

Fifty Years of Adult Literacy Education in Tanzania: Lessons for Sustaining a Middle-Income Economy

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Abstract

As Tanzania celebrates fifty years of adult education, the country has experienced a changing landscape and major transformations in adult literacy, with greater priority being given to looking at adult learners' roles in the global marketplace. This paper examines various socio-economic changes that have faced youth and adult literacy education since 1970s and how policies and practices affecting adult literacy have evolved over time. Twenty-three archival documents were analyzed from 1960s to the present. The researchers conducted in-depth open-ended interviews as well as observations and archival document analysis on the transformation and prospects of adult literacy in Tanzania. The study highlights the need for young people and adults to constantly update their literacy skills so that they are able to function effectively in society and serve as important stakeholders to ensure that the country's development agenda of strengthening a middle income economy is sustainable. This requires investing more financial and non-financial resources and increasing political awareness of and commitment to literacy education to ensure that all young people and adults achieve relevant and proficiency levels in both basic and functional literacy skills.

Keywords: *Adult education, adult literacy, adult and non-formal education, sustainable development goals*

Introduction

As the world is becoming increasingly interconnected with intensified socio-economic globalization, the acquisition and usage of literacy skills are crucial for helping male and female learners adapt to and transform the environment in which they live (UNESCO, 2016; World Bank, 2003; Wagner & Kozma, 2005). The advent of the global economy and rapidly-changing society provides a broad range of opportunities for Tanzanians, but they need to acquire the necessary competencies to take advantage of them, which have also led to the increased mobility of capital, resources and people (UNESCO, 2015; URT, 1999).

Since its independence in the 1960s, the provision of adult education in Tanzania, in particular the eradication of illiteracy and acquisition and usage of literacy skills, was aimed at advancing the national development agenda, especially rural agricultural development (Bwatwa et al.,

1989). The need for literacy proficiency is critical if Tanzania is to meet its development goal of sustaining middle-income status and creating an inclusive sustainable future (URT, 2014; UNESCO, 2016). Due to global forces, there is an urgent need to strengthen literacy programmes that will equip young people and adults with skills, knowledge, so that the community is well-served and what is essential for inclusive and sustainable socio-economic development is provided (UNESCO, 1998). In this regard, Tanzania needs to strengthen critical national goals and priorities in matters relating to adult education, particularly the acquisition and application of literacy skills. The proper utilization of literacy skills will enable youth and adult learners to move toward equitable and inclusive sustainable development through increasing abilities to meet their needs (UNESCO, 2015; URT, 2014a).

The evolution of the literacy concept

The concept and definition of literacy have evolved over five decades. According to UNESCO (1958), literacy was defined as the ability to read and write short and simple statements with understanding concerning one's everyday life. A person is functionally literate when he/she can engage in all the activities for which literacy is required for the effective functioning of her/his community, including reading, writing and doing arithmetic for his/her community's sustainable development (UNESCO, 1978). The current report by UNESCO (2005) on Education for All (EFA) Strategic Review and UNESCO's Strategy for the 2005-2015 went further to re-define literacy as the ability to identify, understand, interpret, create, communicate and compute using printed and written materials associated with different contexts. This adds up a continuum of learning across different proficiency levels (UNESCO, 2016).

In the Tanzanian context, for example, literacy has been defined as the acquisition of basic skills such as Reading, Writing and Arithmetic (3Rs) that can take place in and outside the classroom. This also involves the effective application of literacy and basic skills to one's daily socio-economic development (URT, 2014a). Therefore, given the pace of globalization and the multitude of social changes that have faced Tanzania since the 1970s, this paper examines the state of youth and adult literacy education today. More specifically the paper attempts to answer

the following questions:

- i) How have the policies and practices of literacy education evolved over fifty years after its proclamation?
- ii) How effective are current policies demonstrated in the case of two centres of adult learners in Morogoro and Dar es Salaam, Tanzania?

