

EDUCATION AT A CROSSROADS

How acute shortage of teachers has left the majority of rural schools in a state of paralysis

# A crippling shortage of teachers—rural schools brought to their knees

Enrollment figures are quite impressive as the government's free education policy takes root even in the deepest rural areas, but where are the teachers?

By Saumu Mwalimu and Nuzulack Dausen  
@TheCitizenTz  
news@tz.nationmedia.com

**Dar es Salaam.** As public primary schools recorded a phenomenal increase in enrollment figures this January, concerns over countrywide critical shortages of teachers resurfaced amid fears the situation is fast getting out of hand in some places—where a single teacher is managing a class of over 200 pupils.

The standard pupil-teacher ratio (PTR) in primary schools is 40, but a recent analysis of government data, conducted by *The Citizen*, reveals that at least 58 per cent of public primary schools across the country have more than the prescribed threshold.

Recent data from the President's Office, Regional Administration and Local Government (PO-RALG) shows that by last December, there were 91,772 public primary school teachers. The number fell short by 47,151—which is almost equivalent to the total number of teachers recruited between 2015 and 2016 (45,528) in both private and public schools.

According to data obtained from the government's open data portal [www.opendata.go.tz](http://www.opendata.go.tz), as of March last year, 9,358 public primary schools out of 16,083, surpassed the 40 pupils per teacher standard, raising fresh concerns over the success prospects of the free education policy.

PTR is the number of pupils enrolled in a particular primary school divided by the number of teachers available.

Of the schools with the highest PTR, there are 345 where one teacher mans over 100 pupils. The situation is even worse in 15 schools where a teacher manages over 200 pupils.

Five regions with the worst pupil-teacher ratio as of March 2016 are Kigoma (59), Katavi (58), Mara (55), Mwanza, Singida and Rukwa (54).

Kilimanjaro has the best PTR of

“The directive has already been given to all councils to ensure that they reallocate teachers to those areas facing serious shortages, especially in rural areas”  
MR JUMA KAPONDA, DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION MANAGEMENT IN THE PRESIDENT'S OFFICE

### WHERE IS MY TEACHER?

Tanzania had a total of **16,088** public primary schools by December, 2016

By 2015, almost two thirds of teachers in the country were in primary schools

By December, 2016 the government had **191,772** teachers in primary schools. It has a shortage of **47,151** teachers.

**45,528** Total number of teachers recruited between 2015 and 2016 in both public and private primary schools

**64.6%** Primary school teachers

**31%** Secondary school teachers

**4.4%** Pre-primary school teachers

**84.4%** 2016 Standard One enrollment growth rate. Up from 1,028,021 pupils in 2015 to 1,895,584 in December last year

### TOP 10 PUBLIC PRIMARY SCHOOLS WITH BEST TEACHER-PUPIL RATIOS BY MARCH 2016

1. FURAHA - TABORA	1:3
2. TABORA VIZIWI - TABORA	1:3
3. IRENTE - TANGA	1:3
4. BUIGWI BLIND - DODOMA	1:4
5. KIGWE VIZIWI - DODOMA	1:4
6. KLENK - KILIMANJARO	1:4
7. SANGASANGA - MOROGORO	1:4
8. MATAMBWE - MOROGORO	1:3
9. SERONERA - MARA	1:5
10. KIKOBOGA - MOROGORO	1:5

### LAST 10 PUBLIC PRIMARY SCHOOLS WITH WORST PUPIL-TEACHER RATIOS BY MARCH 2016

1. SOKOINE - KIGOMA	1:227
2. NAMALANDULA - GEITA	1:468
3. GOMBE - KIGOMA	1:404
4. MUHAMANI - KIGOMA	1:373
5. TUPINDO - KATAVI	1:353
6. RUKOMA - KIGOMA	1:335
7. BUYEKERA - KAGERA	1:312
8. MGHUNGA - KIGOMA	1:292
9. MAKOMBE - KIGOMA	1:281
10. MANVALA - SANGWE	1:231

