

Quality of Education Reforms: The HakiElimu Campaign of 2005-2007

Between 1996 and 2004 the Government of Tanzania implemented various programs to increase primary and secondary school enrollment. As a result, primary education enrollment increased from 90.5 percent of the relevant age group in 2004 to 97.3 percent in 2007. The number of primary school leavers who went on to secondary school increased from 147,490 to 448,448 over the same period.

However, enrollment was not the only problem in the education sector. In 2004, HakiElimu, a nongovernmental organization that focuses on education, partnered with the Tanzania Teachers' Union to survey teachers on their living and working conditions.

Half of the 1,383 teachers surveyed said that they would stop teaching if they found another job. More than three-quarters said the salary was too low. More than half said that they paid more than 15 percent of their salary for accommodation. About 41 percent of teachers in urban areas and nearly 80 percent in rural areas said that they received their salaries late.

HakiElimu used media to educate the public and foster debate on the problems in Tanzania's school system. It used radio spots and also produced and distributed 44 popular publications.

In September 2005 the government issued an interdict against HakiElimu and told all regional and local government authorities that the organization was banned from activities in schools. Ironically, this government action helped to raise further public awareness about the organization and campaign.

In December 2005 a new president came to power in Tanzania. After a meeting with teachers, the new president formed a task force to investigate teachers' problems. HakiElimu tried to contribute to the investigation. For example, HakiElimu contacted the finance minister with a proposal on how to solve the delays in teachers' salaries.

However, at about the same time, the Prime Minister's Office issued a letter banning HakiElimu's publications and advertisements on the grounds that they were contrary to public interest. This banning led to a debate in Parliament and further media coverage. In 2006 HakiElimu published a booklet that contained 32 articles, 10 editorials in national newspapers, 22 letters to the editor, 16 statements from civil society organizations, and 23 news stories about the interdict.

In February 2007 representatives of HakiElimu went to the capital city Dodoma to meet with several ministers, including the Prime Minister and Education Minister. After the discussions, the Education Minister agreed to lift the ban on HakiElimu.

Subsequently, government introduced some reforms that addressed problems highlighted by HakiElimu's campaign. In January government increased the minimum wage for teachers. Since 2007 teachers' salaries have been paid on time. And between 2005 and 2008 the number of teachers employed in primary schools increased from 135,013 to 154,895, the number of government primary schools increased from 14,257 to 15,673, and the number of secondary schools from 1,202 to 3,039.