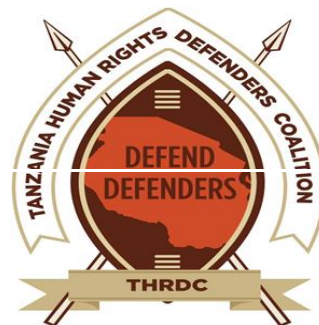


CHILDREN OF TANZANIA

CHILDREN'S VIEWS ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE UNIVERSAL PERIODIC REVIEW RECOMMENDATIONS



Coordinated by; Tanzania Child Rights Forum (TCRF), Legal and Human Rights Centre (LHRC), Save the Children Tanzania, Tanzania Human Rights Defenders Coalition (THRDC)

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1.INTRODUCTION

Tanzania's children are among the largest groups of people, accounting for about half of the total population of Tanzania. This number of children poses a challenge for the government to increase efforts in investing in children in various fields including education, health, inclusion, nutrition, environment, child protection and safety. We recognize the various steps being taken by the Government, civil society organizations and all stakeholders in child rights in Tanzania to improve the rights and welfare of children. Through these efforts, we children, we had the opportunity to express our views on the implementation of the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights.

We, the Children of Tanzania, have reviewed the recommendations made by various countries regarding the implementation of human rights in Tanzania and come up with opinions according to our perspective. This report provides our perspective on the efforts of the government and stakeholders in defending human rights, especially the rights of children in Tanzania, as well as looking at the existing challenges. We also provide our recommendations on how we see it to improve the implementation of children's rights in schools, homes, public places and in all institutions dealing with the rights and welfare of children.

2.PREPARATION OF OPINIONS

The preparation of these children's opinions was carried out in two children's sessions that included children from the National Children's Council and children in NGO programmes. The participation focused on groups of children including those with special needs, those living and working on the streets, children living in children's homes and members of the Tanzania Children Council. The collection of these opinions was done by the children themselves with the support of children's stakeholders from civil society organizations.

3.ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We, the children of Tanzania, express our gratitude to all stakeholders of the Civil Society Organizations that serve children for enabling us to fully participate in expressing our views on the implementation of the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights. We acknowledge the coordination of children's participation in the preparation of this report by the Tanzania Child Rights Forum, Save the Children Tanzania, Legal and Human Rights Centre, SOS Children's Villages, Plan International, Tanzania Human Rights Defenders Coalition, and Neema Resource Foundation. Our sincere gratitude to the guardians who accompanied us to attend the meetings to collect, compile and write this report. We also thank all the parents, guardians, communities and children who collaborated with us in the preparation of this report

4.CHILDREN'S OPINIONS ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE UNIVERSAL DECLARATION ON HUMAN RIGHTS.

This report focuses on some areas related to the development and well-being of children as defined in the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This report provides children's perspectives on the implementation of children's rights, the challenges they face and the expectations they have for improving the implementation and management of children's rights in Tanzania.

In this report, we have identified achievements, challenges and recommendations based on the recommendations made by United Nations member states as outlined in chapter eight recommendations arising from the 2021 country report. In this report, we provide our views on the following thematic areas: Elimination of violence against children, Inclusive education, return to school of children who have given birth, Changes to marriage laws, Elimination of degrading punishment in schools, Climate change and Elimination of female genital mutilation.

4.1 Continue efforts aimed at implementing the National Plan to End Violence Against Women and Children, including the elimination of gender-based violence.

We, the children of Tanzania, recognize the steps taken by the government to eradicate violence against children. The government has enacted and implemented laws to protect children as well as revitalizing the National Plan to Eliminate Violence Against Women and Children; provided education on violence against children to various groups, including children, and established and oversees protection systems in schools, including protection desks. Additionally, the government has established Children's Councils starting at the Village or *Mtaa* level, to ensure that children have the opportunity to participate and discuss issues that concern them; signed regional and international agreements on child protection, and celebrates national days, where this opportunity gives children space to express their opinions.

