

Joint NGO Submission for
Universal Periodic Review (UPR) of the United Republic of Tanzania
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This joint submission to the Universal Periodic Review of Tanzania is made by three ECOSOC accredited NGOs, Edmund Rice International Limited, VIVAT International and FMSI.

Submitting Organisation:



Edmund Rice International Limited (ERI) is an international non-governmental organization, founded in 2005 and with Special Consultative Status with ECOSOC since 2012. ERI is supported by two Catholic Religious Congregations, the Christian Brothers and the Presentation Brothers. It works with networks of like-minded organizations and in the countries where the two Congregations are present. ERI has a special interest in the rights of the child, the right to education and in eco-justice.

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VIVAT International is a Non-Governmental Organization with a membership of more than 25,000 from 12 Catholic Religious Congregations, working in 122 countries to promote human rights through advocacy at international and local levels. VIVAT International addresses human rights issues with particular focus on the rights of children, women, and eradication of poverty, sustainable development and the culture of peace. It has Special Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations (ECOSOC) and is associated with the United Nations Department of Global Communications (DGC).



Marist International Solidarity Foundation (FMSI) is an international organization promoted by the Marist Brothers, present in 80 countries. FMSI has more than 15 years of experience working in the field of international solidarity, advocating for children's rights especially in the field of education. It works at the international level, participating in the UN human rights mechanisms in collaboration with other organizations with similar interests. It has been accredited by ECOSOC since 2011.

INTRODUCTION AND METHODOLOGY

1. This submission is prepared by the above organizations in consultation with members of their respective networks in Tanzania. The data and information reflect the experience of the submitting stakeholders and of their partners in the field. It is based upon information obtained from several Government departments, as well as upon data and research made available by various civil society organizations as credited in the references.
2. The submitting stakeholders respect the progress made by Tanzania in promoting and safeguarding human rights and the commitments made in relation to previous UPR cycles but believe there are areas requiring further attention. This joint submission focuses on several interrelated areas - the right to education, the rights of the disabled, the rights of children and the rights of women to gender equality and protection from sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV).

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

3. This Universal Periodic Review (UPR) submission addresses critical human rights issues affecting students, women and rural communities in Tanzania.
4. **Right to Quality Education:** The Republic of Tanzania has made commendable progress in expanding access to education, especially in the primary sector, increasing enrolment rates. However persistent challenges such as access to education especially in rural areas, for pregnant girls and young mothers, disabled children and other vulnerable children, a lack of specially-trained teachers, low secondary completion rates, infrastructure issues, funding gaps and ongoing reform efforts, such as the minimum marriage age (for girls) remain to be addressed.
5. This submission calls for urgent measures to improve access to education for children with disabilities, pregnant girls and young mothers, other vulnerable groups, especially in rural areas, to increase education funding, improve education infrastructure, invest more in facilities and specialist teacher training, promote educational equality and strengthen policy implementation.
6. **Rights of the Child:** Tanzania has made notable progress in advancing children's rights through legal reforms, policies, and social programmes. The ban on pregnant girls returning to school has been lifted, with guidelines introduced, although enforcement remains uneven. The Law of the Child Act provides a framework for protection, criminalizing practices such as FGM and child trafficking, while recent amendments strengthen support for child victims and address online exploitation. Free primary education has increased enrolment, and initiatives like Child Helpline 116 and the National Strategy on the Elimination of Child Labour support coordinated responses.
7. However, significant challenges persist. Weak enforcement, limited sanctions, and entrenched cultural and economic factors continue to undermine progress. Unequal minimum marriage ages, harmful social norms, and barriers to girls' secondary education contribute to high dropout rates.

