

# Support for the formation of a federation of East African states: Citizens' attitudes in Kenya and Tanzania

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## Introduction

Political leaders in the five countries of the East African Community (EAC) – Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Rwanda, and Burundi – have made concerted efforts to promote the benefits of an East African Federation (EAF). The signing of regional integration treaties is covered extensively in national and regional media.

Yet many citizens in the two largest member states are not convinced that integration will lead to promised benefits for their countries. In Afrobarometer public-opinion surveys in 2011-2012, citizens of Kenya and Tanzania were asked about the likely impact of an integrated EAF on the availability of jobs, managing conflict, controlling corruption, strengthening democracy, and controlling prices. On none of these five issues did a majority of Tanzanians say that an EAF would have a positive impact, and on only two issues – availability of jobs and controlling prices – did a majority of Kenyans expect improvement through an EAF.

Public opinion on the regional federation is important because formation of the EAF would require a passive referendum vote in each country; if regionalism is supported only by elites and not by common citizens, such a referendum could have a difficult time passing. Moreover, the implementation of integration treaties requires the understanding, conviction, and confidence of citizens. Active involvement of the public is crucial, and its absence has been identified as the greatest impediment to success of regional integration (Aryeetey & Oduro, 1996).

After providing background on regional integration in East Africa, this paper uses Afrobarometer data to describe public opinion in Kenya and Tanzania regarding expected effects of an EAF and to analyse the possible influence of lived poverty, patriotism, trust in political institutions, and perceived transparency of political executives on public support for full federation.

## Afrobarometer surveys

Afrobarometer is an African-led, non-partisan research network that conducts public attitude surveys on democracy, governance, economic conditions, and related issues across more than 30 countries in Africa. Five rounds of surveys were conducted between 1999 and 2013, and Round 6 surveys are currently under way (2014-2015). Afrobarometer conducts face-to-face interviews in the language of the respondent's choice with nationally representative samples of between 1,200 and 2,400 respondents.

The Afrobarometer team, led in Kenya by the Institute for Development Studies at the University of Nairobi and in Tanzania by REPOA, interviewed 2,399 adult Kenyans in November-December 2011 and 2,400 adult Tanzanians in May-June 2012. Samples of this size yield results with a margin of error of +/-2% at a 95% confidence level. Previous surveys were conducted in Kenya in 2003, 2005, and 2008 and in Tanzania in 2001, 2003, 2005, and 2008.

## Key findings

- Support for full federation, expressed as the expectation that an EAF would benefit the country and region, is fairly weak. Tanzanians are considerably more pessimistic about the effects of federation than Kenyans.
- Economic opportunity is perceived as the area most likely to benefit from full federation.
- Sizeable minorities in both countries believe that full federation would actually weaken, rather than strengthen, democracy and the fight against corruption.
- Overall, high levels of trust in political institutions and national pride are associated with greater support for federation, while high levels of perceived corruption are associated with less support. But explanatory factors differ significantly between the two countries.



## The East African Community (EAC) and East African Federation (EAF)

The EAC is a regional inter-governmental organisation uniting its five partner states in the ultimate goal of establishing a political federation, the EAF.

The EAC is one of eight regional economic communities recognized by the African Union, alongside the Arab Maghreb Union (UMA), Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), Southern Africa Development Community (SADC), Community of Sahel-Saharan States (CEN SAD), Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD), Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), and Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS). The five EAC members have a combined population of 133 million (2010 estimates), ranging from Burundi's 7 million to Tanzania's 45 million. Tanzania's land size is bigger than the other four members combined (52%).

The EAC aims at widening and deepening co-operation among partner states in political, economic, social, and other fields for their mutual benefit. Four pillars were envisioned: customs union, common market, monetary union, and political federation. The East African passport was introduced in 1999 to ease border crossings for East Africans. It is valid for travel within the EAC countries and entitles the holder to a multi-entry stay of renewable six months' validity in any of the member countries. The free movement of people in the EAC is set to be improved with the introduction of "third generation" ID cards, which will identify the holder as a dual citizen of his/her home country and of "East Africa."

The East African Customs Union became operational in 2005, and a protocol for the establishment of the EAC common market was signed in 2009. The monetary union and political federation are next on the EAC agenda. The political entity, if it sees the light of day, would be the third-largest and second-most populous country in Africa. The official language of the EAF would be English; Swahili would also be recognized.

