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TANZANIA

Women in Law & Development in Africa

POLICY BRIEF ADVOCATING FOR CHILDREN SOCIAL WELFARE AND PROTECTION





BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Across Africa, harmful practices and unsafe learning environments continue to undermine the realization of children's rights, particularly for girls. Practices such as Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) and child marriage persist despite regional commitments including the Maputo Protocol (2003), which obligates States to eliminate harmful practices and ensure access to education and protection for all children. These commitments are reinforced by the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child and the Agenda 2063 framework, which emphasize inclusive education and gender equality.

In Tanzania, the Government has demonstrated commitment to advancing children's rights and gender equality through national laws, policies, and strategies aligned with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 4 and 5. Notable progress includes:

- The Education Circular No. 2 of 2021, introducing re-entry pathways for adolescent mothers.
- The National Plan of Action to End Violence Against Women and Children (2017–2022), which established child protection and safe school frameworks.
- Ratification of international conventions such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and CEDAW, reinforcing obligations to protect girls from harmful practices.

However, persistent structural barriers including harmful socio-cultural norms, poverty, gender inequality, and gaps in policy implementation continue to limit the effectiveness of these efforts. As a result, many children, especially girls, remain at risk of exclusion, violence, and limited participation in education and decision-making processes.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Despite existing legal and policy frameworks, Tanzania continues to face significant challenges in ensuring that all children, particularly girls, are protected and able to participate meaningfully in education.

Child marriage remains prevalent, with approximately 29 percent of girls married before the age of 18 (UNICEF, 2022). This practice disproportionately affects girls from rural and low-income households and continues to be a leading cause of school dropouts and early pregnancy.

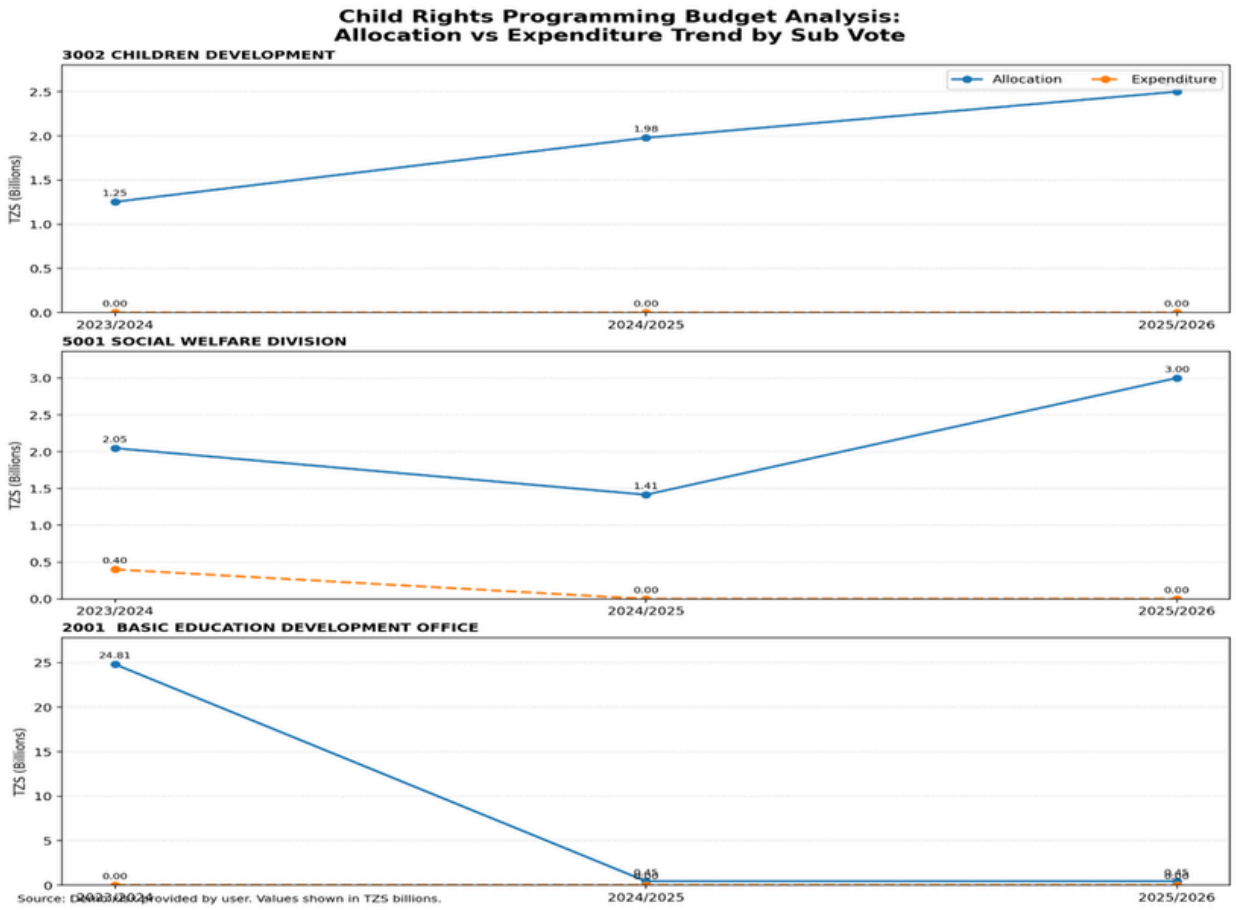
Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) persists in several regions, with a national prevalence of 10 percent among women aged 15–49, but rates exceeding 40 percent in regions such as Manyara, Dodoma, and Mara. The persistence of this practice reflects deeply entrenched cultural norms and gaps in enforcement mechanisms.

