

Hussein Mohammed Bashe

From the butcher shop to parliament

The vibrant town of Tabora lies in the hinterland of Western Tanzania. The town was founded by Arab traders in the 1850s and developed into a centre of slave trade and a hub for major caravan routes. Tabora borders Shinyanga to the north, Singida to the east, Mbeya and Songwe to the south and Katavi, Kigoma and Geita to the west.

Tabora is by far the largest region in Tanzania in terms of surface area at 76.2 square kilometres. In German occupied Tabora, Nzega was the most prosperous town of Central Tanganyika due to its vast population of circa 699,691 whose main stay was trading, logistics, agriculture and livestock keeping.

August 26th, 1975 was marked by the birth of Hussein Mohammed Bashe in the town of Nzega East in the small street of Ndambile (now Ntingiya). The now Honorable Minister for Agriculture and member of Parliament was the first of six siblings. A journey rich in experiences describes the story of Hussein Mohammed Bashe, who's trials and tribulations contributed to his remarkable rise in Tanzania's political landscape.

Now in 2023, Bashe - an agrarian, affectionately known for his centre-left political views, believes that agricultural transformation is at the core of Tanzania's economic development. Under the leadership of **Her Excellency the President of the United Republic of Tanzania Madame Samia Suluhu Hassan** whose vision for economic transformation through agriculture serves as a guiding pillar for all the works that Bashe continues to achieve in the agriculture docket, the Country has continued to make strides regionally and globally.

Key milestones

Under his leadership, the Ministry of Agriculture has laid the foundation to, and continues to execute towards Tanzania's economic prosperity through stern policies and measures on food security. The Ministry of Agriculture's key milestones revolve around increasing farmers' efficiency and productivity. Its Vision **2030** aims to reduce crop wastage from an average 20-30% to 5%,



avail raw material for industries by 100%, create 3 million new jobs for women and youth, reduce poverty by 50%, increase exports from USD 1.2 to 5 billion and grow the sector by 10%.

Bashe advocates for the transformation of agricultural financial models through the use of LCs (Letter of Credits) to finance inputs for small holder farmers via cooperative societies. This belief led him to the establishment of the **Tanzania Cooperative Bank** which now serves cooperatives as well as small holder farmers.

Additionally, Bashe holds-firm key principles that drive his passion for a transformed agri-sector including : **private sector participation** (further accelerating land tillage by small holder farmers from two to ten acres), the transformative and enabling force of technology in agriculture through **digital platforms** and strongly believes that **agriculture is business**. He believes that food security will be driven by trade and insists that the subsidy programme and input support are driving forces behind reduction of cost of production further propelling profitability and throughput for small holder farmers. In 2022, Bashe introduced the **BBT** (Building a Better



Tomorrow) initiative which aims to nurture and develop *a new generation of young farmers*. The program was launched by Her Excellency the President of the United Republic of Tanzania Madame Samia Suluhu Hassan.

BBT is poised to accelerate the effective participation of youth and women in the sector. In line with the government's ambitions in agriculture, BBT sets out as the platform for engaging youth in large-scale plantations or block farms, providing access to land, finance, technology and access to markets. Under the stern leadership of Her Excellency the President of the URT, Bashe's agriculture ministry has executed the Agenda 2030 and among other things, implemented the automated farmers registration system where today, more than 3 million farmers across the country are fully registered and are direct beneficiaries of an effective and efficient system of distribution of fertiliser subsidies. Full of enthusiasm, he echoes President Samia Suluhu Hassan's dream to transform the agriculture sector hence enabling Tanzania to become **a major food producer and exporter** beyond the region's borders.

Early years...

Hussein Mohammed Bashe thrived as a child - born and raised in the small village

of Nzega in rural Tanzania. His father, Sheikh Mohammed of the Nzega District and his mother Zaynab, a homemaker, both raised the soccer-crazed Bashe in line with teachings of their Muslim faith. Their small community believed that *a neighbour's child is one's own* bringing true meaning to the saying "it takes a village to raise a child". Bashe grew up receiving contribution in form of school uniform, shoes, fees, books, encouragement and support from his community all of which have shaped his current disposition as a responsible, responsive and driven leader for the people of his (Nzega Urban) constituency and the country at large.

Farming and livestock keeping was the main economic activity of their Somali-descent society. On the family's ten-acre piece of land, Sheikh Mohammed and Zaynab traded produce from the land at the local market to feed Bashe and his four siblings. As the first-born boy-child, the expectation to prosper the family business through generations laid on Bashe and therefore, from a young age he was immersed in understanding and taking part in the family business and became knowledgeable in the ways

of farming, livestock-keeping and trading particularly livestock auctioning and butchery. All-the-while, Bashe continued helping his father to ensure that the family had enough money to meet their needs. With the highest level of self-discipline and determination, Bashe managed to balance the needs of the family and his desire to further himself through formal education, a value firmly instilled by his mother Zaynab. He achieved satisfactory results from school relative to many of his peers in similar circumstances. These were the first signs that Bashe was developing a strong will that would shape his life and career. He belonged to the **Sobibo** social group in town. Sobibo is where the youth gathered in the evenings to socialize and discuss current affairs. Today Sobibo is a football club running the slogan Sobibo itajengwa na wana Sobibo wenyewe to mean Sobibo will be developed by members of its own community, a tag line which will continue to influence Bashe's beliefs as a politician.

Bashe readily admits that his late parents had a profound influence on him. His mother, Zaynab instilled in him the need for education while his father imparted entrepreneurial skills. Speaking about his mother he says, "She made sure that I went to school every day, without exception! She resorted to drastic measures when I was stubborn and unwilling, to the point that one day she linked one of my arms with hers and literally dragged me to school with her when I resisted going. My mother had faith in my academic abilities and always encouraged me to apply myself. She instilled in me the belief that I could do anything I set my mind to and believed in my potential for greatness even though as a young boy all I wanted was to use my talents to make money with my father."

