

**GLOBAL FEMINISMS
COMPARATIVE CASE STUDIES OF
WOMEN'S AND GENDER ACTIVISM
AND SCHOLARSHIP**

SITE: TANZANIA

**Transcript of Mariam Hamdani
Interviewer: Anneth Meena**

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Mariam Mohammed Hamdani was born in Mkunazini Zanzibar, Tanzania. She is an accomplished journalist and activist. She is the founder of Tausi Taarab Orchestra band. Hamdani has served for three seasons as a judge for the Emerson's Zanzibar Foundation Film Award (ZIFF 2017- 2019). She has enormous experience in arts and culture programmes. She has several boards such as: Copyright Society of Zanzibar (COSOZA), the Media Council of Tanzania (2006 -2008), and the Zanzibar Stone Town Heritage Society (2009 – present). She is a Co-founder and chair of Zanzibar Youth Education Development Support Association (ZAYEDESAs) (2000 to present); Board Member/Trustee for The Stone Town Heritage Society (2009 – present); Board Member for Women Development for All (WODFA) from 1990 – 2000; Vice Chair for Music and Arts Council Zanzibar 2005 – 2010; and Vice Chair Zanzibar Broadcasting Commission from 2005 - 2010.

Hamdani holds Post Graduate Diplomas and Certificates from different institutions: Post Graduate Diploma in International Relations and Development from the Institute of Social Studies at The Hague, Netherlands (1982-1983); Post Graduate Diploma in Communication Policy and Planning for Development from the Institute of Social Studies at The Hague, Netherlands in cooperation with the African Council for Communication & Education (1983); Diploma Specialization on writing for Health issues, a programme sponsored by FINIDA , between Dar es Salaam, WHO Geneva and Tampere University Finland (1985-1987); Diploma (First Class) in Journalism from the Tanzania School of Journalism (1979-1981); Diploma in History and Philology from Friendship University Moscow (1964 to 1965); Certificate in International Broadcasters Program- Educational Foundation of American Women in Radio and Television, Inc. (1978, United States of America); Certificate in Management of Information Services Eastern and Southern African Management from Institute Arusha Tanzania (1981); Certificate in New Trends of Information, Communication and Education for development of the River Nile Communities Sudan And Egypt (1982); and Certificate in Radio Programme Production from the Voice of Germany Training Centre, Cologne (1985).

Hamdani has organized and coordinated several events including the first Music and Cultural Festival in Zanzibar in 1994, the UN Women conference for African Countries on Peace held in Bwawani Hotel Zanzibar in 1999, and the International Symposium on Music and Traditional Dances as Influenced by Oriental — held in Bwawani Hotel Zanzibar in 1996.

Hamdani has had several positions: Deputy Permanent Secretary Ministry of Trade, Industry and Tourism 2002 to 2004; Deputy Permanent Secretary Chief Ministers Office dealing with Information (Radio, Television and Newspapers) 2000 to 2002; Deputy Permanent Secretary Ministry of Information Culture Tourism and Youth 1990 to 2000; Deputy Director Voice of Tanzania Zanzibar 1989 to 1990. She has also worked with both national and international media — Voice of Germany Kiswahili Service from 1986 to 1988; Department of Television Newsroom - head of reporters, newsreader, and producer of information programs from 1978 to 1981.

Anneth E. Meena, born in Coast Region in 1971, is an activist, researcher, and feminist. She is an independent consultant in Environment, Health and Gender issues. She is passionate about women's rights. She has worked in several organizations holding various positions such as Monitoring and Evaluation coordinator for World Vision, Arusha (2000); Project Coordinator for Forum for African Women Educationalist on Centre of Excellence School in Tanzania as a model for gender responsive curriculum and pedagogy (2001 -2002). She pioneered the establishment of a family social enterprise and became the first school manager and later first principal (2007- 2017). She has worked as an independent consultant with various Women Rights Organizations including TGNP Mtandao; Women Fund Tanzania Trust (WFT-T); Readership for Learning and Development (Soma). Meena has been involved in documenting women stories through TGNP Mtandao, WFT-T, Soma and currently with the University of Michigan. She is a member of various coalitions including sextortion, women leadership, and constitution.

Meena has had various academic awards such as 'The Hammad Prize Award' in recognition of exceptional written work on an international topic in 2005 with Wagner School of Public Services, New York University, New York, USA. She was one of the two recipients of an Oprah Winfrey Scholarship as a graduate at New York University (2004 to 2005). She was a Ford Foundation Fellow (2003) with the International Centre for Research on Women Washington, DC, USA. In 1999, she received a small Grant Research Award from the Council for the Development of Social Science Research.

She holds an undergraduate degree on Environmental and Geographical Sciences from University of Cape Town, South Africa (1996); Masters of Demography from University of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania (2000) and a graduate degree in Masters in Science in Management for Public Services from the New York University, USA (2005).

Keywords: Media, Art/Writing as Activism, and Gender-Based Violence

Anneth Meena: First of all, I thank you for setting aside some of your time and agreeing to take part in this research which is a study on women and gender, an international project on feminism through funding by the University of Michigan. The purpose of the project is to gather and preserve women's conversations, showing where their activism has contributed to the struggles and issues of women. So today, we shall spend about an hour to discuss the following five areas: Your life and work in general, your reflections on your work, your views on how the feminist movement affects your work, your view and opinions regarding the overall needs of women, and finally the existing relationships, if any, between your work and the work of other activists in the country.

In other words, at the very beginning, let us start with the story of your life. As you look back from where you are today, what do you think has contributed to your journey to bring you to where you are and what you are doing today? What are you proud of, or what major achievements are you proud of in your work? Welcome!

Mariam Hamdani: Thank you very much. I think you already know that I was born here in Zanzibar¹, grew up in Zanzibar, and later went abroad to study and then came back. I can say that our past upbringing has greatly contributed to building women in particular. Even though it may have appeared inward looking, the community always cautioned us to be careful. I am grateful that this helped me as a journalist for many years. I have worked as an announcer and I even collaborated with Voice of Germany² for two years. During that time, I was trying very hard especially to help women, but other people were persuading me to go abroad and even sent me application forms from the ministry of foreign affairs to fill. As I was helping women, I saw this as just doing something ordinary or normal, but it turned out that I was doing something meaningful. Then when I became the director of the radio station here in Zanzibar called Voice of Tanzania³, Zanzibar, that is the time when Dr. Salim Mnari came to inaugurate the new building and said clearly, it seems that women here are more educated than men. Therefore, I called them and told them to listen. We are always making noise about women being abused and oppressed, I told them, now you have the opportunity, now you should use it. Some of the women had been to school and reached form two so I talked to my cousin and asked her to teach the women. They progressed and eventually took the form four exam after which we did all we could and

¹ Zanzibar is a semi-autonomous region of Tanzania, consisting of the main islands Unguja and Pemba. It blends African, Arab, Indian, and European influences. ("Zanzibar." Wikipedia. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zanzibar>. Accessed July 25, 2024.)

² This is referring to DW's Kiswahili service, a German international news outlet popular in East Africa. DW's broadcasting in Swahili began in 1963, and marked a notable departure from the use of European language new coverage in colonized African states. ("DW's Kiswahili Service: 60 years of broadcasting." DW. <https://corporate.dw.com/en/dws-kiswahili-service-60-years-of-broadcasting/a-64569014>. Accessed 13 August 2024.)

