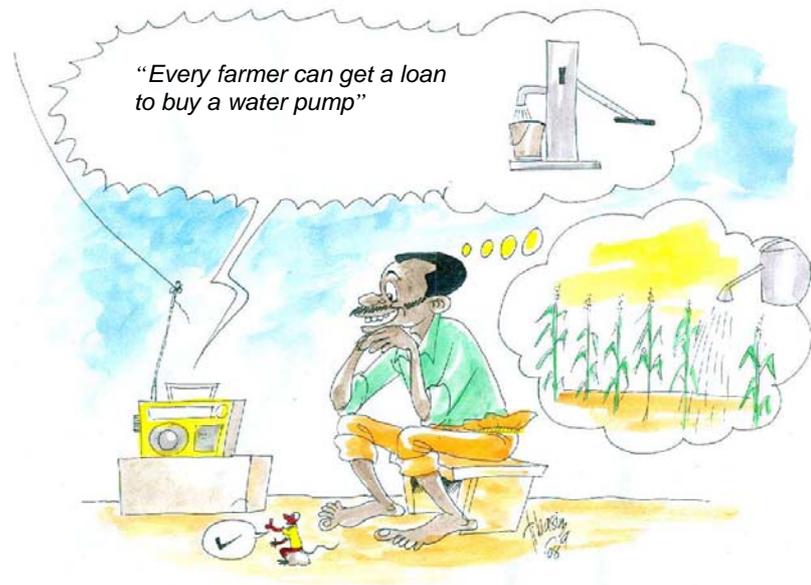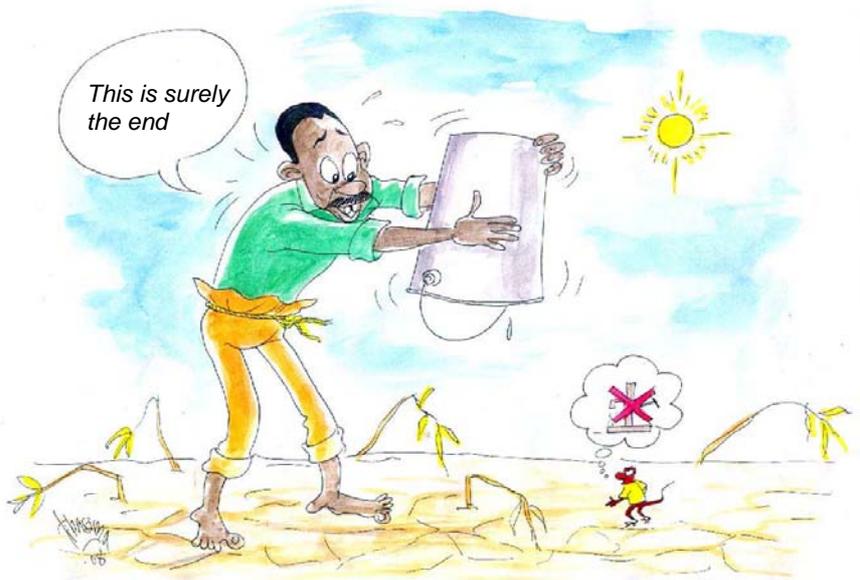What works in East Africa? What doesn't? What have been the most important developments in the last ten years? What are the most powerful constraints and opportunities for the next 5-10 years? What really drives change? Who knows what? How do resources flow and decisions get made? How do problems get solved? Who has the power and the inclination to make things happen? How do ideas get formed and norms established? What needs to be done?

