



AFROBAROMETER *Briefing Paper*

TANZANIANS AND THEIR NATIONAL PARLIAMENT: WHAT THE PEOPLE EXPECT OF MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT (MPS), AND WHAT THEY PERCEIVE THEIR MPS ARE DELIVERING

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Members of Parliament face a challenging task in fulfilling their core and at times conflicting responsibilities within government and society. They are expected to provide a voice for the people, i.e., represent their constituents' interests and views within the national government. They are also expected to provide services to improve lives and livelihoods within their constituencies. In addition, MPs are expected to legislate, i.e., draft and enact new laws, and amend and improve existing laws. And finally, MPs are expected to provide oversight of the executive branch of government (the President, the Cabinet and the government bureaucracy). However, Afrobarometer observations show that, it is not uncommon in Africa that MPs spend a disproportionate amount of their time on constituency services - which is often the most visible aspect of their work to voters, and thus important in attracting votes - at the expense of their other core functions. As a result, many African legislatures remain weak and unable to challenge strong presidents or provide the necessary checks and balances on presidential power.¹

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This brief examines popular expectations and perceptions on the performance of the Parliament in Tanzania, based upon findings from Round 4 of the Afrobarometer survey conducted in 2008. In particular, the brief looks at how Tanzanians prioritize the various responsibilities of an MP, and analyses citizens' perceptions on how well their MPs are fulfilling these diverse roles.

Contrary to popular belief, the survey findings indicate that Tanzanians prefer their MPs to focus their efforts on representation, and to a lesser extent, constituency services. Respondents showed very little interest in the oversight function of Parliament. However, public understanding of, and attitudes about, the authority and

responsibilities of MPs - i.e., what MPs can and should be doing - under a multi-party system are still evolving. During nearly three decades of one-party rule, MPs played a much more limited role focused on monitoring implementation of the party manifesto. Overall, with respect to performance, respondents accorded MPs reasonably good ratings, but revealed significant underlying dissatisfaction with MPs' performance when specific functions were examined.

BACKGROUND

After nearly three decades of one-party rule, Tanzania adopted a multi-party system in 1992. However this has not led to major changes in the Tanzanian political

¹ Logan, C., Fujiwara, T., and Parish, V. Citizens and the State in Africa: New Results from Afrobarometer Round 3. A Compendium of Public Opinion Findings fro 18 African Countries, 2005-2006. Afrobarometer Working Paper No. 61.

environment. Regime transition took place under the guidance of the former and present ruling party, Chama Cha Mapinduzi (CCM), and CCM has continued to overwhelmingly shape and dominate the political landscape, winning landslides in elections in 1995, 2000 and 2005. Following each election, CCM has controlled between 80% and 90% of parliamentary seats, while also continuing to control the presidency. The current President, Jakaya Mrisho Kikwete, assumed office in December 2005, succeeding Benjamin Mkapa who stepped down after his second term in office as stipulated in the constitution of Tanzania. Meanwhile, the Tanzanian opposition remains weak and fragmented.

Under such conditions, in which both parliament and the executive are strongly dominated by a single party, what do Tanzanians expect from their Parliament, and what benefits do they think they are getting from their representatives?

THE SURVEY

The Afrobarometer is now conducted in 20 countries in Africa. A standard survey instrument is used in all countries, with face-to-face interviews conducted in the local languages of respondents. The survey seeks citizens' opinions on the economic, political and social circumstances in their countries, with topics covering democracy, governance, participation in the political process and quality of electoral representation, livelihoods, service provision, economic management, crime, trust in institutions, and national identity. The first three rounds of the survey were conducted in 2001, 2003 and 2005. Round 4 was carried out in Tanzania from 23 June to 12 July 2008, and was based on a nationally representative random sample of 1,208 adult Tanzanians above the age of 18 years (i.e., voting age), with an even split of male and female respondents. Based upon Tanzania's estimated population of 38

million people, the overall margin of sampling error is +/-3% at a 95% confidence level.² The sample was drawn from all regions of the country, with each region sampled in proportion to its share of the national population.³ Interviews were conducted in 71 districts on Mainland Tanzania and 8 districts in Zanzibar. Furthermore, 27% of respondents were drawn from urban areas and 73% from rural areas, which is consistent with the national urban/rural distribution. Fieldwork was conducted by Research on Poverty Alleviation (REPOA), an independent research organization in Tanzania, with support from the Center for Democratic Development (CDD) of Ghana, one of three Afrobarometer core partners.