³ Voice of Tanzania-Zanzibar (VOTZ) is a popular public radio station and mass communication tool. ("Radio and Technology Strategy." The RISE Project Final Report. https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PNADW832.pdf. Accessed July 25, 2024.)

they succeeded to enroll them in the Tanzania School of Journalism (TSJ)⁴, and some passed. Seeing that two or three had succeeded gave the others motivation and courage to continue. I am also involved in sports. I remember that I helped women a lot and they got opportunities and so I went to their homes to ask for permission for them to get involved. This was because some would not get permission until Ms. Mariam went to their homes to plead for them. Really! Therefore, I travel with these people to Dar es Salaam⁵, we go to Zambia⁶, and we go to Egypt. They would get the opportunities to play, and I was the secretary for Badminton⁷ in Zanzibar for 12 years. Therefore, on that issue, I was helping a lot, particularly the women participants. I was surprised that the families trusted me so much. These participants would not get permission to go if I did not go to pick them up. Then, later when I worked in radio, I realized I am capable of helping others. That is why I became a director. Later I became a deputy secretary general of the Ministry of Information, Culture, Tourism and Youth. At that time, I was not only dealing with news but was also involved with Arts. You know at work sometimes there is a high level of discrimination of women especially from men. They wonder why you think you know what you are doing, that is, if their wishes are not acceptable to you, they block you. I am thankful to my mother because of how she raised us up. She used to tell my late brother that we should be tough in life and not yield to bullies, not be hypocrites and not be bullies. Because some people bully or discriminate too much with no limit. I remember the time I was in the ministry of information. When I went there, it seemed as if the minister and the secretary general did not want me there at all. So they were not giving me work, therefore I went to the president and told him, sir, they are not giving me work, this is the third month now, they are not giving me work at all. Since I had previously attended a course at ESAMI⁸ for leadership, I knew what to do. So I got a good secretary, I told him, bring the files. I read about the whole ministry and knew it from top to bottom, from bottom to top. So later, when I reported to the president that I was not getting a single work file, I accepted that I was dealing with news matters so right there and then, I underwent a change. I loved culture and created a cultural group, so I decided to focus on that and strengthen it and so I

⁴ The School of Journalism and Mass Communication (SJMC) at the University of Dar es Salaam, originally the Tanzania School of Journalism (TSJ) established in 1975, was integrated into the University in 2002 to meet the increasing demand for highly trained media professionals. ("About SJMC." University of Dar es Salaam. <https://www.udsm.ac.tz/web/index.php/schools/sjmc/about-sjmc>. Accessed July 25, 2024.)

⁵ Dar es Salaam is the largest city and commercial hub of Tanzania, situated along the eastern coast of Africa on the Indian Ocean. ("Dar es Salaam." Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dar_es_Salaam. Accessed July 25, 2024.)

⁶ Zambia, officially known as the Republic of Zambia, is a landlocked country situated at the intersection of Central, Southern, and East Africa, bordered by eight nations, with its capital in Lusaka, which, along with the Copperbelt Province, forms the core economic region of the country. ("Zambia." Wikipedia. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zambia/>. Accessed July 26, 2024.)

⁷ Badminton is a racket sport where players hit a shuttlecock over a net, aiming to land it in the opponent's court. ("Badminton." Wikipedia. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Badminton>. Accessed July 24, 2024.)

⁸ The Eastern and Southern African Management Institute (ESAMI) is a regional management development institute established in 1980 and headquartered in Arusha, Tanzania. It provides top-level management training, research, and consultancy services to its member governments in Sub-Saharan Africa. ("Eastern and Southern African Management Institute." Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eastern_and_Southern_African_Management_Institute. Accessed July 24, 2024.)

did. I do not now if you remember the late Ms. Kidude⁹. I was instrumental in sending the late Ms Kidude to Germany. It happened that when I was working with the Voice of Germany, I met someone called Bern Salim who wanted to come here to record taarab¹⁰ songs of a retired group. I advised him that it was better to record the work of different groups; there are women's groups and men's groups, so it is not just one group. Luckily they came to record the group Roel. Now, after one year of record sales they said they would invite us to Europe, and so we got an invitation. On that list I included Ms Kidude and that became an issue; Rukia's name was deleted from the list and another woman's name replaced hers. We saw that this one woman was deleted from the list and someone else added to the list. Similarly Ms. Kidude's name was also left out of the list. When all this happened, Dr. Omari called me. I used to communicate often with Dr. Omari because when I was a presenter I highlighted his work a lot. At that time he was working as a veterinarian, he was not yet the vice president. Therefore, we still had a good relationship. He called me and we had a long conversation. We talked a lot so I knew there was something he wanted to tell me. He told me, I hear you came from Germany to pick up Ms Kidude and yet people say she is "wild". I told him, no, Ms Kidude is not wild, but we call her wild and it is because if you insult her she will insult you back. Dr Omari argued that Ms. Kidude would embarrass us in Germany. We argued, I told him no, she will not embarrass us. I assure you we shall be proud of her. I knew this because when I went abroad to Germany I understood what they liked. In Holland as I was studying international relations, I used to like the festivals and concerts, and whenever I did not have classes I would spend the whole day there, you know, you can spend the whole day in the same place because everything is there. There are toilets, food, everything, so you can spend the whole day there. Therefore, now I replied to Dr Omari, I have seen how they respect the elderly at these concerts. In addition, you follow the market and you will realize that Ms Kidude has the capability to perform. Dr. Omari agreed and she went to Germany. Ms. Kidude performed so well in Germany that Bern commented to me, "Mariam I never thought Ms. Kidude was such a star!" I told him this is why I brought her because I knew she would win over many. Wherever she went, yes, there were challenges. In one place, the artists told her not to include "yaleli". Those things that make "yaleli", no, do you know the meaning of "yaleli"? It is when you sing, "aaaaaah aaaah", apparently white people do not like that. She came to tell me, Ms. Mariam they forbade me and I told her to calm down. When you sing, just look at me and I will give you a signal when to put "yaleli" on a song. I knew there were many Germans of Arab¹¹ descent and they would appreciate the "yaleli". Therefore, it happened, when I gave her a signal, she did it! There was a lot of excitement and joy, with many joining in the audience appreciating her in the "yaleli". Consequently, from then on, all the newspapers wrote a lot about her, and then from then onwards, she

⁹ Fatuma binti Baraka, widely known as Bi Kidude (1910 – 2013), was a celebrated Zanzibari-born Tanzanian Taarab singer, often referred to as the "queen of Taarab and Unyago music." ("Bi Kidude." Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bi_Kidude. Accessed July 24, 2024.)

¹⁰ Taarab is a popular music genre in Tanzania and Kenya, blending influences from the African Great Lakes, North Africa, the Middle East, and the Indian subcontinent. ("Taarab." Wikipedia. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Taarab>. Accessed July 24, 2024.)