Methodology

The authors reviewed and analyzed archival materials relating to youth and adult literacy education in Tanzania. Twenty-three archival documents were analyzed, which included local and national official records, such as letters, agendas, administrative documents, routine records, university reports and policies that portray the current literacy education situation in Tanzania. These documents dating from 1950s to 2020 were obtained from the national library, Institute of Adult Education, Ministry of Education, Science and Technology and the University of Dar es Salaam.

The authors also conducted seven in-depth and open-ended interviews with individuals lasting 60 -90 minutes, including one university professor from the University of Dar es Salaam, one retired Institute of Adult Education official, two literacy facilitators, two literacy learners and one literacy expert from the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology who oversees literacy education policies, regulations and rules. The participants were purposively selected and agreed to be interviewed during the period of February to December, 2019. All the participants were long-term employees with more than 15 years of experience working in the adult and non-formal education sub- sector in Tanzania.

The study also involved the systematic noting and recording of in and out-of class actions and interactions in the natural setting of learners. The use of observation added a missing dimension to the study and helped to ensure its validity by increasing the understanding of both the context and phenomena and providing some insights into literacy teaching and learning environment that would be difficult to uncover in any other way. The observation paid closer attention to the level

of classroom size, learners' sexes, attendance, T&L facilities, andragogical process, including learning duration, ICT application as well as facilitator-learners ration. This took place 2 weeks after conducting the interviews.

Data analysis

Through discursive analysis of open-ended questions coded by similar responses, the researchers were able to find out the current situation of fifty years of youth and adult literacy education in Tanzania. The interviews, archival analysis and observation were oriented toward finding patterns and themes that were common to literacy facilitators, experts and learners. According to Helman (2001), the methodological approach to data collection through observing learners produces descriptive ethnographic data that explains what people actually do, while the interview data explains what people say they believe.

First, the interview data were transcribed, read through and informal notes were made regarding the themes that emerged. Helman emphasizes that understanding what people believe can only come when one spends enough time observing what people do. The study analyzed issues of youth and adult literacy education to respondents with supporting statements and quotations to make points and act as supporting evidence, drawn from the most to the least frequently mentioned themes. As observers, we focused on a wide variety of observational data to relate to what was being studied while keeping records and writing field notes as soon as possible after my observations. Specifically, we took very brief notes in short phrases during classes to indicate the learners' levels of teaching and learning process. In addition, we explored the proposition that "the fifty years of adult literacy education that equip people to apply and utilize skills will lead to people's ability to solve societal problems and meet developmental challenges" was explored by examining a large set of documents and socio-economic policies beginning in the 1960s and by tracing aspects of history relating to adult literacy and their role in socio-economic empowerment and development.

These archival sources were open to the general public and we selected relevant ones after we read and reviewed their contents. The analysis focused on events, and the time and contexts in which they occurred. We used the quotes of various officials in Tanzania found on official government websites, local and international media and other archival documents to provide supporting information to link archival sources and other data to the reality on the ground.

Finally, the researchers analyzed divergent findings, through deliberating on opposing ideas and agreeing on the meaning of the findings. As a result of rigorous and analytical analysis of the data, researchers developed codes, categories and themes that demonstrate the study findings that are discussed in the following section:

Findings

The headings below derive from categories that resulted in the analysis of the data. The findings are presented according to the following research question, “What is the state of literacy education today, after fifty years and attendant population toward sustaining the middle income economy and strive to become an industrial country by 2025. The following findings are reported in aggregate form:

Historical trends and status

Since its independence in 1961 and after the Arusha Declaration in 1967, adult education in Tanzania became a major cornerstone of national development. As a result, many Tanzanians sought to acquire basic literacy skills, such as, reading, writing and numeracy, to increase their participation in social, political and economic activities that were vital for national development (Bwatwa, et al., 1989; Hall, 1971). Adult education, particularly literacy, was also stressed in many political campaigns and given high priority by the first political ruling party, Tanzania National Union (TANU), specifically by Mwalimu Julius K. Nyerere, the first President of Tanzania.

