ARE OUR CHILDREN LEARNING?

10 Key Facts On Education In Tanzania

This summary presents ten key facts on the status of education in Tanzania based on the findings of the 2015 Uwezo Annual Learning Assessment, with reference to previous years’ results for comparisons. Children aged 7-16 years were tested on their skills in literacy (Kiswahili and English) and numeracy. The tests were benchmarked to the national curriculum, Standard 2 level. The data on learning outcomes focus on the literacy and numeracy performance of children in Standard 3 and in Standard 7, or ages 9 and 13. In Standard 3, children would be age 9 if they progressed through school at the right pace and at this stage they should have mastered the Standard 2 skills tested during the Uwezo assessment. Standard 7, or age 13, marks the end of the primary cycle in Tanzania at which stage children should be fully competent in Standard 2 work. For the literacy tests, a child passed if s/he was able to fluently read a short story. For the numeracy test, a child passed if s/he was able to correctly answer all numerical tasks and operations up to multiplication level. The average pass rate refers to the weighted average of the pass rates on the three individual tests.
This report summarizes the findings from the 2015 Uwezo annual learning assessment and examined trends in learning outcomes over time. Many findings echo those of previous Uwezo reports. Most importantly, while the majority of children are enrolled in school, learning outcomes have remained low relative to expectations. The majority of children enrolled in Standard 3 have not achieved Standard 2 level literacy or numeracy skills. Hence, it takes children additional years of primary school to acquire this basic level of literacy and numeracy.

Beyond the headline stories there are several important findings. There appears to be strong evidence of good progress in Kiswahili literacy skills over the years. The share of Standard 3 pupils passing the Kiswahili test increased from 29% in 2011 to 56% in 2015. In addition there have been major improvements in the pupil to textbook ratio over the assessment rounds, from 30:1 in 2013, to 8:1 in 2014 and now 3:1 in 2015. Although these data capture the availability of textbooks for Standard 2 pupils in three specific subjects only, there is cause for celebration. Books are critical inputs into the learning process and these Uwezo data show that with concerted government effort in a particular area, progress can be achieved.

However, there is also evidence that rates of pupil attendance in primary school may be declining, especially in rural areas. In 2011, 77% of children age 7 were enrolled in primary school while in 2015 this number had dropped to 55%. Further analysis shows that the urban rates of enrollment have remained steady, the declines are almost exclusively in rural areas. While this may be a temporary phenomenon, it reminds us that we cannot be complacent about ensuring sustainable access to schooling and supporting age-appropriate progress through school over time. The data suggest a further note of caution. These declining enrolment rates could signal the fading of initial enthusiasm over free primary education that produced a massive surge in enrolment. The experience that followed - the struggles with under-resourced schools and classrooms, overstretched teachers and low quality learning outcomes - led to declining rates of enrolments. We must ensure that the extension of fee-free basic education does not suffer a similar fate of an initial boost in enrolment numbers followed by a steady erosion when commensurate investments are not made to improve the quality of schools and learning outcomes.

In addition, teacher presence and engagement is generally low. At the national level, official pupil-teacher ratios appear broadly adequate in government primary schools, at 44 pupils to one teacher. However, Uwezo found that teacher distribution across the country is problematic, and that a quarter of teachers were absent from school during the day of Uwezo assessment. This strongly suggests that pupil-teacher contact / classroom instruction time during the school day is low and children are not getting the instruction time they need in order to learn the basics.

Overall, the findings confirm that a policy emphasis on improving the quality of schooling is highly relevant in Tanzania. This is in accordance with international commitments, such as the Sustainable Development Goals, which merit careful monitoring and integration in government strategies. At the same time, it is important to emphasize that while raising the quality of schooling is a valid general priority for Tanzania there are also very large gaps in learning outcomes between different households and regions. Three out of four children (74%) in the best-performing district, Iringa Urban, on average passed the three tests compared to 15% of children in Sikonge, the worst performing district. This means that policy makers need to take regional differences into account, and, in doing so, target efforts and resources to ensure that disadvantaged children are not left behind.