¹¹ Arab descent refers to individuals who originate from or have ancestry linked to the Arab people, an ethnic group mainly inhabiting predominantly Arab states in West Asia and North Africa. ("Arabs." Wikipedia. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arabs>. Accessed July 26, 2024.)

received invitations to perform in other places. I accompanied her when she went to France. We accompanied her when she went to Japan. She received many awards and performed with many groups until the time she died. I too started my women's group called Tausi¹². This group Tausi has received invitations to many countries; we have already been to Holland, we were in Germany in February, and before that, we went to Turkey. We went to Beirut¹³ and to Egypt and even to the African Union¹⁴ meeting. African Union had their meeting in 2010 and they invited us, which was the first time a woman came to the party and saw us and said, I will invite you and she invited us. By the way, people really like these women's groups these days. Our women's groups sing songs like traditional love songs including taarab songs. We also sing songs that speak against abuse. We sing against the abuse of children and women, and other songs focus on health campaigns, especially those dealing with vaccinating children. Many children are ignored and are not taken to the hospital on time and some lose their eyesight from diseases that can be cured. We have sung songs about sicknesses, for example about cancer. Now we are thinking about what arears to target and sing about, but some times the radios stations do not play our songs. We do play when we get an opportunity at concerts, or if we get an invitation to an event, we include those songs. People say, ah! Ms Mariam, are you not afraid? I answer them, no, if the radios do not play our songs, we still sing them. When festivals came, we played them and people praised us for the performance. Now you know me. In my life, without a doubt, I have faced many challenges. As I was growing up in my old-fashioned family I did do not have permission to do certain things. For example, I wished I learnt to play music when I was young but I would not dare ask for permission because of our traditions. Now I play an instrument called "kanuni"¹⁵. I really do not like to sing, I just like to strengthen artists more. I also realise that when I was working in the media until today when I am a member of TAMWA¹⁶, I am thankful that people respect me a lot. I have also been on the board during the intervening years. Right now, I participate only as an advisor or consultant. If something happens, especially here in Zanzibar, young

¹² Tausi Women's Taraab (with 'Tausi' meaning peacock) was established in 2009 under the guidance of Mariam Hamdani and originally led by the esteemed singer Bi Kidude. The group adheres to the classical taraab tradition and frequently performs at Sauti za Busara, the renowned Zanzibar music festival. ("Tausi Womens Taraab, The Taraab Queens of Zanzibar." RetroTan. <https://retrotan2020.com/tausi-womens-taraab-the-taraab-queens-of-zanzibar/>. Accessed July 24, 2024.)

¹³ Beirut, the capital and largest city of Lebanon, has a population of 2.5 million (2014) and is one of the world's oldest continuously inhabited cities, situated on a peninsula along the Mediterranean coast. ("Beirut." Wikipedia. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Beirut>. Accessed July 25, 2024.)

¹⁴ The African Union (AU) is a continental organization of 55 African member states, established to replace the Organization of African Unity (OAU). The AU was founded on 26 May 2001 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, and launched on 9 July 2002 in Durban, South Africa. ("African Union." Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/African_Union. Accessed July 26, 2024.)

¹⁵ The qanun is a Middle Eastern string instrument, resembling a large zither with a thin trapezoidal soundboard, known for its distinctive emotional tone. ("Qanun." Wikipedia. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Qanun_\(instrument\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Qanun_(instrument)). Accessed July 26, 2024.)

¹⁶ The Tanzania Media Women's Association (TAMWA) is a non-profit, non-partisan, human rights organization founded in 1987, dedicated to advocating for women's and children's rights through media and awareness-raising activities. It has significantly contributed to legal reforms and social changes in Tanzania, including the enactment of laws against gender-based violence and the empowerment of women in leadership roles. ("About Us." TAMWA. <https://tamwa.org/a/index.php/about-us.html>. Accessed July 26, 2024.)

people look for me and request that I accompany them. Ms Mariam, we are asking you, to accompany us, your artists. I tell them, I know, let us go. I am ready to help because I too received help in my life, especially when I was working on the radio. Imagine 20-30 years ago as I was working on the radio, I was beautiful and did not wear scarves. I wore jeans and high heels then. Whenever I went to interview men, they would get confused. However, there was a man called Joseph Asama, now late, who worked with me. He was the head of the program, we got along well, shared jokes and he liked me. He noted that it was hard for me to interview men because they would not focus on the interview. So I had a strategy, I requested him to be present when I was interviewing some of the people. He agreed. He usually said, you would not succeed to interview that man alone. He will treat you badly. So Joseph accompanied me to the interview, he was sitting there as I was doing the interview and until I finished. Later, he would tell other colleagues, oh man, I was able to stop the honorable man, he was rolling his eyes and looking lovingly at Mariam, but he could not say anything to her while I was there. Indeed Joseph Asama really helped me a lot and every day I pray for him. Because of him I got many interview sessions, I became confident and had wonderful sessions. I then got the appointment as a radio director and people agreed that I was able to do it. Some of my colleagues were afraid of the position. When you a woman gets a public position, you will be some men who will want a relationship with you. If you are not interested in him, it will be a disaster. Then if you come home at night, it will be a disaster. Now when any honorable person showed interest in me, I would tell him that I have a boss and I pray for him every day, because he was one of the people who helped me to get promotion. Then there was also old Sheikh Salim, the old man died when he was a hundred years old. Sheikh Salim advised me every day to tolerate the people. When I no longer went to interview people, they started asking, where is the woman, as they believed I wrote better interview reports. Salim continued to encourage me. I told Salim and again he said, listen, be patient, these people, have nothing, but as long as you know, go and write that they can come to see you. Now those are the challenges I faced and I laugh when I remember them. So one time the minister called me, he came to the railway station and found me there. "Oh, I did not know my ministry has such beautiful women," he said. I kept quiet, thinking to myself that he would call me the following day. Indeed, he actually called me, and I went. He told me, I have not called you for anything now but today at four o'clock, come here; I want to take you somewhere. Where are we going? I asked. "Are a little child? Don't you know me?" I told him, I do not understand you. What do you want me to understand? He said, "I mean I want you." I told him I did not want him. He told me, "How you dare you to tell me I don't want to go, I can take a pair of scissors and cut you." I told him, Cut me with that pair of scissors! I slammed the door and left right there. When I returned to the radio, fortunately, I found a meeting where the late Commissioner was present with others. Right then I requested to go inside and I told them exactly what had happened. Those crazy people are thinking about you. Then later I came to learn that he treated others the same way and his employees behave in the same way. There was one day in the evening when his bodyguard appeared; he opened the door of the office to find his boss with a woman laid on the table. Therefore, when I told them my story, they told me, calm down and do not worry, he will not do anything to you. On the second day, I heard the announcement that he was posted to be the Regional Commissioner in the south, and someone else took over the ministry position. I said that I am really lucky and sometimes when you respect yourself, even those people

