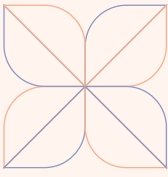




**EDUCATION  
CHAMPION  
NETWORK  
TANZANIA**

# How Re-Entry Agenda in Tanzania Impacts the Achievement of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 4 and 5





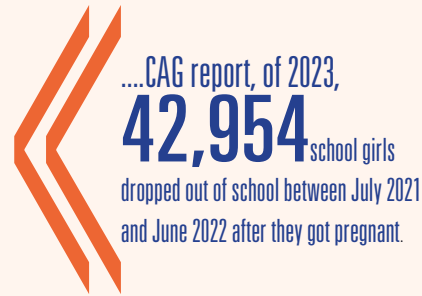
## Executive Summary

An Assessment of the Re-Entry Agenda regarding progress made in SDG 4 (Quality Education) and SDG5 (Gender Equality) by Tanzania since the establishment of SDGs (8 years ago) and the government's Voluntary National Review (VNR) submitted in 2019. It shows there is gross and net enrollment rates have increased for both girls and boys at primary and secondary school levels, Completion rates have increased by 8.1% for the past five years, and in terms of the transition from primary to secondary, pupils joining Form I have increased from 56% in 2015 to 77.2% in 2021<sup>1</sup>.

Besides the accomplishments, Tanzania's progress is slow regarding realising the SDG's principle of "No One Should Be Left Behind." The Tanzania 2023 VNR explains that several students drop out due to poverty, indiscipline, pregnancy, truancy, and death. Regarding pregnancy, the Controller and Auditor General (CAG) report, of 2023, 42,954 school girls dropped out of school between July 2021 and June 2022 after they got pregnant. This deprivation of education for numerous girls and boys means denying their basic right and lifelong learning opportunities.

Lately, a ruling by the Africa Committee on Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC) maintained that the dismissal of pregnant and married girls with no re-entry in Tanzania amounted to discrimination based on sex, marital status, and health status (pregnancy), furthermore, mandatory pregnancy testing also amounted to discrimination under the scope of Article 3 of the Charter. Henceforth, Tanzania was found in desecration of article 21 of the ACRWC. In addition, it was not in the best interests of a child to be expelled due to being pregnant or married, as it prevented their access to quality education, which is massively disadvantageous

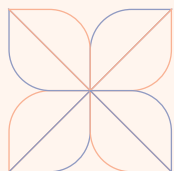
to their all-inclusive development and prospects prospects<sup>2</sup>

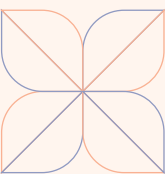


In sum, the main recommendations for strengthening the implementation of SDG 4 and SDG 5 for the Government of the United Republic of Tanzania, are to

- Review the Education (Expulsion and Exclusion of Pupils from School) Regulations, 2002 G.N. No. 295 of 2002, and undertake concrete steps to prevent the expulsion of pregnant and married girls from schools including by providing laws and policies on the same;
- Support the readmission of all girls who have been expelled due to pregnancy and wedlock through the provision of special support programs to compensate for the lost years, and the provision of clear guidance to school administrators that girls and boys who drop out of school are allowed to come back to school with no preconditions;
- Provision of sexual education for adolescent children and provide child-friendly sexual reproductive and health services, and extensive sensitization of teachers, health care providers, police, and other actors.

1 Basic Education Statistics in Tanzania, 2021  
2 Africa Committee on Rights and Welfare of the Child





## 2. Interplay between Education and Gender Equality

Genuine Progress Indicator (GPI) data shows that the education sector has nearly achieved gender parity at the primary school level. Nonetheless, girls still underperform in completing secondary education exams. Tanzania's adolescent school girls still encounter a substantial assortment of discrimination and abuse at school, as well as sexual harassment, routine pregnancy tests, and corporal punishment. Teachers have been known to demand sex in exchange for grades or school fees. In the 2021 World Bank report mentioned that more than 120,000 girls drop out of school annually in Tanzania, 6,500 of whom were due to pregnancy or having children.