\* In our survey, we discovered that Sokoine & Muhamani didn't deserve to be among bottom 10 schools since they had more teachers than the indicated data. Most of teachers didn't arrive after March last year. But a teacher handles a class with more than 100 pupils

\*PSLE: Primary School Leaving Examination

### HOW REGIONS WITH BEST PUPIL-TEACHER RATIOS PERFORMED IN PSLE\* 2015

Region	PSLE pass rate in 2015 (%)	PTR in primary schools 2015
Ininga	73.25	31
Dar es Salaam	83.17	34
Kilimanjaro	80.33	38
Arusha	75.67	33
Njombe	75.63	41
Tabora	58.51	55
Mara	68.94	54
Geita	76.52	52
Singida	61.22	68
Singida	58.41	66

Five regions with best PTR ratios in 2015. They were also among the top 10 performers in PSLE in the same year, except Iringa

Bottom five regions in pupil-teacher ratios in 2015. Four of them except Geita featured in the bottom 10 regions in PSLE 2015

Sources: Open data portal ([www.opendata.go.tz](http://www.opendata.go.tz)), Ministry of Regional Administration and Local Government (PO-RALG) & National Examination Council of Tanzania (Necta)

Infographic: Nuzulack Dausen Twitter @nuzulack

TheCitizenData

33:1, followed by Arusha (37), Dar es Salaam (38) and Iringa where one teacher manages about 39 pupils. Among the top 10 schools with PTR of 200+, six are from Kigoma Region. These are Muhamani, Sokoine, Makombe and Gombe in Kigoma District Council; and

Rukoma (Uvinza) and Muhunga in Kasulu town council. The best pupil-teacher ratios were recorded at Sangasanga and Matambwe primary schools in Morogoro, and Irente Primary in Lushoto, Tanga Region, where one teacher has a class of not more than six pupils. Expectedly,

these schools performed well in last year's Standard 7 national exams, and topped at district level.

**Improving over the years**  
While the average national pupil-teacher ratio has been improving over the years, from 54 in 2008 to

one for every 42 in 2015, it took a negative turn after the re-introduction of the free education policy last year saw a dramatic increase in enrollment. By March last year, the national PTR had risen to 48.

It has been a different tale in privately-owned primary schools, which, by 2015, had an average pupil-teacher ratio of 25 against the government's 42.

While at face value, the PTR looks promising, it's a desperate situation for a significant number of schools in rural areas where some teachers are single-handedly managing more than 100 pupils, making effective teaching and learning practically impossible.

**Suspended recruitment**  
Since two years ago, the government suspended the recruitment and re-allocation of new teachers citing budgetary constraints. This has left hundreds of teachers with heavy workloads.

However, the government says it will employ 40,000 new teachers this year to address the shortage.

A recent survey by *The Citizen* in public primary schools in Kigoma, Tabora and Morogoro regions suggests that there is a direct link between low PTR and high performance—meaning that should the government deploys more teachers to, especially hard-hit remote rural schools, there is a high possibility of improved results.

The survey was aimed at establishing how high pupil-teacher ratio affects performance. According to survey findings, public schools where teachers handle classrooms of more than 100 pupils performed poorly in the 2016 Standard 7 national exams, while those with average PTR performed better.

Mr Bernard Pius, head teacher at Chohero Primary School located on the Uluguru Mountain range, says the "situation is very difficult". His school has arguably one of the worst-case scenarios in the country—for two years, it has had to operate with only two teachers.

The two teachers were handling 510 pupils by close of last year in December—from pre-school to Standard 7. How they do it, is the fit they have to tell the world.

"I teach from pre-school to Standard 3, while the other teacher, Mr Henry Matanji, handles pupils from Standard 4 to 7," he says in a recent interview with *The Citizen*.

The school is among the 15 with an acute shortage of teachers in the country, according to official data, and had been performing poorly in Primary School Leaving Examination (PSLE) results.

