



# Article 24 of UNCRPD and Its Influences on Legal, Policy, and Strategic Frameworks for Inclusive Education in Tanzania

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## Keywords

Accommodation, discrimination, disability, inclusive education

## Abstract

The right to an inclusive education is covered in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) in Article 24 on Education. This study analysed UNCRPD's Article 24 and its influence on Tanzania's legal, policy and strategic framework. The study used a narrative qualitative research approach with a focus on documentary review. Using thematic content analysis, five major themes were deductively established: (i) organisation of Article 24 of UNCRPD on education, (ii) obligations of inclusive education, (iii) goals of inclusive education, (iv) principles of inclusive education, and (v) Tanzania's integration of Article 24 of the UNCRPD. There were also inductive sub-themes related to Tanzania's integration of Article 24 of the UNCRPD related to legal, policy, and strategic frameworks as well as achievements and challenges. The findings underscore the significant role of Article 24 in shaping Tanzania's inclusive education agenda while also highlighting persistent challenges that must be addressed to achieve equitable and disability-inclusive education.

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## 1. Introduction

The adoption of inclusive education systems has gained momentum, which is reinforced by policy and strategic frameworks in many countries. As stated by UNESCO (2009), the “concept and practice of inclusive education have gained importance in recent years. Internationally, the term is increasingly understood more broadly as a reform that supports and welcomes diversity amongst all learners” (p. 4). Every child has the right to realize their potential and get a high-quality education. For children with disabilities (CWDs) to get the best education, countries need to make commitments to provide inclusive education. As stated by the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), it is “only inclusive education [that] can provide both quality education and social development for persons with disabilities and a guarantee of universality and non-discrimination in the right to education.” (CRPD, 2016, p. 1). As outlined by CRPD (2016), inclusive education is:

- “ (a) a fundamental human right of all learners...; (b) a principle that values the well-being of all [children], respects their inherent dignity and autonomy, and acknowledges individuals’ requirements and their ability to effectively be included in and contribute to society; (c) a means of realizing other human rights... the primary means by which persons with disabilities can lift themselves out of poverty,... means to participate fully in their communities and be safeguarded from exploitation..., means of achieving inclusive societies; (d) the result of a process of continuing and proactive commitment to eliminating barriers impeding the right to education, together with changes to culture, policy and practice of regular schools to accommodate and effectively include all [children] (p. 3).

The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), which was put into effect in 2008, is the primary tool for improving the human rights of people with disabilities. The Convention was adopted in many African governments during a time when discrimination and marginalization of people with disabilities were pervasive (Dziva et al., 2018).

The Convention has been praised as a turning point in the fight to redefine the interests and concerns of people with disabilities. It seeks to maintain the intrinsic dignity of all people with disabilities and to guarantee that they can fully and equally enjoy all human rights and basic freedoms (UN, 2006). Individuals with disabilities may have chronic physical, mental, intellectual, or sensory impairments that, when combined with additional obstacles, may prevent them from fully and equally participating in society or social activities including education. The Convention requires the nations to take all necessary steps to guarantee that CWDs have equal access to and enjoyment of all basic freedoms and human rights, just like other children (UN, 2006).

As observed by Dziva et al. (2018), UNCRPD confirms to a paradigm change away from considering people with disabilities as charity cases and toward considering them as human rights holders and collaborators in the pursuit of sustainable development. Importantly, UNCRPD essentially serves as both a development and a human rights protection tool. The preamble of UNCRPD, which emphasizes that people with disabilities shall fully enjoy all human rights and basic freedoms on an equal footing with others, reiterates UNCRPD's role in promoting human rights (UN, 2006).

The convention is appreciated to be the first treaty that offers an integrated approach to the protection and promotion of about 15 percent of people worldwide who live with various types of disability (WHO & World Bank 2011). As a result, UNCRPD is a thorough and well-considered framework with provisions designed to address the primary issues faced by people with disabilities (Dziva et al., 2018). UNCRPD consists of several constituent parts. Articles 1 through 9 of UNCRPD's introduction define terminology and outline the Convention's goals. A detailed explanation of people with disabilities' rights to specific political, social, economic, and cultural rights may be found in articles 10 through 30. The implementation and monitoring methods are in articles 31–40. Articles 41–50 of the Convention, which control how UNCRPD functions, come to an end.

A major turning point is marked by Article 24 of UNCRPD on education, which expressly acknowledges children with disabilities' right to inclusive education at all levels. It requires member states to guarantee a free, high-quality, and inclusive education system in which students with disabilities are not kept out of the general education system because of their condition. In

Article 24 of the UNCRPD, disability is seen through the lens of the social model, which places more emphasis on environmental and societal impediments than on personal limitations. This represents a paradigm change towards the push for accessibility, non-discrimination, equity in education, and reasonable accommodations in educational systems. The article safeguards the right to quality education for all CWDs. It declares that all children have the right to inclusive education and outlines the necessary actions to achieve this goal. All CWDs must not only face discrimination but also be allowed to take part in the general school. In many nations, including Tanzania, this international commitment has influenced legislative changes and educational practices.

The contexts of international human rights law, Tanzania's national education policy, and changing disability paradigms provide a basis for arguing how inclusive education has been framed and pursued. However, assessment of the UNCRPD's Article 24 and its impacts on disability inclusion in many countries, Tanzania in particular, has received minimal scholarly attention. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to critically examine the key obligations, goals and principles of inclusive education outlined in Article 24 of the UNCRPD and how well they have been implanted in Tanzania's inclusive education framework. Specifically, this study answers the following question:

- How is Article 24 of the UNCRPD on education organised?
- What are the key obligations, goals, and principles of inclusive education outlined in Article 24 of the UNCRPD?
- How has Article 24 of the UNCRPD been integrated into Tanzania's national education legal, policy, and strategic frameworks?