know that this person really respects herself, no matter how good you are, how will they respect you and show you compassion. Therefore, I cannot forget those things. I remember when I was in a journalism college one teacher who tried making friends with me. He said, "You haven't finished college yet, can't you agree?" I told him, I rejected you. Therefore, he was giving me low marks. Then someone who told me, I wish I was you, I would look for money, and get people to destroy him. How can you write such a good paper and he only gives you this 40 per cent? So, thanks to him, I felt encouraged to go to the principal of the college with the paper. I told him, I am studying hard and doing my best but am I getting low marks? He asked to look at my paper. He looked at me and said, Calm down, and do not tell anyone that you came here. Listen some men are rude and if you are a beautiful woman and especially like me, I am not bragging but I was beautiful. I am almost 80 years old. People still try to compete with the elderly, so my goals are that I especially wanted to do more but I did not succeed. You know what you are doing. For example, I studied in Holland at International Relations postgraduate. I came and studied again and studied international communication related to the news, they would accept me, so I said, and then I will go to the voice of Germany for two years. They wanted me to extend my time due to their issues, but I cannot live in a cold place when I have chest pain. Therefore, I wanted to go home and enjoy the weather more. I want the money, but to get the money means hard work every day. Even when I went to the United States, it was hard soon after September 11.¹⁷ You know here in Zanzibar, if you were of Arab origin, you could not travel. Now there was a chance to go to the United States for six or three months for a study tour, then there was an Indian friend of mine, luckily, her husband was Thabiti Kombo.¹⁸ One day I told him there was this trip but it was difficult and he asked if I would come back because many of people leave for America and they do not come back. I told him I will come back and he asked are you sure? Therefore, the man was powerful in the government. Mrs. Kombo when I was rejected there she said aah this child of ours will just go and come back. Therefore, I went to the United States and found that a position for women was advertised, the days when Mwahamina went to Germany. They tried to make me stay in America and I said no. I have promised to go back and if I do not go back, I will destroy the chances for all the people while I stay here in the United States. Coming back, I had a challenge. One day Bakari asked me how it was that I got such a great opportunity and then I up gave up. I told him no. My soul is at home; my soul is with my elders who raised me. I cannot, let my old mother live alone here, my brothers are in the mainland, that is, Ms Zakia Meghji¹⁹ was in Moshi²⁰ with her husband. She and her husband studied economics so after marriage they

¹⁷ September 11th refers to the 2001 terrorist attacks on the United States by al-Qaeda, where hijacked planes struck the World Trade Center, the Pentagon, and a field in Pennsylvania, killing nearly 3,000 people. These attacks led to major global political, military, and security changes. ("September 11 attacks." Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/September_11_attacks. Accessed July 25, 2024.)

¹⁸ Thabit Kombo was a prominent Tanzanian politician for over two decades and a member of the national executive committee of Chama Cha Mapinduzi, Tanzania's sole political party. ("Thabit Kombo." *The New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/1986/08/31/obituaries/thabit-kombo.html>. Accessed July 25, 2024.)

¹⁹ Zakia Hamdani Meghji is a pioneering Tanzanian politician. She was the first female Minister of Finance, serving from 2006 to 2008, and prior to this, was the longest-serving Minister of Natural Resources and Tourism, holding the position from 1997 to 2005. ("Zakia Meghji." Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zakia_Meghji. Accessed July 25, 2024.)

²⁰ Moshi, the capital of the Kilimanjaro region in Tanzania, is a small municipality on Mount Kilimanjaro's slopes. ("Moshi, Tanzania." Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Moshi,_Tanzania.)

were osted in Moshi, in those days Swalha was at the UN²¹ dealing with matters of the world food program²². That left Ms. Rabila and me. Nevertheless, my mother was attached to me more so I just said no, I cannot leave my mother. Those are the things of the world but I do not regret it, I am happy that I am happy here even though I do not have anything grand but I am happy. I think if you get a similar situation decide between going to Europe and leaving the person who raised you I think if you would decide as I did. Even God will bless you, as I believe and that is why I am here, I have become the vice president of Tanzania's information council²³. The news agency is big, you know.

AM: I know it is big.

MH: I was the vice president in that place during the second period. Then not only was I a vice president but they also gave me the opportunity to do research for a book. I did research and wrote about media in Zanzibar from 13th century.²⁴ The president launched the book. Then later on during the competition I received an award, they gave me an award. I got the award as recognition of being the best worker, for excellence in journalism. Even my teacher told me that it was not through favoritism but because I wrote that book. The book will last through generations. They gave away the book free. What I am doing right now is preparing it for online publication so that more people can read it free. I am thankful that in my life, I have met great professors like Issa Shivji²⁵, I have met Mr. Bomani²⁶, I have met people like the late Othman and others. I have also learned many things from them. In addition, I am grateful to the women I have worked with here, especially in the early years, when I was young. I have interacted with them a lot at Afro Shiraz party²⁷; I have worked with them a lot when I was in the women's committees. Also

²¹ The United Nations (UN) is an international organization founded in 1945, consisting of 193 member states, with the aim of promoting peace, security, and cooperation among nations. It addresses global issues such as human rights, climate change, and development through its specialized agencies and programs. ("About Us." United Nations. <https://www.un.org/en/about-us>. Accessed July 26, 2024.)

²² The World Food Programme (WFP), a United Nations agency, delivers food assistance worldwide and stands as the largest humanitarian organization and top provider of school meals. Established in 1961 and based in Rome, it aids over 128 million people across more than 120 countries and territories. ("World Food Programme." Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_Food_Programme. Accessed July 26, 2024.)

²³ The Ministry of Information, Culture, Arts, and Sports is a Tanzanian government body established in 2006, combining the previously separate sectors of sports, information, and culture. ("Ministry of Information, Culture, Arts, and Sports (Tanzania)." Wikipedia. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ministry_of_Information,_Culture,_Arts_and_Sports_\(Tanzania\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ministry_of_Information,_Culture,_Arts_and_Sports_(Tanzania)). Accessed July 25, 2024.)

²⁴ Hamdani, Mariam Mohammed, et al. *A History of Zanzibar Media: Traditions and Transitions*. Media Council of Tanzania, 2014.

²⁵ Issa Gulamhussein Shivji, born on July 15, 1946, in Kilosa, Tanzania, is a renowned author and academic specializing in land and constitutional law. ("Issa G. Shivji." Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Issa_G._Shivji. Accessed July 26, 2024.)

²⁶ Paul Lazaro Bomani, born in 1925, in Musoma, Tanganyika, was a prominent Tanzanian politician and diplomat. He served as the first Minister of Finance from 1962 to 1965 under President Julius Nyerere, later holding various ministerial positions and becoming Tanzania's ambassador to the United States and Mexico. ("Paul Bomani." Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paul_Bomani. Accessed July 27, 2024.)

²⁷ The Afro-Shirazi Party (ASP) was a Zanzibari political party formed from the Shirazi Shiraz Party and the Afro Party. Led by Abeid Karume, the ASP and the Umma Party initiated the Zanzibar Revolution on January

later, when I became a journalist and often had to travel to study those short courses and other long ones, I saw again that I could participate. However, until today, if anything happens, I tell them to feel free to call me. I am ready because even in political campaigns we talk about politics to tell people not to fight, do not fight. I do not know what to say, because you have asked me a lot, but I do not know now if I have answered the questions. Does this affect anything?

AM: Okay! Secondly, you have touched on your work history and mentioned various places where you have worked. However, perhaps what I would like to know is what motivated you to do the work you do?

MH: To be honest, at first I wanted to study medicine. I wanted to study psychiatry, but at first, we travelled when we were young and during that time, party politics was hot. Sheraz politics²⁸, Hibuz politics, we went to China.

