



Understanding Learning Differences Across Schools2030 Contexts

Country profiles | Tanzania

COUNTRY PROFILES

Tanzania



Overview: Defining the concept and terminology of inclusive education

Education policy in Tanzania is largely set at the national level by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, with regional commissioners appointed by the central government. Zanzibar, an autonomous region of Tanzania, creates its own education legislation. The country has made recent efforts that strive towards a more inclusive education system, via the development of a National Strategy for Inclusive Education, the installation of special needs units within mainstream schools, and the mainstreaming of more progressive and holistic understandings of how special needs develop in children.¹

According to the Education and Training Sector Development Plan for 2007-2011, 'special needs may arise throughout the learning career from

social, psychological, cultural and/or physical disability factors'.² There is limited information available on how learning differences are thought about and addressed in the country. The Ministry of Education of Tanzania defines inclusive education as 'an approach which transforms the education system, including its structure, policies, practices and human resources, to accommodate all learners in mainstream education by addressing and responding to learners' diverse needs'.³

While several special needs education institutes continue to operate, most children with disabilities receive education in integrated special needs units in mainstream schools.⁴



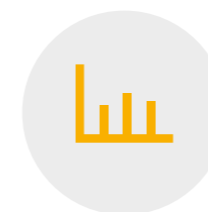
Views from teachers and programme staff

Focus group respondents felt inclusive education to be a topic of importance in Tanzania's current education agenda, following on from the country's commitments to the Education for All movement. Staff and teachers understood inclusive education to mean education that broadens opportunities for all children – including marginalised groups that have historically been excluded such as hunter gatherers, fishing communities, street children, as well as children with disabilities and special educational needs. An inclusive education means that all children are learning together and sharing resources in one school, regardless of socio-economic background, sex, race or language. Special education was understood to be a more specific intervention targeting learners with special needs and enabling them to learn according to their needs, which could mean learning in special units or special schools.

Those most targeted by such interventions are those with impairments (e.g. hearing, visual or physical) and those with special needs (gifted and talented, or 'slow learners'). Factors that have presented barriers to being included in education are language, poverty and gender, however a lack of knowledge and skills related to supporting children with special educational needs has held the system back from being inclusive. Most commonly '**children/learner/pupil with disabilities**' is used, or the disability is specified, for example with reference to children with sight or hearing impairment.

'When we're talking about inclusive education, this should broaden education opportunities for all children - including children with disabilities.'

AKF Tanzania staff member



Quantifying learners with learning disabilities

The primary source of data on learners and disability is collected through Tanzania's decennial census. Additional data has been collected by UNICEF as part of its 2016 verification study of the out of school population, which found that approximately 3.5 million school age children were not in school.

Repetition rates are high, with 10% of Standard 1 learners repeating their first year of schooling.^{1,2,3} The government acknowledge that data on learners with disabilities is limited and underutilised to inform planning.

1 Tanzania - Inclusion chapter, Profiles Enhancing Education Reviews (PEER), <https://www.education-profiles.org>, Retrieved May 2022 (Hereafter: Tanzania - Inclusion chapter, PEER, May 2022) | 2 Tanzania - Inclusion chapter, PEER, May 2022 | 3 Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, 2017 | 4 Tanzania - Inclusion chapter, PEER, May 2022 | 5 Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, 2017

Country profiles | Tanzania



Policy and legislative commitments

The Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology (MoEST) oversees the [National Strategy for Inclusive Education](#), the most recent iteration of which was put forward for 2018-2021.

The strategy aims to ‘maintain standards of inclusiveness, adaptation, and modification of curriculum content, pedagogy and environment to ensure access and participation in quality education for all learners irrespective of [...] intellectual abilities and special learning needs’.⁶

The MoEST developed a network of Resource Assessment Centres which aim to improve early identification and assessment of children with special needs, improve care and teaching for children with Albinism, visual and hearing impairments, intellectual impairment and autism.⁷

The Primary Education Development Plan (PEDP), developed over phases between 2001 and 2021, introduced inclusive education as a way to address the exclusion of hard-to-reach groups, orphans and those with disabilities.⁸



Teacher training provision on inclusive education

The 2004 [National Policy on Disability](#) identified the need of an individualised education plan for teachers. With an acute shortage of teachers trained in special educational needs and inclusion, subsequent policies have called for a review of teacher education curricula and programmes to include content on special needs. In the current system, itinerant specialist teachers are tasked with providing support to teachers and learners in several regions. Their task is mainly to assist mainstream schools in

making adaptations and preparing materials for blind learners.⁹ As of 2013, five higher education institutions provide teacher training for special needs education. Three schools award postsecondary certificates and diplomas in special needs education, and two schools award bachelor’s degrees in this area.¹⁰ One of the key strategic objectives of [The National Strategy for Inclusive Education](#) is to strengthen the capacity of teacher training colleges and teachers to work with vulnerable students and those with special

needs. The strategy outlines ambitions to review the teacher education curriculum, increase the numbers of specialised teachers, and build capacity of in-service teachers.¹¹

Consistent with these findings, AKF staff members explained that in-service training on inclusion is currently exclusively for special needs teachers. However, they are aware of the government’s efforts to establish training on inclusion in teacher training colleges so that all teachers are trained on this. Most of the teachers consulted had undergone some form of training on this, but they also requested that training was available for in-service non-specialist teachers and spoke of the need for teachers to be equipped with more tools and strategies to apply. One teacher had covered inclusive classroom practice in a master’s course which they viewed as particularly helpful

‘It helped much on how to deal with them and create lesson plans that accommodate all my learners depending on their disabilities

because you can’t teach all of them using the same approach. It helped me on how to choose learning materials that will accommodate all of them despite of their disabilities.’

