



Overcrowded classrooms
in Tanzania mean
student/teacher
ratios up to

100:1



Our Presence in Tanzania



Country Overview

Tanzania became an independent nation in 1961 after many years of European colonization. While there has been relative political stability in the country compared to the rest of Sub-Saharan Africa, the country suffers from high levels of poverty, widespread disease, and a lack of development.

Almost 90 percent of Tanzanians live on less than two dollars a day and economic hardship is especially prevalent in rural areas, where about three quarters of the population live. The country also suffers from frequent epidemics of HIV and malaria, which are Tanzania's leading causes of death.

Educational Landscape

With a large portion of the population under the age of 14, improving the education system in Tanzania continues to be a challenging endeavor, as well as a major opportunity to alleviate poverty throughout the country.

The education system saw major reform under President Nyerere who made a push for universal primary education and increased enrollment dramatically during the 1980s. These changes resulted in some unexpected consequences,

Country Information

Population	52 million
Land area	885,800 km ²
Languages of instruction	Swahili & English
Launch of operations	2011
Room to Read offices	Dar-es-Salaam



including an extreme shortage of adequately trained teachers. By the 1990s, less than half of primary school teachers met the minimum qualifications of the Ministry of Education. The increased pressure on the primary school system also led to insufficient facilities and materials, and severe overcrowding with student to teacher ratios as high as 100:1 in some rural areas.

These challenges resulted in a significant drop in the transition rate from primary to secondary school. Today, even students who do reach secondary school often do not have the necessary skills to succeed. Literacy rates at the completion of primary school are 63 percent in Swahili and 30 percent in English. Despite these low rates, instruction switches to English at the beginning of secondary school, presenting an additional challenge for students who are not yet literate in the language.

A large gender gap also exists within education in Tanzania due to additional obstacles for girls. Along with cultural prejudices, female students struggle with inadequate sanitation systems in schools, pressures to marry and have children early, and gender-biased teaching methods. Girls accounted for 63 percent of all secondary school dropouts in 2010, and those who do not drop out often fall behind.

History and Results

We successfully launched our Literacy and Girls’ Education Programs in the Mvomero district in the province of Morogoro in 2012. We have since have since expanded both programs to the Bagamoyo and Kibaha districts within Pwani Province.

After just a few years of working in Tanzania, we are excited to have an opportunity to greatly scale our impact by partnering with the national government, USAID and RTI International to improve literacy education in the country. Through this partnership, Room to Read will help develop materials used for literacy education in Grades 1 – 4, potentially impacting an estimated 1.4 million Tanzanian primary school students over time.

2018 Tanzania Targets	
Literacy Program	
Schools supported	122
Children benefited	33,420
New local language titles	5
Reprinted local language titles	15
Girls’ Education Program	
New participants	400
Total participants	2,590



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