Therefore, they told me I would take ten years. Ten years! I was young and was crying because I wanted to go back home. You now sometimes it is wrong to send a child to go to study away from home. These days it is different as people are used to staying in hostels²⁹. We grew up in the old-fashioned way whereby you did not have permission to leave home. It was unlike these days where our children have freedom to go to parties and have different views of life. I do not think it was backwardness but to send a child away from home and expect her to stay away for 10 years, but I told them that I was not ready for that. When my brother was in Russia, I too went there. Therefore, while I was there I studied History and Physiology³⁰ and had some fun because he took me to dances and I became a little civilized. Therefore, after that I came back to Zanzibar to find that History and Literature had changed. Previously the literature we read used to be about England and foreign affairs. Study about their people, things like *Great Expectations*³¹, etc. Now we want the literature of our own people right here. We also want the language used to be our language and not old history of middle stone age of other individuals like Cleopatra³², Julius Caesar³³, etc. Therefore, I worked for a Russian news agency. In the Russian news agency, I got a little bit of a challenge with the prevailing politics in Zanzibar. Then I got

12, 1964, overthrowing the Sultanate and establishing the People's Republic of Zanzibar. The ASP later merged with the Tanganyika African National Union (TANU) in 1977 to form Chama Cha Mapinduzi (CCM). ("Afro-Shirazi Party." Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Afro-Shirazi_Party. Accessed July 26, 2024.)

²⁸ Referring to the Afro-Shirazi Party (ASP).

²⁹ A hostel is a budget accommodation with shared dormitories and communal facilities.

³⁰ Physiology is the study of how living organisms function, including their physical and chemical processes at the cellular, organ, and systemic levels. ("Physiology." Wikipedia. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Physiology>. Accessed July 26, 2024.)

³¹ *Great Expectations* is a novel by Charles Dickens that tells the story of an orphan named Pip and his growth and personal development. Written between 1860 and 1861 and set in early 19th-century Kent and London, the novel features memorable characters and explores themes of wealth, poverty, love, and redemption. ("Great Expectations." Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Expectations. Accessed July 26, 2024.)

³² Cleopatra was the Queen of Egypt from 51 to 30 BC. ("Cleopatra." Wikipedia. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cleopatra>. Accessed 20 September 2024.)

³³ Julius Caesar was a general, statesman, and dictator of Rome until he was assassinated in 44 BC. ("Julius Caesar." Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Julius_Caesar. Accessed 20 September 2024.)

married and... that is why I looked a little older. Mr. Moyo at that time was the Minister of Education. He saw me and came to our home to make a marriage proposal. When I arrived home, my parents told me that Mr Moyo and Mr Kaojore had paid a visit. I trembled because Mr Kaojore was famous for going to the big Indian mosque to shoot with a gun. I said, "Oh, really!" Then my mother told me that this man seems to be good and I knew she was probably scared but I agreed to marry him. I stayed. Later on, I delivered my first child. He died. I gave birth to the second one. Then later, his parents told him to bring back his two wives. His parents did not approve the way he was buying me dresses and I was changing them every day. He had left one wife called Hadija and another one called Salma. I learnt all this from his grandmother. His grandfather was very old and did not know how to hide anything, good or bad. Therefore, I was grateful for getting the information. I knew that I needed to make preparations. I sat that day when he told me what his parents were telling him, that he needed to bring back his other wives. I told him that I came from a different family the other families. I have come from the city and our mother's two-story house is right in the center of the city and was built before the revolution. We were not rich, but we were middle-class people, and then I worked for a large institution and bought the clothes I wanted. Then I went there with many people, and then my mother told me that I must invite other women, which means it is a big house. Therefore, I started moving my clothes little by little, which means everyone had their closet, he had his closet and I had mine, and he did not know that I was taking away my clothes. Now when the day came for him to bring his two wives to come there and live with him, I told him, stay by yourself in your cowshed, I cannot stay in the cowshed with you at all. I already knew two years back that you intended to bring your wives. I did not ask you because everyone has their own life. You cannot force that kind of life on me. Therefore, I left and went back to my mother's home. Later he came to feel sorry for me oh! You know I regret it because I was told by Thabiti Kombo, do not compare this one with your other wives, this one is different, do not do that, this one is from a different clan, do not compare her with others. I told him, I am not coming back as long as you have done completely stupid things to show that women are nothing, nothing. You want each of us three women to occupy our rooms like cows. Stay there yourself in your cow shed. Therefore, I went to the radio again, I went to the White House³⁴ to see old Karume³⁵. He asked me do you want to go back to your husband, Moyo? I told him, I do not want to go back. He asked me, what do you want to do now? I told him I want to work in radio because I worked in a communication agency and I quit because of politics it was not possible for me to continue that and that is when I started going to radio. I went to the radio and I enjoyed the radio, we alternate like this, he sends people to me even if I do not deal with it, I am one person where when someone sees that he is making money, he should do what he wants and I do my life as I see fit. So again, we have continued, I worked at the radio after I went to the writing college in Dar es Salaam and I graduated from Esami, Esami is a short course but it helped me and I said oh! In Esami, those who study in Esami are very smart. The two-and-a-half-month course was

³⁴ The official residence of the Tanzanian president is a white house called Ikulu. ("Ikulu." Wikipedia. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ikulu>. Accessed 13 September, 2024.)

³⁵ Abeid Amani Karume (1905 – 1972) was Zanzibar's first President, coming to power after a 1964 revolution that deposed the Sultan. He later served as the first Vice President of the United Republic of Tanzania alongside President Julius Nyerere and was the father of Zanzibar's former president, Amani Abeid Karume. ("Abeid Karume." Wikipedia. Accessed July 27, 2024.)

difficult, but it is a lifetime investment, because until today, if I went to leadership, I feel as though I stayed there for one year. I do not know how I would be without that experience, is the college still there?

AM: Yes, it is there, I think it still exists.

MH: Therefore, ESAMI is what helped me to learn human resource skills and get to a different level from those who just continued with their leadership positions at work. These courses, though very short are very, very helpful. Few people know how helpful and how important they are. Later when I went to Germany, I took a leadership short course, so I combined with the ESAMI skills. However, Esami's course is the one that was most beneficial to me. I continued to work here and whenever I had the opportunity, I traveled and came back here until now that I have retired. However, even I have retired and I am still happy to serve and that is why I started a group because there were many groups of women performers here in Zanzibar. There was Zari Bulahi, there was Royal Navy³⁶, there was Banati, Hairia, and there was Nuru royal. They all had many members. The only problem was that when they go to sing at a wedding, for example, men play the instruments, so they sing but the men play all the musical instruments, including the violins. Now with the emphasis on tourism, the instrumentalists get jobs in hotels; the hotels are paying them to play the instruments. Do you think they will they leave the money paid by the hotel and play instruments for women? They disappeared one by one and many women's groups found themselves without instrumentalists. Of course, women had their own problems. Women are not without problems, you know. Therefore, this affected the groups; one of the main reasons is that there are no instruments. So all the women's groups died, more than twenty, and there is not a single group. In addition, I said I want the men to perform but I do not want them to participate in the groups of women and men. One person says that he does not want his unmarried daughter to join the group of women and and not get married. Now after retiring I have started to buy second hand instruments like violins etc. Even people started whispering to each other these days; Ms. Mariam is not getting enough. Why is she buying all these instruments? One of the people dared speak out. People listened and laughed. For sure, I do not think Ms. Mariam is right, she has bought violins, drums, and other things. I have struggled and struggled, I have gone here and there looking for women to come and teach themselves music, every time you go they just stare at you. Therefore, I went to one place, they rolled their eyes at me, and I said ah! Therefore, I returned home and said that I have lost all my money after retirement. Instead, I should buy something for myself because I have bought these instruments here. The next day I got a call and someone told that there were twenty-five women ready to learn to play the musical instruments. We want to learn these instruments, they said. Therefore, they looked at the instruments. This one wants to learn to play the violin; this