WHAT TANZANIANS WANT: POPULAR EXPECTATIONS OF MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT

Tanzanians want their voices to be heard, and expect their MPs to listen to them and represent their views in Parliament in accordance with the principles of popular sovereignty. Over two thirds (69%) of respondents considered that to 'listen to constituents and represent their needs' was the most important of the four main responsibilities of an MP (see Figure 1). This finding runs counter to conventional wisdom, which suggests that people want services for their constituency more than anything else. Only one-fifth (18%) of respondents identified 'delivering jobs or development to the constituency' as the most important responsibility of an MP. Less than one-tenth (9%) thought 'making laws' is the top priority. Providing executive oversight was the function ranked last, with only 3% saying MPs should focus on 'monitoring the President and his government'. The strong preference for MPs to focus on listening and representing crossed party lines: 66% of respondents affiliated with CCM, and 77% of those affiliated with the opposition, ranked this function as the top priority. However, as revealed by findings presented in the

² For example, for a survey finding calculated to be 50%, there is a 95% probability that the actual percentage would lie within +/- 3% of the finding, i.e., between 47% and 53%.

³ The only exception is Zanzibar, where an intentional over-sampling was performed to produce a sub-sample large enough for statistical analysis, which is important given that the region is autonomous in many aspects of economic, social and political management. The final sample split was Mainland Tanzania 1,096 respondents (91%) and Zanzibar 112 respondents (9%). However, all national results reported in this brief are weighted so that Zanzibar only contributes in proportion to its actual share in the national population.

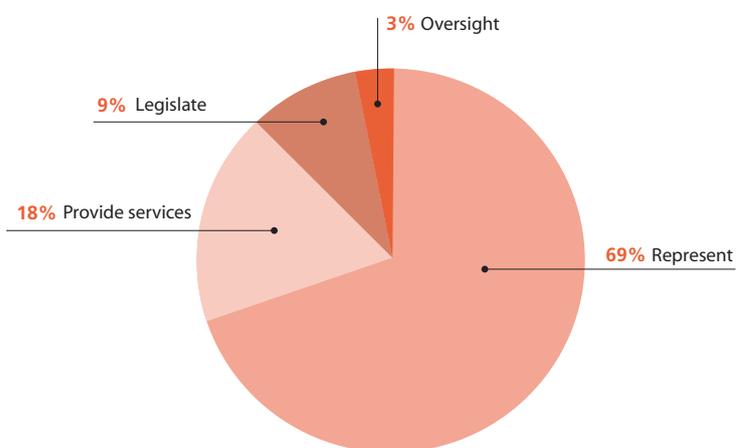


Figure 1: Citizens' Perceptions on the Most Important Responsibility of an MP

“Members of Parliament have different responsibilities. Which of the following do you think is the most important responsibility of your Member of Parliament: a) Listen to constituents and represent their needs; b) Deliver jobs or development; c) Make laws for the good of the country; or d) Monitor the President and his government?”

following sub-sections, this does not mean that people think that serving the community is unimportant, that Parliament should not be making the country's laws, or that executive oversight is an inappropriate role.

Serving the Community

Although it is not their top priority, Tanzanians rate the ability to provide constituency services as an important criterion for selecting an MP. As shown in Table 1, a large majority (64%) of respondents indicated that when electing a Member of Parliament, they preferred to vote for a candidate who can deliver goods and services to people in their own community. Only about one-third (35%) indicated a preference to vote for a candidate who focuses on making policies that benefit everyone in the country. Neither respondents' level of education nor party affiliation significantly affected these proportions. Similarly, both men (64%) and women (65%) preferred to vote for a candidate who can deliver local goods and services.

Legislating

Tanzanians do not rate law-making as a primary responsibility of their MPs, but they overwhelmingly believe that legislative powers belong in the hands of MPs, and not the President. Overall, 80% of respondents

Table 1: Expectations of MPs

Which of the following statements is closest to your view. Choose Statement 1 or Statement 2.	% of respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing with each statement		
	All Respondents	CCM Affiliated	Other Party Affiliations
On Serving the Community:			
Statement 1: In electing a Member of Parliament, I prefer to vote for a candidate who can deliver goods and services to people in this community.	64	64	66
Statement 2: In electing a Member of Parliament, I prefer to vote for a candidate who can make policies that benefit everyone in our country.	35	35	33
On Legislating:			
Statement 1: Members of Parliament represent the people; therefore they should make laws for this country, even if the President does not agree.	80	78	87
Statement 2: Since the President represents all of us, he should pass laws without worrying about what Parliament thinks.	13	14	8
On Parliamentary Oversight:			
Statement 1: The Parliament should ensure that the President explains to it on a regular basis how his government spends the taxpayers' money.	66	63	78
Statement 2: The President should be able to devote his full attention to developing the country rather than wasting time justifying his actions.	29	31	21

agreed that 'Members of Parliament represent the people; therefore, they should make laws for this country, even if the President does not agree'. Only 13% had the contrary opinion that the President should make the country's laws (see Table 1).

