

Visit to **Tanzania**

following the report of the
Commission for Africa
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Introduction

I had four reasons to visit Tanzania in 2005

- I was undertaking the return part of a British Council exchange programme between UK women parliamentarians and their counterparts in Africa. My exchange partner was Hon Monica Mbega MP for Iringa Urban and I also visited another MP on the programme Hon Amina Salum Ali MP for Zanzibar.
- My constituency of Camberwell and Peckham is probably the constituency in the UK with the highest number of residents of African origin. They come from at least 14 different African countries – including Tanzania.
- The Commission for Africa, established by the Prime Minister, Tony Blair MP, reported in Spring 2005 and sets the agenda for the UK presidency of the G8 countries which begins in July 2005. The Prime Minister has asked Ministers to work on the Commission for Africa agenda with their counterparts in Africa.
- I am working on the developing of a student voluntary programme to enable UK young people from the African diaspora to work in their country of origin in their gap year or post-university year. To further that, I visited Student Partnership Worldwide Tanzania which places two volunteers – one from the UK and one from Tanzania – in remote rural villages to carryout HIV/AIDS prevention.

The **Commission for Africa** identifies 5 challenges on which Africa and the developed world need to work together

- Increased aid from the developed countries
- Fair trade between Africa and the developed world
- Debt relief
- Conflict resolution
- Good governance

And I take these as the themes for the purpose of this written report.



Villagers waiting to meet us in Mwangata

The need for Increased Aid and Fairer Trade

Most of Tanzania's people are poor. Whilst increasing numbers of children are going to primary school, many who get the necessary marks cannot go to secondary school as they cannot afford it. Infant and child mortality rates are high and life expectancy is 48 years and falling.



Meeting local people in a small village outside Iringa who started building a school last year but need further funds to complete it

The help that increased Aid could give is evident. Villagers struggle to build a new secondary school – with local companies donating cement and local people carrying out the building works. But they are unable to complete the second classroom. The local authorities have built a new health clinic for ante-natal, delivery, post natal care and paediatric immunisation. Though the building is good and it is already serving the local community it does not yet have a water supply or HIV testing equipment. Aid which backs up the efforts of local people to improve health and education facilities makes a big difference and will be well used.



Discussing the need for a water supply and HIV testing kits for Igumbilo Clinic

The concerns about trade involve questions of investment as well as fair markets. The Iringa region – like much of Tanzania – is agricultural, producing maize, tomatoes, oranges. Yet it has virtually no food processing industry. The crops produced do not

fit the size/shape requirements of the western supermarkets. Without the processing industries the surplus, after subsistence and local markets have been supplied, simply rots. And the tea from the Mufindi area which produces for Brooke Bond is packed and packaged abroad.

Investment and access to markets in developed countries could see areas such as Iringa tackle the desperate levels of poverty and become prosperous.

An area where there is a further need for aid is work on HIV/AIDS. In the Iringa area the official figures show an HIV infection rate of up to 14% - higher than the national average. In the schools we visited over 10% of the children are orphans. In speeches in the villages and to the children in the schools Monica Mbega MP gives out a strong message that it is for the villages themselves to take care of the orphans, not to reject them. She reminds villagers that if there's a wedding, they all gather round and give something to get the couple started on their married life. She says they should do the same for the orphans when the parents die. At the schools – as all the pupils gather outside to meet us – the orphans are brought forward and Monica Mbega tells them they must work hard with their education and that even though they have no parents they must have hope and work for their own future. She then gives out free school uniforms for the orphans which she has bought with donations from local businesses and from her own finances.

Presenting uniforms to AIDS orphans at Hoho Primary School. At this primary school alone there are 71 orphans – in the 5 primary schools in this small region of Monica's constituency there were 566 orphans at the last count.



Student Partnership Worldwide volunteers live for 9 months in remote villages without electricity, water or mobile phone connection. Their aim is to ensure that by the time they leave, the message of how HIV transmission can be prevented is understood by all the villagers. We saw one pair of SPW volunteers working with a young villager who was painting a poster. He explained that the sign of a boy leading a girl towards a sign saying “Tasty Chips” was warning girls not to agree to sex in exchange for a plate of chips.