8. Stronger enforcement, legal reform to equalize marriage age at 18, and community-based initiatives are needed to reduce child marriage, child labour, and gender inequality.
9. **Gender Equality and Sexual and Gender based Violence (SGBV):** Tanzania has made important progress in promoting gender equality through policy reforms, legal frameworks, and international partnerships. Efforts to reduce female genital mutilation (FGM) have shown success, particularly through community-based programmes and collaboration with NGOs.
10. However, significant challenges remain. Women and girls continue to face barriers to education, limited economic opportunities, and high risks of gender-based violence, especially in rural areas where restrictive cultural norms persist. Weak law enforcement and limited resources further hinder progress. Discriminatory laws—particularly those related to inheritance, legal protection, and the 1971 Marriage Act, which permits girls to marry as young as 14–15, continue to undermine equality.
11. This submission calls for stronger enforcement of laws addressing sexual and gender-based violence, expanded support services for victims, and legal reforms on marriage, inheritance, and property rights. It also highlights the need for increased access to education and sustained gender mainstreaming across institutions to advance equality.
12. These key areas are addressed through specific recommendations aimed at improving human rights protections and fostering social justice in Tanzania.

A. RIGHT TO QUALITY EDUCATION IN THE UNITED REPUBLIC OF TANZANIA

13. The submitting stakeholders welcome the steps taken by the Government of the United Republic of Tanzania to strengthen its education system through policy reform, legal frameworks, and targeted programmes aimed at improving access, inclusion, and gender equality.
14. **Access to Inclusive Education:** We note positively the establishment of the National Policy on Disability 2004 (revised 2020), alongside legal guarantees under Article 27 of the Law of the Child Act, which affirm the right of children with disabilities to access education on an equal basis with others¹. The adoption of the Inclusive Education Act (2023) further demonstrates the government's commitment to advancing inclusive education. In practice, Tanzania has developed a network of 29 special schools and 239 special units within mainstream schools, reflecting efforts to expand educational provision for children with disabilities².
15. We further commend the State for supporting inclusive education through collaboration with non-governmental organisations and community-based initiatives. These programmes have focused on improving school environments, promoting specialist teacher training, and engaging

¹ Government of Tanzania; UNICEF

² EdukAid; UNICEF

parents and community leaders in inclusion efforts³. Although often externally supported, these initiatives signal recognition of the need for inclusive, community-driven approaches to education.

- 16. Gender in Education:** We welcome the significant policy progress that has also been made in addressing gender disparities in education. The 2021 revision of the Education and Training Policy marked a major shift by allowing pregnant girls and young mothers to return to school after childbirth. This reform enabled approximately 15,000 girls to return to education in 2021, with an additional 3,000–4,000 returning annually thereafter⁴. The Ministry issued implementation guidelines, demonstrating a clear commitment to reintegration and gender inclusion.
- 17. Expand access and improve retention:** We acknowledge broader sector-wide strategies, including the Education Sector Development Plan, that have sought to expand access and improve retention. These initiatives include free primary education, scholarships for girls, improved sanitation facilities, and the development of boarding schools⁵. Collectively, these measures have contributed to high primary enrolment rates and reflect sustained policy attention to education reform.
- 18. Gaps and Challenges:** Notwithstanding these positive developments, the submitting stakeholders remain concerned that significant structural and systemic challenges persist in ensuring equitable and inclusive education.
- 19. Limited access to education:** We note with concern that vulnerable groups, including children with disabilities, pregnant girls, young mothers and children with albinism, continue to face significant barriers to accessing education. Enrolment of children with disabilities remains extremely low, with fewer than 1% of students enrolled and only around 10% of children with special educational needs accessing education⁶. Rural and remote areas are particularly affected, with under-resourced schools, inadequate infrastructure, and long travel distances, often up to 8 kilometers, limiting access⁷. Completion rates are also unequal, with only 14% of children with disabilities completing secondary education compared to 26% of their peers⁸.
- 20. Implementation of Inclusive Education:** While inclusive education is supported in policy, we are concerned that implementation remains weak. Many schools remain physically inaccessible, and inclusive practices are often limited to localised, project-based initiatives dependent on external partners rather than being embedded within the national system⁹. Children with disabilities are frequently segregated in special units and rarely integrated into mainstream classrooms, particularly in rural areas where services are scarce.