From theoretical point of view, the social model of disability and rights-based educational theory serve as the foundation for this study. The social model of disability that prevent full participation, rather than personal limitations. Simultaneously, the rights-based approach to education makes the case that access to inclusive education is a legal and moral requirement rather than a question of charity or policy preference by citing international human rights law, especially UNCRPD. With the rights-based approach, states are required

to uphold, defend, and fulfil the right to inclusive education. Furthermore, policy transfer theory provides a framework for exploring the adoption and adaptation of international legal norms, such as those found in Article 24 of UNCRPD, inside national policy contexts. It takes into account both the advantages and disadvantages of implementing international standards in regional contexts.

## 2. Methodology

### Research approach and design

This study used a narrative qualitative research approach with a focus on documentary review. The choice of research approach was informed by the nature of the study, which aimed to analyse how Article 24 of the UNCRPD has influenced Tanzania's legal, policy, and strategic frameworks for disability-inclusive education. Therefore, the best method was a desk-based study of documents because the analysis required knowledge of legal, policy, and strategic frameworks.

### Location of the study

Although the study was a desk-based review, the context of analysis was Tanzania, with specific attention to national legal, policy, and strategic documents echoing disability-inclusive education. The review was within the Tanzanian education sector, with documents accessed from official repositories such as online databases of the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MoEST).

### Sources of Data

In this study, secondary data were collected. Data were generated from the analysis of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), especially Article 24 as the international normative framework, and the national legal, policy, and strategy documents, such as:

- Tanzania's Persons with Disabilities Act No. 9 of 2010.
- Tanzania's Law of the Child Act of 2009, revised edition of 2019.

- Tanzania's Education and Training Policy 2014, Edition 2023.
- Tanzania's National strategies for inclusive education (NSIE), namely, NSIE (2009–17), NSIE (2018–21), and the current NSIE (2021/22–2025/26).

## **Data Analysis**

The analysis employed a legal, policy, and strategy analysis framework to explore how UNCRPD's Article 24 has influenced disability-inclusive education in Tanzania by classifying data sources into three domains. This involved (i) the analysis of the UNCRPD's Article 24 as the global normative framework; (ii) the analysis of Tanzania's national inclusive education legislation, policy, and strategies; and (iii) the analysis of how closely Tanzania's frameworks conform to its commitments under Article 24 of the UNCRPD. Data were analysed using thematic content analysis. The steps of analysis included the selection of relevant documents, coding, comparison, and synthesis of findings. Initially, relevant international (Article 24 of UNCRPD) and national documents (Tanzania's legal, policy, and NSIE documents) were identified and analysed.

In coding, the provisions of Article 24 were broken into key thematic areas: organisation of Article 24 of UNCRPD on education and obligations, goals, and principles of inclusive education. Subthemes in principles of inclusive education included non-discrimination, reasonable accommodation, personalised adequate support, safe and inclusive environments, effective communication and accessibility, continuous professional development, and access to lifelong learning. These themes were then compared with Tanzania's legal, policy, and NSIE documents to determine areas of alignment or partial compliance. This was important to determine the themes related to the established legal, policy, and strategic frameworks that promote disability-inclusive education and achievements and challenges. Lastly, the synthesis was important to broadly organise the findings to highlight the influence of Article 24 on Tanzania's inclusive education strategies over time.

### **Ethical issues**

In this study, there were no human participants because it only used secondary data (international treaty, legal, strategic, and policy documents). The following were among the ethical factors: accurate portrayal of every aspect of the documentary content; proper source acknowledgement and citation in order to prevent plagiarism; and transparency and objectivity in document analysis, preventing misinterpretations of legal provisions.

## **3. Findings**

This part presents five key themes that were deductively established after analysis of international (Article 24 of UNCRPD) and national documents (Tanzania’s legal, policy, and NSIE documents): (i) organisation of Article 24 of UNCRPD on education, (ii) obligations of inclusive education, (iii) goals of inclusive education, (iv) principles of inclusive education, and (v) Tanzania’s integration of Article 24 of the UNCRPD. The inductive sub-themes in principles of inclusive education are also presented in this part: non-discrimination, reasonable accommodation, personalised adequate support, safe and inclusive environments, effective communication and accessibility, continuous professional development, and access to lifelong learning. There were also inductive sub-themes related to Tanzania’s integration of Article 24 of the UNCRPD (legal, policy, and strategic frameworks and achievements and challenges).

### **Organization of Article 24 of UNCRPD on the education**

Article 24 of the UNCRPD is organized into five parts. Part of Article 24 outlines the goals of an inclusive education. These goals include: (a) developing and maximizing human potential and promoting self-worth, respect, and dignity; (b) enhancing respect for diversity, fundamental freedoms, and human rights; (c) helping people with disabilities reach their full potential in terms of personality, talents, and creativity; and (d) enabling persons with disabilities to participate effectively in society (Article 24 [1]). Part two is on exclusion and discrimination. Among the Article’s 24 provisions are the following: (a) prohibiting the rejection of individuals with disabilities from free and compulsory general education; (b) requiring nations

to guarantee that equal access to inclusive, high-quality free education should be available for people with disabilities; and (c) requiring nations to offer specialized assistance and appropriate adjustments for achieving the goal of full participation (Article 24 [2]).