Although the Government has adopted a re-entry guideline to support adolescent mothers to return to school, implementation remains inconsistent. Many girls face stigma, discrimination, and limited institutional support, which restricts their ability to re-enroll and complete their education.

Unsafe school environments further undermine children's rights. The continued use of corporal punishment, along with cases of sexual violence and harassment, compromises the safety, dignity, and wellbeing of learners. Inadequate school infrastructure including lack of gender-responsive sanitation facilities and menstrual hygiene management contributes to absenteeism and reduced participation, particularly among girls.

These challenges are compounded by weak coordination among stakeholders, limited community awareness, and insufficient accountability mechanisms, resulting in a gap between policy commitments and actual practice.

FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE



Source: Budget books Vol IV; 23/24, 24/25 and 25/26

Government Commitments Vs Budget Execution

1. Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MoEST)

According to the education policy of 2014 (2023 Edition) the Government committed itself to insure safe and friendly environment in schools "3.8.1 The Government, in collaboration with stakeholders, will ensure the creation of safe and friendly environments in education and training institutions."

However, under the budget from the analysis above the following were observed:

- The drastic decrease in allocation of budget from 24.B to 450M (98% decrease allocation) highlights the impact to children education in service delivery especially in the implementation of re-entry guidelines and safe school intervention.
- 0% budget execution for 23/24 under Basic education SEQUIP programme, this highlights the challenges in the implementation of re-entry guidelines and safe school interventions.

1. Ministry of Community Development, Gender, Women and Special Groups

The analysis above considered the budget speeches from the Ministry of Community Development, Gender, Women and Special Groups for the fiscal years 2023/24, 2024/25, and 2025/26. However, only the 2023/24 budget speech mentioned allocations for child protection and development, without providing a detailed breakdown for specific areas of Violence against children (VAC) such as early marriage and FGM, as a result, it is difficult to hold the Ministry accountable for its commitments in these areas.

"Kwenye eneo la watoto, kiasi cha Shilingi Bilioni 3.6 kimetengwa kwa ajili ya kuwezesha utoaji wa huduma kwa watoto wanaoishi katika mazingira hatarishi na marekebisho ya tabia kwa watoto waliokinzana na sheria, kufuatilia utoaji wa huduma katika Makao ya Watoto, Nyumba Salama na Vituo vya Kulelea Watoto wadogo Mchana na Watoto Wachanga; Kukarabati Shule ya Maadilisho ya Irambo; Kukarabati Mahabusu za Watoto Upanga, Arusha, Mbeya, Moshi na Tanga; na Kukamilisha ujenzi wa

Mahabusu ya Watoto Mwanza" HOTUBA YA WAZIRI WA MAENDELEO YA JAMII, JINSIA, WANAWAKE NA MAKUNDI MAALUM, MHE. DKT. DOROTHY O. GWAJIMA (MB), KUHUSU MAKADIRIO YA MAPATO NA MATUMIZI YA FEDHA KWA MWAKA 2023/24.

The budget execution across 23/24, 24/25 and 25/26 in alignment with the government commitment presented as follows:

1. **Item 3002 – on Children Development and Survivor**

The analysis above, highlighted the increase in budget allocations across 23/24, 24/25 and 25/26, However the execution remains 0% which indicates deprioritization of issues around Violence against Children such as FGM and Early marriage.

2. **Item 5001 – on Social Welfare Division**

Considering the budget analysis above, the budget allocation remains uncertain from 2.5B to 1.41B to 3B this situation may weaken frontline social welfare services in handling cases of abuse, neglect, early marriage, and FGM ultimately affecting timely response and quality of support provided to children.

POLICY OPTIONS

1. Strengthen enforcement of existing legal and policy frameworks addressing FGM and child marriage through improved monitoring and accountability systems.
2. Scale up community-based interventions aimed at transforming harmful social norms and promoting positive practices that support children's rights.
3. Enhance implementation of the re-entry policy by establishing clear operational guidelines and support systems for adolescent mothers.
4. Promote safe and inclusive learning environments through the enforcement of child protection standards and elimination of violence in schools Including end Corporal Punishment.
5. Strengthen multi-sectoral coordination among government institutions, civil society, and development partners to ensure a harmonized response.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The Government should strengthen enforcement of laws prohibiting FGM and child marriage, with particular focus on high-prevalence regions, and ensure accountability for violations.
2. The Ministry of Education should institutionalize and operationalize safe school standards, including the progressive elimination of corporal punishment and strengthening of school-based safeguarding mechanisms.
3. The Government should allocate adequate resources to support effective implementation of the re-entry policy, including provision of psychosocial support and community sensitization to reduce stigma.
4. Investment in gender-responsive school infrastructure, including safe sanitation facilities and menstrual hygiene management, should be prioritized to improve retention and participation of girls.
5. Establish robust data collection and monitoring systems to track progress on child protection, school re-entry, and harmful practices, ensuring evidence-based policymaking.

CONCLUSION

The Government, in collaboration with civil society organizations, should strengthen community engagement and advocacy initiatives to address harmful social norms and promote children's participation in decision-making processes.

Sustained investment in education, protection, and gender equality is essential to break cycles of exclusion and ensure that every child especially girls, can realize their full potential.