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IBP Partner Haki Elimu Raises the Level of Education Debate in Tanzania

Tanzania faces a number of complex challenges in providing high-quality education for its people. The teacher-pupil ratio in primary and secondary schools averages 1:52, and both students and teachers often do not fully understand the language of instruction. In addition, more than 3,000 girls in primary and secondary school become pregnant and drop out each year. Solving these problems requires government commitment, but it also requires meaningful public participation based on an understanding of education policy, a high level of debate among citizens, and the ability to hold officials accountable. Raising the level of debate and holding government accountable: this is what International Budget Partnership's (IBP) partner Haki Elimu does day in and day out.

Haki Elimu has organized a multi-pronged media strategy to inform the public and officials about education. First, the organization has been working to train journalists in education policy and investigative journalism. Thirty journalists were trained in 2008, which led to a number of education stories in the media, as well as a special TV broadcast on the implementation of education policies in the city of Mwanza. Another investigative piece on students who had been illegally expelled in Dar es Salaam led to the school reinstating them.

The second prong of Haki's strategy is to support broad-based media campaigns around education issues that use television, radio, billboard, and mobile phone SMS technology. Haki sponsored a weekly television show and helped produce hundreds of radio programs, including some that were broadcast on Radio Free Africa. These spots and programs not only have generated debate but also have grabbed the attention of government. One spot on corruption in the education sector raised the ire of a deputy minister, who publicly threatened Haki Elimu. Other voices in the public and the media rose to Haki's defence, and the episode ended up further raising the organization's profile.

A third prong of Haki's approach is to engage in policy analysis to support evidence-based advocacy. The main focus of its research has been on how to improve access to and the quality of education, including producing a major study on access to education for students with disabilities.

Haki Elimu has been publicly recognized by the Tanzanian government for its contribution to debates around education policy. In 2007 the government referred to a Haki brief on financial improprieties by government officials in its report on Poverty and Human Development.

Lear more about HakiElimu's work at: www.bakielimu.org