Secondary school teacher, Dar es Salaam

Nevertheless, all consulted expressed a request for more focus on training:

‘Learners need more support on technology and many teachers lack knowledge and skills on how to manage them and assist them.’

Secondary school teacher, Dar es Salaam

‘Some teachers requested skills to know how to accommodate these children - when you ask what they want to learn more about this is what they will say.’

AKF Tanzania staff member



Country profiles | Tanzania



Diagnosis of learning disabilities

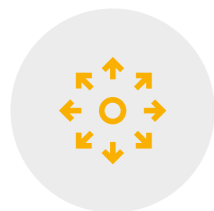
Though Resource Assessment Centres have been established to support assessment of learners, focus group respondents explained that to their knowledge there is no formal diagnosis system in place, and that the process is mostly based on teacher's own physical assessment of a child and their assessment of their learning. This tends to mean that most of the focus is on visible signs, and thus more on those with severe learning disabilities.

Teachers will also speak to parents to clarify the learning needs of the child. However, there is no established process to obtain an official diagnosis. Schools can request a basic assessment kit from the government for teachers to use themselves to assess learners.

It is envisaged that these kits are used in schools by teachers on an annual basis for screening. It was raised however, that having the tools is not enough as teachers must be equipped with the skills and knowledge to do so effectively. It appeared that some of the teachers were unaware that these tools exist, but they mentioned they try to give more time to these learners and include them in different learning activities more suited to their learning style.

'We also have to develop the capacity of these teachers. Having tools is one thing, having teacher capacity is something else. We need to achieve both.'

AKF Tanzania staff member



Current attitudes and awareness of inclusive practice and disability

Focus group respondents felt that the gap between policy and practice in inclusion is largely down to teachers not being adequately prepared with enough knowledge on the topic. Hence, still some negative attitudes persist in schools and in

communities towards children with disabilities. There is some knowledge about disability amongst teachers, however it was perceived that there isn't as much awareness about learning disabilities as most

of the focus is on physical disabilities. It was apparent that one teacher whose school has a special unit reported good awareness of disabilities compared to other schools. Staff cited recent research conducted in the past few years which has shown that most of the teachers didn't understand how inclusion should be accommodated, again highlighting the policy-practice gap that they had spoken about.

'Most will focus on physical disabilities and mental health, but they don't go far.'

AKF Tanzania staff member

'The education sector needs to go deeper into the matter of learning disabilities instead of focusing only on physical disabilities.'

AKF Tanzania staff member

'In our school, most teachers and students are now aware of learners with special needs because we have units for those with intellectual impairments.'

Primary school teacher, Lindi



Education provision, services and support for learners with disabilities

Staff members and teachers alluded to different models and different ways in which learners with disabilities are learning in school. Some schools put learners with disabilities in special programmes, although eventually they re-join other students to continue studies together; some schools in each district have a special unit that caters especially to students with disabilities; in some schools children with disabilities are in regular classes with other learners, and also get home visits; and in other cases children are referred to a specialised school.

'Special education is provided in Tanzania but it is not common. For example, in our municipality we have only two units (schools) for special needs pupils. Some learners with learning disabilities are in regular class/schools but other learners with learning difficulties they are in segregated (special classroom/schools) with their trained teachers.'

Primary school teacher, Lindi

Country profiles | Tanzania

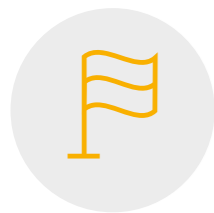
Staff explained that the government are currently learning from different models to test whether and how inclusive schooling can happen. However, it was felt that the government are deciding on categorising single-disability special units in regular schools at the expense of inclusion – for example opting to designate schools focusing solely on visual impairment which means learners are not mixed and the approach is not as inclusive.

The government also have ambitions to adapt the curriculum for those with disabilities, and this is currently under review. Support is provided through a mix of the state, private organisations and NGOs.

AKF staff mentioned that many of the solutions emerging from the human-centred design process in Tanzania are addressing a drive to be more inclusive.

‘Classroom materials are not accessible to all disabled learners. Students with vision impairments need assistance of technology, but teaching aids are not accessible to all. Even the classroom seating arrangement is not friendly to them. Many of our classrooms are overcrowded and the seating arrangement used is row and column style which is not a good seating arrangement according to their impairments.’

