



Critical Review of Twaweza - Tanzania REPORT

December 2017

INTRODUCTION

For the purposes of self-reflection and evaluation of its impact on governance and change in Tanzania, Twaweza in Tanzania commissioned an independent consultant to collect views from ‘critical friends’ of the organisation – those who know Twaweza’s work and are willing to provide honest and thoughtful feedback on areas of strength and weakness. This report presents a synthesis of those views. The analysis in the report goes beyond stakeholder interviews. It triangulates the feedback from the interviewees with a qualitative assessment of media presentation and other factors such as social media responses from and about Twaweza. The report is thus a critical evaluation of the public perception of Twaweza in Tanzania. Based on the questions that were asked to stakeholders, the report also outlines recommendations for the organization as suggested by the interviewees. It is important to mention that a number of interviewees held very similar views about Twaweza.



1. Areas of Strength

There is a general view that Twaweza is a powerful organization in terms of leadership, human resources and funds. Interviewees acknowledged the strong leadership that Twaweza has enjoyed from its formation to the current period. The combination of strong leadership and skilled human resources has made the organization professional. The interviewees emphasised that Twaweza is professional in how it does it work and conducts itself.

“Twaweza conducts itself well, it is one of the most professional Civil Society Organizations in the country” – Interviewee, Government.

The ability to carry out professional work and attract skilled human capital reflects the funding status of the organization. Interviewees from fellow civil society organizations (CSOs), in particular, mentioned that Twaweza has adequate financial resources which is not true for many CSOs in the country. The situation is that of *“between egg and chicken, which one comes first”*, is it the skilled human resources that have enabled innovation and the means to attract more funds or is it the funds that have enabled Twaweza to employ skilled personnel?

Or perhaps the answer is in a different space altogether. Some interviewees suggested that leadership in Twaweza has enabled the organisation to reach the high levels of professionalism admired by CSOs and other stakeholders.

“One of the strengths of Twaweza is the strong and competent leadership” – Interviewee, Media.

There were apparent concerns on the change of leadership – some interviewees thought it might bring anxiety to the organization.

“It seems like the organization is soul-searching - the leadership transformation has had an impact on the organization’s identity – this is not a weakness, it is a change” – Interviewee, Government.

Upon probing, the concern and anxiety stem from the connection between leadership style and personality. Since its formation, Twaweza has changed leadership only once from the founder who shaped the organisation’s early identity. The interviewees felt that this change pushed the organization into an unconscious identity/soul searching process. Ultimately this refers to the process through which the organization is shifting from being associated with a single figure towards having an independent organizational identity.

Another strength attributed to Twaweza is the organization’s communication strategy. The interviewees argued that Twaweza has done well in creating conversations among citizens on different subjects including politics, governance, and socio-economic justice. It has branded itself well. Critically one of the interviewees argued that Twaweza should bring back its original short video clips “Twaweza ni Sisi”.

“Where did those initial clips (Twaweza ni Sisi) go? The ones that Twaweza used when it was being established? They were moving and brought sense of ownership to anyone who watched them. They triggered unique feelings towards togetherness...Twaweza should re-use them, they will help rejuvenate the organization again” – Interviewee, Political Party.

For him, those first video clips were creative and many in the public could relate to the message. He further asked, “why did they stop producing such clips”? The organization uses different media outlets such as TV programs and social media not only to disseminate information but also to generate

conversation. Analysis of Twaweza's media approaches shows evidence of a good communication strategy. The organization's twitter account is active with close to 50,000 followers. The Facebook account is equally active. These social media accounts are updated regularly with active participation in terms of responding to comments and facilitating conversations. The organization also uses other social media outlets to facilitate and disseminate information. For example, Twaweza works with JamiiForums during its events, which are also open to the public. The organization's website is another reflection of a good communication strategy as well as Twaweza's commitment to transparency and accountability. Publications, research findings and annual review including financial statements are all available online.¹

"They walk their talk, all their annual financial statements are online and publicly available" – Interviewee, NGO.

In relation to the above, the interviewees also thought that Twaweza is transparent and accountable in terms of its operations. This, as mentioned above, was cited in reference to the availability of their reports including financial audits and other evaluation reports. It is an indication that the organization is transparent and accountable to not only its funders but also the public.

