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**TANZANIA**

# FIRST PERSON

## Youth, Politics, and the Future

### A young man becomes a political activist after a parliamentary internship



Photo: SUNY Tanzania/George William

Salum Awadh, a 26-year-old whose interest in politics was sparked by a USAID-sponsored internship, explains how he wants to change Tanzanian politics.

***“Ever since this exposure, the definition of politics has changed to one of public service, room for my country’s bright future, what I can do for my country and the most desirable burden to carry,” says Salem Awadh, a young man inspired to a life of politics through a USAID-funded internship program.***

Salum Awadh is a 26-year-old with big ambitions: someday he wants to run for president of Tanzania. But he wasn’t always so interested in politics — in fact, his university degree is in environmental science, with a minor in economics. What convinced him that his future lay in politics was a USAID-funded parliamentary internship program.

Before the program, Salum considered politics to be a “waste of time, an unnecessary burden, about corruption and just making noise.” But the internship changed his mind: “Ever since this exposure, my definition of politics has changed to one of public service, room for my country’s bright future, what I can do for my country and the most desirable burden to carry.”

The internship program is part of a USAID effort to strengthen legislative procedures in Tanzania’s parliament. Interns gain access to senior officials and decision-making processes and learn about how government works. Young people, like Salem, leave the internship with greater appreciation for the challenges that face the public sector and often with a desire to improve their country’s system of governance.

Upon completing the internship, Salem began working on the legislative strengthening project, gaining more expertise in the political arena. Seeing Salem’s dedication and commitment to improving democratic governance in Tanzania, USAID helped him attend a training course in democratic principles for current and future African community leaders. There, he learned about the structure of governance in the United States, at federal, state and local levels. Salem sees his insight into American governance as an inspiration for his own country. “It is not just a story to tell, but a tree with many ripe fruits for people in my country to eat. The tree refers to the entire system of governance and ripe fruits to good practices such as decentralization, transparency, ethics, good conduct and accountability,” he says.

“I have the reason, will and ability to shape my country’s future. My mind is set, my mood is right, the journey has already started. Corrupt leaders get out of the way!” Salem declares, testing the waters for the slogan that will lead him to victory.