Improving the quality and relevance of education for pupils is a critical priority for the mainland of the United Republic of Tanzania (referred to as ‘Mainland Tanzania’). Despite progress in increasing net enrolment rates in primary education, learning outcomes in Mainland Tanzania remain low. Regional disparities within the country persist in learning outcomes, promotion rates and resource availability. The five-year Education Sector Development Plan (2021/22–2025/26) underscores the Government’s focus on enhancing learning outcomes by addressing gaps in education quality, accessibility, participation and equity. In this context, the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MoEST) and the President’s Office, Regional Administration and Local Government (PO-RALG) are leveraging an innovative research partnership with UNICEF to identify and scale local solutions that are already improving learning in Mainland Tanzania’s government primary schools.
The Data Must Speak (DMS) positive deviance research aims to explore solutions for improving educational outcomes. It strives to identify behaviours and practices that allow some schools, referred to as ‘positive deviant’ schools, to outperform others despite operating in similar contexts and with similar levels of resources, and to identify levers to scale these practices. This report presents the local behaviours and practices found in positive deviant schools in Mainland Tanzania, with the aim of helping to inform future education policy. This research has been co-created and co-implemented with MoEST, PO-RALG and national education stakeholders since 2022.

Key findings on the behaviours and practices of positive deviant schools:

**School leadership and management**
- Head teachers enhance teachers’ pedagogical skills and performance through training and capacity-building opportunities, both in and out of school.
- Head teachers improve the quality of teaching and learning through stronger performance monitoring and pedagogical support.
- Head teachers strengthen teachers’ motivation through positive reinforcement and incentives.
- Head teachers ensure that their schools have strengthened measures to curb pupil absenteeism.

**Community engagement**
- Schools strengthen parental engagement in their pupils’ learning.
- Parent committees more actively facilitate support for addressing school and pupil challenges.
- Schools engage the broader community to support school activities and foster a sense of ownership over the school’s success.

**Pedagogical practices**
- Teachers more frequently monitor pupils’ learning and organize additional support, particularly for pupils who are struggling.
School climate
- Schools create more opportunities for pupils’ participation in decision-making and sharing of feedback.

Decentralized administration
- Ward Education Officer prioritizes improving teaching and learning when providing supports to schools.

Policy recommendations:

School leadership and management
- Support head teachers and Ward Education Officers to strengthen their instructional leadership, providing the necessary guidance and training for head teachers to reorient their role towards improving teachers’ pedagogical skills and performance.

Pedagogical practices
- Further explore the role of incentives in supporting teachers’ motivation and consider developing teacher incentive programmes.
School climate
- Strengthen the mandate and capacities of Parent-Teacher Partnerships to raise awareness among parents of the importance of their role in supporting pupils’ learning.
- Support school staff, including head teachers and teachers, to develop systematic communication approaches with parents that are more frequent, personalized and focused on pupils’ learning.
- Continue to expand access to initial and continuous professional development opportunities that support teachers to implement school-based assessments and use learning data to inform their classroom instruction.

Community engagement
- Continue expanding access to initial and continuous professional development opportunities that support teachers to implement school-based assessments and use learning data to inform their classroom instruction.
- Encourage or standardize out-of-classroom support and remedial learning for pupils who are struggling, including by incentivizing teachers and community stakeholders to engage as partners to deliver this support.

Decentralized administration
- Increase sustainable, equitable and adequate financing for education, with a focus on ensuring that government funding at the school level is sufficient for infrastructure needs, workforce management, and activities focused on teaching and learning, including professional development.

Stage 4 of the DMS research will deepen these recommendations by identifying levers for scaling practices and behaviours of positive deviant schools to more schools in Mainland Tanzania together with MoEST and PO-RALG.