Despite these achievements, there are still many challenges. Children Councils are not doing their job because they lack participation, they do not have the tools, a large part of society still does not value children as being able to participate in decision-making bodies. Despite the existence of laws, the implementation of laws and regulations is limited, there is a low level of education about violence, especially in rural areas. Violence has been ongoing at home, in schools and other places. Some parents do not cooperate with children, for example in resolving cases of violence within the family.

We would like to advise the Government and stakeholders to increase financial and human resources to oversee the implementation of the law, especially in rural areas, and to increase efforts to provide education on violence against children. The Government should allocate funds for the establishment and development of children's councils. Education should be provided on the National Plan to End Violence Against Women and Children at the community level, in and out of school.

4.2 Ensure the meaningful participation of women, children, persons with disabilities, and local communities in climate change and disaster risk reduction systems.

We Children recognize the steps taken by the government to strengthen our participation in climate change processes and reduce the impacts of disasters. The government has allocated a budget to ensure that Children are involved in providing feedback on the impacts of climate change. The government has also taken steps to establish various clubs and groups for Children in schools to combat climate change. Children have been motivated and participated in tree planting and environmental conservation programs. Children have participated in contributing directly to discussions including the African Union Summit and COP30. In national sectoral plans, Children gave their opinions in the development of the health sector plan to adapt to climate change, and our opinions were incorporated into the plan.

Despite these achievements, challenges remain in ensuring children's participation in climate change processes and disaster risk reduction because children's participation is still limited in expressing opinions on the impacts of climate change. This is due to the lack of priority given to the importance of children in participating in expressing opinions on the impacts of climate change. Children do not receive feedback on the opinions they gave in various meetings held to prevent the impacts of climate change. There are budget constraints for participation in expressing opinions on climate change and providing education.

We, the Children, request the Tanzanian government and child rights stakeholders to give us priority in expressing our views on sustainable development in the face of climate change. Also, we, the Children, should be empowered to be prepared in the fight against climate change.

4.3 Increase efforts to prevent and investigate sexual violence against children and eradicate female genital mutilation

We, the Children of Tanzania, have had the opportunity to express our opinions on the steps taken by the government to protect children from sexual abuse and eradicate female genital mutilation.

The government has increased its efforts to educate children, teachers, parents and the community at large to eradicate violence against children. Laws to prevent violence against children have been

enacted along with the establishment of child protection and safety desks in schools. The observance of national and international days to combat violence against children provides children with an opportunity to voice their opinions against the violence that befalls us at school, in homes and even in other public places.

Despite the efforts being made, there are still challenges of violence in boarding schools between students and students and between teachers and students. Some parents/guardians do not pay attention to the protection and safety of the child, especially children with disabilities. Legal and psychological support services are not widespread in all areas, especially in rural areas. Also, sexual violence and female genital mutilation deprive girls in particular of achieving their dreams of education, employment and other things.

We recommend that the Government should strengthen laws and policies enforcement efforts, as well as allocating additional resources to the implementation of various programs against child abuse. Children should be given the opportunity to participate in discussions, various programs and in measuring the success of the implementation of these programs.

Violence cases are still not being processed promptly. There have been cases of child murder, child abduction, and child mutilation. Investigation for such cases has been delayed. Violence cases are resolved at the family level by agreement between families instead of through legal means, thus depriving victims of their rights. Children have access to online technologies and use networks, such as Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, and the internet, but they have not received adequate protection. The government should establish systems to manage the protection and safety of children online. It should ensure that every parent or guardian is educated on how to protect a child from the risks associated with access to online technologies. The government also should increase public education about the benefits and effects of using digital technologies. It should strengthen child protection systems and ensure that parents, guardians, children, and the entire community are aware of and responsible for child protection.

4.4 Continue to develop a National Strategy for Inclusive Education, especially for children with disabilities

We, the children of Tanzania, have given serious thought to the participation and inclusion of children with special needs in the country's education system. Many schools have children with disabilities studying alongside children without disabilities. We recognize the various efforts made by the government in educating our parents about the importance of all children receiving education regardless of their background. We recognize the efforts made by religious and community leaders and children's stakeholders in educating the community about the effects of deprivation of education on children. School buildings have been improved to enable children with disabilities to access the classrooms and other facilities. Some children with disabilities have been

given bicycles and those with hearing challenges have been given hearing aids and those who are blind have been given typewriters.