Secondary school teacher, Dar es Salaam



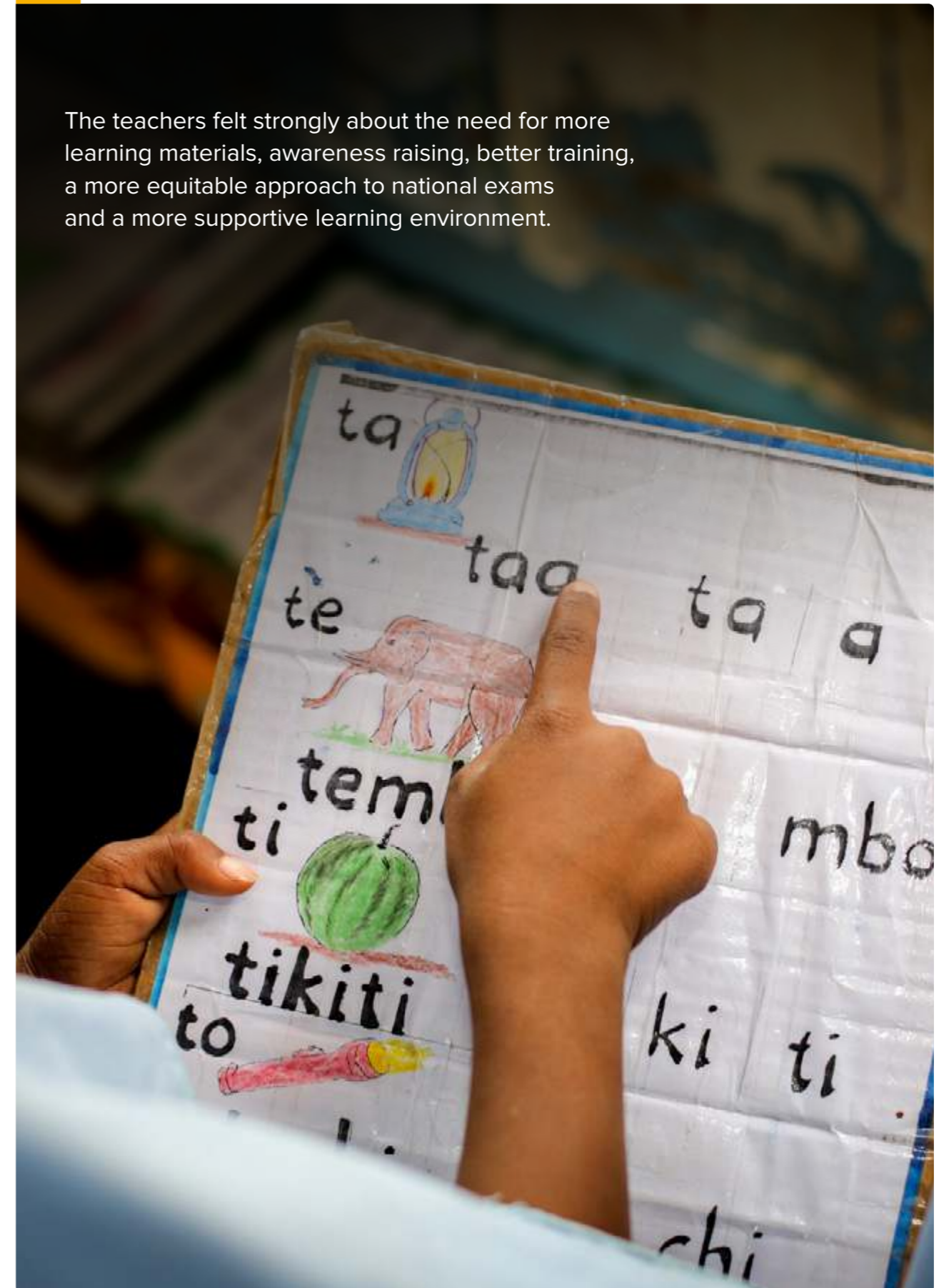
Challenges and priorities

The [2018-2021 National Strategy for Inclusive Education](#) acknowledges that children and youth with disabilities are not supported, reflected by the high repetition rate and large out-of-school population. The strategy cites additional barriers to establishing an inclusive education system as; a lack of funding and framework for teacher trainings, an overall shortage of special needs teachers, and a lack of data availability. Further, information on sub-categories of disability is highly limited both in government policy and strategy, as well as in the work of not-for-profits focused on disability.¹²

Focus group respondents noted that improving infrastructure should be a priority to ensure access for those with physical disabilities.

A core priority was first and foremost to ensure all children are enrolled and attending schools, even in villages where those with disabilities have traditionally not attended school. There was a strong emphasis on the need to build teacher knowledge of inclusion, how to accommodate learners with disabilities and a need for better equipment and capacity to assess learners with learning disabilities.

The teachers felt strongly about the need for more learning materials, awareness raising, better training, a more equitable approach to national exams and a more supportive learning environment.





Understanding Learning Differences Across Schools2030 Contexts

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