

Adult and Non-Formal Education (ANFE) plays a crucial role in Tanzania's development. With an illiteracy rate of 18.2% (NBS, 2022) and a significant number of students discontinuing their education, 329,918 (MoEST, Basic Education Statistics in Tanzania – BEST, 2022) alone, ANFE provides a vital second chance. It serves as a central pillar of sustainable development, democracy, and economic resilience, contributing directly to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly in poverty reduction, health, and active citizenship. Despite its vital role, ANFE remains critically underfunded.

The Marrakesh Framework for Action (MFA) and the Fifth Global Report on Adult Learning and Education (GRALE 5) clearly advocate for a significant shift in how ANFE is financed. As a dedicated member of UNESCO, the African Union (AU), and the East African Community (EAC), Tanzania is urged to prioritise budgeting for ANFE in line with these important agreements. The MFA (2022) specifically mandates member states to enhance public funding for ANFE to avert any regression. While global standards suggest that countries allocate 4–6% of their GDP and/or 15–20% of their total public budget to education. As a result, Tanzania faces a dual challenge: it must meet these educational benchmarks while ensuring that ANFE receives the visibility and funding it requires within this budget framework. Currently, Tanzania allocates around 3.26% of its GDP and 12.5% of its national budget to education, which falls short of the recommended international benchmarks. Additionally, there is no dedicated budget line for ANFE and no clear funding targets established.

The Financing Gap in Tanzania

An analysis of the Ministry of Finance of Tanzania of the budget estimates for 2025/2026, and regional data, reveals a critical disparity in how ANFE is prioritised across East Africa.

- **Tanzania allocates a substantial 7.39 trillion TZS (about 3.05 billion USD) to education for 2025/26—around 13–14% of total public spending and 3% of GDP, yet it has no clearly labelled budget line for Adult and Non-Formal Education (ANFE), with adult learning expenditures scattered under broader Basic Education and community development votes, making this area structurally invisible, hard to track, and highly vulnerable to reprioritisation despite the government's strong overall investment in human capital and some activities.**
- **Kenya allocates roughly KSh 15–20 billion (about €100–130 million) to Adult and Continuing Education (ACE), equivalent to an estimated 2–3% of the education budget—which is higher than the many countries that invest less than 1% of their education budgets in ANFE, yet still below the more ambitious group that dedicate over 4%. The overall education spending is about 16–17% of the national budget, which aligns with the global benchmark of 15–20% for public investment in education.**
- **Uganda allocates about UGX 5.04 trillion (€1.2 billion) which is 7% of the national budget to education, below the global benchmark of 15–20% for public spending on education, while its flagship adult education initiative,**

ICOLEW, receives UGX 85 billion (€22 million) up to 2030 through the Public Investment Plan to establish 228 Community Learning Centres, which represents only a small fraction of both the education and national budgets but marks a clear, programmatic investment in adult learning that is still modest compared to international expectations for robust lifelong learning systems

The current education budget is structured in the following manner, according to the Ministry of Finance.

Level / Budget Area	Allocation (TZS)	% of National Budget	% of Education Budget
Total Education (FY2025/26)	7.394 trn	13.09%	100.00%
Basic Education	4.941 trn	8.75%	66.82%
Higher Education	1.719 trn	3.04%	23.25%
TVET	478.7 bn	0.85%	6.47%
Education Administration	164.8 bn	0.29%	2.23%
Science & Technology	90.6 bn	0.16%	1.23%
ANFE / ALE (explicit budget line, FY2025/26)	0	0.00%	0.00%
ANFE (ESDP planned total cost, 2025/26–2029/30)	69.0 bn	–	0.18% (of total ESDP cost)

ANFE financing in Tanzania is often intertwined with other initiatives, including basic education literacy interventions, local government community development programmes, and TVET-related upskilling efforts. In addition, ANFE is included as a costed programme line in the ESDP 2025/26–2029/30 costing model, indicating that it exists in planning even where it is not clearly ring-fenced in vote structures. The ESDP estimates a total ANFE cost of TZS 69 billion over the plan period, equivalent to 0.18% of the total ESDP cost. When annualised, this is approximately TZS 13.8 billion per year, which is roughly 0.2% of the FY 2025/26 education budget. However, the lack of effective budget tagging and ring-fencing reduces traceability, making ANFE expenditure difficult to monitor and safeguard. Meanwhile, global frameworks call for clearer resourcing, better governance, and transparent information systems to support ANFE.

0.2%
of education budget
reaches ANFE

- Chronic underinvestment in ANFE leaves millions without a second chance to learn. ANFE receives only about 0.2% of the education budget, based on the ESDP estimate of TZS 69 billion for ANFE over 2025/26–2029/30 (around TZS 13.8 billion per year out of a TZS 7.39 trillion education budget). 18.2% adult illiteracy rate and 329,918 students who discontinued formal education in 2022 are left with very limited opportunities to reenter learning through adequately funded, accessible ANFE pathways.

