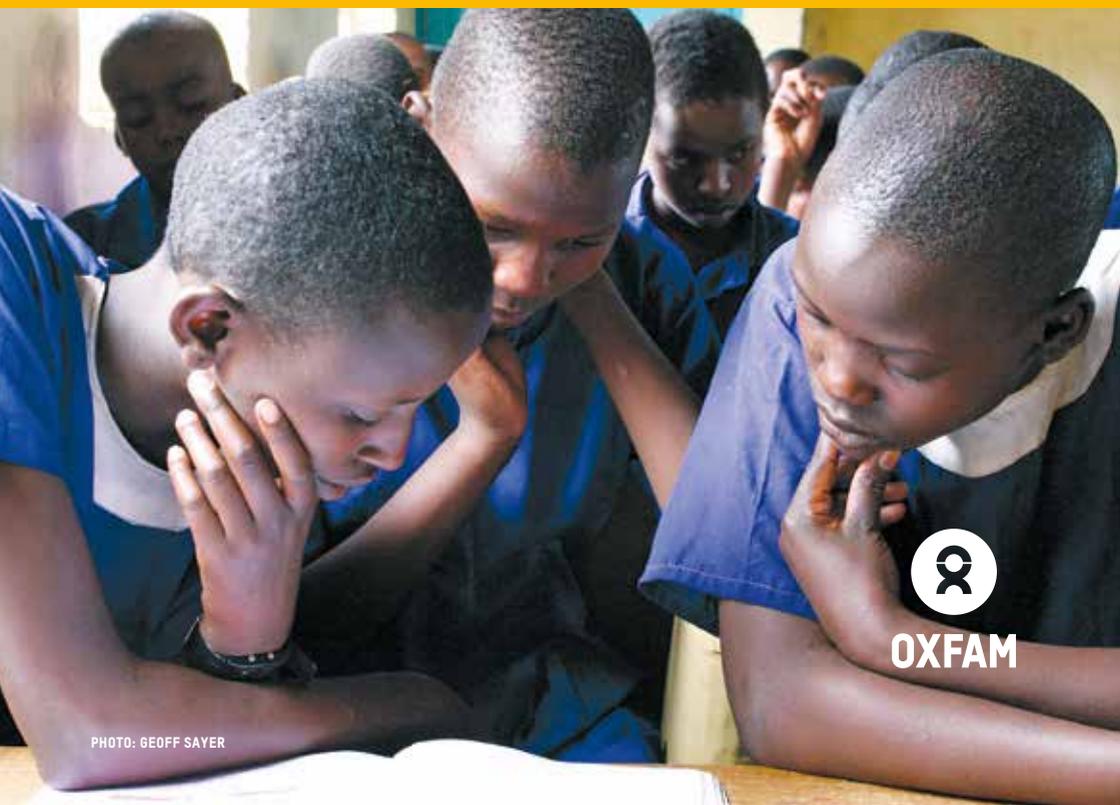


MY RIGHTS MY VOICE

TANZANIA PROJECT OVERVIEW



OXFAM

MY RIGHTS, MY VOICE IN TANZANIA

- Children and young people in Tanzania have huge potential to transform their lives and communities. With the right skills and support, they can be a driving force to break the cycle of poverty so many are born into.
- To help them achieve their potential, their right to education must be fulfilled. That is why Oxfam is running a three-year project in Tanzania as part of the international My Rights, My Voice programme, to empower school children to demand quality education through democratically-elected school councils.
- We are training pupils (especially girls) in leadership skills, their right to quality education and how to hold the authorities accountable. And we are helping schools and the government harness student feedback and deliver improved learning.
- Working with children and young people, and those who influence their lives, My Rights, My Voice is empowering them to achieve lasting changes in policies, practices and beliefs, so their health and education needs are met – now and in the future.