### Public opinion on expected effects of full federation

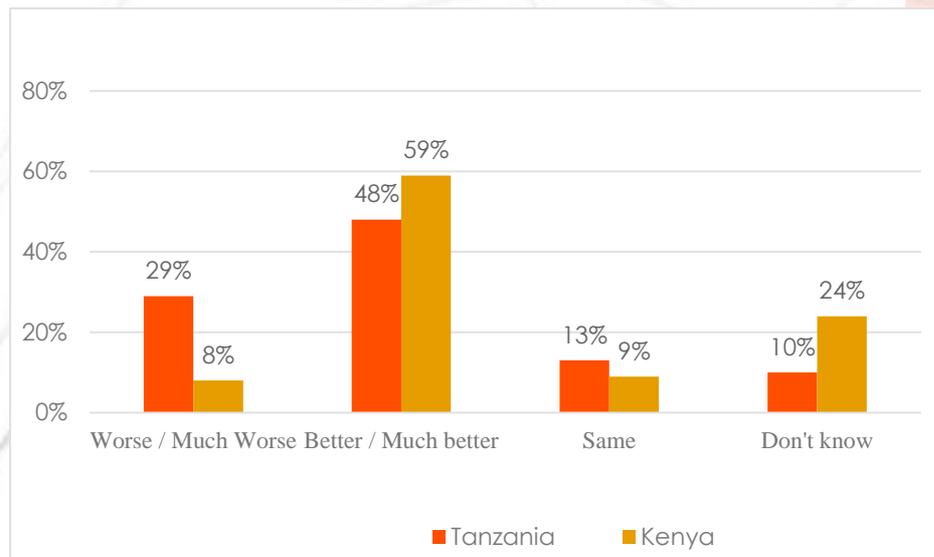
Optimism regarding the likely effects of an EAF is low. Survey respondents were more supportive of full federation on economic issues than on other questions, such as resolving conflict and controlling corruption.

#### *Common market and free labour movement*

The establishment of the EAC common market provides for "four freedoms": the free movement of goods, labour, services, and capital. Proponents of the common market argue that it would significantly boost trade and investments and make the region more productive and prosperous.

Afrobarometer survey respondents were asked whether full federation of East African states would make availability of jobs, markets, and trading opportunities better or worse for their country. A majority of Kenyans (59%) say it would make things "better" or "much better"; 48% of Tanzanians think the same (Figure 1). A full 29% of Tanzanians say the EAF would make things "worse" or "much worse," vs. 8% of Kenyans who hold this view. This economic dimension is where citizens of Kenya and Tanzania offer their strongest support for the regional federation.

**Figure 1: Expected EAF impact on common market and labour movement**

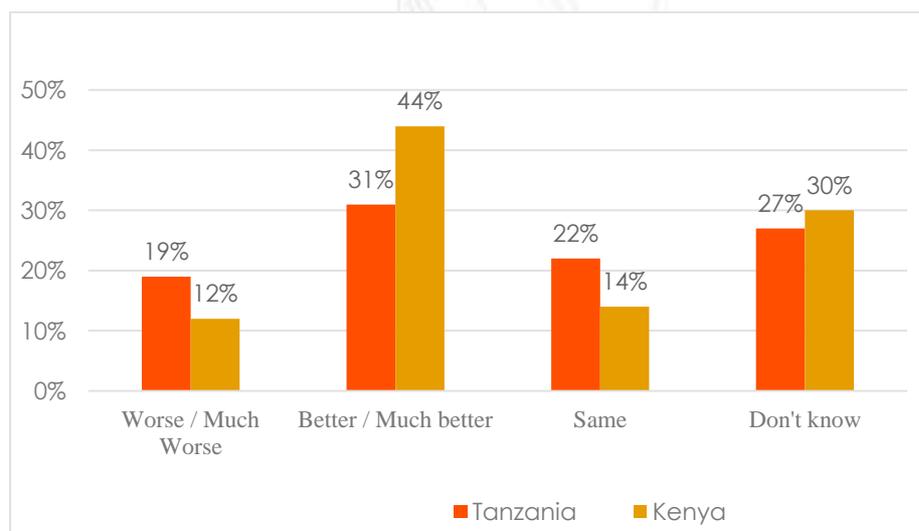


**Respondents were asked:** *In your opinion, do you think the full federation of East African States would make availability of jobs, markets, and trading opportunities better or worse for your country? (Note: Due to rounding, the sum of category percentages may not always total 100%.)*

### Management of national and cross-national conflicts

Only one-third of Tanzanians (31%) think that full federation would improve (“better” or “much better”) the resolution of national and cross-national conflicts. Kenyans are more supportive of federation, with 44% holding that full federation would help in conflict resolution (Figure 2). Why are Kenyans more supportive than Tanzanians? One possible explanation is that Kenyans have been beneficiaries of regional conflict resolution. During the post-election clashes of 2008, former Tanzanian President Benjamin Mkapa joined former UN General Secretary Kofi Annan and former South African First Lady Graca Machel in successfully mediating the peace process, and the EAC was given a lot of credit for its role in the mediation.