The Twaweza initiative has been informed by an engagement with these questions – through the work of its initiators in East Africa and elsewhere, our reading, and our interaction with citizens. These questions have also been core concerns in the country assessments undertaken in Tanzania, Uganda and Kenya this year. This section presents a summary analysis and key 'take-home' messages emerging from the country assessments.[1]

1.1 **Governments have improved but are largely unresponsive to citizens:** All three countries have undergone major reforms in the past decade, usually with significant donor support. These reforms have achieved several important milestones and brought benefits, but overall have not lived up to their promise. Uganda has one of the most developed local government decentralization frameworks in the world, which in practice is starved of funding, prone to elite capture, and suffers from cumbersome and confusing requirements. In Tanzania, too, local government, public sector, public financial management and other governance reforms, as one observer put it, "look good on paper and impress outsiders but are in fact a charade spinning its wheels".[2] Kenya experienced an unprecedented level of democratic fervour after the 2002 elections, which led to a set of reform commitments. But today the constitutional review process (seen to be foundational by many Kenyans) is largely stuck, and essentially the same government (albeit with different party names) is seen as bloated, self-serving and uninterested in the plight of people. The upshot is that in all three countries the typical citizen does not view government as its representative voice – at both national and local levels – and rarely turns to it for practical help. In contrast, government is often seen to be a problem; as corrupt[3], violent[4] or contemptuously uninterested. Therefore, it was no surprise that most respondents characterized local level authorities such as county leaders and the police as best avoided.

1.2 **Services have expanded dramatically but lack quality and accountability:** All three countries have dramatically expanded public services, particularly in education. Enrolments in primary and secondary schools have almost doubled, classrooms have been built, and over seven million additional children are now registered for schooling. Virtually all observers noted that service quality is

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[1] Country assessments were undertaken in Tanzania, Uganda and Kenya in early to mid 2008, jointly by the Hewlett Foundation, the International Budget Partnership (IBP) and Hivos. The Kenya country visit was only just completed on 16 August 2008; the full country reports and synthesis are being finalized at present and expected to be competed by mid-September. For the sake of brevity data and full references are dispensed with here; they will be provided in the country reports.

[2] See for instance Tim Kelsall's recent piece on which reforms work in Tanzania (draft mimeo, 2008)

[3] Some cases cited include Anglo Leasing and Regency Towers in Kenya; the Bank of Tanzania, Richmond (energy) and radar purchase in Tanzania; and the military helicopter procurement in Uganda.

[4] Numerous observers referred to Uganda as a militaristic state 'not that different from Zimbabwe' and in Kenya dissenters were often said to suffer from arrest, beatings and harassment from the authorities.

extremely poor. A common phrase is 'lots of schooling, little learning', with a sense of crisis that students complete schooling without the skills necessary to thrive in life. While basic education is ostensible free in all three countries, various fees and contributions appear to have been informally reinstituted. In health too, thousands of new health facilities have been built across the region, but they lack staff, medicine, equipment and effective supervision. Many complained about the high cost of health and water too. After over 40 years of independence, all three countries are unable to provide basic water and sanitation to large parts of its population. In Kenya and Uganda private provision of basic services for the poor has grown, making them closer and more convenient, but quality and cost remain a concern. These developments suggest that the fundamental issues of equity and inclusion may be getting worse, with some survey and anecdotal evidence showing that inequalities are increasing significantly in the region. Observers noted that there were dual systems – decent, privatized opportunities for a small rich elite and third rate service for the rest. However, despite the existence of recourse mechanisms, such as the school committee and the health unit management team, many of these structures exist only on paper, and even where they do exist, most citizens find themselves unable to hold the government to account. Citizen efforts to organize are hampered by unreliable access to public information and the absence of channels for civic organizing and representation, despite some positive movement in this area (such as exhortations to post budget information on notice-boards).

