LEADING TRANSFORMATION #29:
HEALTHY AND EFFECTIVE COMMUNITIES

The best description of a healthy community is provided by the African concept of being, UBUNTU. Ubuntu is best captured by the statement, “I am because God is and we are; and since God is and we are, therefore I am.” This concept accepts the centrality of Creator God to healthy communities. It also sees the wellbeing of the individual within the context of the community, and of the community through the life and accomplishments of individual citizens.

The following are characteristics of effective communities:

1. COMMON IDENTITY: Clear path to citizenship or membership. Unique characteristics of the community are identified, nurtured and regularly utilized. A high sense of history is maintained through regular storytelling and other rituals.
2. VISIONARY LEADERSHIP: Leadership that provides compelling Vision and Hope for a new day and destination.
3. SHARED SPACE: The boundaries for the sovereignty of the community are firm and secured; local, distributed or virtual.
4. COMMON LANGUAGE: Communicating in accepted and understandable languages.
5. SHARED VALUES: The values and norms of the community are known and shared. Important values include Integrity, Trust, Tolerance and Interdependence. Tolerance accepts those who are different or hold different perspectives on issues. Tolerance does not however mean acceptance of blatant violations of agreed upon common values. When tolerance has no boundaries, a society loses its soul. Interdependence is a commitment to reciprocal partnerships; supporting one another in other to succeed together. “When one succeeds, we all succeed. When one fails, we all fail.” “We have not arrived until we all arrive.”
6. SECURITY: Protection of the lives and properties of citizens.
7. RULE OF LAW: Laws are understood, respected and enforced without partiality.
8. PATRIOTISM: Citizens are proud to be part of the community and are willing to make sacrifices for its security and progress.

In sum, patriotism is directly responsible for the commitment to the fighting for justice and freedom, resistance of oppression, practice of high integrity; and the willingness to sacrifice for the common good. Injustice, corruption, ineffectiveness in leadership are major contributors to lack of patriotism, and hence lack of pride and commitment to the ideals and goals of communities. The building of healthy and effective communities therefore requires competent leaders of integrity and high commitment who can inspire a high sense of patriotism in ordinary citizens. This is followed by the ability of leaders to mobilize motivated citizens for strategic causes and actions that have high potential for promoting transformation and development.