

Is the Right to Education Fulfilled in Tanzania?

Findings of the Right to Education Index 2015

Introduction

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 principles. The RTEI themes are governance, availability, acceptability, affordability and adaptability. The RTEI questionnaire was completed by an independent researcher and reviewed by two reviewers, government and Results Education Fund. The RTEI 2015 involved five countries which are Tanzania, Nigeria, Chile, Zimbabwe and Philippines. The RTEI findings show that Tanzania's average score for all five themes is 64.1 which is lower than the other four countries as shown in table 1. This brief presents the key challenges that need improvement in fulfilling the right to education.

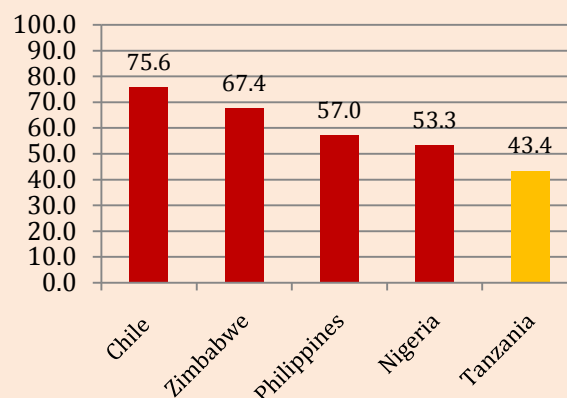
Table 1: RTEI Countries Score

| | Tanzania | Chile | Zimbabwe | Nigeria | Philippines |
|---------------|----------|-------|----------|---------|-------------|
| Scores | 64.1 | 73.1 | 70.5 | 76.1 | 81.5 |

Fact 1: Learning and Teaching Materials and Facilities

In the RTEI 2015, Tanzania scored 43 out of 100, implying the huge problem in the availability of learning and Teaching materials and facilities in schools. Availability of text books scored 27 indicating the acute shortage of text books in schools as four pupils use one textbooks instead of one text book per pupil. With regard to availability of classrooms, Tanzania scored only 13 out of 100. As shown in the report, the classroom pupil ratio for primary education stands at 72:1 instead of 40:1. This indicates the serious challenge of pupils' congestion in classrooms which affects learning and teaching and eventually learning outcomes. Tanzania's score in this theme is the lowest as compared to all five countries involved in the RTEI 2015 as presented in figure 1.

Figure 1: Tanzania and other countries



Fact 2: Girls Education

Despite the fact that gender parity index is 1:1 in Tanzania, Girls are faced by many challenges that affect their lifelong learning 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 the final stage. Pregnancy and early marriages are the major challenges that affect girls' completion of education. In 2012, about 7,138 girls were expelled from school due to pregnancy, and the dropout due to pregnancy accounted to 8.8 percent in 2014. The practice in Tanzania is that, any girl who conceives is normally expelled from school, and there is no re-entry programme after delivery which leads to the end of her education journey to higher levels. The RTEI report also highlights the challenge of early marriages which adversely affect girls' completion of their primary and secondary education. In 2010 about 36.9 percent of girls were married under the age of 18 (UNFPA report 2013). This is due to the fact that the marriage Act of 1971 allows female marriage after the age of 15. The weakness of the marriage act is seen as one of the reason accounting for early marriage and hence making more girls to be married after completing primary education or stop to joining secondary education and opt for marriage either.

Fact 3: Learning Environment

The 2015 RTEI, also assessed the extent to which children are protected from different child abuses, the use of corporal punishment in school and existence of legislative mechanisms and frameworks on child protection. In this area, Tanzania scored 33 points out of 100 which is also lower than those of the other four countries. This score is even lower than the average score of 59.8 for all five countries which means the learning environment is not conducive for children in Tanzania. Despite the existence of Child Act 2009 which intends to protect the child, Tanzania still faces several challenges that affect children's education. These include child labour which propels dropout rate and affects the learning process of children. The report of the US Department of Labour shows that in 2013 about 25.1% of children between age of 5 to 14 were employed in the labour market. The use of corporal punishment is another challenge to the children's learning process. The RTEI shows that Tanzania does not have any Act to prohibit corporal punishment for pupils. The Corporal Punishment Act of 1979 and the Government Guidelines of 2000 make the use of corporal punishment lawful for four strokes to be administered by a head teacher. However, the practice also indicates that the use of corporal punishment is used widely and in most cases teachers do administer corporal punishment.

Recommendations

- RTEI 2015 shows that many girls do not complete their final stage of any education level due to pregnancies and early marriages. It is therefore high time for government to introduce re entry program that would allow girls to go back to school after delivery. Lessons from neighboring countries such as Malawi and Uganda can be very useful in learning how the re-entry programme for girls' works. The Marriage Act, 1971 should also be reviewed to raise the age for female marriage from the current 15 to 18 years.
- Most schools lack learning and teaching materials and facilities which affects their learning outcomes. The government should invest heavily on school infrastructure, learning and teaching materials. This needs more money to be allocated for development expenditure in basic education. The budget for development project should be increased from the current average of 15% to 30% of the total education share of the budget.
- Good learning environment is crucial for effective learning for our children. We need to protect our children and stop using corporal punishment. It high time for the government to effectively implement the Child Act of 2009 to stop child abuse and child labour.
- 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.