved a mix of means as opposed to solo performances. They also collaborated with other individuals, organisations and networks to help achieve their goals. Such networks and institutions were valuable and included churches, non-governmental organisations, and the media. The claims were dynamic and responsive to the ever-changing environment and the successes the movement achieved. There were also emerging interests that the movement encountered

(Tilly, 2004: 12). This was in contrast to Archer (cited in Elshtain, 1999: 224) who argued that movements lacked integration in society as they focused on a single issue making them unable to facilitate change and development. In the case of Yala Swamp, the focus was clear and the broad principles and values guiding the movement clear in a singularity that is contrasted to dealing solely with one issue.

Unlike Elshtain, (1999: 227) who was of the view that movements are based on an internal opinion and a negative solidarity against other groups thus militating against the common good and hence could not be part of civil society, the Yala Swamp movement is grounded on the right to own private property and earn a livelihood by one's own work while staying in a clean environment. The people also held that they had to be treated with dignity like any other human being as opposed to being used as a means to an end. They did not agree to being used and controlled in a way that did not work for the common good. Such positions could not be reduced to opinions. The movement was fundamentally based on a positive solidarity as attested to by the amount of abuses and injustices patiently borne as the movement seeks to resolve issues through non-violent means. They have also reached out especially to some members of the community and institutions that were seriously opposed to the movement. The movement concurred with Beyme (1999: 255) that for civil society to survive it has to champion in its cause and all at the same time individual, socio-economic and cultural rights of the people.

The movement, in agreement with Shafer (2007: 75) and Beyme (1999: 238), used the media initially for mobilisation. However, unlike the two the movement used it to mobilise actors in the outer concentric circles like the wider public and civil society organisations with national and international constituencies. At the community level mobilization was initially achieved and sustained by way of public meetings, addresses at funerals and at local churches, person-to-person contact among other ways in what Keane (1998: 171 - 72) refers to as micro-publics. Such micro-publics coalesced into wider public events, which then drew the support of people and institutions in the outer concentric circle. Unlike Arler (2006: 141) who argued for the primacy of the outer concentric circle the Yala Swamp movement was primarily grounded in the inner

concentric circle composed of the people who were adversely affected by the activities of the multinational corporation. The people clearly identified the issues that needed to be addressed, determined to resolve them while working with the outer concentric circle. Actors in the outer circle were relatively volatile and laden with many other issues cropping up constantly in the public domain, which shifted their attentions from time to time.

5.3 Leadership

Whereas Kotter (2001: 4), referring to the common forms of leadership based on individuals, holds that one of the core purposes of leaders is to set a vision or direction which followers need to work towards, in the Yala Swamp movement the vision was defined by the people. The leaders were then chosen to carry forward the vision. Leadership is there to serve people and work with their ideas. The community also played a crucial role in aligning leaders or people who were diverting from the movement's goal. However, the leaders played a significant role in motivating people especially during the hard times. This was in keeping with Uphoff *et al* (1998: 44-45) that leadership needed for successful rural development initiatives had to involve more people without excluding the contributions of individuals.

The movement used unconventional means to achieve its goals. This is seen in the form of its organisation, which differs from that of the common community based organisations. This was attested to by Lowy *et al* (2005: 4-5) and seen in a tactic in which many people performed different roles at different times as in the mass media events making it hard for individuals to be targeted and victimised. The organisation of activities was also loose and amorphous.

Lowy *et al* (2005: 5-6) further argues for five qualities of what would be relay leadership. Firstly is its guerrilla approach already seen in the movement in the way it engaged in the mass media allowing elected leaders to stay in the background. Secondly is to have no desire to succeed by standards set by existing institutions. That the movement selected ordinary people who were adversely affected by activities of the multinational corporation and leaving out what is considered the correct and successful route of

choosing local politicians and other more established leaders was an expression of desire to succeed by different standards. However, this did not mean that they were absolutely antithetical to existing institutions. Thirdly, the actions were based on certain ideals and values, which the movement was not ready to relinquish. Fourthly, there was a tendency to attack the strengths of the opponents as opposed to their weaknesses. This was seen in the attack on the carrot of employment dangled for the community by the multinational corporation. The movement rejected this on the grounds that in the near future, the farm was to be fully mechanised and they were not ready to drop their current livelihood activities for low earning and seasonal jobs in the farm. Lastly, the movement involved the knowledge of the community and other supporters drawn principally from community meetings to make decisions.

Leadership in the movement functioned in a more or less organic manner. Contrary to Lowy *et al* (2005: 7) power was not hierarchical and whereas decisions were not made according to positions but by the community of Yala Swamp, they were neither based on expertise. A community member with any expertise or knowledge that was needed contributed it to enrich decision-making and the subsequent execution of the decisions and did not use it as a powerbase from which to control the movement. This was vivid when some leaders tried to adopt dictatorial tendencies and met resistance from community members.