Taken as a whole, Tanzania is perceived to have an unequal education system. Children from rural areas are more likely to be out of school than those from urban locations. Barely 60 percent of children from the poorest households, compared to nearly 94 percent from the wealthiest households, complete their primary schooling. Hardly 7 percent of children from the poorest households complete their "O" level secondary education while less than 1 percent of children from the poorest households conclude upper secondary compared to 60 percent and over 20 percent from the wealthiest households, respectively<sup>3</sup>.



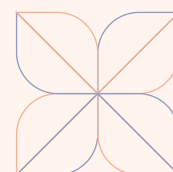
**120,000**

...girls drop out of school annually in Tanzania

**6500**

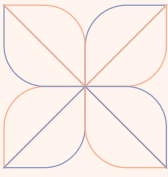
... of whom were due to pregnancy or having children

3 UN Gender Parity report





## 3. Why is re-entry policy important?



### ■ Background

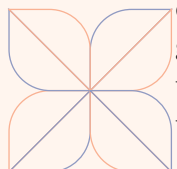
The expulsion of girls from educational institutions due to pregnancy has been prevalent in Tanzania since the early 1960s. As a matter of fact, in the 1960s and 70s, female government employees, especially female teachers, were expelled if they became pregnant out of wedlock and school girls were subjected to mandatory pregnancy testing and expelled if found pregnant. This practice contradicts Article 11 of the 1977 Constitution of the United Republic of Tanzania, which identifies the right to education as an essential right. However, the provision in Article 11 is not enforceable as the National Education Act of 1978, which aimed to promote nationwide education. While the Act comprises a non-discrimination clause it does not explicitly state pregnancy as a valid ground for expulsion. The Act grants powers to the Minister of Education to develop policies as they “see fit” to implement thus, The Education Act, 1978 establishes the legal framework for primary education, making it compulsory for every child from the age of seven, and parents/guardians to be responsible for ensuring regular attendance.

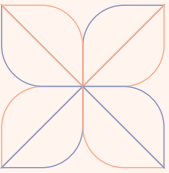
### ■ Girls education in Tanzania, policies and agreements

Tanzania has ratified several international conventions and charters related to education and the rights of girls. The country ratified the UNESCO Convention Against Discrimination in Education on January 3, 1979, and the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) on August 20, 1985. These conventions require governments to address female student dropout rates and organise programs for girls who left school prematurely. The African Charter on Human and People’s Rights, ratified on February 18, 1984, and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, ratified on March 16, 2003, also emphasise equal access to education and measures to support pregnant girls in continuing their education. Despite these legal commitments, an amendment to the National Education Act in 2002 permitted

the expulsion of students who got married or committed offences against morality, including pregnancy outside of wedlock. Consequently, a significant number of adolescent school girls are expelled annually. Efforts have been made to address the issue, such as the amendment of regulations in January, 2010 to allow re-entry for young teenage mothers, supported by UNICEF. However, challenges remain in the implementation of these policies, resulting in many pregnant school girls not returning to school after giving birth.

In 2016, the Education Act was further amended to prohibit any person from marrying a primary or secondary school girl or boy, criminalising such acts and aiming to protect against discrimination and early marriages. The government also assigned vocational training facilities and folk development colleges to integrate adolescent girls into the education system. Nevertheless, the issue of pregnant schoolgirls’ expulsion and their limited re-entry into the education system persists, highlighting the need for greater





implementation and enforcement of policies promoting girls' education and safeguarding their rights in Tanzania.

## ■ **Girls enrollment and completion rates: Realisation of SDG 4 and SDG 5**

A major factor in the lower completion rates among girls is their socialisation to be mothers and homemakers, thereby reducing the familial, societal and internal view that women's education is a priority. For this reason, when schools are far away from home, families face economic shocks and are more likely to pull girls rather than boys from school. Moreover, many girls are forced into early marriages or experience early pregnancy, preventing them from staying in school. Young mothers are now legally able to return to school but may face pregnancy discrimination, a lack of available facilities, and the economic need to drop out to care for their children. However, re-entry is not enshrined in any law of the country.

From 2019 to 2021, school dropout has been greater for lower secondary education than for upper secondary education and primary education. According to Basic Education Statistics, form 2 has the highest dropout rate (6.7%) and the major reason for dropout is truancy (93.6%) followed by pregnancy (8.1%)<sup>4</sup>.

