



AS IT IS

Tanzania's Female President Appoints Woman as Defense Minister

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Tanzania's first female president, Samia Suluhu Hassan, recently named Stergomena Tax as defense minister. It is the latest in several appointments of women to top government positions.

The appointment came as part of the second Cabinet reorganization Hassan has made since the death of former president John Magufuli earlier this year.

Hassan said Tax's appointment would help push back against the idea that women cannot serve in such a position.

"I have decided to break the longtime **myth** that in the Defense Ministry there should be a man with muscles. The minister's job in that office is not to carry guns or artillery," Hassan said.

Gender equality activists have welcomed the appointment. But they say more needs to be done to deal with the country's gender equality **gap**.

Anna Henga is head of the Legal and Human Rights Center.

She said there must be changes to laws that put women in low-decision positions. She added that the government should also give money through the Health Ministry to educate people that women can also be leaders.

Experts say an increase in the political representation of women at the national level does not mean women will have more power in daily life.

Social scientist Nator Kitunda said gender should not matter. "I think this tries to show that there is a direction in gender equality though I'm not a believer in gender. The primary **criteria** should be someone's performance and their ability to **implement** those responsibilities," Kitunda said.

Aika Peter is a Tanzanian human rights activist. She said appointing more women leaders is a good thing. But she added there must be a plan that lets more than just one person show their leadership skills in such a position.

"We really need to see new faces in these positions — when you see the same people being recycled every day it gives the impression there are people who are so good at this job, there are no others who can be good at it," Peter said.

With Tax's appointment, there are now eight women who hold top positions in Hassan's government.

I'm Jonathan Evans.

Charles Kombe reported on this story for VOA News. Jonathan Evans adapted this story for Learning English. Ashley Thompson was the editor.

Words in This Story

gender – n. the state of being male or female; sex

myth – n. an idea or story that is believed by many people but that is not true

gap – n. a space between two people or things

criteria – n. something that is used as a reason for making a judgment or decision

implement – v. to begin to do or use something, such as a plan; to make something active or effective