³ EdukAid, *Inclusive Education in Tanzania*

⁴ Ministry of Education, Tanzania; Human Rights Watch

⁵ Government of Tanzania; World Bank

⁶ UNICEF; World Bank

⁷ UNICEF

⁸ UNICEF

⁹ EdukAid

- 21. Teacher Training:** We note with concern the insufficient number of adequately trained teachers to support inclusive education. Limited specialist training, particularly in rural and underserved areas, continues to hinder effective implementation of inclusive education policies¹⁰.
- 22. Resourcing and Infrastructure:** We remain concerned about chronic under-resourcing within the education system. Many schools lack adequate classrooms, learning materials, sanitation facilities, and gender-responsive infrastructure. In some districts, 73–90% of schools lack lactation facilities for young mothers¹¹, highlighting gaps in support for vulnerable learners.
- 23. Gender Inequality:** We note that while near parity has been achieved at primary level, disparities widen significantly at secondary level, where approximately 47% of girls are not enrolled compared to 38% of boys¹². Early marriage, teenage pregnancy, domestic responsibilities, and entrenched social norms continue to limit girls' educational opportunities. Around 23% of girls aged 15–19 have experienced pregnancy, contributing to high dropout rates¹³. Although re-entry policies exist, their effectiveness is constrained by administrative barriers, limited awareness, stigma, and insufficient support services¹⁴.
- 24. Transition and retention:** We express concern regarding low transition and completion rates at secondary level. While primary enrolment exceeds 95%, secondary enrolment and completion remain low, with completion rates estimated at around 11%¹⁵. Approximately 3.2 million children aged 7–17 are out of school, including 1.2 million who have never attended¹⁶. Socio-economic disparities are stark, with only 7% of children from the poorest households completing lower secondary education compared to 60% from wealthier households¹⁷. Contributing factors include poverty, child labour, early marriage, teenage pregnancy, inadequate facilities, and curriculum gaps.
- 25. Child Protection:** We remain concerned that corporal punishment remains legal, as it is not explicitly prohibited under the Law of the Child Act (2009), and there is no comprehensive national child protection policy specific to schools¹⁸. Its continued use contributes to physical and psychological harm and undermines student well-being. Strengthening legal protections, improving teacher recruitment, and implementing clear child protection frameworks are essential to ensuring safe learning environments.
- 26. RECOMMENDATIONS:** *While Tanzania has demonstrated strong policy commitment and made measurable progress in expanding access to education, substantial gaps remain in implementation, resourcing, and equity. Addressing these challenges will require sustained national investment, strengthened enforcement of existing laws and policies, and continued*

¹⁰ World Bank

¹¹ UNICEF; World Bank

¹² UNICEF; World Bank

¹³ UNICEF

¹⁴ Human Rights Watch

¹⁵ World Bank

¹⁶ UNICEF

¹⁷ World Bank

¹⁸ Human Rights Watch; UNICEF

collaboration with international partners to ensure inclusive and equitable education for all children. The submitting stakeholders strongly recommend that the United Republic of Tanzania:

- 27. Strengthen inclusive education systems by fully implementing the National Policy on Disability and the Inclusive Education Act, including the recruitment and deployment of disability-trained teachers and social workers, and ensuring accessibility of school infrastructure nationwide, particularly in rural areas.*
- 28. Harmonise domestic legislation with international standards, including the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), and amend existing laws and policies to guarantee equal access to education and services for children with disabilities.*
- 29. Ensure effective implementation of re-entry policies for pregnant girls and young mothers by providing adequate school infrastructure, including sanitation, lactation and childcare facilities, and by addressing stigma through community-based awareness programmes.*
- 30. Increase secondary school enrolment and completion rates, particularly for girls, by enforcing a minimum legal age of marriage of 18, strengthening child labour laws, and expanding scholarship and retention programmes, especially in rural and underserved areas.*
- 31. Invest in education infrastructure and resources, including building and upgrading schools in rural areas, improving transport access, and conducting accessibility audits to ensure inclusive and safe learning environments for all children.*
- 32. Strengthen teacher training and retention, including specialised training in inclusive and gender-responsive education, and provide incentives to attract and retain qualified teachers in rural and underserved communities.*
- 33. Prohibit corporal punishment in all educational settings and establish a comprehensive national child protection framework aligned with international standards, supported by effective enforcement and monitoring mechanisms.*

B. THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

34. The submitting stakeholders welcome the legislative, policy and institutional measures undertaken by the Government of the United Republic of Tanzania to strengthen the protection of children's rights and promote access to education. These measures demonstrate a growing commitment to aligning national frameworks with international human rights standards, particularly in relation to child protection, gender equality and access to education.
35. **Policy Shifts on Girls' Education and Gender Inclusion:** We commend the Government for lifting the ban on pregnant girls attending school in November 2021, as announced by President Samia Suluhu Hassan, and for issuing re-entry guidelines in March 2022 to facilitate their return. This represents a significant shift from previous exclusionary practices and has enabled thousands of girls to resume their education¹⁹. The public discouragement of mandatory pregnancy testing further reflects efforts to reduce discriminatory practices, although implementation remains inconsistent²⁰.
36. **Strengthening Legal Frameworks for Child Protection:** We welcome the continued development of the Law of the Child Act 2009 (revised 2019 and amended 2024), which provides a comprehensive legal framework for safeguarding children's rights. The 2024 amendments significantly strengthen protections by extending mandatory social welfare support to children who are victims or witnesses in legal proceedings, in addition to those in conflict with the law. This ensures that the best interests of the child are upheld and helps mitigate psychological trauma during judicial processes²¹.
37. We further commend the amendment to Section 158(1) of the Law of the Child Act, which explicitly recognises and criminalises sexual exploitation of children in digital spaces, including online grooming, cyberbullying and child pornography. This represents an important advancement in addressing emerging forms of violence against children and strengthens the mandate of law enforcement agencies to investigate and prosecute such offences²².
38. **Establishment and Strengthening of Reporting Mechanisms:** We note positively the strengthening of the National Child Helpline 116, which provides an accessible platform for reporting child rights violations, including abuse, expulsion from school and forced pregnancy testing. This mechanism enhances accountability and access to support services for children and families²³.
39. **Efforts to Address Child Labour:** We welcome the adoption of the National Strategy for the Elimination of Child Labour (2024/25–2028/29), which reflects a coordinated and strategic approach to addressing child labour. Progress has been recorded, with child labour rates

¹⁹ Government of Tanzania; Human Rights Watch

²⁰ UNICEF

²¹ Government of Tanzania

²² UNICEF; ITU

²³ UNICEF

declining from 35% to 26% between 2014 and 2021 in mainland Tanzania²⁴. This demonstrates the impact of sustained policy attention and multi-sectoral interventions.

- 40. Legal and Policy Measures to Address Harmful Practices:** We recognize the role of the Law of the Child Act in prohibiting harmful practices, including child trafficking, female genital mutilation (FGM), and hazardous child labour, thereby establishing minimum standards for child protection²⁵. In addition, the 2016 High Court ruling, upheld by the Court of Appeal, declaring child marriage under the age of 18 unconstitutional, represents an important judicial step towards protecting girls' rights²⁶.
- 41. Expansion of Access to Education:** We further commend the Government for implementing free primary education, which has contributed to increased enrolment rates and expanded access to basic education²⁷. This reflects sustained investment in improving access to education and reducing financial barriers for families.
- 42. Gaps and Challenges:** The submitting stakeholders note that, despite the progress achieved by the United Republic of Tanzania, significant challenges remain in the protection and promotion of children's rights. These gaps highlight the need for strengthened enforcement of existing legislation, legal reform to address inconsistencies, and comprehensive strategies to tackle poverty, harmful social norms, and structural inequalities, particularly in rural areas²⁸.
- 43. Child Protection and Combating Abuse:** We express serious concern at the prevalence of violence against children. It is reported that over 70% of children experience physical violence during childhood, and approximately 28% of girls are subjected to sexual violence²⁹. Corporal punishment remains lawful and widely practised in homes and schools, despite the existence of the Law of the Child Act (2009, revised 2019), which does not explicitly prohibit such practices. The absence of a comprehensive national child protection policy for schools further weakens safeguards, leaving child protection frameworks implicit rather than enforceable. Children also remain vulnerable to sexual exploitation, including in sectors such as tourism³⁰.
- 44. Online and Digital Safety:** We are concerned about the growing risks faced by children in digital environments. According to the *Disrupting Harm Report* (2022), approximately 200,000 children in Tanzania were subjected to online sexual abuse and exploitation in 2021, with many victims unaware of the abuse³¹. While legislative frameworks exist, enforcement remains inconsistent, and access to specialised judicial mechanisms, including juvenile courts, is limited. Some legal provisions also remain insufficiently aligned with international standards, further weakening protection³².