No
dedicated ANFE
budget lines in
FY 2025/26

- The absence of a dedicated ANFE budget line makes programmes invisible, fragmented and hard to sustain. In the FY 2025/26 national budget, ANFE has no explicit vote or sub vote: all funds for adult literacy, Integrated Community Based Adult Education (ICBAE), Community Learning Centres (CLCs) and other non formal initiatives are embedded under broader Basic Education, community development and local government lines.

?
no stable funding
after projects end

Pilots not scaled or
sustained

Multi-year planning
impossible

- Heavy reliance on short term projects undermines ANFE system building and programme continuity. Because domestic allocations are small and not ring fenced, many ANFE activities are driven by donor funded projects rather than by predictable recurrent budget lines. This project dependence creates several negative impacts: successful pilots in integrated literacy–livelihoods, women’s savings and learning groups, or community skills training are not scaled or sustained once external funding ends; local governments find it difficult to plan multi year ANFE staffing and infrastructure because funding arrives in “project cycles” rather than as a stable public service; and the sub sector struggles to meet Tanzania’s Marrakesh Framework commitments on governance, quality and continuity, even though the policy and planning framework in the ESDP is in place.

- Priority 1: Establish and operationalise a dedicated SubVote for ANFE**

Recommendation: MoEST, in collaboration with the Ministry of Finance (MoF) and PORALG, should introduce a distinct SubVote for ANFE in the FY 2026/27 budget and progressively increase its share to at least 1% of the education budget over the ESDP period. This will cover Community Learning Centres (CLCs), facilitator stipends, materials and monitoring and evaluation.

Why: A dedicated SubVote will make ANFE financially visible, allow Parliament and the public to track allocations and execution, and protect ANFE funds from being absorbed into formal schooling needs. It also creates a clear anchor for aligning Tanzania’s practice with the Marrakesh Framework and GRALE commitments on adult learning finance.

- Priority 2: Revitalise ANFE committees and departments**

Recommendation: Government should revitalise ANFE committees and departments so they function as permanent, multi-sector “learning and livelihood hubs” – not just standalone literacy projects.

MoEST and PO-RALG should issue a clear national coordination structure for ANFE, defining their core functions, minimum service package, and staffing expectations. Sectors such as Agriculture, Health, Community Development and Youth should be encouraged to channel some of their extension and outreach activities through CLCs and ICBAE groups, with small earmarked allocations. In doing so, adult education becomes the platform through which multiple sectors reach communities, stretching every shilling further.

Why this matters: The ESDP already recognises Adult and Non-Formal Education as a distinct sub-sector, and existing structures like ICBAE and CLCs provide a ready delivery infrastructure. The challenge is that many centres operate with minimal budgets, limited staffing and weak links to other sectors. Revitalising them – and giving them a clear coordination role – would allow CLCs to host programmes on literacy, livelihoods, financial literacy, health, climate resilience and active citizenship all in one place. It means communities get more, and government gets more value from an infrastructure that already exists.

- Priority 3: Broaden and stabilise the ANFE funding base through partnerships and public accountability**

Recommendation: Tanzania should engage more partners in cofinancing ANFE and introduce simple public reporting tools to increase transparency, mobilise local investment and strengthen accountability. MoEST, PORALG and the Institute of Adult Education should collectively produce an annual “ANFE Status Report”, summarising financing by source, number of CLCs and ICBAE groups supported, facilitators engaged and learners reached; partners can support an ANFE Scorecard that compares regional or district performance to incentivise local governments to allocate more of their own and sector funds to adult learning; and development partners should be invited to cofinance the ANFE SubVote through pooled or aligned funding rather than fragmented, short-term projects, to ensure that effective programmes and practitioners can be retained and scaled

Why: With current domestic ANFE spending at about 0.2% of the education budget, scaling up will require both stronger government leadership and a wider coalition of funders: local governments, NGOs, private sector, faithbased organisations and development partners. Clear annual information on ANFE financing and results can make adult learning more visible to citizens and councillors, motivate districts to invest from their ownsource revenues, and provide an evidence base for partners to align and increase their contributions.

What success looks like by 2030

- Every ward CLC has a predictable grant to open doors, run sessions, and keep lights on.
- More adults learning: higher programmes participation and completion.
- Visible community action: more group initiatives (savings, producer groups, clean-ups, parenting groups).
- Policy stability: CLCs and citizenship learning accepted as normal parts of the education system (not “projects”)

compiled in [1]).
3. UNESCO (2015). Recommendation on Adult Learning and Education (RALE)—definition of ALE’s three domains (as cited in [1]).
4. DVV International (2021). Uganda case—ICOLEW architecture: triggering public financing of popular ALE (country study title, in [1]).

1. DVV International (2021). Public Financing of Popular Adult Learning and Education (ALE): Experience, lessons and recommendations from 14 country and case studies. Editors: Chris Duke, Heribert Hinzen, Ruth Sarrazin. Bonn: DVV International. ISBN 978-3-942755-46-7.
2. UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (2016; 2019). Global Report on Adult Learning and Education (GRALE II & IV)—financing shares and investment gaps (as