

## PROJECT COMPLETION BRIEF

# TANZANIA

## Reading Tanzania Project

2023-2025

### INTRODUCTION

#### A READING CRISIS AND A NEW OPPORTUNITY

Across Tanzania, too many children move from one grade to the next without learning to read with confidence. In many primary schools, students have access to as little as three to eleven pages of text per year, leaving them without the joyful reading practice needed to build foundational literacy. Classroom libraries are sparse, teachers overstretched, and local publishers struggle to produce high-quality children's books.

The Reading Tanzania project was created to change this story for nearly 5,000 boys and girls in Grades 1-3.

Launched by CODE in partnership with the Children's Book Organization for Tanzania (CBO), the project addressed both the shortage of engaging, locally published children's books and the limited capacity of teachers to use those books effectively in their classrooms to help improve children's literacy.

Working across 15 schools in Ifakara, Kilombero District, the project strengthened the local book chain, equipped teachers with practical, student-centred approaches, and laid early foundations for a culture of reading to take root.

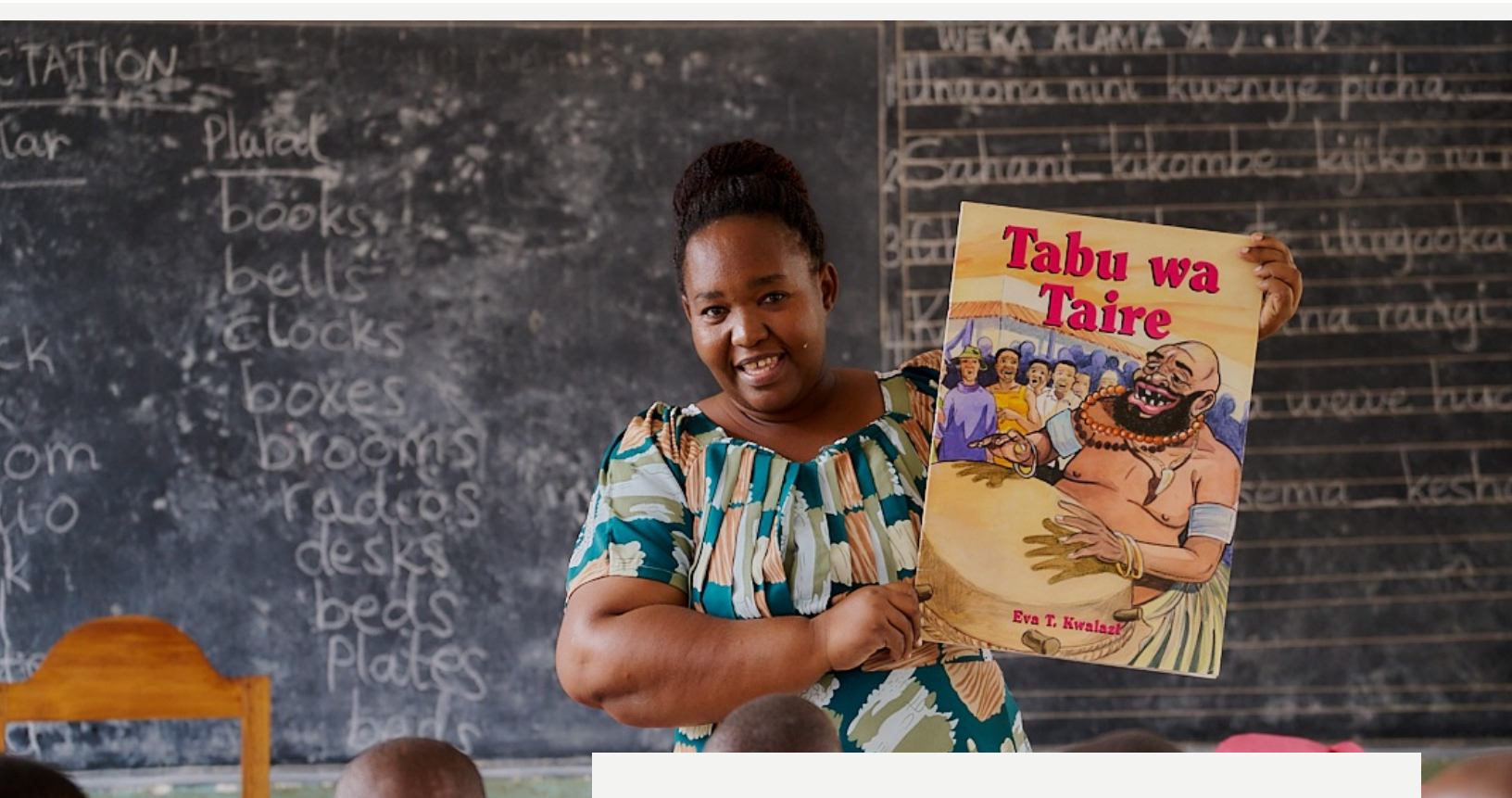
**This work was made possible thanks to the extraordinary commitment of the 2022 Summit for Literacy participants, inspired once again by Chris Bredt's vision and dedication.** Their trek up Mt. Kilimanjaro helped raise the essential funds that brought Reading Tanzania to life – placing vibrant storybooks into children's hands and creating reading experiences they had never had before.