²⁴ International Labour Organization

²⁵ UNICEF

²⁶ Equality Now

²⁷ World Bank; UNICEF

²⁸ UNICEF; World Bank

²⁹ UNICEF; Tanzania National Bureau of Statistics

³⁰ UNICEF; ECPAT

³¹ ECPAT; Save the Children

³² UNICEF

- 45. Child Labour:** We acknowledge efforts made to address child labour, including the adoption of the National Strategy on the Elimination of Child Labour (2024/25–2028/29). However, they note with concern that child labour remains widespread, particularly in agriculture, fishing, mining, and domestic work. The International Labour Organization and UNICEF estimate that over 4.2 million children aged 5–17 are engaged in child labour in Tanzania³³. While rates have declined from approximately 35% to 25% in recent years, structural drivers such as poverty, limited access to education, and entrenched social norms continue to sustain the practice. Seasonal agricultural demands frequently disrupt schooling, particularly in rural areas, contributing to poor academic performance and high dropout rates.
- 46. Child, Early and Forced Marriage:** We remain concerned about the persistence of child, early and forced marriage. Data from UNFPA and the Tanzania Demographic and Health Survey indicate that approximately 30–36% of girls are married before the age of 18³⁴. Although the High Court and Court of Appeal have declared child marriage under 18 unconstitutional, the Marriage Act (1971) has not been amended to establish a uniform minimum age of 18 for both sexes. This legal inconsistency, combined with entrenched cultural norms, continues to perpetuate the practice, particularly in rural areas, undermining girls’ rights to education, health, and development.
- 47. Access to Quality Education and Poverty:** We highlight that poverty remains a major barrier to children’s access to quality education and essential services. In rural areas, limited access to safe water, adequate nutrition, and school infrastructure exacerbates educational exclusion and reinforces reliance on child labour and early marriage³⁵. Although policies exist to support re-entry into education, particularly for young mothers, there is no comprehensive national programme providing psychosocial support, mentorship, or financial assistance, limiting the effectiveness of reintegration efforts.
- 48. Transition, Retention and Systemic Barriers:** We note that, despite high primary enrolment rates, transition to and completion of secondary education remain low. Socio-economic inequalities, gender norms, early pregnancy, and inadequate school infrastructure contribute to high dropout rates, particularly among girls and vulnerable groups³⁶. In addition, inconsistencies between policies—such as the re-entry policy and outdated Education Regulations (2002) permitting expulsion of pregnant girls—create confusion and undermine implementation.
- 49. Legal and Institutional Gaps:** We further note that, while Tanzania has established a strong legal framework for child protection, enforcement remains inconsistent. Limited access to juvenile justice mechanisms, gaps in coordination, and partial alignment with international standards weaken the effectiveness of existing laws³⁷. The lack of explicit prohibitions in key areas, including corporal punishment, and the absence of a comprehensive, enforceable national child protection policy for schools continue to expose children to harm.