In the fifty years of Tanzania’s adult education, the country has experienced massive socio-

economic, political and cultural changes, which has presented both opportunities and challenges as regards the literacy skills needed for societal well-being and poverty reduction (URT, 2014b; URT, 2020a). As a developing country, Tanzania has been facing many challenges when it comes to providing its people with quality adult educational services, in particular literacy education (URT, 2014; Nyerere, 1967; Rodney, 1982; Bever, 1996).

Upon successfully attaining its independence in 1961, Tanzania like the rest of African countries was saddled with negative political and socio-economic conditions, such as illiteracy and poverty (Rodney, 1982; Fanon, 1961; Collins, 1971). For example, as a result of the colonial mindset that was fearful of widespread access to education by the local population, formal education was restricted to the primary level and, even at that, less than 50% of Tanzanian children were able to go to school (Buchert, 1994; Cameroon & Doddy, 1970). Furthermore, despite their obvious majority, less than 1% of the Tanzanian population directly participated in the limited democratic politics and socio-economic decisions of the colonial era (Meredith, 2005), while they experienced discrimination in receiving funds to support educational services.

In 1961, Tanzania was the least developed country among the three British East African colonies of Tanzania, Kenya and Uganda, as all higher education levels were provided outside the country, mainly Makerere University in Uganda, Royal Technical College in Kenya and other universities in Britain (Nyerere, 1967). This resulted in a national education gap, since the German colonial era and 41 years of Britain's flawed educational practices (which led to inequality and inequity) did not enable people to receive an education and become capable of contributing to an independent country in 1961. It is worth pointing out that at independence; only 15% of the Tanzanian population could read, write and count simple arithmetic (see Table 1 below). In addition, the country had only two African engineers, twelve doctors and about thirty arts graduates (Nyerere, 1967), serving a population of approximately twelve million people.

The total population of the United Republic of Tanzania has grown significantly during the past fifty years, from approximately twelve million in 1967 to over fifty million by 2020 (URT, 2020). During this fifty years' time, the delivering a literacy education has gone hand-in-hand with the need for an increased population, particularly during 1980s due to national literacy mass

campaigns, government commitment as well as other stimulating demands of providing adult and non-formal educational services, particularly literacy education in Tanzania (UNESCO, 2016a).

Table 1: *Trends and Status of Adult Literacy Education in Tanzania (1960s-2013)*

Year	Male	Female	Average	Trend	Remarks
1961	20%	10%	15%	Data during independence	▲ Adult education, particularly literacy was a major agenda of the national development plans. Therefore, the Government's commitment, political will and dedication to invest in adult and non-formal education, particularly on youth and adult literacy classes and mass education campaigns were given high priority by the first president of Tanzania-Mwalimu Nyerere.
1970	22%	18%	20%	Upward trend	
1975	66%	56%	61%	Upward trend	
1977	79%	67%	73%	Upward trend	
1981	85%	73%	79%	Upward trend	
1983	90%	79%	85%	Upward trend	
1986	92.9%	88%	90.4%	Upward trend	
1992	87%	81%	84%	Downward trend	▼ Decline in government support, particularly, its commitment and political will to ensure availability of enough resources to raise awareness and implement adult literacy education.
1995	86.9 %	81.5 %	84%	Constant	
2000	84%	67%	76%	Downward trend	
2002	81%	76%	79%	Upward trend	
2013	69%	70%	70%	Constant	

Source: URT Census, 2012; URT Census, 2002; World Education Forum; UNESCO, 2016

NB: This data is self-reported and normally come from census as the country has not carried out literacy assessment since 1980s. Therefore, the data on youth and adult illiteracy level might be unreliable.