How can all this be achieved? Lasting solutions cannot come from the government alone. Collaboration between the children, parents, teachers and officials who are most closely connected with our schools and system of education is absolutely essential. Civil society organizations and foreign donors also have a role to play to improve the quality of education in Tanzania.

At the same time, government interventions are clearly critical, in increasing resources to schools, reducing the stark regional and district inequalities, and creating a good environment for parents and other stakeholders to engage. The fifth phase government must be commended for its bold interventions in education - direct disbursement of capitation grants to schools, widespread efforts to make textbooks more available and fee-free education. They demonstrate recognition of the critical role education can play in moving the country forward. An even deeper commitment to using evidence to make policy decisions, and a targeted deployment of human, technical and financial resources to improve learning outcomes is needed to move towards our shared vision of a middle-income country in which all children receive quality education.
Literacy and numeracy skills among primary school children are still well below curriculum expectations across all grade levels.

Average pass rate for all three subjects at Standard 2 level in 2015:
- **STANDARD 7**: 72%
- **STANDARD 3**: 35%

**FACT 1**

- **STANDARD 3**: 56% (6 out of 10) able to read and do multiplication at Standard 2 level.
- **STANDARD 7**: 89% (9 out of 10) were able to read a story in Kiswahili.
- **STANDARD 3**: 13% (1 out of 10) could read an English story.
- **STANDARD 7**: 48% (5 out of 10) were able to do multiplication.
- **STANDARD 3**: 35% (3 out of 10) were able to do multiplication.
- **STANDARD 7**: 78% (8 out of 10) were able to do multiplication.
FACT 2

Overall learning outcomes have not changed over the period 2011 to 2015

In the five rounds of Uwezo, the average pass rate among children aged 9 to 13 (those in and out of school) has fluctuated in a narrow range.

2011 37%
2015 38%

Combined average pass rates in all three subjects (Kiswahili English, and Numeracy), by class:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Standard 3</th>
<th>Standard 7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>72%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

FACT 3

Rates of literacy in Kiswahili are consistently much higher than those in English and show a positive trend. The pass rates in the numeracy test show almost no change in the last three years.

Kiswahili pass rates over time

The pass rate in Kiswahili among Standard 7 pupils has increased;
The pass rate in Kiswahili among Standard 3 pupils has almost doubled.
A strong positive association was found between the mother’s highest level of schooling and the learning outcomes of her children.

Pupils in Standards 3 to 7 who could do Standard 2 work, combined average pass rates (Kiswahili, English, Numeracy);

MOTHERS HAVE SECONDARY EDUCATION OR HIGHER: 74%

MOTHERS HAVE NO FORMAL EDUCATION: 46%

Huge disparities persist in learning outcomes across different regions and districts.

Children aged 9 to 13 who could do Standard 2 work, combined average pass rates (Kiswahili, English, Numeracy);

REGION

BEST PERFORMING REGION
Dar es Salaam 64%

WORST PERFORMING REGION: Katavi 23%

DISTRICT

BEST PERFORMING DISTRICT
Iringa Urban 74%

WORST PERFORMING DISTRICT
Sikonge 15%

Gap is 59%
Among children aged 7 years in 2015

55% were enrolled in primary school (compared with 77% of children of the same age in 2011)

26% were attending pre-school

19% were not enrolled in any educational institution

The percentage of children not progressing through primary school in line with their age has been increasing over time

In 2015, 48% of children aged 11 years were one or more grades behind (i.e. enrolled in Standard 4 or below) compared with 33% of the same cohort in 2011

FACT 8

Nationwide, the availability of textbooks in core subjects (Kiswahili, English and mathematics) has improved significantly.
On average, nationally:

- **25%** of teachers were absent from their schools
- **29%** of pupils were absent from schools

**FACT 10**

Few schools provide lunch despite potential impact on children’s ability to learn

○ **24%** of schools have a lunch program.

There are significant regional disparities:

- **79%** KILIMANJARO
- **6%** KIGOMA
- **5%** GEITA