Part three of Article 24 of the UNCRPD addresses suitable measures to facilitate CWDs to fully and equally participate in education and the necessary steps that should be taken, including the acquisition of Braille and sign language (Article 24 [3]). Part four of the article focuses on the training and hiring of qualified and knowledgeable teachers in sign language and/or Braille who can work at all educational levels (Article 24 [4]). Part five of the article lays out the countries' obligations to guarantee that CWDs can access general education, including postsecondary education, adult education, vocational training, and lifelong learning. This part also adheres to the non-discrimination principle and the treatment of people with disabilities equally with other people (Article 24 [5]).

### **Obligations of inclusive education**

One of the credits that can be attached to UNCRPD is its emphasis on inclusive education for all. As stated in UNCRPD's Article 24(1), nations must guarantee the provision of inclusive education and lifelong learning for all. In this clause, special education is the exception and inclusive education is the rule. Article 24(2)(a) and (b) of the UNCRPD states that nations must make sure that CWDs have equal opportunity to access inclusive education at all educational levels without discrimination based on their disability. CWDs must not be excluded from basic and compulsory education. Consequently, CWDs must be encouraged to attend conventional schools in their neighbourhood. CWDs must not be restricted from access to a high-quality inclusive education due to their condition. In short, UNCRPD in Article 24(2) enhances inclusive education for all.

### **Goals of inclusive education**

It is significant to note that UNCRPD's Article 24 clearly outlines the goals of inclusive education. It is stated in UNCRPD Article 24(1) that nations must guarantee inclusive education and lifelong learning at all educational levels. The goals of inclusive education should be to (a) develop and foster human

potential and promote self-worth, respect, and dignity; (b) enhance respect for diversity, fundamental freedoms, and human rights; (c) help people with disabilities reach their full potential in terms of personality, talents, and creativity; and (d) enable people with disabilities to engage fully in society. Therefore, it may be argued that these goals should be implemented in every educational system to make inclusive education practical.

### **Principles of inclusive education**

Sub-theme in this themes which are important to the development of disability-inclusive education included: non-discrimination, reasonable accommodation, adequate support, learning and teaching environment, effective communication, qualified teachers, professional training, and lifelong learning.

#### *Non-discrimination*

Article 2 of UNCRPD states that disability discrimination means any kind of difference, exclusion, or limitation that precludes people with disabilities from equally utilizing or putting their human rights into practice in all areas of life. Article 24(2)(a) guarantees CWDs equitable access to quality inclusive education in mainstream schools without discrimination. To this clause, no student's impairment may be a reason for their exclusion from free and required general education. This provision is important as it reminds the countries to openly state a ‘no-rejection clause’ in their educational policies and laws. Legislation that openly rejects students with disabilities from receiving an education because of a disability must be revised. It underscores that countries must prohibit the denial of admission of CWDs into inclusive schools and guarantee continuity in education. This necessitates reasonable accommodation and adequate support to enhance quality disability-inclusive education for all students in schools.

These principles are in line with the legislative framework in Tanzania, including the Education Act; National Education and Training Policy, 2014, Edition 2023; National Strategy for Inclusive Education; and Persons with Disabilities Act No. 9 of 2010. The above-mentioned documents promote equality in education. However, according to research carried out by Mlollele et al. (2023), Philip (2024), Mohammed and Almasi (2024), and Maphie

(2025), there are several difficulties faced by the education system, including inadequate funding, inaccessible facilities, inadequate training of teachers, and negative attitudes of society toward inclusive education.

#### *Reasonable accommodation*

Issues related to reasonable accommodation have been included in Article 24 of the UNCRPD. Article 24(2)(c) mandates that nations make a reasonable effort to accommodate each person's needs to fulfil every child's entitlement to an inclusive education that meets the individual's requirements. Although this provision was previously covered in Article 5(3), its importance for inclusive education is further highlighted by its inclusion in Article 24(2)(c) regarding education. As defined in UNCRPD, a reasonable accommodation is any modification or change that is deemed necessary and suitable to ensure that all human rights are equally accessible to and enjoyed by people with disabilities or impairments (Article 2). This means that reasonable accommodations are anti-discrimination measures that must be implemented right away.

#### *Personalised adequate support*

The availability of adequate support is an essential feature of inclusive education. This is well addressed in Article 24 of the UNCRPD. Article 24(d) and (e) expressly articulate that for inclusive education to be effective, general education must provide students with disabilities with the necessary support. As in Article 24(2)(e), to achieve full inclusion, effective and personalised support measures must be provided in environments that maximise social and intellectual success. Adequate assistance is linked to and a supplement to accessibility measures.

Although support services are essential in inclusive education for disabled learners in Tanzania, there are still some challenges. Some studies on inclusive education have indicated that one of the major challenges in delivering support services is the shortage of qualified personnel and the inadequate supply of teaching-learning materials in inclusive settings (Philip, 2024; Maphie, 2025). Inclusive education, as well as the provision of support services, is also faced with inadequate training and inexperience in inclusive education (Mohammed & Almasi, 2024; Mlolele et al., 2023).

*Safe and inclusive environment for learning and teaching*

A quality learning environment is vital to support all students. For quality teaching and learning to occur, there should be environments that are safe, supportive, and conducive. As stated in UNCRPD’s Article 24(3)(c), nations are required to make sure that education is provided in settings that optimize life, academic, and social development skills for people who are blind, deaf, or deafblind, and especially for children. This provision implies that education systems should create safe, inclusive and supportive quality learning environments to allow quality learning for students who have either deafness or blindness.