1.3 **The core challenge is implementation:** When governments fail to be effective, reformers tend to focus on generating better laws, policies and frameworks. But we were consistently informed (particularly in Tanzania and Uganda) that "the laws are generally fine but that they lack implementation". Support to get things delivered and accountability for when things are not done were often missing. Several observers pointed out that too many laws, policies and mechanisms can in fact be counterproductive as they complicate and overwhelm bureaucracies with limited capacity. On over-focus on legislation can also serve as a distraction from addressing core operational challenges. In the case of Uganda we were told that the President is 'way ahead of donors and runs rings around them' by 'throwing new pieces of legislation'. There are so many governance and ethics related mechanisms in Uganda that a new body to coordinate them had to be developed. 'Simplicity' was often highlighted as a key need in relation to getting the work done. In all three countries, for instance, local governments and key ministries were said to suffer from multiple funding streams and overlapping projects, each with their own accounts, manuals and set of rules. While observers struggled to recommend specific actions to resolve these problems, there was broad agreement that one needs to get the incentives right to catalyze meaningful implementation, enhance openness regarding challenges, and expand the options for exercising practical accountability when stated objectives do not materialize in practice.

1.4 **Political patronage trumps democratic representation:** While 'developmental' initiatives including civic education programs make reference to a framework of democratic accountability (such as your elected leader should represent your interests) each of the three countries were said to function as a neo-patrimonial

state in many respects. In this conception a good leader was the one able to 'dish out goodies' rather than work for an abstract national level common good. This state of affairs arises partly from disillusionment with the ability of democratic politics to deliver results, as well as a sense that politics has been captured by a few. One therefore seeks what little one can get – a few kilos of sugar, cloth, or bars of soap – because that is 'the best one can expect from electoral politics'. In the 2007 elections in Kenya, for instance, 'progressive' MPs who had worked on national issues were said to have lost their seats for failure to exercise patronage. Constituency development funds (CDFs) run by MPs 'to take care of their constituents' are perhaps the most explicit mechanism for political patronage, and a major feature of public discussion in all three countries. While some civil society activists are calling for CDF levels to be increased so as to 'get more money to people', others caution that CDFs distract attention from core budget funds, breed duplication on the ground and compromise MPs oversight function.[5] More insidiously, power mapping studies in all three countries show well developed patronage networks among the political class, and that senior civil servants and a business elite are behind grand corruption scandals worth hundreds of millions of dollars.[6] Any project that seeks to develop democratic culture clearly needs to understand and grapple with these realities. While the task is daunting, observers noted that the media and to some extent parliament are playing key role in exposing these issues.

1.5 **Parliaments are simultaneously constrained and active:** As the dominance of ruling parties has diminished or been subject to increased scrutiny, Parliaments have taken on greater prominence in the region. The latitude parliaments have to acts as a check on the executive is a matter of contention, with apparently contradictory trends. In Kenya the two main parties (PNU and ODM) run a power sharing government and there is no official opposition in Parliament; yet many MPs who are not in the cabinet speak out actively on issues. More information is also said to 'leak out' from the coalition government, as members of one party reveal questionable actions undertaken by the other. In Uganda, President Museveni's grip over the ruling NRM has tightened as he resorts to what observers see as militaristic means to stifle dissent. Yet the Parliament has been one of the more consistent avenues for questioning the excesses of the presidency, including through an active public accounts committee. In Tanzania, despite (or perhaps because of) the fact that the ruling party holds close to 90% of seats in Parliament, parliamentary probes and discussions have been among the more open in the country, generating wide media coverage and significant public debate. Earlier in 2008 a parliamentary probe on energy contracts led to the resignation of the powerful Prime Minister and two prominent ministers. Arguably, parliaments have been compelled by the effect of media and the accountability it engenders. Whereas a parliamentary comment in the past may have gone ignored, in recent years it is broadcast live, and in this way media has exerted pressure on MPs to perform, and provided lone voices with large audiences. Through media, the public is also better

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[5] See statements by Policy Forum in Tanzania and MUHURI in Kenya (personal communication, September 2008).

[6] Examples include the reported involved of President Museveni's brother in improper procurement in Uganda, the involvement of the Kenyan Minister for Finance in the sale of the Grand Regency Hotel in Nairobi, and the networks involved in the EPA scandal at the Bank of Tanzania and in the sale of timber in Tanzania unearthed in a report by TRAFFIC. References are provided in the full country assessment reports.

informed of the workings and issues addressed by parliaments. CSOs such as the Policy Forum in Tanzania and IEA in Kenya are also increasingly partnering with the parliaments in undertaking analysis and informing policy positions.

