



Press Release
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Access to water is improving in rural areas but declining in urban locations But one in four rural Kenyans (26%) spend an hour or more collecting water

21 March 2017, Nairobi: Whereas recent findings by Twaweza show that 62% of rural Kenyans have access to an improved water source compared to 78% of those living in urban areas, data from Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, the World Health Organization and UNICEF's Joint Monitoring Program shows that in the last few decades there has been a decline of water access from improved water sources in urban areas (at 90% in 1990) and an improvement for rural citizens (at 35% in 1990). Despite the rapid increase in access to improved water sources in rural areas, citizens there remain disadvantaged. One in four (26%) spend at least one hour collecting water compared to one in ten citizens (12%) in urban areas. In addition, in 92% of households in Kenya, the burden of water collection falls on women (71%) and children (21%).

These findings were released by Twaweza in a research brief titled *Half empty or half full? Water, sanitation and hygiene in Kenya*. The brief is based on data from *Sauti za Wananchi*, Africa's first nationally representative high-frequency mobile phone survey. The findings are based on data collected from 1,741 respondents across Kenya from 5 to 28 November 2016. The findings are useful for review and reflection on Kenya's efforts towards providing access to improved water supply and sanitation services for its citizens.

Overall 68% of Kenyans have access to an improved water source, although this varies significantly by wealth groups; where 87% of the wealthiest compared to 48% of the poorest have access to improved water sources. In rural areas, the most commonly used source of water is surface water (26%) which is an unimproved source and in urban areas the most common source of water is a public tap (32%) which is classified as an improved source. In urban areas 53% of citizens have access to piped water compared to 30% in rural areas.

In urban areas the most common challenge to accessing safe water are irregular supply (32%), distance to water points (30%) and the insufficient numbers of water points (28%). In rural areas, the challenges are distance (48%), insufficient numbers of water points (30%) and dirty water (29%). In an effort to make water safer to drink, the majority of Kenyans (65%) do treat their water mainly by boiling (44%) and/or using chemical disinfectants (39%). Other citizens also report that they let water stand and settle (11%) and/or strain it (10%).

Finally, Kenyans are split as to whether access to water has improved (27% think it has) or gotten worse (29%). The largest number of citizens (44%) believe that there has been no change. A majority six out of ten Kenyans (58%) are dissatisfied with their county governments' performance in delivering water services.

Dr John Mugo, Director of Data and Voice at Twaweza, said: *"The apparent decline in access to water in urban areas is troubling. More and more citizens are finding themselves living in cities and if*

infrastructure is already struggling to keep pace, this does not bode well for the future. At the same time the government should be commended for the rise in access in rural areas and we hope they continue to maintain this positive trend. Now is also the time to concentrate on the more entrenched issues around access to water including the burden of collection and the quality of water provided. Improved water sources cost money. Someone somewhere along the way will have to bear that cost to ensure that Kenya's poor are not just left scraping in the muck for dirty water that will cost them more in the long run."

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Notes to Editors

- This brief and the data contained can be accessed at www.twaweza.org, or www.twaweza.org/sauti
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