Also mentioned by interviewees as a strength is the creativity and innovation in dealing with emerging issues. The organization is proactive in engaging citizens to discuss topical issues on the ground. Examples cited include its work on shrinking civic space and the recently designed programs such as #NjooTuongee that invites government officials to respond to questions from the public.

2. Impact on Policy

Twaweza has three major projects: Sauti za Wananchi (opinion polls on various issues), Uwezo (citizen-led learning assessment), and KiuFunza (teacher incentive program). According to the interviewees, Sauti za Wananchi, out of the three programs, is the most well-known. The interviewees argued that if Twaweza is a household name, it is due to Sauti za Wananchi. This popularity is in particular related to polls on politics that Twaweza conducts including political opinion polls, corruption, and incumbency popularity.

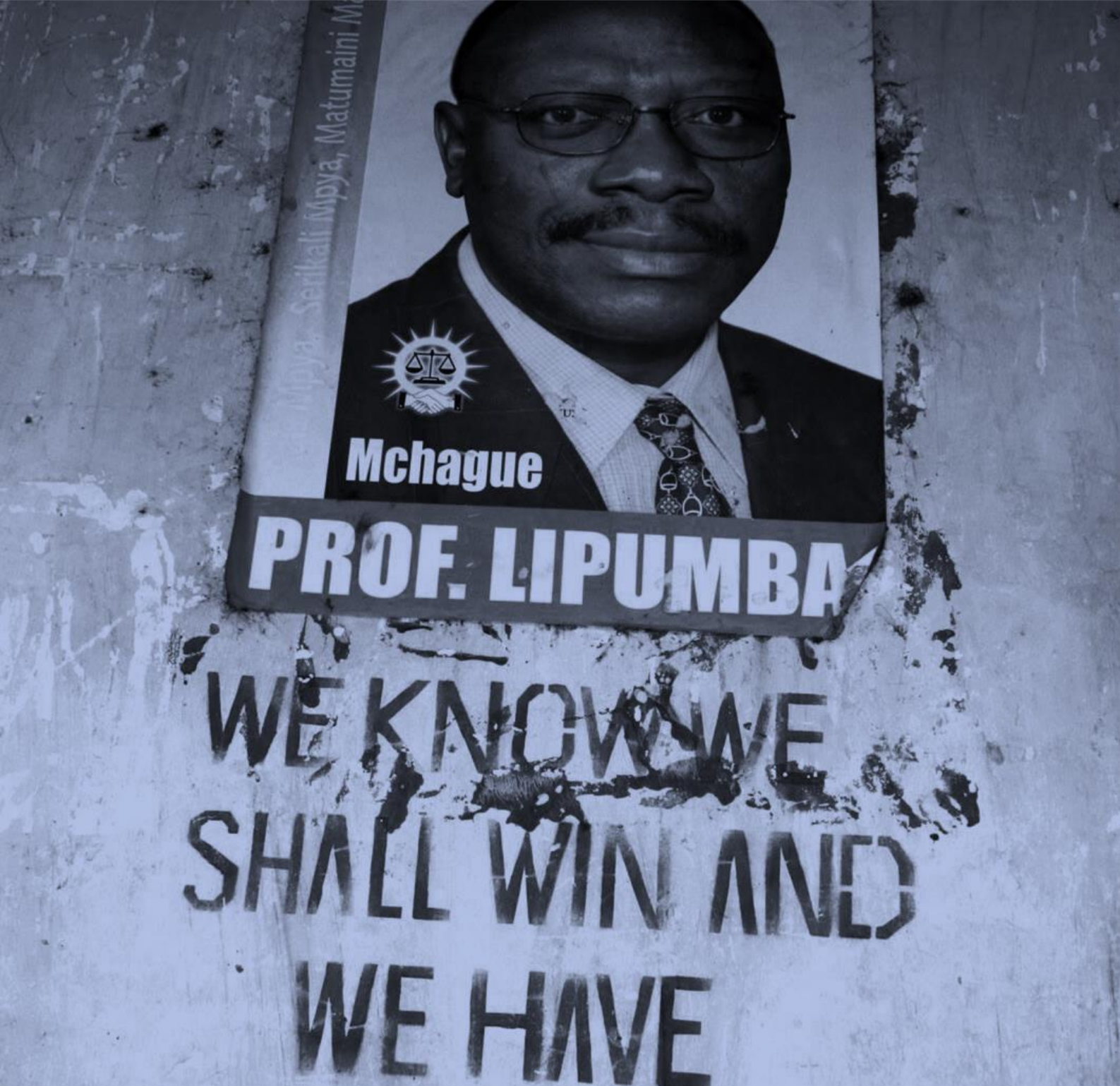
"If Twaweza is a household name, it's because of Sauti za Wananchi." – Interviewee, Government.