Other studies in Tanzania have indicated that inclusive and accessible learning environments are fundamental in improving educational outcomes for learners with disabilities (Philip, 2024; Maphie, 2025). However, for example, Maphie's (2025) study established that inadequate support services, inaccessible infrastructure, and limited specialised resources continued to hinder the effective inclusion of learners with disabilities in schools. Similarly, Philip's (2024) study found significant gaps in the provision of accessible learning environments and support systems necessary for meaningful participation. These findings implied that strengthening inclusive infrastructure, learning resources, and support services was essential for ensuring quality education and maximising the academic and social development of learners with disabilities.

*Effective communication and accessibility*

As defined in Article 2 of UNCRPD, communication encompasses a variety of methods and formats encompassing textual, auditory, plain-language, tactile, human-reader, Braille, large print, accessible multimedia, augmentative and alternative forms of communication, including information and communication technology that is accessible. For a smooth run of disability-inclusive education, there should be good means of communication with students. Article 24(3) emphasizes that nations must guarantee suitable languages, forms, and means of communication for students with disabilities to learn academic skills, as well as life and social development competence. The article lists the requirements that must be met for CWDs to take part in the inclusive education system. Access to Braille and other alternative scripts, augmentative and alternative modes, a variety of communication methods,

mobility skills, orientation, peer support, mentorship, and the promotion of the deaf community's linguistic identity must all be made easier by the countries. It is underscored that inclusive measures encourage bilingual education and communication to enable hearing-impaired students to participate in the inclusive process, in addition to facilitating the integration of deaf students.

Communication plays an important role in ensuring that disability-inclusive education is effectively implemented since it ensures that learners with disabilities are able to access the necessary information for participation in learning processes. According to Article 24(3), State Parties must ensure that there are appropriate means of communication used to enhance the acquisition of academic, social, and life skills by individuals with disabilities. In Tanzania, ICTs are increasingly recognising the significance of communication among persons with disabilities (Mnyanyi, 2023). In Tanzania, the implementation of inclusive education continues to encounter challenges related to communication and accessibility. These challenges include, but are not limited to, insufficient support services, a lack of assistive tools, and inadequate teacher preparation to effectively address communication issues. Consequently, it is essential to improve teacher training, enhance communication support services, and promote the use of assistive technologies to ensure the success of inclusive education in Tanzania (Philip, 2024; Maphie, 2025).

#### *Qualify inclusive teacher training*

Teachers are a fundamental input for guaranteeing quality disability-inclusive education. The importance of skilled teachers in providing high-quality, disability-inclusive education is acknowledged in Article 24. Most importantly, all children in an inclusive education need teaching and support from qualified teachers. Article 24(4) compels nations to take the necessary steps to hire and attract qualified teachers, including those with disabilities. Teachers should be knowledgeable in Braille and/or sign language. Article 24(4) suggests that teachers must be properly educated and well-trained if they are to support all students in inclusive settings appropriately. A broad consensus regarding the vital importance of highly skilled teachers should be created for the successful implementation of disability-inclusive education. Nothing less than all students receiving instruction from qualified teachers.

This provision is based on the belief that all learners attending inclusive education should be provided with instructions by competent teachers who have been adequately trained for their duties. In their study in Tanzania, Omoro and Possi (2023) established that self-efficacy, knowledge, and instructional competence, among others, play a pivotal role in determining the level at which instructors can successfully implement inclusive classroom instructions. In addition, Mlollele et al. (2023) found that the lack of teacher training was one of the key barriers to inclusive education in public primary schools. Maphie (2025) also observed that a shortage of skilled teachers, coupled with low levels of expertise in special education, impeded effective inclusion, whereas Philip (2024) pointed out that many teachers did not have the competencies needed to teach learners with disabilities. Furthermore, Mohammed and Almasi (2024) indicated that although participation in seminars and workshops boosted teachers' knowledge and competencies, there was still an inadequate number of qualified teachers with pedagogic competencies, among other things.

#### *Continuous professional development*

High-quality disability-inclusive education learning and teaching require ongoing professional development to equip teachers and other personnel with updated competence in supporting students with disabilities. Article 24(4), expressly states to educate professionals and employees working at all educational levels to enable them to support CWDs to access education in inclusive education. This clause is significant because it addresses the necessity of preparing teachers to assist CWDs. The clause emphasizes the importance of continuous professional development for teachers and other educators pursuing a career in disability-inclusive education. Article 24(4) also stresses such professional training to include skills in using augmentative and alternative modes, and forms of communication; and disability awareness in instructional strategies, and resources. For teachers to appropriately support CWDs in an environment that grants inclusive education, there must be sufficient support in place.

This perspective on continuous professional development is consistent with recent studies in Tanzania. However, Maphie (2025) found insufficient teacher preparation and failure to access relevant training as barriers to implementing inclusive education in schools. Likewise, Philip (2024) noted

that, although there was a policy on the inclusion of special education learners in learning, teachers lacked the expertise to address the needs of children with disabilities. The above conclusions indicate that continuous professional development programmes for teachers and improvements in teacher preparation programmes are critical for developing their competencies to deliver inclusive education.

#### *Access to lifelong learning*

Ensuring the right to education involves lifelong learning. Article 24(5) requires nations to guarantee lifelong learning, and equitable opportunity to receive postsecondary and adult education as well as vocational training. This clause is substantial because it emphasizes that individuals with disabilities should access lifelong learning. Therefore, the nations should provide reasonable accommodation to guarantee the opportunity for high-quality lifelong learning.

