



Our February 2020 UDSM Alumna

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.

Zakia Hamdani MEGHJI



Year of Matriculation: 1968

Year of Graduation: 1971;

Degree: BA (Hons), Social Sciences & Education

More: MA (Economics), University of Dar es Salaam, 1976

Zakia Hamdani Meghji (nee Hamdani) is a Tanzanian, born on the 31st of December 1946 in the-then Sultanate of Zanzibar, daughter of Mohammed Abdulrahman Hamdani and Salama Rubeya El-Genzel. Both parents were resident in Zanzibar, where their daughter went for her early-childhood and subsequent stages of elementary and secondary education. Upon passing her senior-school [‘A-level’/Form 6] examinations, she was admitted at the University of Dar es Salaam for a bachelors’ degree programme in the-then Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences. She specialised more in the social science disciplines, with education preparing her for the teaching vocation.

Upon graduation in 1971, she joined the teaching profession and taught at a government secondary school in Dar es Salaam for two years (1971-72), before relocating to the Cooperative College Moshi, where she became a lecturer and grew to become a senior lecturer and head of department until 1978. For the six years that followed, well up to 1986, Zakia played various roles in the cooperative movement, becoming an education officer at the Moshi-based International Cooperative Alliance, 1978-1982, with special focus on women’s education; then, since 1982, programme officer (responsible for women and youth) in the same International Cooperative Alliance; and thereafter consultant on women and youth development activities in cooperatives at national level. In 1984, she was appointed to the chairmanship of the Savings and Credit Cooperative in Moshi, serving in this capacity with the necessary knowledge and experiences drawn from her economics, her sociology, and her managerial insights. Her performance record in the national cooperative movement became clearly distinct and visible, further reinforced by a ‘companion’ book she produced on ‘*Woman co-operator and development: Experiences from eastern, central and southern Africa*’ (published by Maarifa Publishers Ltd, Nairobi, 1985, 127pp). This earned her credit not only within the Tanzanian government circles but also internationally, particularly within the east African region.

In 1986 she became a member of parliament (nominated) and, with this political victory, followed a series of higher-level national appointments. These included positions of District Commissioner for Moshi (1988-1990), Regional Commissioner (1990-1992), Deputy Minister for Health (1992-1994) and, subsequently, elevation to full Minister for Health since

1994. Her appointment as Minister of Natural Resources and Tourism (1997–2005) made Meghji the longest-serving minister in that portfolio: an opportunity and a duration that helped to introduce a number of positive changes within the ministry’s policy and organisation as well as changes to the tourist industry as a whole. This long period of service was followed by a change of ministries, with Mrs Meghji being appointed Minister of Finance in 2006, making her the first woman since independence to hold this ministerial post. Unfortunately, however, her period of service in this portfolio was relatively short, coinciding with a high-level financial scandal involving the Bank of Tanzania and its chief executive in 2008. It was a rare yet seriously nasty incident that disheartened her, just as it visibly lowered the spirits and expectations of the ethical within the national population.

Zakia Meghji lives in Moshi, but continues to take interest in matters of community outreach and development, including memberships on primary school boards, secondary school boards and women’s clubs. Her avocations include reading and swimming. The prestigious book of ‘*Marquis Who’s Who*’, founded by a standards-setting Chicago publisher Albert Nelson Marquis back in 1898, lists Zakia among noteworthy international organizational administrators.

In a note of special reckoning, it should be interest to readers to know that, in her university student days, Zakia Hamdani Meghji subscribed—conspicuously and honourably—to the formation of a brand-new ‘University Students African Revolutionary Front (USARF)’, a discussion group that advocated Pan-African unity and an extension of the struggle for Africa’s independence to international dimensions, beyond individual countries. USARF soon came to launch a magazine in August 1969 by the name of *Cheche*, Swahili for *The Spark*. The founding group included, among others, Yoweri Kaguta Museveni, Eriya Kategaya and James Wapakhabulo from Uganda; Archibald Kapote Mwakasungura from Malawi; and Karim Hirji, Henry Mapolu, Zakia Hamdani Meghji, George Hajivayanis and Ramadhan Meghji from Tanzania. With this group in the ‘engine room,’ *Cheche* truly helped to move forward dimensions of the student revolution. For, articles from each of the studied cases that went into publication in *Cheche* were never short of ‘sparks of fire’.

***Zakia Hamdani MEGHJI is Our February 2020 Alumna,
and her greater stories begins here!***

Get in touch with us through

Directorate of Internatinalization,
Convocation and Advancement.
P.O BOX 35091 DSM – Tanzania

Mobile:
0754 623 395

Mail: alumni@udsm.ac.tz
www.udsm.ac.tz

Facebook / udsm.alumni
Twitter / udsmaalumni
LinkedIn/udsm
Instagram/udsm_socialmedia