Parliament appears to be simultaneously constrained by its ties with ruling elites and empowered by its increasingly recognized oversight function. This role could be enhanced by parliaments claiming greater independence through, for example, the Parliamentary Service Commission in Uganda and a revision of the Standing Orders in Tanzania. But parliaments also need independent access to information and analytical capacity that is able to adequately scrutinize the executive. All three countries are working on these issues in different ways, suggesting perhaps that a comparative examination of the genesis and effect of these efforts would be helpful. Nevertheless caution is needed not to overplay the value of a technical intervention where complex political affiliations are the key drivers.

1.6 **Budgets are coming under greater scrutiny and engagement:** Due to increased global attention and the efforts of groups such as the International Budget Partnership (IBP), as well as availability of technology that makes number-crunching and communication easier, there are a growing number of budget related activities in the region. The Open Budget Index (OBI) findings show that transparency of budgets is a problem, but somewhat less acute than some may have imagined. Information is available but not in a form that is easily understood or a level that is meaningful. Having emphasized participation in budget making processes, attention is now shifting to tracking the flow and use of funds and revenues. HakiElimu in Tanzania has cooperated with the Controller and Auditor General's office to make audit findings popular and a matter of public debate. There are many expenditure tracking studies ongoing too; for instance on the CDF in Kenya and education sector in Tanzania; but their quality is often uneven (see Annex 5). The complexity of the task and resources required should not be underestimated.

A key observation is that most people do not care about budgets in the abstract, but do care in terms of how they translate into concrete access to resources and services. In that sense CDF has captured the public imagination because 'it concretizes budgets' at the community (rather than district or national) level. For expanding citizen engagement, budgets need to be linked to and translated in these local terms. It will also be important to create practical ways in which citizens can engage in the budget process in order to create a difference in the services/benefits they receive. These citizen efforts need to be linked with bigger picture analytical work that can identify the major disconnections, gaps and opportunities in the budget chain. For both these sorts of work independent actors will need support to strengthen analytical and communication skills.

1.7 **The strengths, limitations and potential roles of NGOs:** In the past two decades there has been a turn towards NGOs to represent citizen interests, and to fill the gaps left by government failure or to act as a check on it. However, all three country assessments show that *overall* NGOs/CBOs a) are weak and ineffective, b) have limited reach, c) are trapped in a 'workshop and payment of allowances culture', d) lack clear strategic focus and reflective practice and e)

are not perceived by most citizens as representing their interests or providing practical help. In contrast to the liberal notion that a CSO is formed to advance citizens' social justice agendas, we were informed that 'the typical NGO is created to access donor funds". Most NGOs have very limited reach, and act in an ad hoc, short-term and 'projectized' manner that is rarely strategic – a situation that is not helped by the ways in which donor requirements are structured (see below). Instead of fighting government patronage and corruption, many NGOs tend to mirror these aspects themselves. NGOs abilities to reach and connect with citizens and enable citizen organizing at scale are especially weak, rendering them politically impotent and lacking broad-based legitimacy. NGO leaders we met in Kenya, for instance, agreed that most of them 'lived in a Nairobi bubble' with little organic linkage to citizen groups. Moreover, this sort of elite capture can supplant and undermine civic action, and exclude those who are not able to play the 'development game'.[7] The implication of this insight means that an approach that conflates citizen action with NGOs/CBOs and relies entirely on the latter is likely to fail or at best limit progress to small pockets.

At the same time, during our country assessments we noted that that some civil society organizations and individuals were doing powerful work in budget analysis, public education and government scrutiny[8]. In Kenya in particular we were impressed by the depth of analysis and articulation, including among an emerging young leadership, and the clearly important role Kenyan civil society had played during the post-election violence in early 2008. This sort of work and leadership, while not sufficient in itself, can *form a critical piece of an overall ecosystem of change*. For example, while media or private companies may be far more effective in reaching citizens countrywide, they are likely to need NGO(s) to assist with conceptualizing the work, analyzing data, developing tools and popular materials, etc.

