



Our December UDSM Alumnus

This is a “light corner” on the UDSM portal intended to feature for one month in turns two among many of the University’s graduates—alumni—since its foundation in 1961. The corner is designed to inform the public and the University itself, without prejudice in terms of historical precedence but guided only by professional information search, on the past graduates of the University, their whereabouts, their current position or engagement, what is remembered of them as past ‘boys’ and ‘girls’ of their time and, finally, on what is reckoned about their contribution to their Alma Mater, their nation, the Africa region and/or the wider world.

Jakaya Mrisho KIKWETE



Year of matriculation: 1972

Year of graduation: 1975; Degree: B.A (Agro-economics)

More info: LLD (honoris causa), 2011 (UDSM); and several doctorates honoris causa from elsewhere

Born on 7 October 1950 in a village Msoga within Bagamoyo district in the Coast Region of Tanzania, Jakaya Kikwete is a graduate of the University of Dar es Salaam and former President of the United Republic of Tanzania (2005-2015). He went through a formal education school system, beginning with elementary education at Msoga primary school between 1958 and 1961, proceeding to Middle School variously at Lusonga, Karatu and Tengeru (1962-65). He then moved on to Kibaha Secondary School back in the Coast region for ‘O’ level secondary education (1966-1969), and onwards to Tanga Technical Secondary School for his advanced (‘A’) level education (1970-72), where he was nominated head prefect and was a football captain. His mobility across the early schools must have partly been due to his father’s mobility as a government official. His father was a District Commissioner during the colonial administration, then a Regional Secretary, reaching the position of an Ombudsman when Tanzania achieved independence. His grandfather, Mzee Mrisho Kikwete two generations earlier, had been a local chief in his Kwere ethnic group [speakers of Ngh’were language] of Bagamoyo. Thus, the young and promising grandson must have been lucky to be born within a progressive family of local well into government leadership.

Upon completing university degree studies in 1975, Kikwete landed immediately into a political office as Regional Party Secretary in Singida – a political position made fairly easy by his engagement in the Tanganyika African National Union (TANU) national youth movement since senior secondary school days at Kibaha at Kibaha. By the Party’s barometer, he was a long-tested cadre and a level of intellectuals the Party was seeking under the circumspect leadership of Mwalimu Nyerere. In this his political journey, as party secretary and following the merger of parties in both the mainland and the isles in 1977, he was sent to Zanzibar, assigned the task of establishing the new organisation and administration of the Party in the islands. In 1980, he was transferred to the headquarters as administrator of the Dar es Salaam headquarters and head of the Defence and Security Department. He was moved up-country yet again to the district and regional party offices in Tabora Region (1981–84), Singida Region (1986–88) and Masasi District (1988) and, thereafter, Nachingwea, Lindi and Mtwara respectively. From the year 1988, he was appointed to positions with the central government.

At national level, he first became a Deputy Minister of Energy and Minerals (1988-1990), becoming full Minister for Water, Energy and Minerals (1990-94). He served as Minister of Finance (1994-1995), both under the Presidency of Mr. Ali Hassan Mwinyi, 1985–1995) and under the third President Benjamin William Mkapa (1995–2000). He was appointed to Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Relations in 1995 and it was during this period, in 1995 as Minister for Foreign Affairs, that Kikwete made his first attempt at candidacy for nomination to Chama cha Mapinduzi (CCM) party chairmanship. This was

followed, ten years later, by a second and successful run in 2005. He completed a whole ten-year long term of presidency in 2015.

In 2011, at a graduation ceremony marking also the University’s fifty years of its foundation (its Golden Jubilee), President Kikwete was one of three prominent “personalities and alumni” elected for an award. He was awarded a Doctor of Laws (honoris causa) in recognition—as per the traditional scheme of the forerunner University of East Africa—of statesmen and individuals who have excelled or have distinguished themselves in the “walk of public and private life” and/or “in the service of their nation”.

Two distinctly innovative ideas could be cited in association with the presidency of Dr. Kikwete. The first was ‘Kilimo Kwanza’ (literally ‘Agriculture First’) – an initiative, launched on 3rd August 2009, that was aimed at modernising agriculture, the major mainstay of the Tanzanian population. The second was ‘Big Results Now (BRN)’. Both initiatives were illustrative of ruling party’s political slogan of a ‘New Zeal, New Speed [and] New Strength’ [‘Ari Mpya, Kasi Mpya, Nguvu Mpya’]. Yes, admittedly, Kilimo Kwanza was an indigenous (home-grown) idea to try to invigorate Tanzania’s preponderantly rural, peasant and precariously limping economy. His government wanted to do something more innovative about it. BRN was not quite indigenous a blueprint, but it was a leaf deliberately borrowed from Malaysia, a like-minded “Southern” Asian nation which had in the previous decades successfully undertaken a transformation programme to stimulate its economy and improve service delivery—just as had similarly been achieved by the Asian ‘Tiger Economies’ of Singapore, Hong Kong, South Korea and Taiwan. True, ‘BRN’ did produce big results for the Tiger economies and Malaysia. For Tanzania, one would probably have to allow for a little more time of a time lag to evaluate the process more fairly. The engine oil to propel massive change is yet to spread all across. But, shortly before the end of Dr Kikwete’s ten-year presidency, a few things could be noted. Among others was a declaration of free and compulsory junior secondary education making up a full 10 years of universal basic education in Tanzania. This was to anticipate an improved future pace and level of performance of the Tanzanian population, particularly in sectors of agriculture, commerce and education. The effect of these mutually reinforcing programmes will no doubt be watched and assessed as the country drives towards the targeted ‘Vision 2025’. In discussions with intellectuals at Woodrow Wilson Centre—one of America’s think-tanks—on the 3rd of April 2015, JMK offered a sober but firm response in reflection: “When I look back to 2005 [the year he first entered State House], I hold no regrets, only lessons.”

President Kikwete has been honoured by over thirty scholarly institutions, with ten doctorates (honoris causa) from universities in USA, Turkey, Canada, China, Australia, Tanzania and Kenya, as well as honorific citations from other bodies. UDSM enjoys a close relationship with him, not only as one of its prominent alumni but also and fondly as its current Chancellor since 17th January 2016.

**Jakaya Mrisho KIKWETE is our December 2019 Alumnus
and his great Stories Begin Here**

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