Honour Prof Dranzoa by honouring teachers and prioritising education

I did not know Prof Christine Dranzoa (rest in peace) in person, but I knew about her. Seeing the news of her death took me by surprise. Sometime in May, I met an academic from Muni University in her home town of Moyo. He asked that I visit Muni University. He told me about the amazing things happening in the university and what it meant to work there.

I studied in Muni Girls Secondary School in the mid-1990s. At the time, the university was a teacher training college. Many of our teachers came from there and student teachers often came from there.

I had it in my diary that the next time I am in the region, I would visit the university and my former school, where I have never been since I left in 1996 to join neighbouring Mvara Secondary School for my advanced secondary studies. I was in particular interested in visiting the admirable vice chancellor. As part of my living research on women in public life, I wanted to have a conversation with her, the contributions she was making there. It was, therefore, heart breaking to hear about her death.

Many have eulogised her as larger than life, an academic with education in her veins and so on. Much of the narrative around her person, initially focused on her childhood in her village of Adua, Moyo District, and how she beat all odds to rise to the top of the academic world by the time of her death. It has been fascinating reading about her life since she passed on.

Prof Dranzoa's death came at a time when the country was discussing the plight of teachers. Those in the Arts domain were striking over a proposed pay gap with their Science counterparts. They have since called off the strike, without an actual pay rise as they had hoped, following a series of meetings but a commitment to handle the matter. The teachers' concerns were fair to say the least.

> "We risk perpetuating poverty by keeping children of the poor out of real opportunities...
>
> **Emilly C. Maractho**
> **Voice of my heart**



For now, it may seem that the division will remain and the striking teachers have lost. But in many ways, there are many gains from this strike. We have had serious conversations around teachers' welfare, our schools, the status of science teaching, and the role of the arts in development.

Even though the teachers may have gone empty handed for now, the issues will remain for us to engage with. They managed to sustain a conversation around their welfare like no issue has done in a long time. In a country where sustaining conversations on the most critical issues is so difficult, this is an important milestone. There were serious attempts to engage with them, which is also key.

Many have honoured Prof Dranzoa as an educationist of iconic stature. Just the coverage of her death alone shines light into our education. Prof Dranzoa was quoted in an earlier interview saying she felt desperate to see young girls carrying babies on their back at a tender age when they are supposed to be in school. She wanted the men who impregnate young girls who have a lot of potential to be severely punished according to the law. "I stand for the marginalised, truth and integrity," she said.

This desperation most of us share. Increasingly, it is hard to imagine a Prof Dranzoa emerging from a humble background within the villages in the far ends. That is becoming a narrative of the old guard. Younger girls from poor families almost all the time end up with babies on their backs at an early age. I have through various organisations whose work I am familiar with in the West Nile region, heard heart wrenching stories that have left me with that desperation.

My engagement with social policy stems from that desperation. Having to instead fall back on raising awareness around these issues, sometimes taking to advocacy is sometimes a copying mechanism. It is the reason I have been passionate about the issues around education and teachers. Looking back on my years at Muni girls, with many of us good at the sciences, but with the facility to effectively teach sciences limited, we instinctively opted for the arts, that would enable us to still move on somehow.

The best commitment government can make to the promotion of sciences, and to honor scientists like Prof Dranzoa is not just to stop at paying science teachers better, or prioritise sciences over arts in the manner that we have seen, but to create a learning environment that allows children with potential who study in remote places, without the ability to attend better schools to also excel.

What we have seen for a long time now, only drives the wage between children who can attend good schools and those without that opportunity. We risk perpetuating poverty, by keeping children of the poor out of real opportunities for getting out of poverty through education. Prof Dranzoa represents what is possible, that there is talent everywhere, and that one can rise, in spite of circumstances.

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Unborn children should be protected

Allow me to add a voice to the US Supreme Court ruling that overturned the Roe v. Wade ruling of 1973 which legalised and normalised the taking of innocent human life through abortion. The heavens must have rejoiced (Luke 15:1) following this ruling.

Abortion actually degrades the woman and deprives her of her God-given right to give life. Every legislation should be put in place to make sure a woman fulfils her obligation to give life or remain celebate.

There are five main political and cultural reasons put forward by the offenders to kill innocent human life. They claim that abortion prevents overpopulation and poverty. We don't have to kill in order to regulate population: there are other natural and safer methods of controlling birth. People need sex discipline and control; man is a rational animal with free will; the moment we start living by instinct only then shall we be graded as animals.