1.8 **The media is powerful but has many problems:** The growth of media represents perhaps the most dramatic change in the East African landscape in the last 10-15 years following liberalization of the sector. Tanzania has moved from having two state/ruling party owned newspapers, one radio and no TV stations to more than ten daily papers, dozens of radio stations, and 5 national TV groups. The growth of radio and TV in Kenya and Uganda is even greater, with a wide network of FM stations in vernacular languages. While the limitations of reach are serious, particularly for newspapers and for TV where there is no electricity,[9] mass media is by far the most significant source of information for most citizens. Because media provides an overwhelming point of reference and vehicle for public debate it is perhaps no exaggeration to say that 'life is lived in the media' or that 'an issue is not an issue until it is in the media'. Moreover, media has created unprecedented space for access to differing viewpoints and public debate. Several groups we interviewed emphasized that media coverage was one of the most important aspects of the success of their campaign. Private

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[7] See draft study on Dar, discussions with OSI in Nairobi. The form that a registered group needs to take and operate privileges certain types of people and makes ordinary citizens beholden to elites able to 'play the game'.

[8] Examples are FHRI, ACODE & KRC in Uganda; HakiElimu, Hakikazi and Policy Forum in Tanzania; IEA, CGD and MUHURI in Kenya.

[9] Even here the increasing interconnection of technologies is filling some of the gaps. The reach of newspapers extends further through radio and TV which use them as a source of news. Where there is no electricity local entrepreneurs have set up local video parlors hooked to generators to provide access to some of the more popular TV viewing.

companies, cell phones in particular, invest enormously in public reach through media. Media's impact in revealing information on corruption related aspects, noted above, cannot be underestimated.

Notably, space for direct citizen engagement has also increased, particularly through mobile calling or SMS. Indeed while costs remain relatively high, the growth of cell phones has dramatically altered communication possibilities. In Tanzania, over seven million people own cell phones and in Kenya, Safaricom alone is reported to have 9 million subscribers, in contrast to a few hundred thousand who had any phone access a decade ago. Cell phones are quickly becoming the main source of internet browsing in Kenya. Some respondents have explored the use of cell phones for public oriented messaging, but some were sceptical of the willingness of cell phone providers to partner in a civic oriented campaign.

At the same time, observers point out numerous constraints in the media landscape. Consolidation of media ownership, particularly of TV and newspapers, and the tendency of owners to influence editorial positions significantly limits press freedom. State broadcasters in all three countries are yet to transform themselves into public broadcasters, leaving a gap in truly public oriented media. Governments who provide the largest share of advertising revenue could 'kill' media by withholding adverts from a critical outlet. The quality of media is generally poor, and tends to cover the pronouncements of leaders in major cities, as most stories are written by low paid stringers who are not provided with the time or resources to adequately investigate a story. Media houses run on thin resources and staffing as managing directors are unable to or chose not to pay the remuneration necessary to recruit and retain competent staff. Even where media owners may not have funding constraints, such as with the East Africa wide Nation group owned by the Aga Khan, observers commented that 'an obsession with the bottom line' curtails research and investigative journalism.

Thus media is a powerful institution in need of improvement. Many training projects have been implemented, but while useful in some ways, they do not address the core institutional constraints at play. Other interventions, such as the Uganda Radio Network that provides syndicated radio content and HakiElimu that subsidizes investigative work in Tanzania have been more successful. A growing number of citizen journalism efforts are linking ordinary people with both mainstream and alternative media. Recently in Tanzania Hivos has been appointed to manage the Tanzania Media Fund, a multi-donor funded initiative that seeks to underwrite quality and investigative journalism and develop capability in an unconventional manner. The country assessments revealed strong interest in both Kenya and Uganda for establishing such a fund.

