



Boundary representations are not necessarily authoritative.

BACKGROUND

Land and Climate

The United Republic of Tanzania covers 365,755 square miles (947,300 square kilometers). It consists of mainland Tanganyika and three low coral islands that lie off the coast in the Indian Ocean: Mafia, Pemba, and Zanzibar. The combined size of these humid islands is about equal to that of Rhode Island. Tanganyika (about the size of Texas) is a land of great variation. It either shares or borders three of Africa's Great Lakes (Victoria, Nyasa, and Tanganyika). Most of the country is either highland plateau, low-lying coastal plain, or upland plain (the Serengeti). Mount Kilimanjaro, the highest point in Africa, rises to 19,340 feet (5,895 meters). Africa's lowest point is the floor of Lake Tanganyika, at 1,174 feet (358 meters) below sea level. Tanzania's equatorial climate—hot, humid, and 90°F (32°C) on the coast—is tempered by inland elevations where temperatures are mild. Rains fall primarily from March to May and from October to December, with seasonal variations from north to south. Species such as lion, elephant, rhinoceros, and hippopotamus are protected in Tanzania's many national parks and reserves.

History

Various peoples inhabited the area now known as Tanzania for thousands of years before traders from southern Arabia began arriving in the eighth century. The Arabs founded the city of Kilwa as they began settling the coast. Over many generations, Arabs mixed with the local Bantu populations to produce both the Kiswahili language and the modern peoples

of the coastal regions. The Portuguese arrived in the 15th century. They, together with Arabic overlords from Muscat and Oman, developed a series of populous and powerful trading cities and sultanates—particularly on the islands of Zanzibar and Pemba. The sultanate of Zanzibar firmly controlled both the islands and the mainland coast until the mid-1800s. In 1886, Tanganyika became a German protectorate. Zanzibar retained its independence but lost control over Kenya to the British. In 1920, Tanganyika fell under British rule as well.

In 1961, Tanganyika was granted independence, followed in 1963 by a fully independent Zanzibar. In 1964, the two nations merged to form Tanzania and became a socialist republic under Julius Nyerere. His Revolutionary Party (CCM—*Chama Cha Mapinduzi*) worked to unite and develop a nation of many ethnic groups. Nyerere stepped down as president after constitutional reform in 1985 and chose Ali Hassan Mwinyi to succeed him. Mwinyi was reelected without opposition in 1990, but he promised to step down after democratic elections. Multiparty district and regional elections were held between 1992 and 1995, and full national elections were in 1995. Polling was chaotic and opposition groups charged fraud, but the independent judiciary ruled that the election results would stand. CCM candidate Benjamin Mkapa was elected president, and the CCM remained the ruling party.

For the most part, the union between Zanzibar and the mainland has been successful, although the Arab majority on Zanzibar desires more control over the island's economy and politics. Zanzibar maintains a semiautonomous status and elects its own president and legislature. Disputes surrounding

Zanzibar's 1995 elections kept the government from functioning because opposition members of parliament refused to sit in session. A 1999 agreement brought the opposition back to their seats in parliament, but disputes continued. When the CCM candidate won Zanzibar's presidential election in 2000, the opposition Civic United Front (CUF) cited fraud and refused to recognize the results. Demonstrations on Zanzibar and Pemba turned into violent clashes with police in January 2001. Dozens of CUF supporters were killed, and hundreds fled to Kenya. Two months later, talks between the CCM and CUF resolved the crisis. Political violence, though on a much smaller scale, also accompanied Zanzibar's elections in 2005.

As required by the constitution, Mkapa stood down at the conclusion of his second presidential term, in 2005. The CCM's Jakaya Kikwete won 80 percent of the vote in December 2005 elections to succeed him as president and was reelected 2010. The CCM also maintained its long-held majority in parliament. Since taking office, Kikwete has been praised for opening new schools, building roads and other infrastructure, and luring investment through free-market reforms, but the recent global financial crisis has hindered efforts to decrease the country's dependence on foreign aid.