In response to these opportunities and challenges, Tanzania has made various efforts to promote adult education, particularly literacy. Some of these programmes and campaigns to equip Tanzanians with basic literacy and other skills are shown in Table 2 and Table 3.

Table 2: *Adult Literacy Programmes 1960s-2020*

Name of programme	Year of launch	Target
Basic literacy	1961	A national campaign to promote basic literacy skills, particularly the 3Rs.
Functional literacy	1970	Integration and application of acquired literacy skills with practical and relevant life experience of learners.

Post-literacy	1977	Strengthen the acquisition and application of literacy skills through various means, including rural libraries, newspapers, radio programmes, films and books.
Post-literacy	1977	Strengthen the acquisition and application of literacy skills through various means, including rural libraries, newspapers, radio programmes, films and books.
Integrated Community-Based Adult Education (ICBAE)	1993	ICBAE was introduced as an outcome of the national census of 1992 which reported an increase in youth and adult illiteracy rates. It was aimed at promoting community-based learning and participatory approaches in basic and post-literacy classes for female and male young people and adults in Tanzania, with vocational and life skills being linked to the broader issue of societal problem-solving and socio-economic development. This resulted into other programmes, including Yes I Can and Mambo Elimu.
Integrated Programme for Out-of-School Youths (IPOSA).	2020	IPOSA supports the educational needs of out-of-school female and male youths in the eight regions of Dar es Salaam, Tabora, Dodoma, Kigoma, Njombe, Iringa, Mbeya and Songwe. To date, the programme benefited more than 4,000 young women, specifically those who had never been in school or dropped out at primary education level.

Table 3: *National Adult Literacy and Mass Education Campaigns 1960s-2020*

The choice is yours	1968	A national campaign to educate and sensitize voters on the importance of participating fully in the first post-independence electoral process.
Adult literacy education	1970	A national campaign aimed at reducing male and female ignorance through the promotion of reading, writing and arithmetic.
Glorious time	1971	A national campaign aimed at ascertaining the status and impact of development interventions ten years after independence, particularly in terms of fighting the three great national enemies: poverty, disease and ignorance.
Man is health	1974	A mass media campaign aimed at increasing citizens' awareness of a healthier life style and prevention of diseases while ensuring the constant upgrading of people's literacy skills.
Political agriculture	1974	A national campaign to modernize agricultural for socio-economic development.
Food is life	1975	A national campaign to promote a healthier lifestyle and prevent diseases and malnutrition through the use of nutritious food and a balanced diet. The campaign also focused on increasing food production and security.
Forest is wealth	1980	A national campaign aimed at promoting awareness of the importance of conserving forests to protect the country from the threat of desertification.
Voters education	1995	A national campaign to sensitize and educate voters on the need and importance of participating fully in the first multiparty electoral process in the country.
HIV/AIDS prevention	2001	A national campaign to strengthen the fight against HIV/AIDS epidemic.

Source: Institute of Adult Education, 2011

Policies and practices

Many participants expressed their views as they saw the transformation of the adult, particularly literacy education after fifty years and how the country enjoyed an improved literacy educational level. For example, one professor pointed out that “during our time in 1970s when the Institute of Adult Education was established, the focus was more on addressing the socio-economical needs and challenges of the time. Most of the adult educational research and publications during that time focused greatly on the country’s ideological agenda of socialism and education for self-reliance”.

Faced with many post-independence challenges like the rest of African counties, Tanzania recognized that poverty, ignorance and disease were the main challenges to development (Nyerere, 1967). Immediate post-independence development efforts focused on addressing these socio-economic challenges through formulating and implementing policies and strategies aimed at revitalizing the education system in the country. These reforms included the educational reform act of 1962 to regulate the provision of and access to education in the country by revising the curriculum and examination processes as well as promoting Kiswahili as the national language and medium of instruction in primary schools (Mkude & Cooksey, 2003). At the same time, this reform revoked and replaced the 1927 British colonial education ordinance that provided educational services on the basis of racial and socio-economic discrimination, which eventually result into an increased number of illiterate youth and adults in the country.