Academic qualifications

Zaynab sought mentorship for her first-born child and found it in Mr. Turuki, a leader of the Islam Institution in Nzega District. He helped focus Bashe on his A-levels at Ununio High School in Dar es salaam which led to Bashe's feats in higher education. Before then, Bashe attended Imeli Primary School (grades 1 through 3) and Kitongo Primary School where he completed his primary level education in



1990. He earned his O-level diploma from Badri Secondary School then relocated to Dar es Salaam, Kinondoni District to complete his A-levels in 1999 from Ununio Secondary School in Kinondoni District. Bashe holds a bachelor's in business administration degree from Mzumbe University, 2002.

Leadership

Bashe was a keen Madrasa student. He attended various (madras) schools in Holy Quran including Mzee Juma Kihango's, Ghazal and finally the Muslim school in Nzega. His leadership qualities were so impressive that the teaching staff and students alike recommended and elected him a religious student leader at Ununio Secondary School. Bashe drew inspirations from his father, a sheikh, who was a respected religious leader in his home village. While at Mzumbe university, the student council elected him as its vice-president, even though he was only in his first year of study.

Bashe credits his mother's zeal for higher education for ushering him into politics. For, it was at Mzumbe university where Bashe's leadership journey pivoted into politics when he met with the CCM party leadership through its then Youth Chairman, UVCCM's Dr. Emmanuel Nchimbi. This turn led to yet another

pivoting point when Bashe met with Edward Lowassa who later willed and nurtured him into politics. Bashe joined the youth league of the ruling Chama Cha Mapinduzi party following his graduation from Ununio High School.

A hand in the private sector

Bashe's experience in the private sector spans across multiple industries namely telecommunications, banking and media. He had his start at National Microfinance Bank then moved on to Airtel Tanzania. His drive and ambition for excellence led to his ascension to the role of CEO at New Habari Corporation where among other things he reset the performance of the organisation, transformed its culture and left a mark in the media and branding landscape of Tanzania.

Much like in his educational, political and religious training, Bashe also had a mentor in business. Mr. Rostam Aziz, a business tycoon whose origins trace back to Nzega,

has been a great supporter of Bashe over the years. Rostam took keen interest in Bashe from early in his career, involving him in running some of his own endeavours. Bashe's loyalty, discipline and willingness to learn were key

factors in his rise in business. "I sharpened my business acumen in Rostam's living room where we usually held many of our engagements."

A journey into politics

Bashe's interest in politics was instilled in him by his late father, who was a member of Tanganyika African National Union (TANU) party. In 2005, he took his own leap of faith and embarked on a turbulent start of political career. He returned to his home district of Nzega to run for a parliamentary seat. Friends and supporters raised campaign funds, efforts which were met with a good measure of success. Out of 9 candidates, Bashe emerged third having garnered 109 votes.

In 2008, Bashe vied for the seat of Vice Chairman of the Youth (UVCCM) wing of the CCM party. He emerged unsuccessful. However, Dr. Hamad Masauni appointed him as a member of the National Executive Council (NEC) of the youth league. He went on to serve as the Chairman of UVCCM reform committee. During his time in the Youth League, he was recognised as a rising star and in the primary elections of 2010, he ran for the parliamentary seat of Nzega. With a strong lead of 14,000 votes, political events of the time rendered him unfavourable by his party mainly due to his alliance with his idol Edward Lowassa. He did not progress into that year's general elections.

Bashe was a student of Edward since 2007. He shared Edward's philosophy of poverty alleviation through education and the belief that poverty can be cured; that education is the key to graduating poor Tanzanian families across poverty lines. Edward believed that when agriculture is done as a business it held the power to bring about





economic transformation. He supported Bashe's programs in education in Nzega as he continued to train him in their common ways.

Following the government decision in **2014** to split the Nzega constituency into two constituencies, Nzega Urban and Nzega Rural, Bashe returned to the referendum process to fulfil his commitment to serve the people. With more than 9,000 votes in his name, he emerged victorious in the primaries and was nominated to vie for the parliamentary seat flying the CCM flag in Nzega Urban. The following year, in the **2015** general elections, Bashe had a landslide win of 18,774 votes representing 65% of the polls followed by opposition party CHADEMA's Charles Makangala Mabula who polled at 9,658 votes, representing 34 per cent.

His service in electorate led into a vote of confidence by the late President John Magufuli who appointed the Deputy Minister for Agriculture in July 2019. He served in this capacity until November the following year yielding into the 2020 general elections. The general elections of 2020 saw Bashe's landslide reelection by his constituents where he garnered 16,082 votes equivalent to 84.58 percent against CHADEMA's Andrew Atonga who polled at 2,663 votes, 14.01 percent. The late President

John Magufuli went on to reappoint Bashe to the agriculture portfolio as the Deputy Minister of Agriculture in 2020 and later in 2021, President Samia Suluhu Hassan promoted him to full Minister – a position he holds until currently.

Belief system

Hon. Hussein Mohammed Bashe lives by the saying *Umaskini nchini utaondolewa na sisi wenyewe* which means *the power to eradicate poverty in the country rests within its own people*. He believes that through proper policies and strategies of implementations in doing farming as a business, those behind poverty lines can see the light of day. He is a strong proponent of land ownership by the natives as well as public sector investment in building an enabling ecosystem for small holder farmers. As for the private sector, he believes that theirs is a long a cross multiple sections of agri value chain especially on research and development in seed multiplication for the purpose of gaining economies of scale and achieving food sovereignty. *He who owns the seed, owns the food.*