Some differences were recorded based on party affiliation and gender. Those affiliated with the opposition were slightly more likely (87%) than ruling party supporters (78%) to support Parliament's predominant role in law-making, and men (84%) were similarly more likely than women (74%) to adopt this position. Nonetheless, in all cases, large majorities affirm Parliament's key role in enacting legislation.

Parliamentary Oversight

Although Tanzanians ranked 'parliamentary oversight' as a distant fourth and last among MPs core responsibilities, they nonetheless strongly support the role of Parliament in overseeing the executive and putting the breaks on unchecked presidential power. Two-thirds (66%) of respondents overall - and 78% of those affiliated with the opposition - agreed that 'Parliament should ensure that the President explains to it on a regular basis how his government spends the taxpayers' money.' Less than one-third (29%) held the view that 'The President should be able to devote his full attention to developing the country rather than wasting time justifying his actions to Parliament' (see Table 1).

In addition, respondents believe that Parliament has a particularly valuable oversight role to play with regard to scrutinizing government contracts. Respondents were asked to choose between the statement that 'Government contracts affect all Tanzanians, and should therefore always be reviewed by Parliament on behalf of the citizens,' and the alternative that 'Government contracts are negotiated by competent government officials. They should not be sent to Parliament for review.' An overwhelming majority (84%) of Tanzanians are of the opinion that Parliament, on behalf of the citizens, should review all government contracts. Gender has a slight influence on these results; more men (89%) than women (81%) held that Parliament should review all government contracts on behalf of citizens.

This opinion also cuts across party lines; large majorities of respondents affiliated with CCM and those close to opposition parties shared this view (86% and 87% respectively). Indeed, both CCM and opposition MPs have recently demanded in Parliament that the government submit all major contracts for review. So far the executive has resisted this pressure.

There are, however, some ambiguities in Tanzanians' views of the division of responsibilities between the legislature and the executive. In particular, in order for Parliament to exercise its oversight responsibility effectively, it must be able to operate autonomously of the President's office. To gauge the opinion of Tanzanians on this issue they were asked to choose between statement 1: 'Cabinet ministers should not be appointed from the Parliament, because this blurs the separation of powers between the Executive Branch and the Legislature, and accountability becomes difficult', and statement 2: 'There is no need to have complete separation of powers between the Legislative and Executive branches of government. Hence, cabinet ministers in Tanzania should continue to be appointed from the Parliament'. Tanzanians are almost evenly divided on this issue. Nearly half of the respondents (49%) selected statement 2, indicating that they do not think it is necessary for the legislative and executive branches to be completely separated. Rather, they believe that Cabinet ministers should continue to be appointed from Parliament. On the other hand, 45% consider that, in the interests of accountability, legislators should not serve in the Cabinet.

Finally, participants were asked: 'Would you disapprove or approve if elections and the Parliament are abolished so that the President can decide everything.' The overall importance that Tanzanians attribute to Parliament can be summed up in the finding that 92% of respondents rejected this notion. Both men (93%) and women (89%) overwhelmingly rejected the idea of abolishing Parliament and elections. Tanzanians clearly believe that Parliament serves as an important counter-weight to the presidency, even if its oversight function is not considered the top priority by the public, or the importance of this role is yet to be fully realized.

WHAT TANZANIANS GET: ARE REPRESENTATIVES FULFILLING THEIR RESPONSIBILITIES?

First and foremost, Tanzanians expect their MPs to represent their views and act as their advocates in Parliament. How do Tanzanians assess their MPs performance in fulfilling this and their other core functions? Overall, the public appears to hold Parliament and their MPs in quite high esteem. Nearly two-thirds of Tanzanians (65%) said that they approved of the way their own MP had performed his or her job over the past year, compared with only 33% who disapproved. These high ratings may be due, at least in part, to the lively debates in Parliament in the 2007 sessions that focused upon fighting corruption in government, an issue championed especially by opposition parliamentarians, but also supported by some ruling party MPs. A recent investigation into graft in public procurement by a parliamentary probe committee led to the resignation of the Prime Minister and two senior cabinet ministers in February 2008. This may have helped to bolster the standing of Parliament in the eyes of the people. However, Tanzanians' approval of the performance of MPs is still 25 percentage points lower than that for the President (90%), but almost on a par with that for local councilors (69%).