THE PEOPLE

Population

Tanzania's population of 41.89 million is growing by 2.03 percent annually. About 26 percent of Tanzanians live in urban areas. The largest city is Dar es Salaam, with about two million residents. Dodoma replaced Dar es Salaam as the nation's capital in 2000. About 43 percent of all Tanzanians are younger than age 15. Ninety-nine percent of the population is African, coming from some 130 ethnic groups. Thirty of these groups are Bantu-speaking. The Nyamwezi-Sukuma (13 percent of the population) is the only group with more than one million members. There are three Nilotic ethnic groups, two Khoisan, and two Afro-Asiatic. The merchant/trader class is dominated by people of Lebanese, Palestinian, and Indian origin. Arabs are most numerous on Zanzibar. Refugees from neighboring countries live in border areas.

Language

Kiswahili (also called Swahili), the primary official language, developed along the coasts of Kenya and Tanzania as a trade language between Africans and Arabs. It is a mixture of various Bantu languages, Arabic, and English. Tanzanian Kiswahili follows a more traditional form than the Kiswahili that is spoken in Kenya. Zanzibar is considered to have the purest Kiswahili, which locals call *Kiunguja*. English, the second official language, is used in business, government, and higher education. More than one hundred languages are spoken in Tanzania. Most people speak the language associated with their ethnic group, but they generally also speak Kiswahili. Nyerere made Kiswahili official at the time of independence to foster pride in the people's African identity. To help spread use of the language, he urged people

to buy radios, and Radio Tanzania began broadcasting in Kiswahili. The language is still taught on the radio and it is still evolving.

Religion

On the mainland, about one-third of the population is Christian and another third is Muslim. The final third follows indigenous beliefs, although many of these people have also accepted some Christian or Islamic beliefs. On Zanzibar, nearly all inhabitants are Muslim. Muslims believe *Allah* (God) chose the prophet Muhammad and revealed the words of the *Qur'an* (Koran) to him through the angel Gabriel. As part of the practice of Islam, Muslims profess the name of *Allah* and proclaim Muhammad's calling. They pray five times daily and hope to make a pilgrimage to Makkah, Saudi Arabia, sometime in their life.

It is not unusual for professed Christians to mix their beliefs with local traditions. Thus, a local priest and a traditional healer might carry equal respect in a "Christian" village. The two belief systems are not considered contradictory because each has a place in the people's daily lives. The government is neutral in religious matters.

General Attitudes

Tanzanian social systems are group oriented, regardless of ethnic affiliation. Individuals are expected to put themselves second to group welfare. Consequently, Tanzanians are extremely polite and generous people, particularly in public. It is considered impolite to pass a person (unless in a large crowd) without showing a sign of recognition, even if only a smile. Any kind of verbal abuse or criticism, especially in public, is a major offense that negatively reflects on the person's upbringing and background. Displays of emotion, except among close friends, are considered highly inappropriate.

Tanzanians are proud of the peace their country has maintained despite the numerous ethnicities and religions of its people. Education, wealth, cleanliness, and uniformity are traits valued in others. A respect for elders is important.

Personal Appearance

Urban Tanzanians dress conservatively and usually wear Western-style clothing. Shorts and other revealing attire are not proper, except in clearly defined work or recreational situations. The government regulates certain business dress standards; most office workers wear Western business attire. In villages, some people wear traditional clothing associated with their specific ethnic group. Many wear readily available secondhand clothing from the United States or Europe and imported clothing from China and India. Muslim men might wear a *kanzu* (long, embroidered cotton gown) with a matching skullcap, or they may simply prefer Western-style clothing, with or without a skullcap. Some wear a *kanzu* only when going to the mosque. Tanzanian women often wear several *kangas*, or *kitenge*. These rectangular pieces of colorful cotton fabric may be worn as a skirt, top, or head covering. It is common for a mother to use a *kitenge* to carry her baby on her back. Muslim women might cover their hair but almost never their faces. Zanzibari women often wear a

large black shawl called a *buibui*. Even Tanzanians without electricity consider it important for their clothes to be ironed.