Meeting Student Partnership Worldwide Volunteers with pupils from Ilula Secondary School

Scarcely anyone is untouched by the effect of deaths from AIDS. Monica Mbega is typical in that she is looking after 14 children in addition to her own 3 children. Two of her elder brothers and her sister and brother-in-law have died of AIDS leaving her responsible for 17 children.



Women with their children waiting outside the Igumbilo clinic to see the nurse

Good governance and conflict resolution

An African woman parliamentarian – very different from the “Mr Big” African political stereotype

The British Council exchange programme enabled Hon Monica Mbega MP to come to the UK to “shadow” me for a week and meet to have discussions with other UK and African women parliamentarians involved in the exchange programme – which included women from Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Malawi, Uganda, Zambia and Hon Amina Salum Ali from Zanzibar as well as Monica from Tanzania.

Watching Monica Mbega as she went about her constituency it is evident that she, like many of the other women parliamentarians, is the opposite of the “Mr Big” stereotype of African politicians. The flag on the front of her car ensures that everyone can see it. But instead of darkened glass, her car windows are wound down at every pause in the traffic to greet and chat to people passing by.

At every meeting – including the meetings where the whole village would come to listen and talk to us – Monica tells them not just what she is doing for them but also what she believes they should be doing for themselves. In one village she told them that she had just given uniforms to the orphans. But she also told them that everyone in that village should save a very small amount of money each week and put it in a bank account in Iringa for the benefit of that village. In our meeting with SACCOS she not only praised them for helping with loans to buy fertiliser which villages could pay back when the crops were harvested – but she also reminded them that they must operate with complete transparency so that everyone could see how much money the organisation had and what they were doing with it. She reminded them they must ensure the loans are repaid or the organisation would wither.



Talking to the pupils and staff at Ilula Secondary School

Women are not authority figures in Africa in the same way that men are. Therefore women MPs have to work in a different way with their constituents from the men MPs are able to.

MPs have no formal advice surgeries as they do in the UK but their constituents come to their house or their office. Often Monica is not able to take up her constituents' cases with the relevant authorities as there may be no provision to help with their problems. The most striking difference between a UK MPs surgery and the demands on a Tanzanian MP is that most of all those who seek the help of a Tanzanian MP are asking for money. The MP then advises them, or gives them a loan or just a sum from their own pocket. Monica Mbega keeps a large stack of school exercise books in her constituency office for those whose children face exclusion from school as they cannot afford the exercise books.

At the same time as she gives out loans, sums of money and exercise books, she writes to landlords asking for evictions for arrears to be suspended or exclusion from school through non-payment of school fees to be delayed.

The importance of supporting the new Women MPs

In the UK the early women MPs, though a very small minority and therefore not in the mainstream of the House of Commons, had strong support from the women's movement and the voluntary sector. In Tanzania the new women MPs are not in the mainstream of the traditionally male dominated politics, but nor do they get that support and solidarity from the NGOs which would be so helpful to them. The NGOs could be more supportive of those politicians who are doing things in new and uncorrupted ways rather than simply writing them and the whole system off as all bad. It would be more helpful of building good governance if more of the NGOs sought to distinguish and work with those politicians who are trying to change the political system for the better. It appeared to me that by failing to distinguish between those who are trying to change the system for the better and those who are responsible for its failings, many NGOs miss the opportunity to support those politicians who share their aims and help those MPs become stronger and more able to make those changes.



With Hon Amina Salum Ali MP and over 50 women Councillors and women considering standing for elective office in Zanzibar

One programme which I saw at work effectively supporting good governance is The British Council programme to support the participation of women in politics. In addition to the twinning programme, they have organised a series of seminars for the training and networking of women who are concerned about politics and considering standing for elective office. The seminar for 50 women I attended in Zanzibar was remarkable. The strong messages from the Tanzanian trainer and the two women

MPs in attendance and which were reflected from those participating in the seminar were that:

- Women offer new hope for politics
- that they should not restrict women candidates to the minority of the educated elite women but also include those women who, despite having no educational qualifications, will be effective political representatives
- That grass roots record of activity was important
- That women must support the women candidates – the need for solidarity
- That they must not be deterred if they fail first time round

There is clearly NGO concern about the DFID policy of giving aid to the government as budget support rather than aid to specific projects. But it is important to make politics matter and to boost the role of the political process. If decisions on public spending are made in London or Washington there is no accountability to those whose needs are being met and the local politicians' role is undermined. Instead of accountability for public spending there is only benevolence. Of course the use of such Aid support must be transparent – both to the donor countries and to the people of Tanzania who need the support. But the accountability needs to be between the people and their elected representatives rather than from NGOs to the donors.