To further address the problem of illiteracy and socio-economic underdevelopment, one retired female literacy expert reported that “Tanzania introduced the Ujamaa policy, a socialist socio-economic programme that was aimed at bringing equality to all Tanzanians. This post-colonial reform continued with the introduction of the “Education for Self-Reliance” (ESR) policy in 1967 to reform the curriculum and integrate educational theory with practical skills as socio-economic empowerment and development tools.” The ESR policy guided the enactment of other education acts, including the Institute of Education Act No.13 of 1975, with assigned responsibilities and tasks of becoming a centre for learning, research and training in Adult and

Non-Formal Education (IAE, 2011; Hyden, 1980).

One retired female policy maker reported the significant impacts of these educational reforms, including the revision of the curriculum to meet national needs, the expansion of teacher training programmes as well as formalization of on-going assessment at secondary and teacher education levels. Most importantly, “the government put more emphasis on adult education and gave financial support to literacy and adult education programmes.....” The retired policy expert went on stressing.

The Tanzania Development Vision 2025 aims to improve the quality of life for Tanzanians, specifically, among others, through the eradication of illiteracy. The vision emphasizes the importance of education “to promote the acquisition and appropriate use of literacy, social, scientific, vocational, technological, professional and other forms of knowledge, skills and understanding for the development and improvement of man and society”. This vision statement seeks to motivate Tanzanians to be equipped and able to function well in the global economy while resolving daily challenges. The vision also has the following goals:

- Provide self-reliance education that will change people's mind-set and give them the confidence to effectively determine and own the development agenda with the primary objective of satisfying the basic needs of all Tanzanians.
- Be a nation with a rich diversity of people who show a positive attitude to development through their commitment to hard work, professionalism, entrepreneurship, creativity and innovation.
- Be a nation with a high quality of education at all levels that will produce the needed quantity and quality of educated people who are sufficiently equipped with the knowledge and skills to resolve society's problems and meet the challenges of development (URT, 1999).

Likewise, the Tanzania Education and Training Policy of 2014 requires the country to promote quality formal and informal education, promote equality and access to basic education, and advance the use of science and technology in teaching and learning while putting more emphasis on special groups of people such as girls and children with disabilities. This is almost impossible

without investing in literacy education.

The importance of education, particularly literacy education, for the country's sustainable and inclusive socio-economic development, is pointed out in the new National Five-Year Development Plan 2016/17-2020/21, particularly with regard to people's quality of life and well-being, aimed at improving literacy and numeracy skills and promoting citizens' ownership of and participation in policies and decision making (URT, 2016).

In addition, the Tanzania Education Sector Development Programme (ESDP) of 2016-2021 highlights the urgent need to improve the quality of literacy and numeracy data in the country through proper planning and implementation of the programmes concerning the literacy needs of young people and adults in Tanzania. These strategic efforts are captured by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology's (MoEST) vision statement that aims to have a competitive and knowledgeable nation by 2025. It also aims to facilitate and develop human capital capable of creating responsible wealth and socio-economic development through designing, implementing and monitoring higher and technical education, research and consultancy, and science and technology in Tanzania. At the international level, the need to improve and strengthen the learning and life skills of young people and adults as well as improving the literacy programmes has been emphasized. These policies and strategies stress equitable access to quality education at all levels, particularly by women, and support socio-economic growth (URT, 2016). The importance of acquiring and using literacy skills has also been stressed in the United Nations Literacy Decade (UN, 2002) and the Sustainable Development Goals, 2030, in which a commitment was made to enable a substantial proportion of female and male young people and adults to be literate and numerate by 2030. These milestones will not be reached if the need for literacy education is not recognized and supported in the country.