Findings on Tanzanians' overall trust in Parliament are largely consistent with performance approval ratings for MPs. When asked, 'How much do you trust the Parliament, or haven't you heard enough about it to say', an overwhelming majority of respondents (83%) reported that they trust the legislature 'somewhat' or 'a lot', while only 16% are distrustful (i.e., trusting 'not at all' or only 'a little bit'). Furthermore, when asked, 'How many Members of Parliament are involved in corruption, or haven't you heard enough to say,' seven in ten Tanzanians interviewed (72%) said 'none' or only 'some of them' are involved, compared with just 12% who believed that 'most' or 'all of them' are involved. In summary, Parliament and parliamentarians appear to garner quite high marks for their recent performance.

Are MPs Listening?

Closer inspection, however, reveals chinks in parliamentarians' performance. Tanzanians' desire to have their voices heard appears to be informed by the belief that their MPs will grant them audience, and findings indicate that citizens are relatively confident of their ability to gain access to their representatives. When asked, 'In your opinion, how likely is it that you could get together with others and make your Member of Parliament listen to your concerns about a matter of importance to the community?', more than six in ten respondents (63%) believed it is 'somewhat likely' or 'very likely'. However, one-third (34%) did not share this opinion, saying that it is 'not at all likely' or 'not very likely' that their MPs would listen.

Yet, at the same time, they also seemed to report almost the opposite. When asked, 'How much of the time do you think Members of Parliament try their best to listen to what people like you have to say?' seven in ten Tanzanians (73%) expressed the opinion that in reality MPs are not good listeners, reporting that they 'never' or 'only sometimes' listen to constituents. Less than one-quarter (23%) felt that MPs 'often' or 'always' listen to what people have to say.

Contact with Members of Parliament and Other Community Leaders

For MPs to effectively represent the views of their constituents on the floor of Parliament, they must frequently interact with voters. However, when asked, 'During the past year, how often have you contacted a Member of Parliament about some important problem or to give them your views', a very large majority of Tanzanians (84%) reported that they had never contacted their representatives. Only 16% had contacted their MPs, out of which 7% had contacted their representative only once.

Findings also revealed that MPs are contacted much less often than religious leaders (52%) and local government councilors (31%) (see Table 2). Nevertheless, the level

Table 2: Constituents' Contact with MPs and Other Community Leaders

During the past year, how often have you contacted any of the following persons about some important problem or to give them your views?	% of respondents who had made contact at least once
Religious leader	52
Local government councilor	31
Member of Parliament	16
Traditional ruler	16
Some other influential person	13
Official of a government agency	12

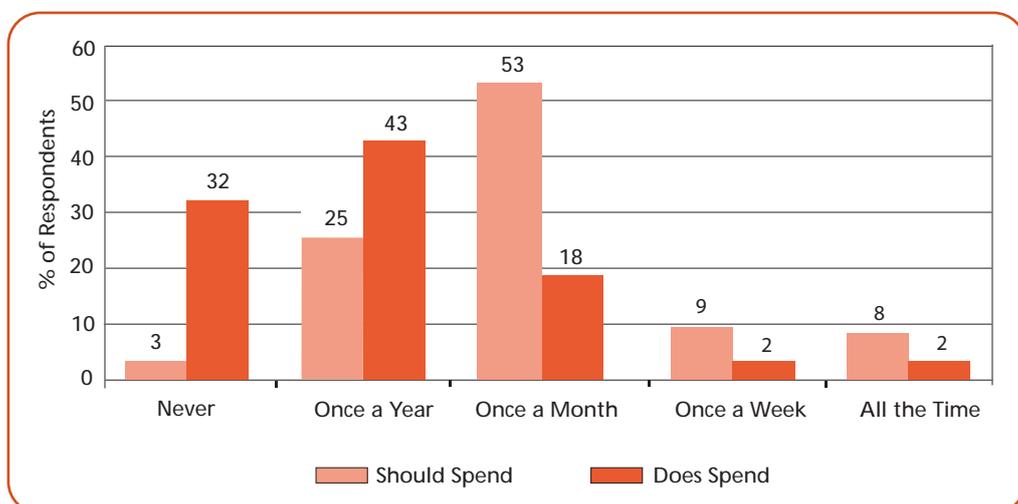
of public contact with MPs in Tanzania of 16% is relatively good in comparison to the 17-country average of just 11% recorded in Round 3 of the Afrobarometer conducted in 2005-06.