**Figure 2: Expected EAF impact on management of conflicts**

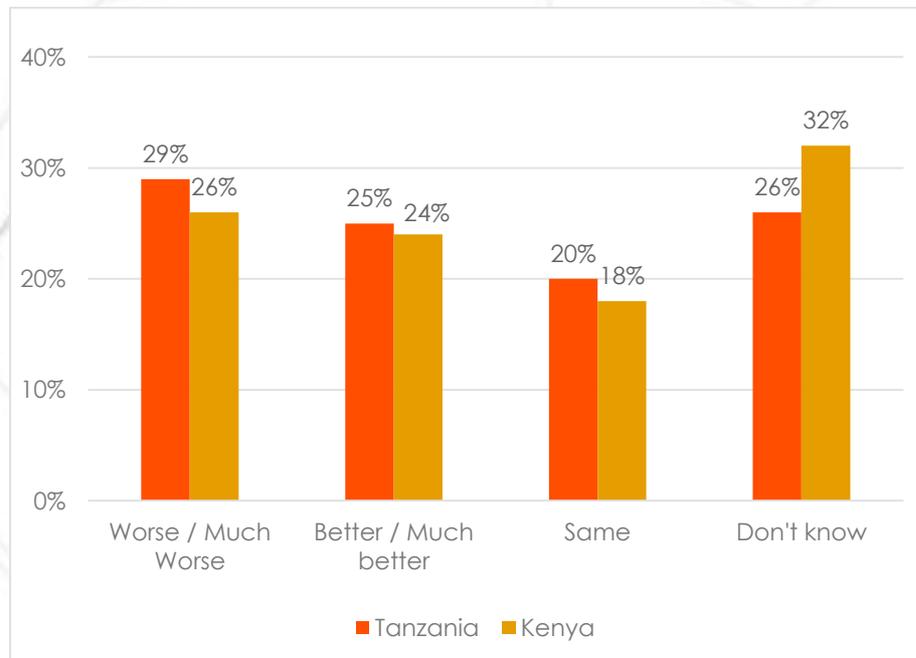


**Respondents were asked:** *In your opinion, do you think the full federation of East African States would make management of national and cross-national conflicts better or worse for your country?*

### Fight against corruption

Only one-quarter of citizens in both nations believe an EAF would strengthen (“better” or “much better”) the fight against corruption in their country (Figure 3). More citizens (26% in Kenya, 29% in Tanzania) think that full integration would actually hinder the control of corruption.

**Figure 3: Expected EAF impact on the fight against corruption**



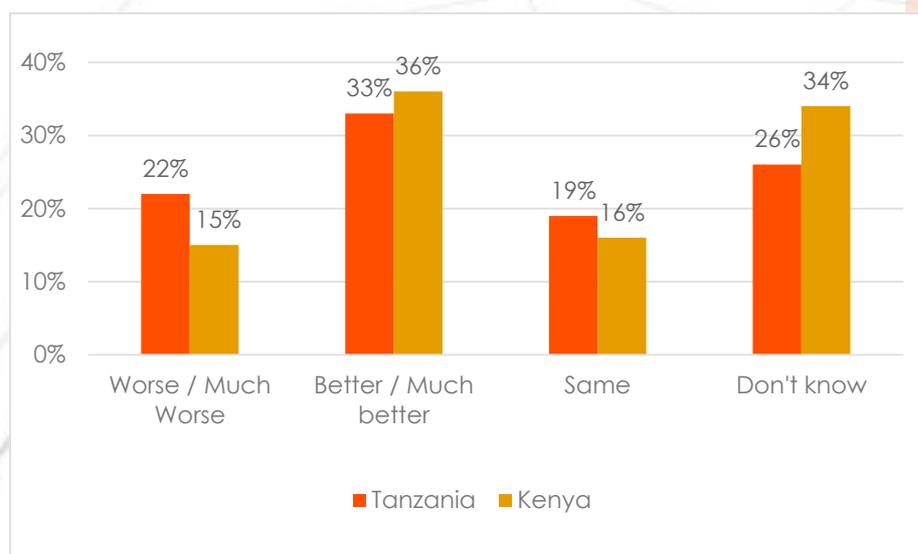
**Respondents were asked:** *In your opinion, do you think the full federation of East African States would make control of corruption better or worse for your country?*

### Strengthening democracy

Both Kenya and Tanzania have been conducting multi-party elections since the early 1990s, and their citizens have expressed an overwhelming preference for democracy in previous Afrobarometer surveys. In the 2011-2012 surveys, Tanzanians' preference for democracy was slightly stronger (86%) than Kenyans' (80%).