³³ ILO; UNICEF

³⁴ UNFPA; Tanzania National Bureau of Statistics

³⁵ World Bank; UNICEF

³⁶ UNICEF; World Bank

³⁷ UNICEF

- 50. RECOMMENDATIONS:** *In the spirit of constructive engagement, the submitting stakeholders recommend that The United Republic of Tanzania:*
- 51.** *Enact and enforce comprehensive child protection legislation, including explicitly prohibiting corporal punishment in all settings and strengthening the Law of the Child Act to ensure full protection of children's rights in line with international standards.*
 - 52.** *Amend the Marriage Act to establish a uniform minimum age of marriage at 18 years for both sexes, and ensure effective enforcement of laws addressing child, early and forced marriage.*
 - 53.** *Strengthen enforcement and accountability mechanisms by introducing legal sanctions against school administrators who unlawfully expel pregnant girls and against employers who engage children in child labour, including hazardous work.*
 - 54.** *Enhance implementation of laws addressing harmful practices, including child labour, female genital mutilation and online sexual exploitation, by increasing budgetary allocations, strengthening institutional capacity, and improving access to justice, including juvenile courts.*
 - 55.** *Adopt and implement nationwide awareness-raising strategies to address harmful cultural norms and practices, including child marriage, child labour and gender discrimination, through community engagement and public education campaigns, particularly in rural areas.*
 - 56.** *Improve access to inclusive and quality education by investing in school infrastructure, expanding facilities for pregnant girls and young mothers, reducing class sizes, and strengthening teacher recruitment and specialised training.*
 - 57.** *Ensure effective implementation of education policies, including re-entry policies for pregnant girls and young mothers, by aligning all existing regulations, strengthening monitoring systems, and providing adequate financial and psychosocial support to facilitate retention and completion.*

C. GENDER EQUALITY AND SEXUAL AND GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE (GBV)

- 58. Advances and Positive Developments:** We acknowledge the notable progress The United Republic of Tanzania has made in advancing women's rights, particularly under the leadership of Samia Suluhu Hassan. Increased political will has translated into greater representation of women in leadership across Parliament, local government, and business sectors. These efforts align with Tanzania's commitments under international frameworks such as Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women and reflect a growing emphasis on gender equality as a national development priority.

- 59. Government Commitment to Ending GBV:** The Government launched the National Plan of Action to End Violence Against Women and Children (NPA-VAWC II), demonstrating a strengthened commitment to prevention and response mechanisms. The Plan incorporates recommendations from the Legal and Human Rights Centre (LHRC), particularly in relation to parenting, community participation, and preventive strategies. These measures aim to address GBV at the household and community levels by fostering safer environments and shared responsibility.
- 60.** International partners, including UN Women and United Nations Population Fund, have commended Tanzania for progress in strengthening legal and policy frameworks, notably through the Sexual Offences Special Provisions Act. Government-led initiatives such as *Chaguo Langu Haki Yangu* further contribute to addressing GBV, child marriage, and female genital mutilation (FGM) through community engagement and social norm transformation³⁸.
- 61. Improvements in Police Reporting and Recognition of Femicide:** There has been a significant shift in police practices, with femicide now distinguished from general homicide cases. According to LHRC reports (2024), this improved classification enhances visibility of gender-motivated killings and supports more targeted policy responses. The recognition of femicide as a distinct category marks an important step toward accountability and data-driven interventions.
- 62. Legal and Policy Reform Efforts:** Tanzania has undertaken efforts to align its legal framework with international human rights standards. A comprehensive legal review led by UN Women, supported by the Government of the Netherlands and the European Union, identified 76 recommendations for reform. These include repealing discriminatory laws, amending existing legislation, and introducing new legal protections.
- 63.** The Government continues to implement the National Five-Year Development Plan (FYDP III 2021/22–2025/26), which integrates gender equality objectives. In addition, the revised National Gender and Women Development Policy (2023), officially launched on International Women’s Day 2024, provides a key framework for coordinating, monitoring, and reporting on gender equality initiatives³⁹.
- 64. Criminalization of Harmful Practices:** The criminalization of FGM under the Sexual Offences Special Provisions Act has contributed to a significant reduction in prevalence—from approximately 32% historically to around 10% nationally⁴⁰. This decline reflects sustained efforts through legal enforcement, education, and community-based interventions.
- 65. Women’s Economic Empowerment:** The Government has introduced measures to improve women’s access to finance and formal employment, aiming to reduce gender disparities in the labour market. These initiatives recognise the critical link between economic empowerment and gender equality. According to World Bank (2022), women play a substantial role in Tanzania’s economy, particularly in agriculture and informal sectors.