³⁶ The "Royal Navy" was an all-women taarab group from Zanzibar, a genre blending various musical styles introduced by an Arab sultan. By the 1950s, all-women groups like "Royal Air Force" and "Royal Navy" were popular for their vocal performances with political lyrics. However, as Zanzibar approached its 1964 revolution, such groups declined, and female musicians became rare. ("The All-Female Band Facing Down Islamic Conservatism in Zanzibar." *Daily Beast*. <https://www.thedailybeast.com/the-all-female-band-facing-down-islamic-conservatism-in-zanzibar>. Accessed July 27, 2024.)

woman wants to learn this instrument. That is how we started. Then, as luck would have it, Mohamed Elias, a famous singer of taarab here in Zanzibar who is also good at playing all the instruments came to our rescue. He promised that if could, he would teach all the women. He was ready to teach them. He said he would do it whether or not he was paid. Six months we have grown wise. There was a young man who had a wife. We have called you. I remember the late Maimuna told me that maybe in seven years they will call but they do not call after six months. In the morning, I tell them to come at nine o'clock, but at eight o'clock, they have already arrived. When it comes to twelve o'clock, I tell them to go to your place now. They do not want us to give them money to buy chips. They eat there and stay until four o'clock. Once they get married, they stop coming. Let us just imagine that you have made an effort, and whom will you sue in this country? You should go to court, sue them, and say, I have trained this woman and here I have signed that if I train her she will serve this group for five years who will listen to you? People will laugh at you because of our traditions, our culture. I tell you they have taken them; they started with one of the guitar players who was good, the one who came with the violin and two other instruments. When they sit on the stage they see them as beautiful, but we were lucky there were others who said no, I am married to him, let him continue, but as a group of women, we do not want other groups. She is flexible until she gives birth to a child. We were invited to Bagamoyo³⁷ where there was a festival, and a husband said, "You are free to go, but don't leave the child with me, no." It turned out that our group became a nursery; this woman takes care of the child, this one breastfeeds and this one boils water. We did that until we went to Bagamoyo and performed at the festival. We did well and came back. We have one member right now, who has three children, but her husband has given her permission, I go with her to Burundi³⁸ and I go with her to Egypt. Another one got married, her husband gave the condition that to participate we must pay her five thousand shillings³⁹ for training and then fifty thousand⁴⁰ when you reach the stage to perform. We do not have that kind of money to pay someone five thousand shillings for training, fifty thousand shillings for one stage week; I do not know how many shillings he expected us to pay. Therefore, we excused the woman. She stayed out of the group for three years. When she came back she said, I told you I am coming back. My husband was a stranger at that time and I could not argue with him because of our traditions. Therefore now that they understand each other she is coming. She is doing very well and surprisingly she is talented considering that she has not played for three years, she is competing well with those who started playing recently, and she has talent. Another one's father came here crying, "It pains me, Ms. Mariam, that as my daughter plays the instruments after getting married, her husband forbade her, now I cannot intervene, so I will have to open a shop for her", he was sad. However, these are our traditions. Those are the challenges we face. Nevertheless, I still do not lose heart because there are these married whose husbands allowed them. We will continue with them now we have ten left. Out of the ten two have become elderly and do

³⁷ Bagamoyo, the capital of Bagamoyo District in Tanzania's Pwani Region, is a historic coastal town with roots tracing back to an 8th-century Swahili settlement. ("Bagamoyo." Wikipedia. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bagamoyo>. Accessed July 27, 2024.)

³⁸ Burundi, officially the Republic of Burundi, is a small, landlocked country in East Africa, located in the Great Rift Valley. ("Burundi." Wikipedia. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Burundi>. Accessed July 27, 2024.)

³⁹ 5,000 Tanzanian shillings (TZS) is equivalent to 1.85 United States dollars (USD).

⁴⁰ 50,000 Tanzanian shillings (TZS) is equivalent to 18.53 United States dollars (USD).

not attend. The others allow them to come when they can, so sometimes they go to pick them up. There is one thing I do for sure, if we go to an event like a farm, for example, when we come back, I take them home myself until I knock on the door or they themselves tell their husbands that they are waiting for them on the way. That is the problem of women but it even as it continues, others are happy. It amuses me because there are some women who do not want even one man to join our group, they want the woman to do everything: a photographer, a woman, everything is a woman. You wonder what these people are like; they do not consider that the men are the ones writing for them. Because we like to boost ourselves for something that we cannot but now you cannot stop because they themselves have decided. Even the technician, because we were borrowing a radio, the technician writes for them, this number, number one, number two, so that if there is a problem, they can fix it because he cannot go to a women's only group. If the women do not want a man, then why write to a man. If the day comes when they tell us that, there is no permission for women's only group, we will still need a good technician, then we will tell him to sit there, we find a good seat for him to sit on the side. We tell him to sit on the side there so that people do not see you sitting behind us if anything happens; women themselves have already decided that. We have a lot of talent at home, but the government is not supportive at all. Especially here, because when we started, you cannot believe it, we did not have a drummer, now we have two drummers, but they are not able to play. Now when we have an event, we have to hide a man to play the drum. Once we went to the pond, and we had played the taarab. On the second day, the late Honorable Shamhuni called me. I wondered what was wrong but when I went, I found the Egyptian ambassador was present at the meeting with Honorable Shamhuni. Honorable Shamhuni said that our group of women must go to Cairo⁴¹ so that women there can see them. I wondered how we go to Cairo with the male drummer. Remember that we hid him behind. When they heard there was an upcoming trip to Cairo, people started coming to spend a whole day practising. Eventually they could play the drums. Unfortunately, even though we wanted to go, we had a problem; our instrument broke, so we did not go. After a year, they invited us to go to Cairo and we went. They invited us to go and sing in Sandrea. We told them we were not be ready unless they paid us money! Therefore, it happened that every show they pay us. Therefore, there are challenges women face: when they are growing up and become beautiful, once they get married then you cannot get them. These days the women come here. The other day five of them came and I thought I should teach them a little. Therefore, it means that if you teach them, two days later they get married, you will lose them because here we do not pay. They learn free, and then at other times if someone does not have a fare to go home we contribute for them. Here we make sure there is hot water for her. There is tea, there is tea, there is sugar and there is coffee. At other times, they say, Ms. Mariam, at home, I have a difficult life, I need money to buy some bread. That is what I am talking about, the problems. However, what hurts is people's exectations. The other day they came and wanted us to go to Nisemee College where you pay sixty thousand for classes. We do not have that money but I am ready to teach them. It is therefore frustrating and painful to spend my strength and then when they get married, their husbands stop

⁴¹ Cairo, Egypt's capital and largest city, is a major cultural and historical hub in Africa and the Arab world. It boasts landmarks like the Giza pyramids and the Cairo Citadel, and is renowned for its rich Islamic architecture. ("Cairo." Wikipedia. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cairo>. Accessed July 26, 2024.)

them. It is very painful. I do not know what other question you want to ask me because if you guide me like that it helps.

AM: I would like to know your relationships in the movement. What is your view of the movement in general as it relates to your work? I see you have decided to take women in order to teach them about jobs or industries that were previously only available to men.