Literacy access and participation

Although Tanzania is still striving to improve access to adult education and the participation of young people and adults, particularly women, in adult education programmes, specifically literacy education, to achieve a literacy level of at least 80%, as stipulated by the National

Strategy for Growth and Reduction of Poverty 2010-2015 (NSGRP), this is far from being achieved. Tanzania continues to stress the importance of literacy education in order to promote equitable and inclusive sustainable development and be able to navigate the global digital economy (URT, 2007). The data revealed that until now the Tanzanian government has had clear and consistent national policy for literacy education, for that matter has it produced strategies or organized campaigns for promoting literacy education in the country (URT, 2020).

The majority of respondents informed the researchers that literacy education is at a critical moment of change as the result of national development agenda forces and technology. One female learner explained that the development agenda, coupled with technological force require adult education to be the centre for knowledge and skills creation while sharing and carrying national development agenda of inclusive socioeconomic development.” Another response was given by one male literacy expert who explained that “The adult education carries clear direction for the country’s developmental needs.” In this rapidly shrinking world of science and technology, our adult education fails to provide adequate skills and knowledge to keep pace with the paradigm shift and increasingly industrialization drive and national development agenda of becoming and sustaining a middle income country by 2025.” Noted one professor. Similar feedback was received from female literacy facilitator who explained that “a market-oriented curriculum does not reflect the socio-economic challenges necessary to build place-based education. He added that “...our literacy education in the late sixties and seventies was not education for a job but education to be functioning and positively contributing members of the community and national at large.”

Learning in two youth and adult centres

The study benefited from observing two youth and adult literacy learning centres in Dar es Salaam and Dodoma regions in Tanzania where 158 female and 98 male learners were enrolled. All learners indicated that their desire to grasp the 3Rs and be able to apply literacy skills in their daily socio-economic activities was their main reason for joining the learning programme.

Demographic information

Most of the learners were aged 18-35 (85%). Around 54% of the surveyed learners reported being married and living with their spouse, while 17% of them reported being married before the age of 18. The findings also revealed that 25% reported being single and 21% divorced. This can be attributed to the fact that in many societies, including Tanzania, girls and women are facing the challenge of gender-based violence and exploitation that hinders their access to and participation in decision making, and due to the division of labour and the limited resources allocated to education, they are unable to fulfill their potential and continue to remain illiterate.

Teaching and learning facilities

The heads of primary schools, where literacy centres are located, reported that no specific financial resources are allocated for implementation of the programme, and so all three facilitators are volunteers and just given an honorarium when the budget allows. The facilitators from Morogoro and Dodoma reported that learners attend classes three and four times a week respectively, lasting two hours.

Teaching and learning materials

The teaching and learning materials used in the centres are modules that have been produced using the standard one material for teaching and learning the 3Rs. The facilitators reported that the classroom has no technological facilities to be used for teaching and learning but only the traditional chalk and blackboard. The duration of the learning circle is approximately three to four months in Morogoro and Dodoma regions, respectively.

Availability of facilitators

To maintain and ensure quality adult education depends on having an adequate number of qualified and motivated facilitators. According to the heads of schools, the centres have only 3

volunteer facilitators but none has a university degree. Two of the facilitators have an ordinary diploma in adult and continuing education and the other three are grade ‘A’ teachers. Many studies indicate that well-trained and motivated teachers/facilitators are the single most powerful factor in determining equity, access and quality (Mkumbo, 2012). This suggests that continuing efforts need to be made to expand adult education, ensure its quality and significantly increase the number of qualified facilitators to cater for the growing demand for literacy programmes in the country.

Challenges

Among the challenges that were discovered from observing two adult literacy centres was the low rate of participation in literacy learning programmes, due to people's various priorities concerning their family and community that hindered their attendance. During the discussion with learners, it was noted that learners who are enrolled missed classes frequently, especially during the harvest period. Therefore, there is a need to develop a flexible schedule and cost-effective technology-based literacy education programmes to attract, support and retain more learners in the adult education programme.