The October 2005 elections in Zanzibar

There is concern on the mainland of Tanzania about the election campaign in Zanzibar. Will the elections be fair to the opposition party CUFF and if the ruling party CCM win the election in Zanzibar will CUFF accept it or challenge it as unfair? Will CUFF be excluded from decision-making if they lose the election but only by a narrow margin? Clearly there needs to be the greatest care not only to ensure that the elections are fair but also that there is a great measure of transparency and independent auditing to ensure confidence in the result. The Director of the National Electoral Commission, Mr Kiravu, confirmed to me that he was writing to the Foreign Minister to ask him to invite international observers to monitor the elections in October.

The Courts and legal advice



I visited the criminal court in Iringa, met the prosecutors and observed the trial of an armed robbery. One of the problems they identified to me is the length of time it takes to get a case to court and the resulting reluctance of witnesses to testify so long after the offence.

The courts have uniformed groups of prisoners tending the gardens of the court. The District judge pointed them out and said “these are the prisoners tending the garden – they are our friends”



With Magistrates at Iringa Court

Visit Programme

Sunday 29th May

07:00	Arrival at Dar es Salaam International Airport
07:30	Travel to Iringa Journey time by road around 6-7 hours. Stopping at village on entry to Monica's constituency.

Monday 30th May

08:30	Visiting the Regional Commissioner office
09:00	Visiting the District Commissioner office
09:30	Visiting the Mayor's office
10:00	Visiting the Municipal Director's office
10:30	Visiting Regional CCM office
11:30	Visiting District CCM office
12:30	Visiting Matumaini Center This is a youth centre for girls who dropped out of school due to pregnancy.
13:30	Visiting Gungadembwe Secondary school to see the progress of building construction (classrooms).
15:00	Visiting Student Partnership Project
17:00 (WLAC)	Visiting and talk with paralegal unit – Women's Legal Aid Centre

Tuesday 31th May

08:30	Visiting Igumbilo Dispensary
10:00	Visiting Hoho Primary School Delivering school uniforms for orphans at the school
11:30	Visit to Iringa Court
13:00	In the office of the Member of Parliament
14:00	Lunch
15:00	Visiting and talk to village / mitaa community bank (vicoba)
16:00	Kitanzini and Miyomboni SACCOS (NGO) Visit and talk with Mwangata people
18:00	Show and Dinner (Small scale traditional arts/tools, etc)

Wednesday 1st June

09:00 – 15:00	Travelling to Dar es Salaam
10:00	Visit to Ilula Secondary School on road to Dar es Salaam
16:00	Press Conference
17:00	Radio Interview with BBC journalist
19:00	Informal dinner with British Council Director Dr Nigel Townson

Thursday 2nd June

8.30	Meet British High Commissioner
9:15-13:00	Meet State University of New York (SUNY) Country Director, Donna Bugby & Parliamentary Committees SUNY Parliamentary Support program has been involved in capacity strengthening of parliamentary committees.
13:00-14:00	Lunch with British High Commissioner
14:00-17:00	Visit to DFID supported programmes Including meeting Commissioner for Electoral Reform, NGOs, and Election Programmes.
19:00	Dinner organised by DfID with 15 NGOs

Friday 3rd June

06:50	Travel to Zanzibar
8.45am	Meet with Hon Amina Salum Ali who took part in the British Council Women in Leadership programme
9.30am	Meet with women Councillors, MPs and women keen to get into front-line politics in Zanzibar



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- Everyone else in Tanzania who took time to meet me and who gave me such a warm welcome wherever I travelled.

Right: The staff and volunteers at the Women's Legal Aid Centre in Iringa with some of the women and children they represent.



Cover photograph – With Monica Mbega MP meeting mums at a 'school gate' at Hoho Primary School in her constituency of Iringa.

Photographs and editing by Charlotte Smith.