MH: All right. In addition, those women become singers. As I work in TAMWA I am thankful that I started this work when I was young and have continued until now I am getting old. Therefore, I am with them or behind them regarding what they are doing in TAMWA. In addition, if something happens right now and they need my advice, I am the first one to consult with our group. We have committed that we will fight through songs. We are fighting through the medium of poetry. We will write poems to condemn those who follow children in schools to rape them and make them pregnant during childhood. We condemn them completely. We want to continue fighting, and right now, we are ready to cooperate with other groups, as right now the newspapers are full of stories of kidnapped children, and children being turned into slaves. Yes, we now want to release correctional songs especially for the elderly, because they sometimes contribute to the kidnapping of these children. For example, today's children are different from us in the past. Of course, our lives were different, our lives were spent inside the house and if you play outside, you play outside the house where an elderly relative can watch you. They are watching you, and when they call your name, Mariam! You respond, yes! The truth of the matter is that the situation you see right now is different. All the open spaces are no longer available as playgrounds. They belong to people who have built big houses. Now where will the children play? They play at home and not only at home now there are those phones, people do not have time with children. It is true to say that life has changed because in the past when girls got married, they were 13 or 14 years old and so by the time they reached 28 years old they had a grandchild, and by 60 years old they had great-grandchildren. Life was different but right now the mother is at work and the grandmother is probably still at work at 60, the child is being raised by a housekeeper and that housekeeper has her own habits that she brings in from her family and upbringing. Therefore, she probably does not even correct the child. If the child chooses to do antisocial things or to play with the phone, there is nobody to provide direction. Therefore, the life of today's children may seem better. There is the false impression that parents love their children because they give them big phones and buy toys for them. In the past, you waited for holiday time to get a toy. Before the holiday, you collect your money and then you buy toys. These days the children get new clothes. Every day if you pass by the houses you will see many clothes hanging to dry. In the past, we learnt to sew a fabric toy and fill it with cotton. You called this your toy. Similarly, the boys made cars using the maize cobs⁴² and other materials they found. These were beautiful creations. You see a homemade car going. We also learnt to throw and catch

⁴² Maize cobs are the central part of a corn plant, holding the kernels. They are typically stripped of kernels and used in food, animal feed, or as fuel and crafts. ("Corncob." Wikipedia. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Corncob>. Accessed July 24, 2024.)

things, we were creative and our minds were working. Just the other day I threw something to one of my grandchildren, it fell, and I was surprised. Why did you fail to catch it? I asked her, does she not play netball⁴³ at school? She said they do not play netball now. I wondered how the child would learn how to put effort. In our time, we played netball, volleyball, skirtball etc. Then there were those English lessons. Our teachers taught us to learn English through action, so it was exciting for the child. I talked a lot on the radio and television about what we did on Wednesdays at that school. When we were in the fifth grade at Forodhani School⁴⁴, there was a building there. Now it is now named Morocco. In that building, we were studying domestic science⁴⁵. During domestic science classes, you learnt basic sewing until you could embroider flowers and make the clothes you wear. You then learnt how to fold children's sweaters, socks and hats. Then we learnt to crochet and finally we learnt to use sewing machines. We also learnt child rearing. In other words, I learnt to wash a baby. It was a big doll. I had not seen one so big. When you wash the baby's head, you make sure you use cold water and not hot water because hot water will burn the child. I never forgot. Then, later we learnt all kinds of foods that we cook and eat here in Zanzibar. We learnt all ingredients and spices used. Finally, we learnt to prepare some European foods under the instruction of the late Belal such as Christmas cake, fruitcake, etc., all kinds of food that you know. However, these days children end up going to buy cooked foods, I do not know if you call them strips. The cooking pans are dirty and full of oil, they are cooking chips, and they are buying chips and roasted meat for the children. This is a problem because the children end up using the phone all the time and all their thoughts are the phones. As an adult, example, if you tell me how you use the phone, you are likely to say you learn a lot, which means there are many things the phone is communicating. However, you would be lucky if the children are just watching pop singers like Diamond⁴⁶, or they are watching Ali Kiba⁴⁷. Thank God if they are just listening to music. Unfortunately, they go looking for relationships and that is why teachers these days say that today's children are not doing well in school. At school, you will find that almost the whole class of children destroy each other. Some of the teachers are also involved in this destruction of the children's lives. How do the children destroy each other? When asked if someone did any research, the response is that the children see these things on the

⁴³ Netball is a team sport where seven players per side aim to shoot a ball through the opponent's goal ring while defending their own. Mainly played by women and girls, it is popular in Commonwealth countries and governed by World Netball, which organizes major events like the World Championships and the Commonwealth Games. ("Netball." Wikipedia. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Netball>. Accessed July 28, 2024.)

⁴⁴ Secondary school located in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania.

⁴⁵ Domestic science, or home economics, involves studying human development, finances, nutrition, housing, and textiles. It began in the 1850s to professionalize homemaking for women and now includes broader vocational skills for all genders. ("Home economics." Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Home_economics. Accessed July 27, 2024.)

⁴⁶ Diamond Platnumz, a Tanzanian bongo flava artist and businessman, is the founder of WCB Wasafi and has a significant following in East and Central Africa. ("Diamond Platnumz." Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Diamond_Platnumz#:~:text=Naseeb%20Abdul%20Juma%20Issack%2C%20professionally,Wasafi%20Bet%20and%20Wasafi%20Media.. Accessed July 28, 2024.)

⁴⁷ Ali Kiba, born November 29, 1986, is a leading Tanzanian Bongo Flava artist known for hits like "Mwana" and "Chekecha Cheketua." He has won multiple awards, including Best Album at the 2022 Tanzanian Music Awards, and launched Crown FM 92.1 in 2024. ("Ali Kiba." Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ali_Kiba. Accessed July 27, 2024.)

internet and do them. They want to experiment on those things. Now who will help the children when even the parents do not have time for them and when those parents get home, they say they are tired so I ask myself, were our mothers never tired? Because we were going to school, our mothers were scraping coconuts while cooking, sifting rice and the little ones would come home at 12 o'clock, and the food would be ready. The older children would come back at one o'clock, but these days, when they come back, they relax. Then in the evenings, there was no TV, there was nothing, but we had grandmothers who narrated stories. They taught us to read, they encouraged us. When you come back from school, they told us to rest and then later, you are playing outside, there is a lamp. They remind you to do your homework. They advise you to drink your tea early so that you do not spend the night awake going to the toilet. Later they ask you, what did you learn today? You reply, I read Aesop's⁴⁸ story about hare and mice. Come on, read it again and do not stop there. The other child will read proverbs⁴⁹, proverbs are what we learnt, and we remember what we learnt in school. What have you read? I read an English book. Grandmother says, read that book. I believe our grandmother did not know any English but she just cheered us on by clapping. She read the Swahili⁵⁰ stories, they are very informative, and then the enlightening stories of long ago. Then we proceed to play games that include movement and singing. You imitate the snake, this one goes there, the other one goes there, that one arrives, that one learns to get up quickly, the last one is bitten by the snake and that one cries, so long as the game lasts. So later when we have finished games, it is the time for stories, you start with the formula: Story story! Story comes! You learn from the warnings of the story and you learn to show respect. The stories are too many for one night so we listen to some of them and go to sleep. After the storytelling session the narrator asks, do you know the meaning of the story? Goodness does not go bad means that for this time stay away from men. They warn you that if a man touches you, your mother will die, that is, they threaten you to stay away from men. However, today what are you going to say to someone who has a big phone full of pictures of all sorts and her mother does not ask, where did you get this phone? Now it is different you know I think because me and the guy who is retired planned to make a film you know I've worked on two stories and he accepted me very much and said he likes it. I see value in these stories and want to collaborate with others to make film scripts but they think we need a hundred million shillings⁵¹ to write an old story. Mind you that, in the past there was abuse as well but it was veiled, that is what I'm thinking. I want to call them to discuss the possibility of making films with only these two stories with only five⁵² or ten million shillings⁵³. Both stories are about abuse. In the past, there was abuse but it was veiled. Now that is what I am thinking of calling them to think if we can get it for a small cost like five or

⁴⁸ Aesop was a fabulist in Ancient Greece who was most famously known for his collection of stories called *Aesop's Fables*. ("Aesop." Wikipedia. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aesop>. Accessed 13 September, 2024.)