Girls are also more likely to experience gender-based harassment and violence in schools, with almost a quarter of reported sexual violence occurring while traveling to or from school. Girls also often lack access to necessary facilities and products for menstrual hygiene management in

school, as 57% of schools had no hand washing facilities, 40% had no water supply and 60% did not have a place to dispose of sanitary pads<sup>5</sup>.

It is difficult to get the most recent estimates of teenage pregnancies, which are thought to have spiked amid COVID-19. Media reports indicate that 190 girls in the Pwani region became pregnant in 2020, with Kisarawe registering the highest number of pregnancies<sup>6</sup>. The difficulty in obtaining the most current official statistics on teenage pregnancies and dropouts has created room for mushrooming unofficial estimates, which differ from government statistics. For instance, one study claimed that 44% of adolescent girls in mainland Tanzania have either given birth or are pregnant by the time they turn 19<sup>7</sup>.

Accurate data on teenage pregnancy and the attendance/dropout by girls was difficult to obtain under the previous regime, because of the government's stand on teenage pregnancy. At the micro level, this is compounded by the shame and stigma the phenomenon evokes and the fact that many teenage pregnancies are never reported or recorded. Government statistics on secondary school drop-out only record truancy, death, and pregnancy as causes for drop-out. Truancy, which is likely to cover many different reasons, accounts for over 90 percent of all dropouts.

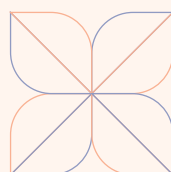
Teenage pregnancy, which often leads to early marriage, also has serious implications for girls. In mainland Tanzania, particularly for girls whose parents cannot afford private school, falling pregnant means the end of any chance of completing their basic education. The Education Regulations Act (Expulsion and Exclusion of Pupils from Schools No. 295) of 2002 states that

4 Basic Education Statistics in Tanzania, 2021

5 World bank Report 2022

6 FAWE report,2022

7 <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/factsheet/2020/03/31/tanzania-secondary-education-quality-improvement-program-sequip>





students can be expelled if they are married or commit a criminal offence including an offence against morality.

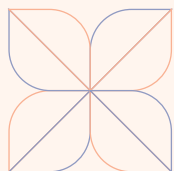
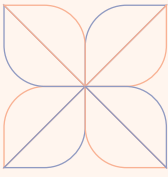
While teenage pregnancy is not mentioned explicitly, it is interpreted by education officials as an offence against morality, thus girls falling pregnant out of wedlock is an immoral conduct. The policy practice (though it has become more accommodating in the current regime) prevented young mothers from returning to formal government schooling after giving birth. Pregnant girls are often compelled to reveal the identity of the men who impregnated them, who would face up to 30 years in jail if convicted of the offence. Most girls therefore either refused to reveal the identity of the men who impregnated them, or chose to quietly leave school before the pregnancy was discovered.

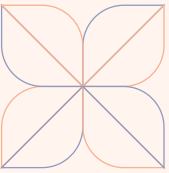
## ■ Existing Context

In November 2021, the Ministry of Education Science and Technology in Tanzania Mainland Issued an Education Circular Number 2 of 2021, which emphasised the government's commitment to promoting quality education for all. The Circular on Re-Entry Policy in the education system is a step towards the achievement of leaving no one behind. Again, in February 2022, the Government through the Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology issued a 'Guideline to reinstating students who dropped out of primary and secondary education for various reasons' which reflects the provisions of the 'Education Circular No. 02 of 2021'. Having the Re-Entry circular and guidelines in place provides hope for pregnant school girls and other dropouts to reclaim their right to education and harvest the benefits of schooling. Moreover, the government established a Drop-Out Early Warning System (DEWS) that was launched in early 2023 for implementation by school management teams to identify students who are vulnerable to dropping out of school and address the situation early to avoid dropout and enable them to continue with their education and complete their education cycle.

