



TANZANIANS AND THEIR MPS: WHAT THE PEOPLE WANT, AND WHAT THEY DON'T ALWAYS GET

Introduction

Members of parliament face a challenging set of tasks in fulfilling their core and sometimes conflicting functions within government and society. They are expected to provide a voice for the people, that is, they *represent* their constituents' interests and views within the national government. Furthermore, they are expected to provide *constituency services* to improve lives and livelihoods within their constituencies. In addition, members of parliament (MPs) are also expected to *legislate*, drafting the laws of the land for presidential approval. And finally, MPs are expected to provide *oversight* of the executive branch of government (the President, the Cabinet and the government bureaucracy). But it is not uncommon in Africa that some MPs spend a disproportionate amount of their time on constituency services – which may be the most visible aspect of their work to constituents, and thus important in attracting votes – often at the expense of these other core functions. As a result, many African legislatures often remain weak and unable to challenge strong presidents or provide the necessary checks and balances on presidential power.

This brief addresses the state of the Parliament in Tanzania. In particular, we ask how Tanzanians themselves prioritize the various responsibilities of an MP. And we explore how well their MPs are doing at fulfilling these diverse roles.

This report draws on the findings of a recent Afrobarometer survey, conducted in June/July 2008, to evaluate what Tanzanians expect of their MPs, and what they are actually getting from them. In sum, we find that contrary to popular belief, Tanzanians prefer that their MPs focus their efforts on representation, and only to a lesser extent, constituency services, while demonstrating very little interest in the oversight function of Parliament. But popular views do not always seem to be consistent, and it may be that the public understanding of and attitudes about what MPs can and should be doing under a multiparty 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). When it comes to MP performance, we find that while in *general* terms MPs get reasonably good performance ratings, when we delve into specifics, there appears to be some significant underlying dissatisfaction with MP performance.

Background

After decades of one-party rule, Tanzania adopted a multiparty system in 1992. However, this did not necessarily lead to major changes in the Tanzanian political environment. Regime transition took place under the guidance of the former ruling party, Chama Cha Mapinduzi (CCM), and the CCM has continued to overwhelmingly shape and dominate the political landscape, winning landslides in every

election. CCM has successively controlled between 80 and 90 percent of parliamentary seats after the 1995, 2000 and 2005 elections, 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, where both Parliament and the Executive are so strongly dominated by a single party, what do Tanzanians expect from their Parliament, and what are they getting from it?

The Afrobarometer Survey

Afrobarometer surveys are now conducted in 20 countries in Africa, using a common survey instrument and methodology. The recent survey in Tanzania was the fourth in a series. The first three rounds were conducted in 2001, 2003 and 2005 respectively. The Round 4 survey was carried out from 23rd June to 12th July 2008, and was based on a nationally representative random sample of 1,208 adult Tanzanians drawn from the National Master Sample. Given Tanzania's estimated population of 38 million people, a sample of this size gives an overall margin of sampling error of +/-3 percent at a 95 percent confidence level.¹ The survey was conducted in all regions of the country, with each region sampled in proportion to its share of the national population.² Interviews were conducted in 71 districts on Mainland Tanzania and 8 districts in Zanzibar. Furthermore, 27 percent of the respondents were drawn from urban areas and the remaining 73 percent from rural areas, also reflecting the national urban/rural distribution. Fieldwork was conducted by Research on Poverty Alleviation (REPOA), an independent research organization, with support from the Center for Democratic Development (CDD) of Ghana, one of three Afrobarometer Core Partners.

What Tanzanians Want: Popular Expectations of Representatives

Tanzanians want their voices to be heard, and as a result expect their members of parliament (MPs) to listen to them and represent their views in Parliament in accordance with the principles of popular sovereignty. Thus, when asked which of the four main responsibilities of an MP is the most important, over two thirds (69 percent) said members of parliament have to listen to their constituents and represent their needs (Figure 1). This finding runs counter to the conventional wisdom, which suggests that people want constituency services more than anything else. Just one fifth (18 percent) identified delivering jobs or development to the constituency as the most important responsibility of an MP, while less than one tenth (9 percent) think making laws is the top priority. Providing oversight of the executive ranks lower still, with only 3 percent saying MPs should focus on monitoring the president and his government.