1.9 **Donors have contributed important resources but need to respond in a more politically astute and nimble manner:** Donors are active players in the region, providing over 40% of the national budgets in Uganda and Tanzania, and exerting significant policy pressure in all three countries. The recent move towards budget support and harmonization processes that are consistent with

the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness[10] has brought certain benefits, particularly in Tanzania. However the extent to which results have been achieved is not clear, especially given the self-referential benchmarks guiding the evaluation of these processes, rather than the measurement of meaningful outcomes. Of particular concern is the fact that this approach does not deepen downward government answerability and responsiveness to its own citizens, and may in fact increase an unhealthy level of upward donor centrality to policy making and accountability. The country assessments indicate that the new aid architecture has not helped establish robust country ownership or significantly curtail misappropriation of public resources. Leaders can continue to abuse their public positions for private gain, and clamp down on media and critics who dare to speak out. A recent briefing paper on the Paris Agenda by David Booth articulates our concerns elegantly, noting that donors need to acknowledge the need for political reform, be bolder and risk-taking, avoid political correctness and pay more attention to helping get the incentives right.[11] Our own analysis articulates how this needs to be linked with the sort of citizen engagement efforts Twaweza advocates (see Annex 4).

CSOs too, given the relatively small private sector and limited middle class in East Africa, are almost all wholly dependent on external institutional donors for funding. Donor interest in CSOs which are able to provide a counterpoint to the State is growing in relation to the Paris Agenda, in terms of groups able to help citizens engage with the State, as well as undertake strategic analytical work. In the region donors have often been more willing to create a seat for CSOs at the policy and governance table, than have governments. At the same, however, country assessments indicate that donor funding modalities are at cross purposes with these interests. Many CS groups complained that donor tendency to provide fragmented, projectized, short term funding, insistence on quick results and multiple reporting requirements undermined their ability to work in a strategic manner or address fundamental concerns. This was confirmed by funders themselves. A major problem is the corrupting influence of aid, where money flows towards issues that donors care about it, HIV/AIDS being the most prominent example for which hundreds of millions of dollars are spent each year, distorting priorities and human resource allocation, and eroding coherence, Other CSOs noted that donor inability to be flexible and nimble limits CSO effectiveness to respond to crises such as the post election violence in Kenya. The recent development of harmonized funding guidelines for strategic CSOs in Tanzania[12] that have formally been adopted by the most donors provides a useful basis to address these concerns. However, the extent of its use in Tanzania let alone the rest of the region is unclear.

1.10 **Young people are the key demographic:** Young people under age 30 constitute about two thirds of the population of East Africa, and form the largest demographic group in the region. Yet their livelihood options, political and

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[10] See www.oecd.org/document/18/0,3343,en_2649_3236398_35401554_1_1_1_1,00.html In Kenya, because of political turmoil and the contestation of state authority funding is largely earmarked.

[11] See for instance David Booth's ODI briefing paper 39 (July 2008) on Reforming the Paris Agenda prepared for the upcoming September meeting in Accra, which calls for an honest debate on aid effectiveness.

[12] See
http://hdptz.esealtd.com/fileadmin/documents/Key_Sector_Documents/Other_Health_Related_Documents/Guidelines_for_Support_to_Civil_Society_oct_07_final__2_.pdf

economic clout, and future prospects are grim. The vast majority of school leavers, as well as large numbers of university graduates are unable to secure jobs. Prospects in rural areas where land pressures are intense and access to markets difficult are especially acute, fuelling one of the fastest rates of rural-urban migration. In urban areas opportunities are limited too, and according to one observer young people here are primarily viewed as a "public order problem". The situation is perhaps most stark in Kenya, where young people are said to have "done the dirty work for the politicians" and found themselves to be both the primary perpetrators and victims of the post-election violence. The discussion about young people also made reference to HIV/AIDS, where this demographic group (and young women in particular) is most vulnerable to new infection and yet holds the least resources to cope with it, and likely faces the most obstacles in accessing services.