⁴⁹ Proverbs are succinct, traditional sayings that impart general truths or advice based on collective wisdom and cultural values. ("Proverb." Wikipedia. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Proverb>. Accessed July 27, 2024.)

⁵⁰ Swahili is a Bantu language spoken extensively in East Africa, including Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda, and acts as a common lingua franca in the region. ("Swahili language." Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Swahili_language. Accessed July 27, 2024.)

⁵¹ 100,000,000 Tanzanian shillings (TZS) is equivalent to 37,057 United States dollars (USD).

⁵² 5,000,000 Tanzanian shillings (TZS) is equivalent to 1,852 United States dollars (USD).

⁵³ 10,000,000 Tanzanian shillings (TZS) is equivalent to 3,705 United States dollars (USD).

ten million we can screen both of them as they are about abuse but what is very interesting is that they show the culture of the children here as they play and respect their elders. Now two or three of the old people who were abusing the children will suffer loss from the child and if these films are successful, you will see that I have made progress, but I think I will succeed. I was talking to a relative and he told me, you do not need a hundred million shillings to produce the films; a hundred million is for those films that exported far away to other countries. However, these films are for local consumption and five or six million shillings⁵⁴ might be sufficient. The films will help to disseminate information on the women who are suffering. I will continue to use songs. I intend to use these short films and I think I will succeed with God's help.

AM: Thank you.

MH: Because it is painful to see parents, long ago you know how we regarded parents. Aah! When they call down there, Mariam! Yes! You will respond, you are running to them. On the contrary, these days, you do not know where your son is. Aah! Here, I am telling you imagine you are watching TV. You see a child on TV at ten o'clock in the night. This poor child is lost and nobody knows his parents. Aah! Ten o'clock in the night! Where is his mother? Moreover, this happens not once not twice. At ten o'clock at night, a lost child was rescued, how? It means that some parents do not care and they defend themselves that they work until ten o'clock at night. Therefore, I have taken up the challenge to visit the women in their homes. I am the one who thought of talking to TAMWA with the program of having these discussions so that these women can also see themselves and their roles in the family, because every day only men receive blames. Oh! Men are destroying children now, are you mothers not the ones who leave them at home all day? Some of the domestic workers you hire are suspect. You will hear others do not look at you. You have already seen others pretending to be women but they are men. Start by taking him to the police first, let them know if this is a woman or a man. In the past, I remember there was one trip when my late uncle came and he was living in Dar es Salaam, so I did a childish thing, you know, I do not remember what; I went to whisper to him. I laughed and he laughed. So after a while, when he left, they asked me who sent you! Why did you go to whisper to your uncle, you bad mannered scoundrel! From that day, I stopped but right now the father will take the child of twelve or fourteen years old and he will go with her to Dar es Salaam and he will go with her to the hotel and will be happy that people like her. Where is the respect? This is what I will talk to TAMWA and the others; let us have these discussions every day, now let us not leave it to only those women who think that if anyone is to be blamed, let only men be blamed every day. You know here, if you listen to Mawio, you may shed tears, because you hear a six-year-old child was raped. How will she get opportunities if you yourself are there, it is not said at all that you will hear your parents' life, what kind of life is that because you do not plan your own life? Yourself. There are others, I have grandchildren; their mother brings them here if she has not found someone to stay with them and they are afraid of me. These days, people are not trustworthy. Anyone can knock

⁵⁴ 6,000,000 Tanzanian shillings (TZS) is equivalent to 2,223 United States dollars (USD).

at the door and say, "I'm your uncle, I'm your aunt, and two people came in and raped them. When they finished, they left." Another issue for parents, both mothers and fathers, we have talked about these unplanned divorces and the things we have even talked about in the songs. Regarding careless divorces, there are songs we sing every day. Every day people are getting divorced, and abandoning their children. Fathers are just marrying; their marriage is like a game. It is as if you hold a colorful piece of paper, you hold it and throw it away. The children are suffering without proper care and nurturing. If you go to court, the labor court⁵⁵ and you hear those cases; you will get angry, the old traditions have disappeared. If we do not make an effort to eliminate this habit of children having phones then let them play, as they want, we shall have no children, we should not complain. This means that right now, a large percentage of children are completely spoiled and it is because of the phone. Let us continue.

AM: I wanted to ask you, even though you talked about it a little, about the interaction of your work with the demand of women in the country as well as internationally. You said that you continue to work with TAMWA and various people in making films. Of those organisations you have been working with, which ones are you still working with in other countries and in this country?

MH: I do not have association with another country for now, except those countries who invite us. For example in Belfast⁵⁶ there is a man named Ron Graham, who used to be here working with Help Aid. He is helping us because of these songs. Now the songs we are doing are those against abuse. Therefore, as regards working with international organization, I do not have one. In addition, if I ever get the opportunity, and maybe if I have the strength or not, I will enroll others who have the ability to manage. However, mostly I am there at TAMWA and collaborate with other organizations like in FELA⁵⁷ meetings. I still contribute and concentrate on the activities of my president first, as with my age I am not able to move as in the past. It is not that easy.

AM: All right. I wanted to ask in conclusion about the international integration and the ties of movements you do. Do you have relationships with other activists or other academicians or organisations in other countries and how did you build those relationships?

MH: The truth is that I do not have an international one out there. Here we had one here but in the end, I left it because the group had too many activists who were against abuse. We used to go and oppose abuse but in the end when we met we did not do anything other

⁵⁵ A labor court is a government body that resolves disputes between employers and employees, handling issues like wrongful dismissal, wage disputes, and workplace discrimination based on labor laws and regulations. ("Labor court." Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Labor_court. Accessed July 27, 2024.)

⁵⁶ Belfast is the capital and largest city of Northern Ireland. ("Belfast." Wikipedia. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Belfast>. Accessed July 27, 2024.)

⁵⁷ The Federation for Educational Leaders and Administrators Foundation (FELA) is a non-profit based in New Dehli that unites educational leaders, industry experts, and policymakers to discuss and address education sector issues. ("About Us." FELA. <https://www.thefela.org/about-us>. Accessed July 27, 2024.)

than hear one story after another. I stopped going to the group and that is why I stayed here at TAMWA and left that other side. I wish there is an international group with which I can share, but international ones are there. I am with Fatma Alloo⁵⁸, I am with Dr Saddam, I really like that we meet in various meetings about abuse. However, it is just like that and my contribution is in speaking on radio and television. It is that level.

AM: Okay! I am grateful to you Ms. Mariam, for your time. I am also grateful for the discussion we had and I can see we have completed it today.

⁵⁸ Fatma Alloo is a Tanzanian activist and journalist, and an interviewee for the Global Feminisms Project.