

Is the Right to Education Fulfilled in Tanzania?

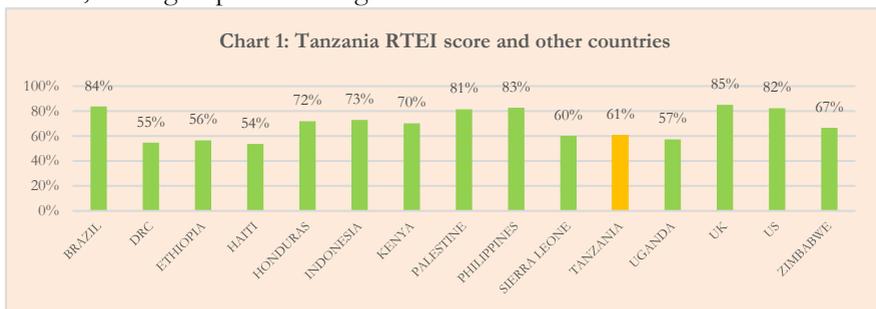
Findings of the Right to Education Index 2021

Introduction

HakiElimu¹ is an NGO that advocates for inclusive and quality education in Tanzania. Since 2015, HakiElimu has been conducting Right to Education Index as part of generating evidence of challenges of realization of Right to Education in Tanzania, then use the findings and recommendation to promote access and quality of education for children of Tanzania.

Right to Education Index (RTEI) is the global survey to assess the extent to which a government fulfills the right to education to its citizens. RTEI uses a questionnaire with key themes related to realization of the Right to Education. The RTEI themes are governance, availability, acceptability, affordability and adaptability. The RTEI questionnaire was completed by an independent researcher and reviewed by three global expert reviewers and RESULTS Educational Fund in partnership with World Vision International. The RTEI 2021 involved 15 countries².

The RTEI findings³ show that Tanzania's average score for all five themes is 61%, making Tanzania to rank 10th of 15 countries involved in the 2021 Index (See chart 1). However, this is a drop by 13 points as compared to RTEI score of 2016 which was 74%. The drop is mainly attributed to low investment in education, below international benchmarks set in the Incheon Framework of Action, leading to poor learning environments.



¹ Swahili word which means Right to Education

² United Kingdom, Brazil, USA, Phillipines, Palestine, Indonesia, Kenya, Honduras, Zimbabwe, Siera Leone, Tanzania, Uganda, DRC, Ethiopia, Haiti

³ <https://www.rtei.org/en/resources/?country=Tanzania>

Impact of Covid-19

On 17 March, the government banned all public gatherings and closed schools from pre-school to tertiary level. School closure lasted for 12 weeks during which 14 million of children stayed at home with limited or no access to learning. This containment and mitigation measure was necessary as it was meant to reduce spread of Covid-19. Although government and schools used broadcast radio and other social media platforms that support live-video communication such as Hangouts Meet, Teams, Skype, We Chat Work, Whats App, and Zoom, not many children in rural, or remote and urban informal settlements were reached⁴. This was attributed to inaccessible modes of delivery of learning . By 29 June, 2020 all schools had resumed learning. In addition to an adjusted school calendar (192 schooling days), two hours were added to the normal school timetable, remedial programmes and prevention measures, such as handwash and temperature checks were introduced in all schools. It is worth noting that students in upper secondary school, whose examinations were postponed were given adequate time to prepare for their final national examinations. While Tanzania managed to compensate for lost time, Covid-19 impacted negatively vulnerable learners, especially those who had no opportunity to learn at home.

Availability of Data

Tanzania scored 75% in data availability. However, during the RTEI survey most data were not available in the Basic Education Statistics for Tanzania (BEST). Particularly, data on income quantiles, rural urban comparisons on some education indicators, districts and regional expenditures on education, Teachers' salaries, Literacy data by districts or regions and budget for learning and teaching materials was missing.