There are those who say the unborn are not persons and, therefore, have no rights. An embryo is already a human being made in image of God (Genesis 1:27). Others argue that women have their rights to their bodies. These rights are God-given and misusing them is an abuse of the Creator.

The killers also argue that the conception was through rape or incest. The methods of conception do not matter. Deformed fetus also has a right to life. Many people have twisted the teaching of the Bible to suit their ego to support abortion.

> Abortion degrades the woman and deprives her of her right to give life.
>
> **Josue Okoth**
> **Abortion**





In Uganda, many crimes happen behind the scenes even with prohibitive laws in place. Secularism, sexual sin and atheism have affected the youth since the teaching of Catechism in schools was abolished in preference to Christian Religious Education (CRE) which is a general knowledge about Christianity. Faith in the fear of God is lacking.

Appeals by leaders to stop crimes such as teenage pregnancy and motherhood will continue to fall on deaf ears: 'though seeing, but do not see; though hearing but do not hear' (Mark 4:12).

At least 250 young girls below the age of 15 years got pregnant every month in 2021 (The Economic and Social Burden of Teenage Pregnancy in Uganda. . .) This number is a drop in an ocean considering that there are many adult mothers who are not captured in these studies.

IVF (In Vitro Fertilisation) technology is another source where innocent lives are killed. The embryos developed within the laboratory are human beings; they are implanted into the uterus of a woman or surrogate to grow. The process often leaves many unsuccessful embryos and the unwanted ones being destroyed.

The Bible teaches that marriage is a call by God and is between man and women and children are to be born of that union (Genesis 1:28; 2:24) and Psalm 127:3 says that children are a gift, not a right. Infants are attached to their mothers in the womb which attachment cannot be transferred to the commissioning mother.

Mr Josue Okoth is a concerned Christian and citizen

Actions we can take to protect our environment

Earth's inhabitants, especially us humans, are at crossroads with the increasing pattern of global warming orchestrated by our actions toward mother nature.

While this existential threat to humanity would be keeping us on alert and cognizant of our actions towards the environment, most people do not seem alarmed.

Environmental protection and sustainability concerns continue to be treated as side issues despite being a central development agenda that if not addressed, the future is in jeopardy.

> "Environmental protection and sustainability concerns continue to be treated as side issues.
>
> **Moses Otai**
> **Environment**



June 5, the designated World Environment Day, passed almost like any other insignificant day. It fell on a Sunday and church services and sermons went on as usual without alluding to the day, and its implications whatsoever. This issue is certainly not about churches or religions, but I am citing this as a missed opportunity for sharing the message considering the crowds that churches pull.

The day was also barely reported about by the media save for a few mentions hidden away in the inner pages of newspapers.

This is a worrying tale of how we're treating mother nature while expecting it to always be good and kind to humanity.

Fortunately, Uganda has a strong foundation to act and enshrine all climate actions within the public and private social spheres of the development spectrum. We have the National Climate Change Policy that was approved in 2015 by Cabinet. Its goal is to ensure a 'harmonised approach towards a climate-resilient and low carbon development path towards sustainable development in Uganda.

This is accompanied by the National Climate Change Act of 2021, which articulates the government's response mechanisms to climate change.

One of the stated purposes is to operationalise the United Nations Framework Convention on climate change, Kyoto Protocol, and the Paris Agreement, which are the critical global action footprints to ensure climate adaptation and resilience actions that ensure environmental protection and sustainability.

With such solid and well-intentioned steps, we can have thematic actions that are central to environmental protection at the centre of our national development plans across ministries, departments, and agencies.

Going Green education and campaigns ought to be institutionalised within the public and private sectors. For instance, schools can be mandated to have climate response education and assessments as part of their immersion while being encouraged to take care of the environment beyond the tokenism of one-off tree planting events. This can include urging children to create, plant, and nurture woodlots for agroforestry, and biofuels.

As a country our dependence on wood fuel for our cooking and related energy needs is obvious. As a result, forest cover has been lost. With so low adoption of other fuels, we're on a self-destructive path.

This is an opportunity to rally communities to ensure that households propagate and build wood fuel lots for their energy consumption needs as a sustainable source of income besides other benefits including sustained rain patterns for agricultural production.

In addition, catalysing the role of the private sector, and other community actors such as NGOs in different spaces would be a great multifaceted approach that ensures that the whole country is vibrantly addressing the issue of protecting planet earth.

With concerted efforts and strong calls for action from powers that be, the spirit to preserve our favourable climate and weather patterns that make us thrive all year round can be engrained in our development ecosystems.

Mr Moses Otai is the country director of ChildFund International