These findings support other studies carried out in Tanzania showing that lifelong learning is an effective means of ensuring that persons with disabilities develop the required competencies. The competencies developed through lifelong learning enabled their integration into society and made them engage in economic activities (Mnyanyi, 2023; Raphael & Songambe, 2025). As per a study carried out by Raphael and Songambe (2025), lifelong learning programmes improved the learning of adults and helped persons with disabilities to empower themselves. Contrarily, according to Mnyanyi (2023), people with disabilities were less likely to be enrolled in adult education programmes because of insufficient funding, a shortage of assistive devices, and a labour shortage.

### **Tanzania's integration of Article 24 of the UNCRPD in education**

Tanzania ratified UNCRPD in 2009, an international legal force to protect the human rights of CWDs, including the right to an inclusive education. By ratifying UNCRPD, especially Article 24 on quality education, the Government of Tanzania subscribes to implementing the objectives of inclusive education stated in Article 24(1): (a) enhance human potential, dignity, and self-worth, and respect for human rights and diversity; (b) develop CWDs to their fullest potentials regarding their mental and physical capabilities as well as their talents, creativity, and personalities; (c) enable

CWDs to take part and live efficiently in free society. As a result of its ratification of UNCRPD in 2009, Tanzania has domesticated and integrated Article 24 of UNCRPD into education through established legal, policy, and strategic frameworks that promote disability-inclusive education.

#### *Legal framework*

Considering that every child has the right to an education, Tanzania ratified UNCRPD in 2009. Since this ratification of UNCRPD, Tanzania has adopted two important legal frameworks. These are the Persons with Disabilities Act, 2010 and the Law of the Child Act, 2009. These frameworks have been fundamental in domesticating UNCRPD, particularly Article 24.

#### *The Persons with Disabilities Act, 2010*

Tanzania enacted the Persons with Disabilities Act in 2010 to domesticate UNCRPD. The Act explicitly states that individuals with disabilities, regardless of age or gender, shall have the same rights to education, training, and research benefits as other citizens. Section 27, for example, is especially important because it outlines the government’s obligations with regard to education for CWDs. The government pledges to ensure that every child with a disability shall (a) have equal rights when it comes to being admitted to public or private school; (b) attend regular public or private school, unless special communication is needed; and (c) receive the necessary education services or other support services related to their disability from a competent and qualified teacher.

While Section 28 of the Act stipulates that all educational institutions shall adhere to the general prohibition against discrimination against CWDs, Section 29 emphasises that (a) all managers and owners of educational institutions shall consider the special needs of individuals with disabilities when making admission decisions; (b) anyone who owns or establishes a special school for individuals with disabilities shall provide sufficient facilities for such purposes; and (c) special schools shall be the transition towards inclusive schools. Despite the sections that state the intention to ensure education for CWDs, the Act does not provide a specific definition of inclusive education.

*The Law of the Child Act of 2009, revised edition of 2019*

Tanzania enacted the Law of the Child Act in 2009, which was revised in 2019 to ensure the rights of CWDs to education and other social welfare. Specifically, Section 5 of the Act forbids discrimination against children, including on the basis of disability, in accordance with the UNCRPD. Additionally, Section 8 requires parents, guardians, or anyone else with custody of a child to treat a child with a disability with dignity. Its sub-section 6 also guarantees CWDs special care, treatment, and reasonably affordable facilities for rehabilitation, as well as equal access to education and training wherever possible to help them reach their full potential and become self-sufficient. Section 13 of the Act emphasises that a child cannot be subjected to "torture or other cruel, inhuman punishment or degrading treatment, including any cultural practice which dehumanises or is injurious to the physical and mental well-being of a child." Although it does not define inclusive education, the Act is in line with UNCRPD, as it provides rights to education and other services, such as health services, to all children, including CWDs, as well as prohibiting discrimination against them.

*Policy framework*

The Tanzanian Education and Training Policy (ETP) of 2014, Edition 2023, emphasises an inclusive education system to guarantee every child the right to an education. The policy emphasises all students, including those with special educational needs, learn alongside one another in age-appropriate classrooms in their local communities. In order to ensure that students with special educational needs may fully participate in the formal education system, the government has been working with stakeholders to improve the learning and teaching environment. Through this policy, the government set a policy goal to deliver inclusive education: "to enhance the delivery of inclusive education and training at all levels". To achieve this goal, the government has set two policy statements: (a) to strengthen the system for identifying the special needs of each student...; and (b) ... to "ensure the existence of conducive environments for the provision of inclusive education and training (URT, 2023, p. 41)."

*Strategic framework*

To integrate UNCRPD's Article 24 in education, Tanzania has undertaken measures specific to inclusive education by developing National Strategies

on Inclusive Education (NSIE), namely NSIE (2009-17) and its successors, NSIE (2018-21) and the current NSIE (2021/22-2025/26).

*National Strategies on Inclusive Education (2009-17)*

Notably, NSIE (2009-17) was the first strategy and influential on Tanzania’s development of inclusive education. The strategy had one goal: to ensure that “all children, youths, and adults in Tanzania have equitable access to quality education in inclusive settings” (URT, 2009, p. 3). The stated goal could be attained through the following obligations: “educational policies and programmes are informed by inclusive values and practices; teaching and learning respond to the diverse needs of learners; educational support is available to all learners; professional capabilities for inclusive education are widened and strengthened; and community ownership of and participation in inclusive education are enhanced” (URT, 2009, p. 3).