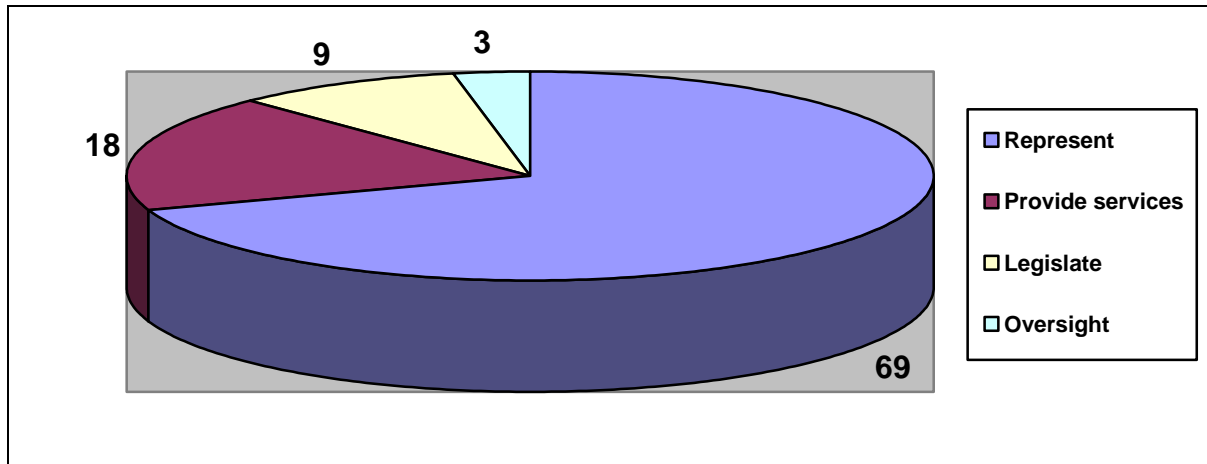
The strong preference for an MP focus on listening and representing crosses party lines: 66 percent of those affiliated with the CCM, and 77 percent of those affiliated with the opposition, ranked this the top priority. As we shall see below, however, this does not mean that people think that serving the

¹ Thus, for an estimate of, say, 50 percent, the true percentage would lie within +/- 3 percent, i.e., between 47 and 53 percent.

² The only exception is Zanzibar, where an intentional over sample was done to produce an analyzable sub-sample, which is important given that the region is autonomous in many aspects of economic, social and political management. However, all national results reported here are weighted so that Zanzibar only contributes in proportion to its actual share in the national population.

community is unimportant, that Parliament should not be making the country’s laws, or that oversight is an inappropriate role.

Figure 1: 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: Listen to constituents and represent their needs / Deliver jobs or development to your constituency / Make laws for the good of the country / Monitor the president and his government?

Serving the Community

Although it may not be their top priority, Tanzanians do nonetheless rate the ability to provide constituency services as an important criterion for selecting an MP. In fact, consistent with the previous question, they put constituency services above legislating, and they appear to put the good of their own community above the good of the country as a whole, at least when it comes to defining their own MP’s responsibilities.

As shown in Table 1, a large majority (64 percent) say that when electing a member of parliament, they prefer to vote for a candidate who can deliver goods and services to people in the community. Only about one third (35 percent) prefers to vote for a candidate who focuses on making policies that benefit everyone in the country. Neither education nor party affiliations significantly affect the results. Similarly, both men (64 percent) and women (65 percent) hold similar views regarding whom to vote for as a member of parliament.

Legislation by the Legislators.

While they do not rate law-making as a primary responsibility of their MPs, Tanzanians are nonetheless clear in their understanding that legislative powers belong in the hands of these MPs, and not the president. Thus, eight in ten (80 percent) agree that “Members of Parliament represent the people; therefore they should make laws for this country, even if the President does not agree”, while just 13 percent dissented, believing that the President should make the country’s laws.

There are some differences based on partisanship and gender. Those affiliated with the opposition are somewhat more likely (87 percent) than ruling party supporters (78 percent) to support Parliament’s predominant role in law-making, and men (84 percent) are similarly more likely than women (74 percent) to adopt this position. But nonetheless, in all cases large majorities affirm Parliament’s key role in drafting legislation.

Parliamentary Oversight

Although it ranked a distant fourth on the list of parliamentary responsibilities, Tanzanians do nonetheless support the role of Parliament in providing oversight of the executive and putting the breaks on unchecked presidential power. Two thirds (66 percent) overall – and fully 78 percent of those affiliated with the opposition – agree 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 percent) counters that “The President should be able to devote his full attention to developing the country rather than wasting time justifying his actions to Parliament.”