³⁸ UNFPA Tanzania

³⁹ Government of Tanzania, 2024

⁴⁰ UNFPA Tanzania

- 66. Remaining Gaps and Challenges:** We note that despite these advances, Tanzania continues to face significant challenges in fully realizing gender equality. Many commitments remain at the policy level, with gaps in implementation, enforcement, and access to justice.
- 67. Persistent Gender-Based Violence:** GBV remains widespread and a major barrier to women's rights. According to the Tanzania Demographic and Health Survey (TDHS), approximately 40–48% of women aged 15–49 have experienced physical or sexual violence in their lifetime⁴¹. Between 2020 and 2023, 112,211 GBV cases were reported—an average of over 28,000 annually⁴².
- 68.** Violence is predominantly perpetrated by intimate partners, with 61% of reported cases involving physical violence, 20% sexual violence, and 19% economic violence. Domestic settings remain the primary location of abuse. LHRC documented 115 cases of intimate partner violence in 2023, including 50 homicides, with women constituting 90% of victims.
- 69.** Emerging forms of violence, including cyber violence, are also increasing, with 62% of surveyed community members acknowledging its prevalence. Underreporting, limited prosecutions, and weak enforcement mechanisms continue to undermine progress⁴³.
- 70. Discriminatory Legal Frameworks and Weak Enforcement:** Although Tanzania has committed to international human rights instruments such as African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, gaps remain in domestic legislation. The Marriage Act of 1971 still permits girls to marry at age 15, despite court rulings advocating for a minimum age of 18 for both sexes. This inconsistency undermines protections against child marriage.
- 71.** Customary and religious laws continue to influence areas such as inheritance and property rights, often disadvantaging women. These parallel legal systems create ambiguity and perpetuate discrimination, particularly in rural areas.
- 72. Child Marriage:** Child marriage remains a critical concern. While prevalence has declined from 39% in 1997 to approximately 22% in 2022, the practice persists, especially in rural regions, where up to two in five girls are married before the age of 18⁴⁴.
- 73.** Child marriage limits girls' access to education, increases health risks, and exposes them to violence and economic dependency. Despite collaboration with international partners, deeply rooted cultural norms and socio-economic factors continue to sustain the practice.
- 74. Limited Economic Opportunities:** Women's economic empowerment remains constrained by structural barriers, including limited access to education, financial services, and formal

⁴¹ TDHS, cited in LHRC 2024

⁴² LHRC, 2024

⁴³ LHRC Annual Report, 2024

⁴⁴ UNFPA, 2025

employment. Although women constitute approximately 80% of the labour force, they are disproportionately represented in informal, low-income, and unpaid family work⁴⁵.

75. Gender wage gaps persist, and women often lack control over income and resources. Social norms impose a “double burden” of paid and unpaid work, restricting women’s ability to pursue stable and higher-paying employment.

76. Female Genital Mutilation (FGM): While national prevalence has declined to around 8.2% in 2022, FGM remains practiced in certain communities, including the Maasai, Iraqw, and Kurya. The practice is particularly prevalent among women with lower levels of education and in rural areas⁴⁶. Cultural beliefs continue to frame FGM as a rite of passage, complicating eradication efforts despite its criminalization.

77. Women’s Access to Justice: Access to justice remains limited due to multiple barriers, including:

- I High costs of legal representation
- II Corruption within the justice system
- III Limited legal awareness
- IV Geographic distance from courts in rural areas
- V Lengthy judicial processes

These barriers disproportionately affect women, particularly those experiencing GBV, and contribute to low reporting and accountability rates.

78. Property Rights and Legal Protection: Women’s rights to inheritance and property remain constrained by customary and religious practices. This is particularly problematic for widows and single mothers, who may lack access to land and resources necessary for economic survival.

79. Women’s Safety and Security: Women’s safety continues to be threatened by various forms of violence, including intimate partner violence, sexual violence, and harmful practices such as attacks linked to witchcraft accusations. These issues highlight broader systemic failures in protection and prevention mechanisms.