Last year, only six out of the 49 Standard 7 pupils who sat the national primary leaving exams at Chohero passed. It was among the bottom 10, according to the National Examination Council (Necta).

It's the same situation at schools in Kigoma Region.

Head teachers at Sokoine, Bondo and Muhamani primary schools told *The Citizen* that the shortage of teachers was worse for Mathematics and English. The schools are forced to use teachers with no qualifications to just fill the gap.

Mr Mohamed Dalali Athuman, the head at Sokoine Primary

## EDUCATION AT A CROSSROADS

Theirs is a harrowing tale of struggle, sacrifice and steadfastness

School, said his 12-year-old school had 902 pupils and only 22 teachers by December, last year. Four of the teachers are in college. In Standard 1, a teacher handles 167 pupils, while another has a Standard 2 class of 145.

The school needs an additional six to eight teachers to meet the national standard pupil-teacher ratio of 40. And like all the other schools suffering the same plight, there is a critical shortage of desks that has forced all pre-school to Standard 2 pupils to learn while sitting on the floor. But the school's performance in last year's Standard 7 exams was comparatively not that bad, considering the environment. Out of its 68 candidates, 38 (56 per cent) passed with a B or C. However, the school was number 25 out of 30 schools in the Kigoma District Council, and 193th of 275 at the regional level.

**The lucky few schools**

Interestingly, at Sangasanga and Matambwe primary schools in Morogoro District Council, where last year a teacher handled an average of six pupils, the pass rate was impressive – supporting the notion that the pupil-teacher ratio plays a major role in performance because the teacher has time to concentrate on individuals during class.

With a total of 69 pupils, Sangasanga which is within a military camp in Ngerengere, had 11 teachers at the end of last year.

A teacher had an average of six pupils. The school was number two out of 78 schools, and all the nine pupils who sat the Standard 7 national exam passed. It was the 33rd out of 384 schools at the regional level, and 770 out of 8,241 at the national level.

Ms Ruthbeth Mshana, the school's acting head teacher, says even when a teacher has four subjects, it's still manageable due to the low number of pupils per class. For example, if you teach four subjects, that means about 40 exercise books for marking. Any teacher can handle that with accuracy and easily assist slow learners," said Ms Mshana.

A low pupil-teacher ratio has also proved successful at Matambwe Primary School. At the end of last year, the school, which is in the Selous Game Reserve, had 26 pupils and six teachers, translating into a PTR of 4.

"For the past three years, we have been leading the district in national exams. We have attracted some parents out of the game reserve who now want to bring their children here because of the quality education we offer, but we can't take all of them because there are no hostels," said Mr Hassan Kilindi, the head teacher.

Mr Kasseka Iddy, head teacher at Kaliua-Tabora-based Igombe Primary School, says teachers handling large classes have their biggest hurdle in marking class exercises. Some teachers, he notes, face at least 300 exercise books to mark every day.

"The government needs to consider the need in schools if we are to improve performance," he says.

Mr Juma Kaponda, director of education management in the President's Office (RALG), confirmed that the government would employ 40,000 teachers for primary schools across the country.

He said: "The directive has already been given to all councils to ensure that they reallocate teachers to those areas facing serious shortages, especially in rural areas."

**“ Scary as it may sound, this is an everyday reality for our pupils and teachers”**  
IGOMBE PRIMARY SCHOOL HEAD TEACHER  
KASSEKA IDDY

pass through a thick forest with all kinds of dangerous snakes.

"Igombe is inside a game reserve, so the teachers, pupils and community in general are frequently attacked by poisonous snakes and other harmful animals," he says,

no classrooms, no adequate teachers and it takes one not less than four hours of walking to the school from the nearest bus stop. PHOTOSISAUMU MWALIMU

"Scary as it may sound, this is an everyday reality for our pupils and teachers as they walk to school through the thick forest."

**In our special education report tomorrow: A look at the shocking unequal distribution of teachers across the country**