



Press Release

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Half of citizens (47%) feel that Kenya's healthcare sector has major problems Cost and availability of drugs cited as significant challenges

13 September 2016, Nairobi: Today State House hosted a health summit to update Kenyans on the progress of health related projects by the national government. Four years ago, the national government set an ambitious plan to improve health care management nationally to ensure that all counties are equipped with basic diagnostic equipment such as CT Scans and X-ray machines.

To coincide with this event, Twaweza East Africa has released new data on citizens' access to and views of health services.

A new public opinion poll (*Sauti za Wananchi*) by Twaweza East Africa shows that almost all Kenyans think the health sector has problems. According to the survey, half (47%) say it has major problems and the other half (45%) say the problems are minor. Cost and availability of drugs are mentioned by citizens as significant challenges.

Brezhnev Otieno, Advocacy Manager for Kenya, Twaweza, said *"The Constitution of Kenya guarantees every individual the right to the highest attainable standard of health, which includes the right to health care services. It is unfortunate that many of the citizens are not able to access quality and timely health services."*

The survey also shows that the last time they were ill or injured, 74% of Kenyans sought treatment from a government health facility. 16% went to a Private/NGO health facility, 8% to a pharmacy, and 4% to a Church/Mission health facility.

In terms of health insurance, seven out of ten Kenyans (68%) do not have health insurance. Amongst those who have (the 31%), nine out ten (88%) mentioned NHIF and 14% a private health insurance by employers. Some individuals have both NHIF and private health insurance. Barriers to not having health insurance include unaffordability (53%), lack of awareness (13%), lack of information on how it works (12%), lack of service providers in the locality (7%) and the feeling that it is unnecessary (7%).

Generally, health practitioners (doctors/nurses) are mentioned as the main sources of health-related information by 51% of citizens. Other sources of health related information are radio (20%), friends and family (14%), television (7%), internet (3%), church (2%). Pharmacists and newspapers are at 1% respectively.

In relation to emergency health services, half of Kenyans (48%) do not know of an ambulance that can be called to their village/area for an emergency. This service is supposed to be provided by county governments. Among citizens who are aware of local ambulance services available to them, 86% stated

that this is provided by the county government, 10% by private entities, 2% by non-profit/religious institutions and others (1%: national government).

When asked to state the primary decision makers for their families on health care issues, male adults within the households are mentioned by 42% of Kenyans. 28% mentioned both male and female adults in the household and 27% female adults within the households.

Finally, when asked if anyone in their households had been screened for various lifestyle-related illnesses, 42% of the households report having someone who has been screened for high blood pressure. This is followed by 29% for diabetes and 25% for any type of cancer. In terms of diagnosis in the past one year, 30% of households report having someone diagnosed with high blood pressure, 20% with any type of diabetes and 12% with cancer.

Aidan Eyakuze, Executive Director, Twaweza added *“Citizens have expressed concerns with the cost and availability of drugs in hospitals. If these are not addressed effectively, many Kenyans will continue to suffer. Meeting the goal of improving the quality of life for all Kenyans as envisaged in the social pillar of Kenya’s Vision 2030, will almost be unattainable”*.

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Notes to Editors

- Data for this press statement comes from Twaweza’s flagship *Sauti za Wananchi*, which is a nationally-representative, high-frequency mobile phone panel survey. Information on the overall methodology is available at www.twaweza.org/sauti. For this brief data were collected from 1,783 respondents from Kenya *Sauti za Wananchi* panel. This was the fourth round of calls to the panel, conducted between 7 and 28 June 2016.
- Twaweza works on enabling children to learn, citizens to exercise agency and governments to be more open and responsive in Tanzania, Kenya and Uganda. We have programs, staff and offices across all three countries, and a globally respected practice of learning, monitoring and evaluation. Our flagship programs include *Uwezo*, Africa’s largest annual citizen assessment to assess children’s learning levels across hundreds of thousands of households, and *Sauti za Wananchi*, Africa’s first nationally representative mobile phone survey. We undertake effective public and policy engagement, through powerful media partnerships and global leadership of initiatives such as the Open Government Partnership
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