Accordingly, consistent with the UNCRPD’s Article 24(3), inter alia, NSIE (2009-17) provided that:

- schools must provide short-term or long-term comprehensive courses to students with disabilities, including competencies in Braille, alternative communication methods, mobility and orientation, etc. These skills would also be provided to teachers.
- schools must cater to the deaf learners and ensure that schools employ Tanzanian Sign Language for teaching and learning.
- teachers who work with the deaf should be knowledgeable in Tanzanian Sign Language proficiency, and it should be part of their certification.
- schools for the Deaf must be maintained in order to provide deaf students with an appropriate language environment; deaf students use sign language, and they need a setting where they can practise and develop such language.
- schools should support the Deaf students’ communication and learning needs in schools and other educational institutions.

*National Strategies on Inclusive Education (2018–21)*

The goals of NSIE (2018–21), which succeeded NSIE (2009–17), primarily concentrated on four major areas. These include: (a) improving fair access to and enrolment in pre-primary school; (b) improving fair access to and

involvement in formal and informal mainstream educational pathways for children who fall into the designated vulnerable categories; (c) ensuring that children in the designated vulnerable categories successfully complete their education cycles; and (d) improving learning outcomes at the primary and ordinary secondary education levels for children in the designated vulnerable categories (URT, 2017). The overall goal of this strategy was to provide vulnerable groups with more participation in and equitable access to pre-primary and primary education, as well as to establish supportive school systems and learning environments that would enable them to successfully complete and achieve learning outcomes in both formal and informal basic education pathways. Various coordinated efforts focused on putting the specified methods into practice.

Among the attempts at punchlines in NSIE (2018–21) included:

- a nationwide initiative of identifying CWDs with the purpose placing some CWDs in educational programmes, while others receiving appropriate assistance.
- equipping schools with accessible instructional resources, and assistive technologies to foster the development of pre-literacy and pre-numeracy skills.
- printing books with large print and braille, among other teaching and learning resources, and sending them to schools across the nation.
- increasing budgetary allocation and disbursement for the procuring and distributing specialised educational equipment and assistive devices resources.
- Updating college-based pre-service teacher education programme to include elements of inclusive education.
- trainings pre-service and in-service tutors on inclusive education, sign language and deaf pedagogy, and identifying and providing assistance to children with different needs.
- building and renovating educational facilities to accommodate accessibility concerns.

*National Strategies on Inclusive Education (2021/22-2025/26)*

This is the current Strategy with the strategic vision: “To have an education system which ensure full participation of learners with special educational needs in inclusive settings and form the foundation for an inclusive society,” and strategic goal: “To provide access and quality inclusive education at all levels for learners with special educational needs (URT, 2021, p. 44).” The Strategy addresses inclusive education through the following are the strategic objectives:

- education policy, legislation and guidelines are informed by inclusive values and practices;
- equitable access and participation of learners with diverse needs and provision of quality inclusive education promoted at all levels;
- inclusive culture among policy makers, decision makers, education practitioners and community members promoted;
- improved coordination and collaboration among education stakeholders in delivering inclusive education; and
- improved quality assurance, monitoring and evaluation mechanism informed by proper data management from schools, educational institutions and stakeholders in the implementation of the strategy (URT, 2021, pp. 43-4).

*Delivery of education for CWDs*

In this review, it was found that education for CWDs in Tanzania is delivered in three systems primary and secondary schools: special school system, special unit system and inclusive school system. In special school system, only CWDs are registered. The severity and category of the learner’s disability determines the set-up of the special schools. Students with physical, cognitive, auditory, or visual impairments might attend special schools. An education system known as the "special unit system" assigns a CWD unit to a regular school. It is well noted in NSIE (2009-17) that in special unit system, the separate classes (integrated special needs education units) for learners with disabilities are placed in some regular schools. While many integrated units are day units, some have boarding facilities to support CWDs (URT,

2009). In inclusive school system, the central principle is to allow all children, regardless of any challenges or differences they may have, to learn together whenever possible. NSIE (2021-26) describes inclusive school as a school that creates as well as provides “whatever is necessary to ensure that all learners have access to meaningful learning” (URT, 2021, p. 69). Tanzania’s Persons with Disabilities Act 2010 ascribes inclusive school as ... “a place where barriers have been removed to enable students with disabilities to learn and participate effectively within the general school system” (URT, 2010, p. 8). Inclusive schools provide and create equal educational opportunities for every child, irrespective of their disabilities or backgrounds.

#### *Definition of inclusive education*

In Tanzania, inclusive education is broadly defined. On one hand, in the context of Tanzania, NSIE (2009-17) describes inclusive education to be:

“ a system of education in which all children, youths and adults are enrolled, actively participate and achieve in regular schools and other educational programmes regardless of their diverse backgrounds and abilities, without discrimination, through minimization of barriers and maximization of resources (URT, 2009, p. 2).

From this definition, NSIE (2009-17) emphasises that inclusive education recognises and addresses the obstacles that arise in the field of education as a learner interacts with their school setting using an array of instructional assistance programmes. As stated in NSIE (2009-17), inclusive education in Tanzania strives on removal of barriers to attendance, participation, and education of all persons in regular educational institutions. The Strategy describes that presence is “physical, social and economic access to education as well as retention in schools and other educational programmes” up to the end of the study programmes; participation means “learners’ active involvement in the whole process of education”; and learning means “a complex interaction between the learners, their environment and the curricula” (URT, 2009, p. 14). Obstacles to attendance, participation, and education can be: (a) within a learner (e.g. learner’s disability, psychological disorders, life circumstances, etc.), and (b) within the learner’s environment

(e.g. within the learner's living and learning environment, curriculum and teaching methods, school management structure etc.) (URT, 2009).