We strongly commend the government for this huge step. This is an important and appropriate decision in liberating a Tanzanian child as it provides an opportunity for school dropouts to return to school and complete their studies, but also increases the chances of this group becoming a potential workforce in the near future. However, we had an opportunity to review the provided guideline and identified several areas that will require further improvement and clarification to facilitate smooth implementation of Re-entry in the country. Few of the gaps include;

- I. There is no clarity provided by the government on the commitment to set a budget to support the implementation of the Re-entry guidelines and monitor its performance.
- II. The guideline is silent and not clear in economic support for the welfare of the mother and child. From family level to the society level where some of the girls face the challenge of going back to school with little assurance of their well-being. The Re-entry policy does not respond to the specific needs of these dropouts and teenage mothers.
- III. Among other several reasons, teen pregnancies impede girls from finishing school which contributes to perpetuating cycles of generational poverty, the guideline does not show the strategy on how root causes of dropouts will be addressed.
- IV. Absenteeism itself is a discipline issue that automatically amounts to expulsion or dropout. The guideline allows re-entry for students who dropped out due to absenteeism and on another hand prohibits re-entry for students who drop out from school due to disciplinary cases. This is contradictory and can lead to robbing dropouts their right to education.
- V. The re-entry guideline has not specified the responsibilities of other Ministries which in various ways should be involved





in the implementation of the guideline if intended results are to be achieved. It has only addressed the Ministry of Education, Science, And Technology, the President's Office, Regional Administration, And Local Government leaving behind the Ministry of Finance and planning, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Social Development, Gender and Special Groups as well as the Ministry of Constitution and Legal Affairs. The implementation of this guideline is cross-cutting and thus the exclusion of these ministries will dilute the division of responsibilities and ultimately affect the implementation of the guideline.

VI. The re-entry guideline does not show or explain the procedures for removing a girl

who becomes pregnant while at school. The Guideline only describes the responsibilities of teachers, parents, and students when returning to school, but it does not explain how she will leave school, and what are the preparations for removing her from school/ taking care of the pregnancy until the time of delivery. The silence of the Guideline in this aspect will lead to unequal decisions or interpretations in different areas.

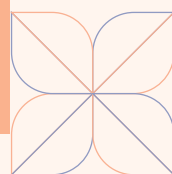
VII. The guideline lacks a provision that will allow students to take their national exams if they are known to be pregnant a few months before the exams and it is proven that they are in good health to be able to take the exams. Omitting such important details might lead to irrational suspension.

## Recommendations on Re-Entry Agenda for achievement of SDG 4 and SDG 5

- I. Instituting mechanisms for strengthening policy implementation and enshrining into law the legal path-way for returning young mothers to school, with supportive counselling, and resources to better ensure they stay in school while caring for their children.
- II. School teachers and administrators should receive training about preventing pregnancy discrimination and how to provide adequate support to young mothers.]It should also include providing training to teachers on challenging notions of gender inequality in the curriculum, and notions that girls are not capable of more technical professions.
- III. Investing in data on tackling the re-entry of pregnant school girls and teenage mothers. Dropout early warning systems should be strengthened, including additional funding available to the

students identified as most at-risk for books, transportation, food, etc. as well as peer support groups to ensure they stay in school.

- IV. Ensuring that all District Education Offices are the operational lead for implementing Re-Entry guidelines and Readmission Campaigns. The re-entry guideline for pregnant girls and the readmission campaign should adopt awareness creation and psycho-social support as the main strategies to facilitate the re-entry of pregnant girls and teenage mothers in public basic and secondary schools
- V. Working on measures aimed at addressing the removal of barriers to girls' education, including the free provision of sanitary towels and apprehending of sexual and gender violence in schools. Also ensuring the strengthening of school feeding programs and building of





more dormitories to ensure girls can stay in school.

- VI. Improving infrastructure such as latrines, water availability, doors on bathrooms, and menstrual hygiene products for school girls. This Could be achieved by expanding existing initiatives, such as the Tanzania Sustainable Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Program and the Secondary Education Quality Improvement Program VIII. The government should reconsider guidance on corporal punishment, especially when it is used excessively, as it can push students, especially girls, out of school because of fear and shame.
- VII. Address the gaps identified in re-entry guidelines to make them more effective and create wide awareness to all stakeholders involved as well as their roles and responsibilities.