THE CHALLENGE

Tanzania's school system offers children and young people very little say in how it is run, which contributes to the poor-quality education most receive. Student councils (called pupils' *barazas* – Swahili for 'meeting') exist in some schools, reflecting government policy – but these are often abused by teachers. Instead of fostering leadership and citizen skills among students freely elected by their peers, the councils are usually appointed by staff and made to carry out tasks in teachers' interests, such as cleaning classrooms. They also reflect the gender discrimination found in wider society, meaning girls and women are largely excluded. Many school management committees are reluctant even to allow a *baraza*, as teachers often view them as a platform for students to challenge their authority and disrupt order in class.

This leaves pupils with no opportunity to give feedback and express ideas that might help improve their education. But the need for improvement is urgent: a recent report found that almost a third of children in Standard 7 could not perform numeracy tasks expected at Standard 2. The lack of girls' leadership perpetuates gender imbalance within schools, harming girls' chances for the future by hampering their capacity and confidence to compete for leadership positions. Without proper implementation of the government's student council policy, Tanzania's school pupils – particularly girls – cannot strengthen accountability within the education system and voice the issues that prevent them from receiving a quality education.

OUR APPROACH

My Rights, My Voice aims to improve education quality by creating and improving

barazas so they become democratically structured, gender-sensitive platforms that enable students to influence decisions concerning their education and school environment. We are working with our local partners KAWOCONET, WOWAP, PWC, Rafiki-SDO and MED to reach more than 210,000 pupils aged 7-18, in 80 schools across three regions (Arusha, Dodoma and Ngorongoro). The project is empowering them to understand their rights, win community backing and hold schools and the authorities to account over the quality of their education.

Building students' skills

We are helping create and strengthen student councils, providing mentoring and coaching before elections, both for candidates and their supporters. With a particular focus on girls, we are training students in leadership skills, on their right

to education, and how to hold teachers and the authorities accountable for its delivery by accessing information and developing monitoring tools. Student champions from each council gather information on key issues, build joint policy positions and develop campaign materials such as letters and artwork to lobby decision-makers for educational improvements. The student body is becoming aware of its right to a quality education and how to hold schools and community leaders to account, while student leaders are learning to represent their peers effectively in community meetings and regional and national forums. In this way, we are also building leaders for the future with a good grounding in democracy and accountability.

Winning community support

Through meetings with parents, elders and school committee members, we are building



PHOTO: GEOFF SAYER

support for democratic student councils as a means of upholding pupils' rights and improving their education. We are also helping more than 2,500 teachers and head-teachers, as well as education officials, to embrace the councils as a force for improving Tanzania's education system, with teacher-mentors selected to support the councils in each school. We promote direct meetings between students (and parents) and policymakers who are now prepared to listen and respond to the concerns articulated by student representatives.

Lobbying for national replication

As a member of the Tanzania Education Network, we are supporting its members in national-level advocacy work. Together, we document good practice in the creation of successful, democratic student *barazas* and advocate for the model to be replicated across the country.

A LASTING LEGACY

My Rights, My Voice is empowering students to demand a better education from their teachers and authorities. Within schools, they are participating in decision-making to find practical ways to achieve their education needs. Over time, their sustained feedback on teaching styles and methods will improve education quality. Informed student leaders – including more girls – are emerging to advocate with authorities locally and nationally over specific issues around quality education, and for implementation of elected student councils across the country. With the government increasingly realising the need to incorporate local-level knowledge and student concerns in its policies, the model is well-placed to be replicated. Ultimately, student leaders claiming their right to be heard in schools and policy-making will result in a quality education for all Tanzanian children.

FIND OUT MORE

My Rights, My Voice is a three-year programme which aims to engage marginalised children and youth in their rights to health and education services. It is being jointly implemented by Oxfam GB and Oxfam Novib, and involves Oxfam Quebec in Niger. Working through our local partners in eight countries, My Rights, My Voice has significant funding from the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida).

To find out more about the programme please mail us at: mrmv@oxfam.org.uk or visit us at www.oxfam.org.uk/myrightsmysvoice

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