Drawing from NSIE's definition, key features of inclusive education in the Tanzanian context include, inter alia:

- a kind education system in which all persons are registered,
- everyone successfully engages in and participates in regular education programs or schools,
- non-discrimination of persons from different backgrounds and abilities,
- removal of all barriers to participation, attendance, and education of all persons in regular schools and,
- extension of resources needed to support all persons to engage in active participation and succeed in regular schools.

On the other hand, the NSIE's (2009-17) successor, NSIE (2018-21) describes that inclusive education entails:

“ an approach that transforms the education system, including its structure, policies, practices, and human resources, to accommodate all learners in mainstream education, addressing and responding to learners's diverse needs. It involves, among others, adaptation and modification of curriculum content, teaching and learning materials, pedagogy, and environment to ensure access to and participation in quality education for all learners, irrespective of their disabilities and special learning needs (URT, 2017, p. 12).

Through this definition, it is clear tha Tanzania needs to adopt a proactive approach to transforming education system, creating policies, culture, and educational environments that minimize obstacles to attendance, engagement, and learning. It is also clear that the government has taken initiatives for reasonable accommodations and adjustments to include CWDs in mainstream education. Similarly, NSIE (2021/22-2025/6 outlines that inclusive education is:

“ a system of education in which all learners are enrolled, actively participate, and achieve in regular educational settings and other educational programmes regardless of their diverse backgrounds and abilities, without discrimination, through minimization of barriers and maximization of resources. [It] involves the transformation of policies, legislation, regulations, processes, structures, infrastructure, practices, and human resources to support the accommodation of all learners to learn together wherever possible, regardless of any difficulties or differences they may have (URT, 2021, p. 3).

Generally, the Tanzanian government is dedicated to two main objectives in this regard. One is to guarantee the removal of structural and systemic obstacles that prevent some Tanzanian groups from exercising their right to get, fully engage in, learn, and complete all levels of education. The second is to make an effort and guarantee that, at all educational levels, regardless of any challenges or distinctions, all students do, whenever feasible, learn together. It is noteworthy that the government is well aware that, at least at some point in their academic careers, certain students may not be suited for inclusive environments.

### **Achievements in alignment of Article 24 of UNCRPD**

During the implementation of legal, policy and strategic frameworks Tanzania attained several achievements. The following are some of the potential achievements:

#### ***Early identification, assessment, and teaching***

During the implementation of NSIE (2009–17), Tanzania, through MoEST, developed Education Support and Resource Assessment Centres (ESRACs) (URT, 2017) purposely to promote: (a) early special needs identification and evaluation; (b) care and assistance for children with low vision and albinism; (c) teaching the 3Rs to children with blindness or deaf children; (d) teaching children who have autism and intellectual disabilities. Tanzania has advanced much in the diagnosis, identification and evaluation of CWDs, as well as improved provisions for CWDs through ESRAC. Among other things,

ESRAC's efforts have assisted in locating, assessing, and enrolling students with disabilities in inclusive educational settings in earnest years (URT, 2021). Furthermore, Tanzania created assessment kits through MoEST and purchased and provided teaching tools and assistive technology for students with disabilities to educational institutions around the nation (URT, 2017).

### ***Preparing qualified teachers***

The Article 24(4) of UNCRPD provides that nations “shall employ teachers, including teachers with disabilities, who are qualified in sign language and/or Braille, and to train professionals and staff who work at all levels of education” (UN, 2006, *ibid.*). Prior to and at ratification of UNCRPD, Tanzania had acute shortage of competent and professional teachers to support and manage inclusive education at all levels of education (URT, 2009). Through NSIE (2009–17), the Country made a great effort to prepare and employ competent and qualified teachers to support disability-inclusive education. Objective four (4) of NSIE (2009–17) strategically addressed professional personnel development for disability-inclusive education.

### *Professional personnel development*

In NSIEs, especially NSIEs (2009–17), the Government attained a number of achievements related to training teachers for inclusive education, especially:

- Tanzania Institute of Education’s (TIE) Inclusive Education Kit, which helps teachers learn about inclusive education;
- Patandi Teacher Training College's Open and Distance Learning (ODL) programme, which trains on-job teachers about inclusive education and special needs for CWDs in partnership with the National Council for Technical Education (NACTE);

### *Supplies and facilities*

Tanzania has made significant strides in terms of infrastructure and materials. For instance, the NSIE (2018–2021) identifies, among other things, the following: (a) building new inclusive educational infrastructure and upscaling existing infrastructure to ensure that environments and classrooms are significantly inclusive; (b) continuing to purchase and supply inclusive teaching and learning materials; and (c) continuing to establish and support satellite centers to house young children who are unable to attend school, including those with disabilities (URT, 2021).

### *Enrolment of students with disabilities*

The domestication and integration of Article 24 of the UNCRPD and the implementation of interventions established through legal, policy, and strategic frameworks that promote disability-inclusive education have resulted in an increase in the enrolment of students with disabilities in schools. For example, as stated in the Education and Training Policy 2014, 2023 Edition:

- the number of students with special needs enrolled in pre-primary education rose from 4,171 (2,502 boys; 1,669 girls) in 2016 to 6,120 (3,575 boys; 2,545 girls) in 2022.
- there were 66,372 (37,830 boys; 28,542 girls) students with special needs enrolled in primary schools in 2022, up from 37,034 (21,151 boys; 15,883 girls) in 2016.
- there were 13,142 (6,422 boys; 6,720 girls) secondary school students with special needs, up from 7,512 (3,920 boys; 3,592 girls) in 2016.
- there were 13,142 (6,422 boys; 6,720 girls) students with special needs enrolled in technical colleges in 2022, up from 108 (56 boys; 52 girls) in 2016.