⁴ Faustina M. Msigwa(2020) Covid-19 Pandemic and its impact on education systems in Tanzania

Issue 1: Education Financing

Education financing is the major issue established by RTEI 2021, where Tanzania scored 61%. This is below the average of 68% for the 15 countries involved in the survey. The low performance can be attributed to the low allocation to the education budget, which is 14% of the national budget. This is below the Incheon Declaration benchmark of 20%. Tanzania also allocated only 3.5% of GDP to Education which is 2.5% less than the requirement of the Incheon Declaration. The RTEI survey also revealed that Tanzania allocated only 27% of education budget to infrastructure development budget, leaving 73% on recurrent budget, implying that huge amount of the sector budget is allocated to clear up teachers' wage bills and very little is allocated to improve learning and teaching environment such as classrooms, pit latrines, hostels, laboratories and other learning facilities. This has serious implication on the quality of education for learners in Tanzania.

Issue 2: Learning Environment

The 2021 RTEI assessed the extent to which the learning environment protects children from abuses and corporal punishment in school. Furthermore, the survey assessed the existence of legislative mechanisms and frameworks to protect children. In the assessment, Tanzania scored 25% out of 100% in learning environment in schools. This is below the average (59%) for 15 countries involved in RTEI 2021. Although Tanzania has been implementing the National Plan of Action of Violence Against Women and Children since 2017, the prevalence of violence and abuse have remained high in schools. Specifically, corporal punishment in schools was established to be common. As revealed by the RTEI assessment, this is attributed to the lack of laws to prohibit corporal punishment. The RTEI findings are supported by research evidence of HakiElimu⁵ which shows that 60.9% of students interviewed for a study experienced psychological violence, 87.9% experienced physical violence, 17% experience sexual violence and 21.1% experienced negligent treatment. Violence and abuse on children is known to lead to unsafe learning environment

⁵ The State of Violence Against School Children in Mainland Tanzania

in schools, which impact negatively learning and ultimately hinder children from realizing their potential.

Fact 3: Girls' Education

Despite the fact that gender parity index is 1:1 in primary and lower secondary education in Tanzania, girls face many challenges that affect their learning, retention and transition to higher levels. The RTEI report shows that more girls are enrolled in primary and secondary education but most of them drop out before graduation. Early and unintended pregnancy and child marriages are the major challenges that affect girls' completion of education. In 2017 the Government banned pregnant girls and teen mothers from going to school. As a result a total of 25,971 pregnant girls were expelled from school between 2017-2020. However, in November 2021, the Government removed the ban for re-entry to allow teen mothers to return to school. The Government has also issued the guidelines for re-entry which will facilitate girls to return to school in subsequent years.

The RTEI report also highlights the challenge of child marriages which adversely affect girls' completion of their primary and secondary education. Although there is no recent data available, the Demographic Health Survey of 2016 shows that 62% of girls were married by the age of 18. Efforts have been made to change the Law of Marriage Act which allowed girls to marry at age 15 with parental consent. The High Court in 2016 ruled that the provisions of sections 13 and 17 of the LMA offended the principles of equality provided in the Constitution and directed the Government to amend the law to make minimum age for marriage to 18.

Recommendations

- The Government must fast track the amendment of the Child marriage Act to implement the ruling of High court to make minimum age of marriage be 18 years from 14 years.
- Government, in particular Ministry of Community Development, Gender, Women and Special Groups to finalize and approve the Guidelines of Children Councils which will support the implementation of Child protection at school and community level to reduce child violence.
- Increase allocation to education sector budget against National Budget from 14% to 20%. This will increase the education budget to Tsh 1.6 Billion annually to support implementation and development of infrastructures and facilities in schools, colleges and universities.
- During the RTEI survey most data were not available in Basic Education Statistics for Tanzania (BEST). The government should therefore add more indicators such as income quantiles, rural urban comparisons on some education indicators, districts and regional expenditures on education, teachers' salaries, literacy data by districts or regions and budget for learning and teaching materials.