Despite the great efforts made by the government and children's stakeholders, children with special needs still continue to face many problems that prevent them from receiving their basic education like other children. We Children have witnessed a high percentage of children with special needs being bullied and isolated in schools, which causes them to be stigmatized and lead to their failure to attend their studies properly. Not all school infrastructure such as toilets, stairs to enter classrooms, and other social services are friendly to children with disabilities. Teachers with skills to teach children with special needs are few, so many of these children fail to receive education like other normal children.

Although the government has built many classrooms, many classrooms are still overcrowded, making it difficult for children to follow their studies properly, and children with special needs are the biggest victims. Many schools do not have special equipment for children with special needs, such as oil and hats for children with albinism, printing machines for children with low vision, bicycles to go to school for children with disabilities, as well as other equipment that children with special needs need. There is also a huge challenge of understanding where teachers cannot differentiate between students with special needs and those who need more support. Teachers teach at a fast pace without considering the different abilities of students.

We, the children of Tanzania, believe that the process of sending pregnant girls and those who have given birth back to school helps children get a proper education on time and avoid child marriages. The government's decision to send these children back to school has put many parents and guardians under pressure who have the misconception that if a child gets pregnant, they should drop out of school and get married. This process has also reduced the psychological challenges for children who felt worthless in society because they got pregnant while they were in school.

Despite these government efforts, there are several challenges. Children who are returned to school face stereotypes as they are not respected like other children. These children are humiliated, leading to a lack of self-confidence and a lack of ability to perform well in their studies.

We recommend that pregnant or postpartum girls return to school at least after a period of one year as they will have developed a stronger sense of self and have gained mental stability. Children who have been returned to school due to childbirth should be transferred to other schools different from their original schools, to maintain confidentiality, reduce discrimination, stigmatization or abuse and be provided with the same services as other children. We also request the government to review laws and policies to ensure that pregnant and postpartum girls return to the formal education system.

4.5 Amend the Marriage Act of 1971 to raise the marriageable age for girls to 18 years.

We Children recognize that the government has taken steps to protect against child marriage but has not yet made legal changes to ensure that children are not married off. Legalizing child marriage increases child pregnancies, breaks the dreams of children, especially girls, deprives girls of development opportunities such as continuing their education and also leads to health consequences such as deaths during childbirth for girls. The current law justifies girls getting marriage instead of education, especially when they face economic challenges in their families. Therefore, we advise the government to amend the law and focus on the implementation of the law that will prohibit child marriage and ensure that a child is married at the age of not less than 21 years.

4.6 Protecting children's rights by eliminating corporal punishment in schools.

We note that the government has put in place a system of punishment in schools to prevent harsh punishments given to students when they misbehave. The law says when a student misbehave should be punished with no more than four (4) spankings with the permission of the headmaster. We believe that some students and children have been disciplined and behaved well because of the punishments they are given including spanking.

Despite the existence of punishment procedures in schools, teachers have continued to give humiliating punishments such as excessive spanking, carrying stones, digging holes, doing push-ups, etc. These punishments cause students to hate the teacher and the subject he teaches. The result is that the student loses interest in studying the subject and ultimately fails, being afraid of being given severe punishment causes students to be psychologically affected and causes students to miss classes and drop out of school. Severe punishments in schools have caused health effects, including permanent impaired vision, disability and even deaths. Severe punishment causes students to be arrogant, naughty and creates a resistance to punishment.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

We recommend that corporal punishment of children be eliminated from schools and instead there should be new systems of discipline in schools as it is in some developed countries. China, the United Arab Emirates, Russia and the United States are some of these countries where corporal punishments have been eliminated. There should be monitoring of the established law on punishment in schools. Once found that a certain teacher did not follow the law on punishment in schools, appropriate action should be taken. We also recommend that teaching materials and

equipment be increased and improved because this will help children's understanding in a faster way and reduce harsh punishment in schools.