There were notable reservations about the impact of Sauti za Wananchi on the organization's public image. Some of the interviewees were concerned that the popularity of Sauti za Wananchi is reducing Twaweza into an opinion poll organization in the eyes of the public. Another interviewee asked, how do political opinion polls fit into their Theory of Change? How do these polls help in their vision? These concerns stem from the controversies and discussions generated on social media and in the public following specific polls. For example, in 2015 just before the elections, the poll results by Twaweza were received with mixed emotions - some accusing the organization of bias towards the ruling party² while others thought the timing for releasing poll results was not appropriate given the political context.³

¹ See <http://twaweza.or.tz/go/reports-plans>

² See <http://www.thecitizen.co.tz/News/Strong-reaction-as-Twaweza-poll-shows-Lowassa-trailing/1840340-2881954-mof8ytz/index.html> ; <http://www.thecitizen.co.tz/News/Readers--views-divided-over-Twaweza-study-on-election/1840340-2896576-12iv1hmz/index.html>

³ See <http://www.thecitizen.co.tz/oped/CROSSROADS---Where-is-Twaweza-poll-on-Zanzibar-election-/-/1840568/3086658/-/qg0enf/-/index.html>



Overall, the interviewees see Twaweza as neutral and evidence-based. One of the interviewees said he sees Twaweza's future as an influential think tank in the country. The applied research that the organization does is high level and reliable.

"Twaweza has the potential of changing, by example, the way we do our advocacy- the use of data to critique policy" – Interviewee, Political Party.

One month after the poll release following the elections, the actual elections result were similar to the poll results. The problem was contextual, political opinion polls are rare in Tanzania. It was thus commendable for Twaweza to release the results in order to enhance the culture of evidence-based politics and critical conversations that are supported by evidence. Interviewees argue that the polls are relevant but Twaweza should focus more on those topics that touch the lives of citizens and CSOs in general.

In connection to this, interviewees want Twaweza to address the issue of the methodology of Sauti za Wananchi. The perception is that distributing mobile phones to respondents can lead to biased responses. Twaweza has attempted to address this by publishing a full methodology paper online⁴, creating a short video⁵ and a methodology factsheet but there are still reservations on the same. There is a need to look at this again in order to maintain the reliability of the poll results from the public perspective.

“The methodology should be re-checked especially the sampling, there is a lot of complaints and this leads to some people saying the data is not reliable” – Interviewee, Media.

The Uwezo program was also popular but not so much as Sauti za Wananchi. This is partly because it is not done as often. The last public event about Uwezo was in April 2017. The interviewees thought that Uwezo had impacted policy in terms of creating conversations on learning issues in the country. It was also mentioned that the data from Uwezo were used to inform discussions in parliament. Although it is difficult to determine the exact contribution on policy and/or education circulars, the Uwezo findings were instrumental in underscoring serious learning issues in the country. Different stakeholders have also used the findings from Uwezo. Policy is a product of many factors and contributions from stakeholders. It is thus difficult to measure the exact extent to which Twaweza’s programs have influenced policy. However, on education and learning issues, the Uwezo assessment provided evidence of critical learning problems we are facing as a country. Prior to Uwezo, there were no other domestic/national assessments of learning in the country.

The various discussions on learning crises stemmed from the Uwezo assessment. These discussions led to analysis of policy related issues in education. One of these issues is the Capitation Grant, one of the interviewees said they use data from Twaweza to push their advocacy objectives in this area. From those discussions, Capitation Grants are now sent directly to schools, which is a significant policy impact.

“One of the clear impact evidence of Twaweza’s advocacy on education through Uwezo and other activities is the Capitation Grant, it is now sent directly to schools, which was one of Twaweza’s recommendations over the years” – Interviewee, Political Party.