CUSTOMS AND COURTESIES

Greetings

Each region has a variety of non-Kiswahili greetings particular to the local ethnic groups, but Kiswahili is understood by the vast majority of people. The most common Kiswahili greeting is *Hujambo* (or *Hamjambo* for multiple people), usually followed by a handshake. A more casual greeting is *Jambo*. A common response to *Hujambo* is *Sijambo* (I'm fine). *Hatujambo* means "We're fine." This exchange is followed by questions about one's home, family, work, or other activities. For example, one might ask *Habari za nyumbani?* (How are things at your home?). A common response is *Salama* (In peace, without problems). A typical greeting when approaching someone's home is *Hodi* (Is anyone there?). The response is *Karibu* ("Welcome" for one person) or *Karibuni* ("Welcome" for more than one person). Men and women shake hands with each other, though a man may wait for a woman to extend her hand before offering his. Mothers often are addressed by the name of their oldest son (or daughter until a son is born), rather than by their given name. Thus, the mother of Albert would be known as "Mama Albert."

Gestures

Tanzanians use the right hand to pass and accept items. To use the left hand alone, even in gesturing, is improper. The verbal "tch-tch" sound is considered an insult. In many cases, it is impolite to let the bottom of one's foot or shoe point at someone. Therefore, when sitting, one does not prop up the feet on chairs or tables but places them on the ground. When hailing a ride from a vehicle, people wave an arm with the palm of the hand facing down if they are willing to pay. They stand with their palms facing up if they are looking for a free ride. Beckoning someone is always done with the palm down; to do so with the palm up is insulting.

Visiting

Visiting is an important social custom; friends and family visit often. Hosts enthusiastically welcome their visitors and do their best to make guests comfortable. Unannounced visits are common and warmly received. Most times of the day are acceptable for visiting except late in the evening (after 8 p.m. or so). A host also does not appreciate repeated visits at mealtime. Any guest arriving at mealtime, even if unannounced, will always be offered part of the meal. Not offering a meal would show a lack of hospitality, and refusing the offer is impolite. If a visit is arranged, a person does everything possible to keep the appointment. Not showing up for a scheduled visit is rude. It is polite for hosts to serve tea (often with milk and sugar), coffee, or another beverage. *Kitumbua* (a fried bread; plural is *vitumbua*) or *maandazi* (small doughnuts) may also be set out. Refusing these refreshments is considered impolite. A first-time visitor customarily brings a small gift to the home. This may include

sweets or cookies but not flowers. Flowers are used to express condolences. Guests of the opposite sex are entertained with the outside door open. When guests depart, hosts customarily accompany them part of the way (a few hundred yards) to see them off properly.

Eating

Throughout the country, people wash their hands in a bowl or basin of water before each meal. This practice is especially important because most meals are eaten with the hand. Even if diners use utensils, they wash the hands before eating. Because the left hand traditionally is used for personal hygiene, Tanzanians use only the right hand when eating without utensils. They might use the left to handle difficult foods, such as meat with bones, but never to take food from a communal bowl. Eating from a communal dish is common, especially when it contains *ugali* (a stiff porridge) or rice. Families on the Indian Ocean coast, as well as in villages and towns along the three lakes (Nyasa, Tanganyika, and Victoria), sit on woven mats on the floor to eat meals. Muslims tend to sit cross-legged on these mats, but others sit with one leg tucked and the other stretched out sideways away from the food. Among Muslims, as well as some rural non-Muslims, men and women often eat separately. When guests are invited, hosts usually serve dinner first and reserve socializing for afterward. Therefore, it is impolite for guests to leave a home immediately after a meal. During the Islamic holy month of *Ramadan*, Muslims do not eat or drink from sunrise to sunset; meals are served in the evening.

LIFESTYLE

Family

Tanzanian society emphasizes the principle of *ujamaa*, or "familyhood." The government encourages extended families to act as both economic and family units. A typical rural household is large. A family often lives with or near the father's brothers and their families. Less often, the family is joined by the mother's sisters and their families. Urban families are usually smaller and less cohesive than those residing in rural areas. Nationwide, the average number of children per family is five. The father is the traditional head of the household, but mothers wield substantial power as the day-to-day managers of the family. They oversee the child-rearing, farming, and cooking. Christian marriages tend to be monogamous. However, males in Muslim and traditional families may legally have as many as four wives. Polygamy is more common in rural areas.