In Tanzania, the public believes that Parliament has a particularly valuable oversight role to play with regard to scrutinizing government contracts. We asked respondents 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 84 percent of those interviewed are of the opinion that Parliament, on behalf of the citizens, should review all government contracts.

Gender has a slight influence in these opinions with more men (89 percent) than women (81 percent) saying Parliament should review all government contracts on behalf of the citizens. This opinion, too, cuts across party lines: large majorities of both CCM affiliates, as well as those close to opposition parties share this view (86 and 87 percent, respectively). Indeed, recently there have been demands in Parliament from both CCM and opposition MPs that the government submit all major contracts for review. So far the government (executive) has resisted such 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 in 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 Legislature and the 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 respondents (49 percent) 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. But almost as many (45 percent) feel that in the interests of accountability, legislators should not serve in the cabinet (executive).

Finally, we asked respondents “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 the various roles of the Parliament can be summed up in the finding that 92 percent reject this notion. Tanzanians clearly believe that Parliament serves as an important counter-weight to the presidency, even if this role is not the top priority, or as yet fully realized. Both men (93 percent) and women (89 percent) overwhelmingly rejected the idea of abolishing Parliament and elections.

Table 1: Expectations of MPs

Which of the following statements is closest to your view? Choose Statement 1 or Statement 2.	% agreeing or strongly agreeing with each statement		
	ALL	CCM	OTHERS
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
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
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

What Tanzanians Get: Are Representatives Representing?

First and foremost, Tanzanians expect their MPs to represent their views and be their advocates in Parliament. How do Tanzanians assess their MPs in fulfilling this and other expectations? Overall, the public appears to hold Parliament and their MPs in quite high esteem. Nearly two thirds of Tanzanians (65 percent) say they approve of the way their own MP has performed his or her job over the past year, compared to only 33 percent who disapprove. These high ratings may be due at least in part to the lively debates in Parliament, championed especially by opposition MPs, but also supported by some ruling party MPs, who have made it their responsibility to fight graft in government. A recent investigation into graft in public procurement by a parliamentary probe committee led to the resignation of the Prime Minister and three senior cabinet ministers. This may have helped to bolster the standing of Parliament in the eyes of the people. It is imperative, however, to point out that Tanzanians' approval of the job performance of their MPs is fully 25 percentage points lower than that for the president (90 percent), but almost on a par with that for local councilors (69 percent).

The performance approval rating for MPs seems to feed directly into popular attitudes regarding the overall legitimacy of Parliament. When asked "how much do you trust the Parliament, or haven't you heard enough about it to say", an overwhelming majority (83 percent) say they trust their legislature "somewhat" or "a lot", while only 16 percent are distrustful (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 every ten Tanzanians interviewed (72 percent) said only "none" or only "some of them" are involved, compared to just 12 percent saying that "most" or "all of them" are. Overall, then, Parliament and parliamentarians appear to garner quite high marks for their recent performance.

Are MPs Listening?

Closer inspection, however, reveals some chinks in the parliamentary armor. Tanzanian's desire to have their voices heard appears to be informed by their belief that their MPs will grant them audience. And they are relatively confident of their ability to make themselves heard. 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?" six in ten (63 percent) Tanzanians say it

is somewhat or very likely. However, one third (34 percent) do not share this opinion, saying that it is not at all likely or not very likely that their MP would listen.

Yet at the same time, Tanzanians also seem 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 every ten Tanzanians (73 percent) express 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 percent) say MPs often or always listen to what people have to say.

Contact with Members of Parliament and Other Leaders

For MPs to effectively represent the views of their constituents on the floor of Parliament there must be constant interaction. One way of encouraging such interaction is frequent contact with the people they represent. 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 percent) reported that they had never contacted their formal, elected national representatives (MPs). Only 16 percent had contacted their MPs, out of which 7 percent contacted only once.