Another interviewee, from the Political Party category, mentioned that the government is also considering KiuFunza - in providing incentives to teachers to improve performance.

One of the other tangible impacts that Twaweza has had on policy was through the facilitation of the Open Government Partnership (OGP) in Tanzania. The country signed on to the partnership, Twaweza monitored the implementation of the national action plan and provided support to the government. The interviewees commended Twaweza for that. There was, however, one concern – that other CSOs felt that Twaweza did not adequately engage them in the OGP program. There was an apparent feeling that the OGP was business between Twaweza and the government. The interviewees were unhappy with the recent pull out of the government from the OGP.

In relation to the OGP, Twaweza is also commended for pushing and contributing to a critical discussion on the Access to Information Act. However, although the enacted Act was amended, it still contains a series of obstacles for citizens to request information.⁶

“Twaweza fills an existing vacuum in Civil Society in Tanzania, however, the organization’s future will also depend on its collaboration with other CSOs in the country and its ability to work from the bottom up” – Interviewee, NGO.

⁴ See <http://twaweza.or.tz/uploads/files/SzW%20Approach%20Paper%20FINAL.pdf>

⁵ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FizLjoNiFHA>

⁶ See <http://www.twaweza.org/go/analysis-on-ati>

3. Areas of Attention

The impact of Twaweza and positive perceptions among the public, government, and other stakeholders can be consolidated further to ensure achievement of its mission and the change the organization wishes to see. There are areas that were mentioned by the interviewees that need further attention if Twaweza is to strengthen its position.

It was felt by some interviewees that Twaweza is almost an elitist organization and it has not trickled down to the normal Tanzanian citizen in the rural areas. Interviewees felt that the organization carries out high profile programs but only educated classes in society can relate to /understand the language of Twaweza. The question was asked, how is Twaweza influencing a Tanzanian citizen in a rural setting outside Dar-es-Salaam? Some interviewees felt that the organization is detached from daily realities of normal *wananchi*.

“Who is Twaweza feeding? How do they get to the people? How do the majority of citizens benefit from what the organization does?” – Interviewee, NGO.

It was also felt that the work of Twaweza does not yet reflect its resources (funds and human capital) and its potential to source more funds given its international networks. One of the interviewees argued that Twaweza should ensure they have similar influence on the ground (in Tanzania) as they do in the international sphere. There is a feeling that the organization has not yet reached and/or touched the lives of many Tanzanians. Several questions were posed by interviewees in response to this question: how has Twaweza influenced active citizenry beyond the few in Dar es Salaam and in other few urban areas? What’s the role of the data produced by Twaweza in the development process? What’s the niche of Twaweza given the varied topics it covers such as those in Sauti za Wananchi?

With regards to interactions with other CSOs in the country, the interviewees felt that Twaweza needs to engage more with other CSOs. Some CSOs feel that Twaweza has not engaged sufficiently with them given shared goals around governance. One interviewee argued that it could be the reason why Uwezo did not have much influence on policy despite the fact that the government could not oppose the assessment findings. If the Uwezo findings, for example, were owned collectively by CSOs as opposed to Twaweza on its own, this could lead to more policy influence.

“We at times get invitations from Twaweza, they have many events. We also invite them to ours - but we always feel they have not involved us adequately. It’s a powerful organization” – Interviewee, Government.

There was a concern that Twaweza is entirely donor-dependent and so it faces similar risks other CSOs in Tanzania are facing. In particular this leads to the risk of becoming donor driven. This, according to one interviewee, has made Twaweza inflexible: donors have signed up to the organisation’s theory of change and so Twaweza cannot deviate from that. As a result, Twaweza can be bureaucratic in its operations and can over-analyze – a situation that obstructs greater creativity and innovation.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The overall feedback on Twaweza is positive. The organization is considered to be one of the most reliable and powerful CSOs in the country. It is professional and the impact of its work in creating evidence-based conversations around governance is recognized. The interviewees also provided recommendations through which they think Twaweza can consolidate the gains and the impact it has had so far. In addition, the interviewees think the organization has a great future and potential. In respect to that, the sub-section below outlines areas of potential that were mentioned by the interviewees, future prospects, and finally recommendations.