80. RECOMMENDATIONS: *In the spirit of constructive engagement, the Submitting Stakeholders propose the following recommendations to the United Republic of Tanzania to strengthen the protection and promotion of women’s rights, in line with its obligations under international and regional human rights frameworks, including Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women. The Government is encouraged to:*

81. Amend and harmonize the Law of Marriage Act to establish 18 years as the minimum legal age of marriage for both girls and boys, in line with international human rights standards.

⁴⁵ World Bank, 2022

⁴⁶ FGM Research Initiative, 2025

82. Review, amend and repeal all discriminatory legislation affecting women and girls, including in the areas of employment, equal pay, inheritance, and property ownership, through the Law Reform Commission of Tanzania and the Ministry of Constitutional and Legal Affairs.

83. Implement the recommendations contained in the gender analysis of Tanzanian laws conducted by UN Women, the European Union, and the Government of the Netherlands, including repealing discriminatory provisions and enacting new gender-responsive legislation.

84. Develop and enact a comprehensive legal framework on inheritance and property rights to ensure women's equal access to ownership and control of land and resources, and to address inconsistencies arising from customary and religious laws.

85. Ensure full alignment of domestic legislation with international and regional obligations, including the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights.

Gender-Based Violence (GBV) Prevention and Response - The Government is urged to:

86. Enact comprehensive standalone legislation on gender-based violence, incorporating clear definitions of all forms of violence, including domestic, sexual, psychological, economic, and cyber violence, in line with international standards.

87. Strengthen enforcement of existing laws, including the Sexual Offences Special Provisions Act, to ensure accountability for perpetrators of GBV and harmful practices such as FGM.

88. Enhance investigation, prosecution and conviction rates for GBV cases by strengthening institutional capacity within law enforcement and the judiciary.

89. Ensure the effective criminalisation and prosecution of FGM, including addressing impunity at community level and reinforcing penalties for violations.

90. Develop and implement targeted strategies to address emerging forms of violence, including online and cyber violence against women.

Access to Justice and Enforcement - The Government is encouraged to:

91. Improve women's access to justice by reducing barriers such as cost, distance, and procedural delays, and by expanding access to legal aid services, particularly in rural and underserved areas.

92. Strengthen institutional capacity of law enforcement, judicial officers, and prosecutors through specialised training on gender-sensitive approaches and applicable legal frameworks.

93. Combat corruption and discriminatory practices within the justice system that hinder women's ability to seek redress.

94. Ensure effective implementation and monitoring of laws and policies, recognizing that legislative reform must be accompanied by enforcement and accountability mechanisms.

Awareness Raising and Social Norm Change - The Government is urged to:

95. Develop and implement nationwide awareness-raising campaigns on GBV, FGM, child marriage, and women's rights, targeting both the general public and key stakeholders.

96. Provide continuous training and education for law enforcement officers, judicial personnel, and public officials to ensure full understanding and application of relevant laws.

97. Engage community leaders, civil society organisations, and grassroots actors in promoting behavioural and social norm change, particularly in rural and hard-to-reach areas.

98. Promote human rights-based education to challenge harmful cultural practices and stereotypes that perpetuate discrimination and violence against women and girls.

Support Services for Survivors of GBV - The Government is encouraged to:

99. Strengthen and adequately resource support services for survivors of GBV, including shelters, counselling, medical care, and legal assistance.

100. Enhance coordination with civil society organisations and service providers to ensure a comprehensive and survivor-centred response.

101. Ensure availability and accessibility of services nationwide, particularly in rural and marginalised communities.

102. Establish monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to assess the effectiveness and reach of support services.

Women's Economic and Social Empowerment - The Government is encouraged to:

103. Promote women's economic empowerment by improving access to finance, formal employment, and income-generating opportunities.

104. Address structural barriers, including unequal pay, limited access to education, and restrictive social norms that hinder women's participation in the labour market.

105. Strengthen women's land and property rights to enhance economic independence and resilience.

106. Recognize and address the disproportionate burden of unpaid care work borne by women through policy and social protection measures.