Housing

Tanzania is a mainly rural nation, and most dwellings are mud brick huts covered with grass thatch or tin roofs. Floors are mud or cement, depending on the financial circumstances of the occupants, and the décor is usually simple. Objects on display tend to be usable, such as clay pots, baskets, and grass mats. Families may share a bed, though parents strive to at least have a bed for themselves, one for their sons, and another for their daughters. Living and working areas often

merge. It is common to see chickens wandering around the kitchen or piles of maize stacked up in the courtyard. Urban accommodation also tends to be very basic. The beautiful whitewashed buildings of Stone Town on Zanzibar are a dramatic exception. Few people have access to electricity and running water.

Dating and Marriage

Western-style dating habits are uncommon among the majority of the people. Traditionally, marriages have been arranged, often within the extended family. Today, while individual preference is permitted, marriages between cousins are still encouraged—especially in rural areas. This practice is becoming less common in cities.

The husband's family normally gives a bride-price to the bride's family for two reasons. First, it is a way to show respect for the bride's parents—to thank them for raising the woman. Second, it helps compensate for the loss of a productive member of the bride's family. This is important especially in rural areas because extended families share work responsibilities. Because the bride-price can be very expensive, families often must ask for financial assistance from extended family members. The bride-price may consist of money, cattle, or crops, though can also be paid through “bride-service,” in which the groom provides labor for the bride's family.

Life Cycle

Childhood in the Western sense hardly exists in Tanzania. As early as age five, Tanzanian children, especially girls, are given serious domestic responsibilities such as caring for younger siblings, cleaning, cooking, and even working in the fields or herding cattle. Girls may get engaged very young, before the onset of menstruation, at which point they are considered women. Many boys are ceremonially circumcised at age 13. Funerals are big and often expensive events. A death is generally marked by a parade, in which the coffin is carried through the streets in the company of mourners and a band of trumpeters. People are typically buried in their family's plot of land, near the home.

Diet

Important staple foods are rice, bananas, and *ugali* (a stiff porridge made from maize, millet, sorghum, or cassava). These are typically eaten with a meat stew or a sauce made of green leafy vegetables (cabbage, Swiss chard, spinach), beans, or cowpeas. Rice is the staple of much of the coastal area and is often cooked with a variety of spices (including cloves, curry, cinnamon, cumin, and hot peppers), which are mixed directly into the water as the rice cooks. This dish is called *pilau*. Cooked bananas are a starch staple in much of northern Tanzania (particularly around Lake Victoria and in the foothills of Mount Kilimanjaro) and in the southwest around Mbeya and Lake Nyasa. Bananas are prepared in a variety of ways, including roasted, fried, or made into a paste and mixed with meat and gravy. Other fruits are mangoes, guavas, pineapples, jackfruit, breadfruit, and oranges. Chicken, goat, and lamb are often served as *nyama choma* (barbecued meat). *Kitumbua* and sugarcane are popular snack

or energy foods. Devout Muslims do not eat pork or drink alcohol.

Recreation

Soccer, track-and-field, and boxing are popular sports in Tanzania. The country is known for its world-class runners. Volleyball and netball are favorites among girls. Young girls also play *redi*, a game similar to keep-away. Boys play soccer. People enjoy socializing at coffeehouses or at home. In their leisure time, men play *bao*, a strategy game for two in which each tries to earn his opponent's pebbles or seeds by moving them in a certain fashion around a board (or the ground). There are many variations, but the game is over when one player is out of playing pieces.

The Arts

Traditional *ngoma* music remains one of Tanzania's most popular styles. Dancers follow the rhythm of drums, accompanied by choral singing, xylophones, and whistles. Sung poetry called *taraab*, a product of Arab influence, has developed into a style of music and dance common on Zanzibar and along the mainland coast. Musicians in Dar es Salaam perform these local styles as well as jazz, gospel, and reggae. Tanzania's folk arts include the ebony sculptures of the Makonde people and baskets decorated with detailed geometric patterns. Intricate door carvings on Zanzibar combine Arabic and local motifs. *Tingatinga* artists paint animals and nature scenes using tiny, brightly-colored dots.