Areas of Potential

The interviewees mentioned the following areas of potential for Twaweza.

- Since Twaweza is, relative to other CSOs in the country, courageous, they can push back more and speak more and more on governance issues without fear.
- More collaboration with other CSOs to collectively push shared agendas.
- The current context of shrinking civic space is an opportunity for Twaweza to have more impact on highlighting governance issues and providing space for citizen-led conversations.

Future Prospects

The interviewees thought that Twaweza has sustainable future prospects but needs to ask itself some hard questions:

- How is the organization working within the current context without antagonism?
- Who are they feeding? / How do they get to the people? / How do the citizens benefit?
- How can they avoid being perceived as political particularly in relation to political polls and having direct working relations with politicians?

Recommendations

The interviewees suggested:

- Twaweza should move beyond Dar es Salaam and ensure they engage more with people and organizations outside the city. It was suggested, for example, that the organization could hold research dissemination events in other towns.
- The Sauti za Wananchi polls on certain topics - such as incumbency popularity - should be carried out regularly (whether it's monthly, quarterly, biannually or annually). In this way, they can track trends and provide a more comprehensive analysis of the political situation.
- Twaweza should focus more on topics that relate to people's development and not just politics. The organization should deal with politics of the people and society in general.
- Twaweza needs to use bottom-up approaches to understand core issues. The practice so far has been top-down, which may not trigger or generate real conversations from the ground.
- The organization needs to work from the heart and not only the brain. In that, the organization's theory of change needs to be flexible enough to allow creativity and accommodate emerging issues in the society.

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Appendix 1: Interview Schedule

Task: Critical Review from Friends of Twaweza in Tanzania

Introduction

This interview guide is for collecting critical and honest feedback from different stakeholders of Twaweza in Tanzania. The feedback is important for the purposes of informing Twaweza's plan to improve its ways of working to ensure positive impact.

Twaweza, in Tanzania, has two major programs – Sauti Za Wananchi (Voices of the Citizen) and Uwezo (learning assessments). In addition to these two programs, Twaweza has introduced other initiatives for the purposes of enhancing governance. These include support for the OGP (Open Government Partnership) and Kiufunza (promoting performance rewards to teachers in order to increase motivation).

Twaweza is always in the learning process. It is a learning organization. This is the reason why the organization seeks to receive critical and honest feedback from its stakeholders.

Below are the questions that will serve as a guide in interviews that will be carried out with stakeholders. The stakeholders will come from four different category institutions including: media, NGOs, academia/research, and Government. The information from the interviews will include

To Media:

1. What and how do you know about Twaweza?
2. Has the work of Twaweza helped/assisted you in your work? How?
3. Do you think Twaweza has had any impact on good governance in the country? Explain your answer
4. How can Twaweza improve its operations and ensure further impact of its work?

To NGOs/CSOs:

1. As a fellow CSO, how is Twaweza different from your organization and other CSOs?
2. How is the relationship between Twaweza and your organization /other CSOs?
3. Has Twaweza had any policy impact in the country? How?
4. How can Twaweza improve its operations and ensure further impact of its work?

To Academia/research:

1. How do you know Twaweza?
2. Have you ever used data from Twaweza on your research?
3. What's your take on Twaweza's methodology in particular on Sauti za Wananchi?
4. If Twaweza stops its programs today, what would be the impact on your work and/or in the country?

To Government:

1. How do you know Twaweza?
2. What has been the impact of Twaweza's programs- Sauti za Wananchi and Uwezo- on government's policy and/or decisions? Are they relevant?
3. Is Twaweza a neutral player? Explain your answer
4. How can Twaweza improve its ways of doing things to ensure improvement on its impact?

Interviewees

List of Interviewees

Designated	Organization/Category	
Interviewee 1		1/2017
Interviewee 2	Government	1/2017
Interviewee 3	Government	1/2017
Interviewee 4	Government	1/2017
Interviewee 5	Political Party	1/2017
Interviewee 6	Academia	1/2017
Interviewee 7	Academic/Research	1/2017
Interviewee 8		1/2017
Interviewee 9	Academia	1/2017
Interviewee 10	Academia/CSO	1/2017
Interviewee 11	Academia	1/2017