Many observers told us that something must be done about young people, invariably described as 'a time bomb about to explode'. Fewer noted that young people could be a key resource for change, noting their levels of energy, creativity, ability to embrace new technologies and change, and creativity. When pressed, respondents struggled to provide an overall framework for action or concrete suggestions regarding citizen action among young people. Some of the youth groups we met with were engaging in interesting ways, but at relatively small scale, and appeared too occupied in day to day affairs and needing to evade authorities to develop a larger vision. Moreover, many of the assumptions about time bombs or creativity remain untested, though we clearly noted clear examples of unrest such as students burning schools in Kenya or demonstrations after Friday prayers in Dar es Salaam. On our part, cognisant that they are a transient category, we were uncertain whether 'youth' constituted an organic self identity around in which young people saw themselves or would be keen to organize.

The ten points above provide a descriptive analysis emerging from the country assessments in Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda. Below we sketch six major program strategy issues that arose from the country assessments.

1.11   **The everyday retail level is what matters most:** It is easy to think about the macro level policies, reforms, and budgets, and national level politics. Many of our discussions focused on this level. But the community visits showed the great distance between national and policy level and everyday life, and how easy it is for development efforts to lose sight with this level. Somewhat surprisingly, many respondents were unable to answer when we phrased the question in terms of 'what does this mean for a 45 year old woman in rural village? What can she do?' Yet, it is precisely this level where life is lived, it is at its most concrete, and that impacts on the lives of citizens – interactions with teachers, heath workers and local leaders, the everyday spaces and opportunities. The macro level is important insofar as it affects people's lives, but for Twaweza we need to make the everyday retail aspects our core unit of reference.

1.12   **Information is essential for citizen action:** Virtually everyone we spoke with emphasized that citizens must have information in order to act and to make a difference. Information enables people to know their rights and entitlements, to

know what is happening both around them and far away, to compare the actual with what is promised, to learn lessons from what others have done, and so on. Without information, action either does not take place or is poorly informed. A key take home lesson is that while information alone is not sufficient, it is a vital and necessary driver for change.

1.13 **Class, geographical and citizen-CSO based gaps need to be reduced:** People in positions of power and charged with the responsibility to make a difference in the lives of ordinary citizens – whether in government, media, civil society or business – tend to live and think in the capital city, and among each other. This elite is poorly linked with its constituencies, and thus risks both becoming out of touch and weak without broad based support. The good news is that many groups we interviewed recognize that this gap and is beginning to work with it, though its slow moving and requires greater imagination. An important distinction needed here is between mobilization (gathering numbers to support your cause) and organizing (facilitating people to organize around their own cause).

1.14 **Disparate efforts need to join up:** In all three countries we were able to catalogue useful and creative work. But it appears to be done in a fragmented, disparate fashion and doesn't constitute a critical mass for change. Many people that we spoke with highlighted the importance of bringing people and ideas together in order to leverage greater change, and welcomed Twaweza's ecosystem approach in this regard.

1.15 **Learning, reflection and imagination are urgently needed**: Many committed practitioners are so busy running around fundraising, managing their organizations, implementing activities, and reporting that they do not spend adequate time reflecting on strategy choice and effectiveness. Yet this is crucial for program vitality. In connection with this, several key people were pleased with Twaweza's explicit focus on learning from the outset, and welcomed Twaweza's role in fostering what one observer called 'introspection'.

1.16 **Deep change takes time:** Many observers made a simple point – the type of change Twaweza envisages will take time. A typical remark was "unless you can think in at least 7-10 year terms or more, don't even bother". Several cautioned us to guard against donors who may want quick results. Instead what was needed was a wide time horizon and flexibility within it to respond to key opportunities. Twaweza and its donor partners will need to work to get this balance right.

The six perspectives outlined above have informed Twaweza's approach and theory of change.