Holidays

Tanzania's holidays include New Year's Day, Zanzibar Revolution Day (12 Jan.), Union Day (26 Apr.), Labor Day (1 May), *Saba Saba* (Farmer's Day, 7 July), *Nane Nane* (International Trade Day, 8 August), and Independence Day (9 Dec.). In addition to national holidays, Tanzanians honor Christian and Muslim religious holidays. Christians celebrate Easter (including Good Friday and Easter Monday) and Christmas. Islamic holidays are based on the lunar calendar and fall on different days from year to year. As the holy month of *Ramadan* comes to a close, a three-day feast is held to break the fast. The Feast of the Sacrifice, held 10 weeks later, honors Abraham for his willingness to sacrifice his son. Muslims also mark the birthday of the prophet Muhammad.

SOCIETY

Government

Tanzania's president (currently Jakaya Kikwete) is head of state and head of government. The president is directly elected on the same ballot with the vice president to a five-year term. The prime minister (currently Mizengo Pinda) is appointed by the president. The legislature is the National Assembly (*Bunge*). It has 274 seats, 42 of which are reserved for appointees or specific officials. Members serve five-year terms. Zanzibar is a semiautonomous state with a separate parliament and elected president (currently Ali Mohamed Shein). The voting age is 18.

Economy

Although only about 4 percent of Tanzania's land is under cultivation, agriculture dominates the Tanzanian economy, employing 80 percent of the population and accounting for 85 percent of all exports. Key exports include coffee, cotton, sisal, cashew nuts, meat, tobacco, tea, cloves, coconuts from Zanzibar, and pyrethrum (a pesticide made from chrysanthemums). Tanzania also produces diamonds and other gems. Tourism is another key industry, with the nation's wildlife and natural beauty its primary attractions. Zanzibar's economy historically depended almost entirely on the export of cloves, but tourism has become the main source of income.

Economic liberalization has encouraged private investment and the creation of new export products. Continued reforms are needed in order to boost economic performance. Corruption still hampers the economy. Progress has also been hindered by droughts and flood damage. The International Monetary Fund provides substantial loans. Tanzania ranks among the lowest countries in the world in terms of per capita GDP. The currency is the Tanzanian shilling (TZS).

Transportation and Communications

Most roads, especially in the rural interior, are not paved. People often travel on foot or by bicycle, ride on or carry loads with donkeys or oxen, or hitchhike. Buses, trains, and taxis are available in some cities, especially Dar es Salaam. Taxi fare is negotiated in advance. Trains and buses run between major cities. Between smaller towns, one can ride a small truck or van that has been converted into a passenger vehicle. Few Tanzanians own cars. Traffic moves on the left side of the road. Telephone landlines are sparse in rural areas; however, mobile phone networks are spreading. The internet is increasingly available in urban areas. The country is served by two daily newspapers.

Education

Kiswahili is the language of primary school instruction. English is used in secondary schools. The government reintroduced free primary education in 2002. Secondary students must pay fees. About 70 percent of all school-aged children begin primary school, but less than 10 percent progress past the seventh grade. Education is highly regarded, but time in the classroom often comes at the expense of time in the fields, a sacrifice that many families cannot afford to make. Girls are valued because of their domestic roles, so boys are more likely to get an education. As a result, there is a wide disparity between the male and female adult literacy rates. Because the distance between schools requires many students to live on campus, most secondary schools are boarding schools. All students wear uniforms. Tertiary education is available at the University of Dar es Salaam and technical training institutions.

Health

In rural areas, malaria, sleeping sickness, bilharzia, hepatitis B, and intestinal parasitic diseases are common. Quality medical care is generally only available in large cities, with the exception of a few remote, well-run mission hospitals. Rural clinics are available, but they often lack trained

personnel and sufficient medical supplies. There is one doctor for every 50,000 inhabitants. Cholera epidemics, which can kill scores of people and infect hundreds more, highlight the need for clean water, health education, and better medical care. Bad weather and crop failures put people at risk of malnutrition. About 6 percent of adults aged 15 to 49 have HIV/AIDS.

AT A GLANCE

Contact Information

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POPULATION & AREA

Population	41,892,895 (rank=31)
Area, sq. mi.	365,755 (rank=32)
Area, sq. km.	947,300

DEVELOPMENT DATA

Human Dev. Index* rank	148 of 182 countries
Gender inequality rank	NA
Real GDP per capita	\$1,400
Adult literacy rate	78% (male); 62% (female)
Infant mortality rate	68 per 1,000 births
Life expectancy	51 (male); 54 (female)

*UN Development Programme, Human Development Report 2010 (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).