*"I love stories about animals, especially the hare, tortoise, and elephant. It's good to have books with those kinds of stories in our classroom because I love to read."*

- Magesa, Grade 3 student

Photo credits: Emanuel Feruzi/ CODE 2025



*"Now the children are able to read. In the past, when they relied on just one reader with limited text and no stories, there was no excitement for reading...."*

- Lucia, Teacher at Mhola Primary

## INTERVENTION

### BUILDING A CULTURE OF READING IN IFAKARA

The Reading Tanzania Project brought together a powerful set of project elements designed to transform how reading is taught, practiced, and celebrated in participating schools.

#### Improving access to culturally relevant books.

CBO led national-level workshops with over 60 Tanzanian publishers, writers and illustrators, strengthening capacity to create inclusive, age-appropriate storybooks across new genres including alphabet texts, informational books, and patterned readers.

By early 2025, 13,500 locally published books, including titles such as *Twende Twende*, *Safari ya Jua* and *Tusome Abachaa* were printed and distributed to the 15 project schools, creating mini-libraries. Distribution was overseen by district education authorities, ensuring full transparency, accountability and partnership.

#### Strengthening teachers' skills and confidence.

Intensive multi-day workshops in 2024 and 2025 trained teachers, librarians and headteachers in guided reading, group reading, independent reading, gender-responsive pedagogy, and much more. Practical sessions, songs, role-







*"The books have instilled not only a love for reading but also a love for school."*

- Victor Kabwogi, Teacher,  
Mhola Primary School

playing and classroom demonstrations helped teachers integrate storybooks into lesson plans. Refresher training reinforced learning and introduced differentiated instruction and strategies for creating print-rich classrooms.

#### **Embedding mentorship and peer learning.**

Mentors visited schools regularly, providing one-on-one coaching that reinforced workshop learning and helped teachers apply new methods and strategies in real classroom settings. WhatsApp Learning Circles extended this support between visits, giving teachers a space to share videos, ideas, and challenges, and creating a cost-effective, self-sustaining model of professional learning. Headteachers and local education officers were actively engaged to help embed new practices into school routines.

#### **Engaging system actors for long-term change.**

Collaboration with the Tanzania Institute of Education (TIE), Ministry of Education, and district education officials helped strengthen the book approval process, align teaching approaches with national priorities, and elevate CBO's leadership role. A new five-year strategic plan, website, and strengthened governance developed during this project now position CBO as a credible, visible champion of children's literacy in Tanzania.

*"Having a number of titles and enough copies has improved attendance. Some truants now come when they see friends with books or hear stories from them."*

- Adela, Teacher,  
Kiningina Primary School



*"When children see themselves, their families, friends and their surroundings reflected in books, reading becomes not just a skill but a source of belonging and pride. Stories rooted in their own culture match their own experiences and cherish their identity."*

- Elias Mutani, Executive Director  
Children's Book Organization

## IMPACT

### STRONGER READERS, STRONGER FUTURES

Over two and a half years, the Reading Tanzania project delivered measurable improvements in literacy learning, classroom practice and system-wide collaboration – confirming that meaningful progress is possible with the right mix of materials, mentorship and motivation.

#### Children are reading more and reading better.

The endline evaluation revealed that students in project schools significantly outperformed those in comparison schools:

- 84% of grade 3 students were able to read grade-level text with comprehension (60% in non-project schools)
- Vocabulary and spelling scores averaged 93%
- Word reading accuracy reached 92%

These results demonstrate strong foundational literacy and decoding skills, with classrooms visibly richer in print materials and children showing greater enthusiasm for reading.

#### Teaching practice improved across all project schools, strengthened by sustained mentorship.

Teachers increasingly embraced best practices in early-grade reading, using more interactive methods, stronger questioning techniques, and livelier read-alouds that drew students into the learning process. Mentor visits further built teachers' confidence and supported the shift toward student-centred instruction. The teachers who participated will carry these strengthened practices forward to the children in their classrooms now and for years to come.

#### Local publishing capacity strengthened.

Writer and illustrator workshops resulted in higher-quality children's books, with several titles achieving national recognition. Partnerships with publishers, TIE and sector leaders laid the groundwork for a stronger, more resilient book ecosystem.

**WITH HEARTFELT THANKS TO OUR 2022 SUMMIT FOR LITERACY TEAM, YOUR IMPACT ENDURES! WE LOOK FORWARD, WITH OPTIMISM, TO BUILDING ON THIS MOMENTUM WITH OUR 2026 TEAM.**