Only one-third of respondents (33% of Tanzanians, 36% of Kenyans) think that a full federation would strengthen democracy in their country (Figure 4), while 22% of Tanzanians and 15% of Kenyans believe that integration would actually weaken democracy in their country.

**Figure 4: Expected EAF impact on strengthening democracy**



**Respondents were asked:** *In your opinion, do you think the full federation of East African States would make strengthening of democracy better or worse for your country?*

### Controlling prices for essential goods

More than half (52%) of Kenyans and 45% of Tanzanians believe that the EAF would help control the prices of essential goods in the region.

### Analysing public expectations regarding full federation

Which factors are related to support in Kenya and Tanzania for regional integration? What shapes people's attitudes toward supranational entities like the EAC/EAF?

To help answer these questions, a regression analysis was conducted with a set of explanatory variables that may motivate optimistic expectations and therefore support for integration. The dependent variable was the **EAF index**, created from the five observed variables described above (effect of full federation on availability of jobs, markets, and trading opportunities; management of national and cross-national conflicts; control of corruption; strengthening of democracy; and prices of essential commodities). Responses range from "much worse" (1, indicating no support) to "much better" (5, indicating strong support). The higher the score on this index, the higher the support level. Missing data and individuals who responded that they didn't know or hadn't heard enough were excluded.

Independent variables included:

1. **Lived Poverty Index**, which was computed from five Afrobarometer survey questions about how often respondents went without food, water, medical services, cooking fuel, and cash. Responses were combined to calculate an average score for each respondent on a five-point scale from 0 to 4. Lower scores mean less absence of basic necessities. Given poor people's high information costs and the complexity of the issue, we would expect higher levels of poverty to be associated with weaker support for federation.
2. **Trust in political institutions**, which was constructed from respondents' expressed trust in three important institutions: the presidency, Parliament, and the ruling party. The higher the score (on a four-point scale from 0 to 3), the greater the trust in political institutions, which we would expect to be associated with stronger support for federation.
3. **National pride** and **support for full citizenship rights for people holding dual citizenship**, as measures of patriotism. Higher scores (on a five-point scale from 0 to 4) indicate greater pride in belonging to one's country. A simplistic reading might link

patriotism to anti-federation attitudes, but Nathanson's (1993) concept of the "moderate patriot" (proud and welcoming to foreigners) suggests the opposite.

4. **Perceived transparency in the executive**, an indicator of respondents' perception of involvement of key figures in the executive (the president, vice president, and prime minister) in corruption. Lower scores on the index (measured on a four-point scale from 0 to 3) equate to lower levels of perceived involvement in corruption, which we would expect to be associated with greater support for federation.

A linear regression was carried out separately for each country to allow a comparison between the models that might help explain differences in causes of support for EAF. An overall linear regression with country as control variable was then run on the combined data.

The results of the regression analysis are presented in Table 1. Different factors matter in explaining perceptions on the full federation in Kenya and Tanzania. Only one explanatory variable is significant in the regression models for both Kenya and Tanzania – perceived transparency in the executive. Citizens of both countries who think that the executive is not involved in corruption are more likely to support regional integration. Respondents' level of education and rural vs. urban residency have no bearing on support for integration.