Relay leadership served the needs and interests of the community and sought to bring the community and other players to serve the needs and interests of the community. It is about serving. The capabilities of the community are diverse and relay leadership opens up the unthreatening space for leaders to work in a complimentary way with the people both in and outside the movement to achieve set goals. Under relay leadership, personality weaknesses would be clearly seen and acknowledged since the power base to conceal one's weakness or reign tyrannically would be diminished. Yet, it gives leaders room to improve and be supported by community members. This was the case in the incidence where a cowardly leader was well complimented by a courageous community member.

Keane (1998: 43-44) also articulated personal qualities of a leader that pointed to relay leadership. One was that they were not driven by lust for power or grand visions of conquest. The movement wanted to uphold the rights to work and earn their livelihoods as opposed to political propaganda that they wanted to destabilise the multinational corporation and local politicians. The community had its challenges with abuse of power. However, the quest for power in itself was not what defined leadership but rather service to the community. This was seen in leaders who had abused power but was now repentant. The community also held that leaders who were not re-elected into the committee needed to continue serving the movement as this was not a sign of total rejection by the people.

Leadership, as noted by Keane (1998: 43-44) and Uphoff *et al* (1998: 51, 57, 59), contributed to achieving goals by skilfully making compromises and trade-offs between the people and opposing actors in a way that opens up more space for people to participate in the life of society. They knew how to withdraw from unworkable positions. This required magnanimity as demonstrated by a businessman who lost his livelihood after his posho mill was flooded yet did not abandon the struggle in exchange for financial inducements and compensation. This stand encouraged many as it was a strong example on standing by what one believed in. Leadership “always requires mettle, acumen, nerve, toughness and patience” (Keane, 1998: 44). Despite serious opposition and harassment, the leaders of the movement generally have stood their ground and displayed heroic gallantry.

Emerging and different interests was one of the major challenges to leadership in the movement as noted by Botes and Rensburg (2000: 48). These came from leaders and even individuals or groups in the community. The cases of the welfare scheme and the distribution of relief food showed the emergence of interests not made known at the beginning of the struggle most of which hampered the movement. There was a general agreement that running a welfare scheme within the movement was detrimental to the broader goals of the movement. This is because it started unfavourably competing with the movement. The structure of the leadership of the welfare scheme and its operations

followed that of more formal organisations bringing it to clash with that of the movement, which was loose and operated organically. Another related challenge to leadership was managing the complexities in relationships with other players who had varying interests. These included civil society organisations, individuals and politicians. Leaders were also faced with their personal weaknesses that undermined their leadership roles (Uperty *et al* 2005a: 20).

On some occasions, there was a demand by the community for tangible results. This was a big challenge to the leaders as noted by Botes and Renburg (2000: 48) and attested to by the prolonged flooding caused by the man-made lake, which made some people lose hope in the ability of leaders to help resolve problems. There is need to always look for a balance between tangible results and processes, which help, create and strengthen movements and institutions.

Opponents of movements used a number of ways to intimidate leaders and the community. As noted by Beyme (1999: 236) and Lowy, *et al* (2005: 9) in the Yala Swamp movement opponents used hired goons to terrorise leaders and the community. Police harassment and co-optation was also used. The opponents also embarked on a counter-mobilisation which was done through sustained propaganda campaigns. This was aimed at isolating the community from the rest of the public and constricting the space in the outer concentric circle. The use of social divisions like clan as a basis for divide and rule was employed by opponents of the movement as noted by Uperty *et al* (2005b: 22) in the case of Nepal where caste system was used as a basis for divide and rule. In Yala the movement, composed of some of the so called “*Ochwado*” (“migrants”) was pitted against a clan said to be the aboriginal elements of the area. There was also an emphasis from opponents that the movement uses existing leaders and structures and looking down upon movement leaders as people who did not deserve leadership.

Chapter 6.0: Conclusions and Recommendations

This chapter draws conclusions based on the evidence from the data collection and the literature review and then ends with recommendations. Firstly, it draws conclusions around leadership challenges in the new social movement in Yala Swamp. Secondly, it looks at the case for relay leadership and how it provides an alternative system of leadership, which is more amenable to new social movements. Lastly, it will end with recommendations to civil society.

6.1 Leadership Challenges

The leadership in Yala Swamp movement has worked to achieve a lot for its community. However, this had not been without challenges. The challenges were of three main kinds. Firstly, there were challenges related to the personalities of leaders, which hampered their performance as leaders. These challenges included attributes like cowardice on the face of threatening opposition. Some leaders also succumbed to manipulation and co-optation due to a weak will. Corruption and mismanagement was another challenge, which seriously hampered the movement coupled with a tendency to serve personal interests that were antithetical to community interests. Some leaders were also hungry for power and used dictatorial styles which did not serve the community nor were they accountable to the people. To resolve these challenges the movement resorted to a number of devices that included reproaching the leaders, mediation and re-election. These worked to varying extents and it was realised that to solve these challenges effectively there was a need for dialogue and civility in resolving challenges. People needed to respect leaders and leaders needed to acknowledge their weaknesses and change for the better.