In addition, the lack of a proper curriculum, including the non-existence of up-to-date and relevant teaching and learning (T&L) materials has been reported to hamper the learning process, resulting in poor learning outcomes. For example, it was reported that standard one T&L materials were used instead of those that were relevant to young and adult learners. In addition, it was noted that there have been no follow-up classes since the establishment of the programme in July 2016 and March 2018 in Morogoro and Dodoma regions, respectively. The higher facilitator-student ratio has also been reported to affect the learning process and outcomes. One female facilitator noted that “currently, we have the biggest learner-facilitator ratio” and “teaching large literacy classes prevents learners from learning effectively as a result of the heavy workload and the limited time for evaluating their works.”

Conclusions

As we move forward towards seeking to meet the sustainable development goals (SDGs-2030)

and the country's agenda of sustaining middle-income status, it is clear that the Tanzanian Adult and Non-formal education system requires producing responsible and productive planetary citizens, with meaningful competencies, attitude and values. The success of adult education, particularly the literacy educational enterprise calls for increased commitment and political will, resource mobilization, qualified facilitators to re-design and implement appropriate policies and relevant practices for literacy education and lifelong learning. Fifty years of adult literacy education portrays several challenges and opportunities and raise new education demands with respect to the provision of the quality adult literacy learning services as a basic human right and the foundation for sustainable development.

Similar to other studies that have identified achievements, challenges and prospects of literacy education in Africa (UNESCO, 2016a; URT, 2014a) where many developing countries are faced with dynamics and challenges in relation quality, funding, relevance as well as access to youth and adult literacy education, responding to the national development needs has been a major challenge. Given the importance of adult education, specifically quality literacy services as the corner stone towards human development, economic development, peace and security, especially in this rapidly changing societies and technologically advanced global economy, this study highlight the need to implement youth and adult education measures that meet basic learning needs, and to society's goal of a citizenry with the skills, knowledge and values for a more peaceful and inclusive society. Good quality literacy education, as emphasized in the study by respondents and other research findings including the Education for All Assessment (2014) and the National Adult Literacy Survey Report in Tanzania Mainland (URT, 2014b), is central for the realization of sustainable development goals and fight against poverty.

Implication for practice

The severe lack of youth and adult literacy skills can damage efforts to maintain the middle income-status and achieve the sustainable development goals by 2030 to which Tanzania is fully committed and striving to achieve. The Education for All Global Monitoring Report indicates that 13% of young people aged 15-19 remained illiterate between 2005-2011, while 12%

emerged only semi-literate even after being in school for six years. In addition, the Tanzanian Population and Housing Census (URT, 2013) revealed that 5.5 million (22.4%) young people and adults aged 15 and over (22.4% of the population) are illiterate. These data reveal a challenging situation. Although the figures came from self-reports where youth and adults were simply asked whether or not they were literate, so there are no reliable data on the level of literacy in the country. Whatever the case, 22.4% illiteracy rate is still a major challenge as the country should strive to achieve 100 percent literacy rate.” In this situation “the illiteracy level might be higher, despite the on-going initiatives to reduce it.

Despite the government’s commitment to providing educational opportunities to all people as a liberation tool, the few available data indicate that a large number of children (about 3 million) are still excluded from getting this basic education (URT, 2016a), which is a clear predictor that an increasing number of young people and adults in the country are illiterate. Evidence suggests that many female and male students are completing their basic education with no strong foundation in reading, writing and doing simple arithmetic. This alarming trend calls for the need to invest more financial and non-financial resources in providing young people and adults with literacy education, including the application of modern technology in the area of Adult and Non-Formal Education (ANFE) to aid learners. This requires improving access to, participation in and delivery of literacy education programmes, specifically for young people and adults, as well as conducting sensitization and public outreach programmes to increase political awareness of and commitment to literacy education through improved planning, implementation and evaluation of the ANFE subsector.

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