**Table 1: Predicting support for the full federation**

|  | Overall           | Kenya             | Tanzania          |
|--|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| <b>Rural / urban residence</b>                 | .024<br>(.026)    | .016<br>(.047)    | .022<br>(.056)    |
| <b>Gender (female = 1)</b>                     | -.039**<br>(.025) | .001<br>(.046)    | -.093**<br>(.052) |
| <b>National pride</b>                          | .050**<br>(.009)  | .170**<br>(.021)  | .032<br>(.018)    |
| <b>Support for dual citizenship rights</b>     | .031*<br>(.027)   | .061*<br>(.045)   | -.001<br>(.058)   |
| <b>Employment status</b>                       | .020<br>(.011)    | -.070*<br>(.023)  | .086**<br>(.022)  |
| <b>Lived poverty</b>                           | .037**<br>(.016)  | .087**<br>(.028)  | .035<br>(.036)    |
| <b>Trust in political institutions</b>         | .096**<br>(.016)  | .040<br>(.034)    | .144**<br>(.033)  |
| <b>Perceived transparency in the executive</b> | -.078**<br>(.026) | -.137**<br>(.048) | -.101**<br>(.052) |
| <b>Age</b>                                     | -.027<br>(.014)   | .062*<br>(.029)   | -.064**<br>(.030) |
| <b>Education</b>                               | .015<br>(.018)    | .032<br>(.031)    | -.008<br>(.045)   |
| <b>Country (Tanzania=1)</b>                    | .206**<br>(.027)  |                   |                   |
| <b>(Constant)</b>                              | 2.646<br>(.108)   | 3.072<br>(.192)   | 3.110<br>(.222)   |
| <b>Adjusted R<sup>2</sup></b>                  | 0.083             | 0.109             | 0.114             |

Standardized  $\beta$  coefficients are presented in the table. Standard errors are presented in brackets. Dependent variable = Support for the East African Federation.

\* Significant at the 0.05 level; \*\* Significant at the 0.01 level

While gender has no bearing on EAF support in Kenya, men in Tanzania are more likely to support full federation than women. In Tanzania (but not in Kenya), citizens who express trust in their political institutions are more likely to support integration.



Younger Tanzanians are more likely than their elders to believe that they stand to benefit from full federation, while in Kenya, older citizens are more supportive than younger citizens. National pride is not related to support for the full federation in Tanzania. In Kenya, however, citizens who are more proud to be Kenyan are more welcoming to integration with their neighbours. Kenyans who perceive their political institutions as corrupt are less likely to warm up to the integration idea, whilst in Tanzania this variable is not significant.

## Discussion

Katera (2008) cites a local Tanzanian newspaper quoting members of Parliament who raised concerns about economic integration, pointing out that the labour force in Kenya is more highly skilled than that of Tanzania and arguing that integration would therefore lead to the loss of many Tanzanian jobs.

Kenya has the largest economy in the region (40%) but also the highest unemployment rate (40%) (Eyakuze & Salim, 2012). Kenya accounts for seven of the 10 best universities in the region, according to a 2012 ranking of universities by CPS International, and has the highest number of learners in tertiary institutions. Kenya is therefore bursting at the seams, ready to venture into the other East African countries in search of work and opportunity. In the EAC common market protocol for movement of labour, only Kenya opened up for all levels of workers. In the other four countries, only professionals can be granted work permits. This demonstrates how Kenya is viewed as having an unfair advantage because of its large numbers of skilled unemployed persons.

On the flipside, employed Tanzanians are more likely to support federation, presumably because of the opportunities brought by opening up the market. In the past five years, a number of Kenyan financial institutions and retail companies have moved into Tanzania, creating local jobs. In this analysis, level of education does not affect citizen support for federation, but the relationship between education and support for full federation deserves further scrutiny in future research.

In East Africa, national pride is strongest among Tanzanians, but it does not seem to affect their support for integration. In Kenya, national pride has a positive relationship with support for integration. This contradicts the premise that persons who are overly proud of their country may not be pro-integration, as experienced in the formative stages of the European Union. Nathanson (1993) argues that “moderate patriots” favour their country but do not believe in superiority or dominance of others. They favour their country by wanting it to flourish according to universal standards. This seems to be the case in Kenya and Tanzania.

Poor people often have high information costs, especially on a complex issue such as regional integration. We would therefore expect that poorer people would be less supportive of full federation than rich people. It is therefore surprising that in Kenya (but not in Tanzania), higher poverty is associated with higher support for federation. This finding should be explored in greater detail in future research.

## Conclusion

Full integration of East Africa will require the support of a referendum in each country. Using survey data from Afrobarometer, this paper shows that public optimism regarding the likely effects of an EAF in a variety of dimensions, and thus support for full federation, is quite modest in Kenya and Tanzania. Going forward, political elites are going to have to make a stronger effort to attract public support for integration.

Literature on factors that affect citizen support for integration is limited. This paper suggests that while individual factors have different effects in different countries, overall, trust in political institutions and national pride are associated with greater optimism regarding the benefits of integration, whereas perceived corruption lowers positive expectations. If political elites want to gain more public support for integration, one way would be for government – especially key members of the executive branch – to become more transparent.

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# AFRO BAROMETER

LET THE PEOPLE HAVE A SAY

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