### **Challenges**

Despite the achievements in implementing disability inclusive education, there are several challenges affecting the delivery of disability-inclusive education. Specifically, NSIE (2021/22-2025/6) outlines the following challenges:

- Although the National Education Act No. 25 of 1978 and its subsequent amendments acknowledge and guarantee the right to education, disability-inclusive education is not expressly covered by them.
- There are not enough qualified educators to oversee disability-inclusive classrooms at all educational levels.
- Persistently negative societal attitudes towards individuals with special educational needs in communities and educational settings, as well as inherent and unabating social-cultural behaviours,

conventions, and ideological dispositions that discriminate against them.

- The absence of an efficient system for communication and coordination between actors in the education sector and those implementing the disability inclusive education approach.
- The majority of political leaders and government officials lack sufficient knowledge and awareness of disability inclusive education.
- The lack of adequate funding for disability-inclusive education.
- The persistent and exacerbating structural poverty and associated challenges.
- The prevalence of environmental, infrastructure, and communication barriers.
- The unknown the exact number of individuals with SEN and their specific needs.

## 4. Conclusion

It is well known that UNCRPD is the first legally international human rights-based Convention that recognizes inclusive education as the right of all people. Notably, UNCRPD's Article 24 affirms that individuals with disabilities have equal opportunities for education as others with disabilities. The Article guarantees the right to inclusive education and prohibits discrimination against CWDs in education. Its specific goal is to remove barriers to social and educational engagement. It requires nations to take action to guarantee the inclusion of CWDs in regular schools.

It is important to remember that, in order to fully implement Article 24 (1) (a), “education must be directed at the strengthening of respect for human rights and human diversity, as well as the full development of the human potential and sense of dignity and self-worth” (Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities [CRPD], 2016, p. 6). In order to implement Article 24 (1) (b), “education should be directed to the development of persons with disabilities' personalities, talents, and creativity, as well as their mental, physical, and communicational abilities, to their fullest potential” (CRPD, 2016, p. 6). In order to achieve Article 24(1)(c), CRPD (2016) highlights that

“the aims of education must be directed at enabling persons with disabilities to participate fully and effectively in a free society” (p. 6).

As stated in Article 24 of the UNCRPD, nations must guarantee the equitable acquisition of inclusive, free, and compulsory education for all people. Article 24 contains a clause on the employment of qualified teachers with the capacity of using sign language and/or braille, and a provision on disability awareness training for staff working at all education levels. Additionally, reasonable accommodations and the accessibility of learning environments, including the provision of accessible educational materials, are mandated under Article 24. Enacting anti-discrimination legislation, offering financial assistance, and spreading awareness of inclusive education are equally important.

Article 24 of UNCRPD has several implications for the provision of inclusive education. Some of these implications are:

- to establish special education as the exception and inclusive education as the principle.
- disability-inclusive education is a fundamental tool that promotes the complete development of students with disabilities' personalities, skills, and creative abilities, and their mental and physical capacities
- disability-inclusive education is a vital instrument that supports the full development of CWDs to the extent possible of their mental and physical capacity as well as their personalities, skills, and creative abilities.
- there are three very important guiding principles which are necessary to ensure that CWDs access an inclusive education. These are non-discrimination, adequate personalized support, and reasonable accommodation.
- all children, especially those with blindness and deafness, require instruction in braille, sign language, mobility, and everyday life skills. Additionally, hiring personnel with skills in sign language and/or braille is necessary.
- consistent with a full inclusion approach, all students should be taught together in inclusive setting

- rejection of special education groupings, as well as any type of ‘special intervention’, which sometimes can lead to stigmatization of students with disabilities
- all students learn best in an environment with effective communication and reasonable accommodation that offers the best opportunities for life and academic development skills
- the need for countries to prioritize disability-inclusive services by-laws and policies

Importantly, to make inclusive education the principle, measures must be taken in order to promote inclusive education for CWDs. Reference to UNCRPD’s Article 24, it is required to make a reasonable accommodation for students with disabilities so they can attend regular schools. Supportive measures must also be implemented if CWDs are to be included in the regular schools. At the end, fully implementation of Article 24 of UNCRPD in education system embraces disability-inclusive education. Based on Article 24 of UNCRPD, specific inclusive education strategic framework must:

- forbid discrimination based on a person's disability.
- ensure that students can access inclusive learning opportunities on an equal basis, regardless of their disability.
- provide appropriate accommodations for all CWDs.
- ensure that the design and construction of all new schools adhere to a reasonable level of accessibility.
- establish a timeline for modifying current schools to ensure they adhere to a reasonable level of accessibility.
- provide a standardized framework for identifying, evaluating, and assisting people with disabilities.
- mandate that all students have access to the national curriculum and provide a framework for curriculum adaptation for students with disabilities as needed.
- provide students with access to assistive technology, such as braille materials, alternate script, augmentative and alternative forms of communication, mobility skills, and orientation, if necessary.
- provide deaf and hard-of-hearing pupils with the chance to acquire and receive instruction in the sign language of the community.

- create a complaints process that is efficient, enforceable, safe, and accessible for contesting any breaches of the right to an education.

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## 6. Short Biography

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