Secondly, there were challenges which came from within the movement and the community the movement was serving. One such challenge was power struggles with some individuals wanting to dislodge some leaders. This gave rise to conflicts, which were poorly handled leading to persistent challenges. Conflicts were also caused by a scramble for community resources like land disputes between people, which spilled over

into the movement. Another challenge was the co-optation and defection of some people from the movement. Though this posed some practical challenges because the movement now missed the support of such people it was positive in another way that people who did not believe in the cause now operated from outside the movement. One of the biggest challenges was the introduction of the welfare scheme into the movement, which adversely competed with the movement and compromised achievement of the goals. It was resolved that the welfare scheme should not be mixed with the movement. Related to this was a dependency on donors long established by poor practices of development actors. This raised expectations of some people to derive personal benefits from the movement. This led to some people attacking some leaders for benefiting to their exclusion. This situation was aggravated by leaders having received some gifts while representing the community in some forums.

Lastly, there were challenges from outside the movement and from its opponents. The police and local politicians continuously harassed the leaders and the community. This was accompanied by victimisation of the community by the government in some government programmes that were supposed to benefit the community. The opponents of the movement also employed counter-mobilisation, which was grounded on an extensive propaganda campaign in the mass media. This caused division in the community but only for a limited time, and confusion in the wider public and served to conceal the truth about the issues that were affecting the Yala Swamp community. This was addressed by use of devices like vernacular radio programmes, mobilisation and advocacy to bring out the truth around the issues. Some civil society organisations supporting the movement were also targets of intimidation by opponents of the movement so that they could stop their support.

To address the challenges to leadership in the Yala Swamp movement it was important to take specific measures to deal with specific challenges. In addition, some broad devices were seen to help in many challenges. These included resolving challenges through dialogue and in a civil manner while respecting one another. It was also important to clearly identify the issues the movement was to tackle from the outset. This needed to go

together with some basic principles and values that would guide the movement. The type of leadership system to be used in the movement and the networks that were needed to support the community cause also needed to be clarified and agreed upon. All this was necessary to properly ground the movement and enable it meet the challenges it faced. It was also important to incorporate as far as possible all the segments of the community affected by development issues and widen the base of the constituencies the movement worked with at the local, regional and international levels. Lastly, it was critical to invest in knowledge and information to help achieve the desired goals.

6.2 The Case for Relay Leadership

Relay leadership which is amenable to new social movements operating on a concentric circles strategy is to be exercised as a space to be filled and emptied in a way that primarily and exclusively serves the community and the common good. This is in contrast to leadership that is constructed around personalities and focused on occupying positions. Leadership is not about occupying positions and leaders need to take up service when required and be ready to relinquish such roles when that is called for. They step in and out of the leadership space provided by the community according to how they can serve and what is need by the community in an organic way. The system of leadership constructed around individuals provides easy ground for tyranny to emerge and be established. Relay leadership provides for fluidity in leadership while at the same time it includes contributions of visionary individuals.

Relay leadership is predicated on clarity of goals and purpose. It works and is guided by a clear set of principles and values, which are embraced by the movement. The leaders are custodians of such values and lead by example. The community must also resolve to tackle the issues at hand. It works with the ideas, decisions and aspirations of people. It plays a more or less facilitative role to serve community so that set goals are achieved. It operates on the basis of concentric circles where people who are affected by an issue and their leadership are at the centre or are the core group and work with people, networks and institutions in the outer concentric circle to achieve the set goals. In addition to those people directly affected by a development issue or core group, relay leadership is open to

ideas and contribution to leadership from outside the movement to help achieve its goal. This opens more space for the movement to work in the outer concentric circle.

Leadership can be elected and organised in a way the affected community finds most suitable. This leaves room for a particular community to have a more flexible system responsive to their local realities e.g. the committee system was used in Yala Swamp. However, this is not to be confused with the formal committees that are used in more formal organisations, which are structures in a leadership system built around individuals and positions. Relay leadership is not ideologically driven. It has a focus on resolving the issues affecting a particular group of people guided by certain principles and values as contrasted to adopting a specific worldview or perspective that the affected people then have to follow. It also does not seek power for the sake of power neither is it constructed around powerbases. In addition, its legitimacy is not derived from nor limited to legal recognition neither does it seek such recognition. It is grounded on the truth around the development issues it seeks to address. Finally, leaders also need preparation and training to succeed in relay leadership. Relay leadership does not just happen it has to be made to work by people.

6.3 Improving Civil Society

To improve civil society both at the local and international level the following recommendations need to be adopted:

- There is a need to improve the links between civil society organisations and movements at the local level to address development issues.
- Civil society must have truthful leaders who are respected by people.
- Civil society must be anchored on the needs and issues of people. It can not see people as means to other ends.

- Civil society must continuously open the space for people to take part in the life of society and solve social and development problems.
- It must create space for people to learn from one another to help in achieving their development goals.
- It must be established at all levels including the international level.

In so doing civil society will play the rightful and more meaningful role in making a positive change in the lives of people, realising development and a life of dignity.

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