Further examination of data indicates that contact with MPs is much lower than contact with religious leaders in part because MPs spend limited amounts of time in their constituencies. A considerable gap was recorded between the amount of time citizens want their MP to spend in their constituency, and the time that they believed their MP actually spent there. When asked, 'How much time should your Member of Parliament spend in this constituency to visit the community and citizens?', 70% of respondents said they wanted their MP to visit them at least once a month or more (see Figure 3). This may be difficult to fulfil given that MPs have other responsibilities. But when asked, 'How much of the time does your Member of Parliament spend in this constituency?', three-quarters (75%) of respondents reported that MPs visit only once a year or less, while

only 21% see their representative once a month or more. Therefore, a gap exists of almost 50% in the percentages of respondents who hoped to see their representative once a month or more and those who actually did see their MP that frequently. And if MPs are not available on visits to their constituencies, the opportunities for contact and for listening are limited.

Despite the relatively limited access to and contact with their MPs, it is notable that a sizeable majority of Tanzanians (76%) were familiar with their representative, as they correctly identified their MP by name. In the 2005 survey, a similar proportion (75%) of respondents correctly identified their MP by name. This is quite a high level in comparison with other countries. Across 17 countries surveyed by the Afrobarometer in 2005-06, on average only 48% of respondents correctly identified their own MP. Only Kenya (86%) and Botswana (77%) surpassed Tanzania, while 74% of respondents in both Malawi and Uganda also correctly named their MPs.⁴

Figure 3: Constituents' Expected and Actual Access to MPs
 "How much time should your Member of Parliament spend in this constituency to visit the community and its citizens? How much time does your Member of Parliament spend in this constituency?"



⁴ Logan, C., Fujiwara, T., and Parish, V. Citizens and the State in Africa: New Results from Afrobarometer Round 3. A Compendium of Public Opinion Findings from 18 African Countries, 2005-2006. Afrobarometer Working Paper No. 61, p.11.

ACCOUNTABILITY: WHO SHOULD OVERSEE MPS?

Tanzanians want a Parliament that can oversee the executive, but who should oversee the Parliament? Respondents were asked: 'Who should be responsible for making sure that, once elected, Members of Parliament do their jobs?' Nearly four in ten (39%) respondents identified voters as the group responsible for holding MPs accountable. However, 21% of Tanzanians believed that MPs are not accountable directly to voters, but rather to themselves (i.e., Parliament should monitor itself), 18% identified the president/executive, and 18% cited political parties. These findings suggest that voting for their representatives has not yet fully instilled a public sense of 'ownership' over the behavior of MPs once in office.

Elections do, however, serve important functions in the view of most Tanzanians. When asked, 'How well do elections ensure that MPs reflect the views of voters,' more than half (57%) of those interviewed said elections fulfilled this function well. A slim majority of Tanzanians also expect there to be consequences if their MP does not respect the wishes of voters. Indeed, when asked, 'Think about how elections work in practice in this country. How well do elections enable voters to remove from office leaders who do not do what the people want', 52% of respondents felt that elections were effective in enabling voters to remove leaders from office. But at the same time, 41% held the opposite view, expressing low confidence in the usefulness of elections as a tool for holding parliamentarians accountable to voters.

CONCLUSIONS

In sum, Tanzanians believe in the appropriateness of the four principal functions of Members of Parliament - listening and representing voters, providing services to their constituency, legislating, and overseeing the executive and government - but by far the heaviest weight of opinion was placed on listening and representing. Therefore, the upshot from this finding might be that if MPs do not listen to constituents, they risk losing their mandate to represent voters, and may not be re-elected to office.

Overall, Tanzanians positively reviewed their MPs and the Parliament as a whole, and reported satisfaction with MP performance, suggesting a belief in the strong representative qualities of these

political leaders. Despite these positive perceptions, MPs are contacted much less often by their constituents compared with religious leaders and local government councilors, and they do not get good marks for their availability to listen to constituents. There is a major gap in access to MPs; constituents expect far more visits by MPs to their constituencies than they are actually making. Thus, while MPs received reasonably good marks on their overall performance, it is clear that MPs still face considerable challenges in fulfilling their core responsibilities, and that there is much room for improvement in the quality of representation they provide.

Afrobarometer is a comparative series of national public attitude surveys on democracy, markets and civil society in Africa. It is an independent, non-partisan research project that measures the social, political and economic atmosphere in Africa. Afrobarometer surveys are conducted in more than a dozen African countries and are repeated on a regular cycle. Because the instrument asks standard set questions, countries can be systematically compared and trends in public attitudes can be tracked over time.

Country and regional reports can be obtained from the Afrobarometer website: www.afrobarometer.org

Countries participating in the Afrobarometer include: Benin, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Ghana, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, Senegal, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.

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