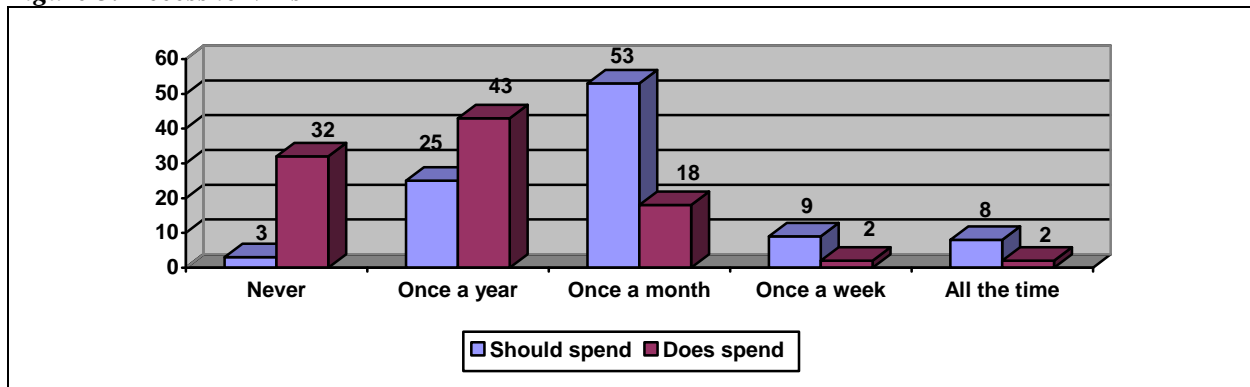
MPs are contacted much less often than religious leaders (52 percent) and local government councilors (31 percent). Nevertheless, the 16 percent MP contact in Tanzania is relatively good in comparison to the 17-country average of just 11 percent in Round 3 Afrobarometer surveys conducted in 2005-6.

Table 2: Contact with 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	% 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

It may be the case that contact rates for MPs are so much lower than those for religious leaders because MPs are much harder to find. There is a considerable gap between the amount of time citizens want their MP to spend in their constituency, and the time that they believe their MPs actually do spend there. When asked, “How much time should your Member of Parliament spend in this constituency to visit the community and citizens?” over half (70 percent) say they want their MP to visit them at least once a month or more. This may be difficult to fulfill given that MPs also have other responsibilities. But when asked, “How much of the time does your Member of Parliament spend in this constituency?” three quarters (75 percent) report visits only once a year or less, while only 21 percent see their representative once a month or more – a gap of almost 50 percent between hopes and realities. And if MPs are not available on visits to their constituencies, the opportunities for contact and for listening are limited.

Figure 3: 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?

Despite the relatively limited access to and contact with their MPs, it is notable that a sizeable majority of Tanzanians (76 percent) appear familiar with their representatives, as they could correctly identify their MP by name. In the 2005 survey a similar number (75 percent) also correctly identified their MP by name. This is quite a high level in comparison to other countries. Across 17 countries surveyed in 2005-6, an average of only 48 percent could correctly identify their own MP. Only Kenya surpassed Tanzania with 86 percent, followed by Botswana (77 percent). Malawi and Uganda followed suit with 74 percent each correctly naming their Member of Parliament.³

Accountability: Who Can Make Representatives Represent?

Tanzanians want a Parliament that can oversee the executive, but who should oversee the Parliament? We asked respondents: “Who should be responsible for making sure that, once elected, Members of Parliament do their jobs? A significant number believe that since MPs are the representatives of the people, it is the voters who should hold them accountable: nearly four in ten (39 percent) identify voters as the responsible party. But a significant majority believes that MPs are not accountable directly to voters, but rather, to themselves (i.e., Parliament should monitor itself) (21 percent), to the president/executive (18 percent) or to their political party (18 percent). This suggests that voting for these representatives has not yet fully instilled a public sense of “ownership” over their behavior 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 percent) of those interviewed say they do well at fulfilling this role. A slim majority of Tanzanians also expect there to be consequences if their MP does not respect the wishes of their voters. Indeed, when asked “Think about how election 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” just over half (52 percent) says that elections are effective in enabling voters to remove elected leaders. But at the same time, fully 41 percent hold the opposite view, expressing low confidence in the usefulness of elections as a tool for holding parliamentarians accountable to the voters.

³ Carolyn Logan, Tetsuya Fujiwara and Virginia Parish, *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.

Conclusions

In sum, Tanzanians believe in the appropriateness of all of the roles of members of parliament, but by far the heaviest weight is on listening and representing. If MPs do not listen to constituents' voices, they risk losing their mandate to represent voters, and may not be re-elected to office.

Overall, Tanzanians positively review their MPs and the Parliament as a whole, and paint a positive picture of widespread satisfaction with MP performance, suggesting a belief in the strong representative qualities of these leaders. Despite these positive reviews, MPs are contacted much less often by their constituents compared to religious leaders and local government councilors, and they do not get good marks for their willingness to really listen to constituents. These findings might be attributed to a major gap in access to MPs: constituents expect far more MP visits and availability than they are getting. Thus, while MPs get reasonably good marks on their overall performance, it is clear that MPs still face considerable challenges, and that there is much room for improvement in the quality of representation that they provide.

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