



Citizens making things happen

Are citizens active and can they hold government to account?



1. Introduction

A well-functioning and vibrant democracy requires active citizens, people who are free and able to discuss and influence key issues, whether through holding government to account or by utilizing their own resources and methods to achieve objectives. Yet citizen agency can sometimes be stifled, either externally (by restrictions on things like peaceful demonstrations) or internally (by feelings of disempowerment or lack of trust between citizens). In addition, citizens' efforts to use formal channels to address issues or get things done can be stifled by a lack of action in response on the part of authorities.

In this brief, we examine both citizens' internal feelings of self-efficacy (belief in your own ability to achieve your goals), as well as the way in which they interact with each other and authority figures. How much do Tanzanians use existing or new platforms to discuss matters with representatives of the state when the need arises? How much trust exists between and across communities? And does this trust translate into community engagement and civic actions?

This brief reports nationally representative data on public perceptions of trust and citizen agency in the country. Data are from the 20th round of Twaweza's Sauti za Wananchi, Africa's first nationally representative, high-frequency mobile phone survey (www.twaweza.org/sauti). Data were collected through calls to 1,405 respondents in Mainland Tanzania between 27 June and 10 July 2014.

This brief's key findings are:

- Tanzanians trust religious leaders (87%) and the President (71%), as well as their relatives (88%).
- Community trust is high: almost all people (98%) believe that a community would pull together following an unfortunate event.

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- Community engagement is similarly high: 72% belong to a community organization, such as a religious group or savings and loan group.
- About half of Tanzanians have never spoken with their local street or village chairman.

2. Eight facts about citizen agency in Tanzania

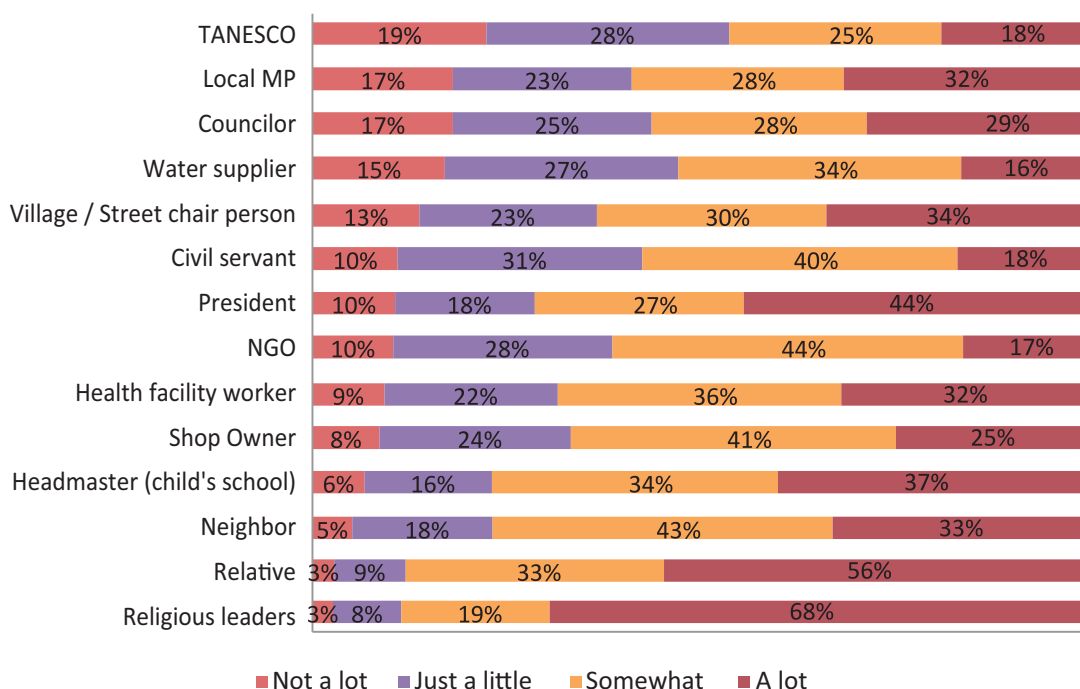
Fact 1: Tanzanians trust their communities

When asked about how much they trusted different people, citizens reported trusting religious leaders (87% trust them “somewhat” or “a lot”) almost as much as their relatives (88%). Although people do not report trusting politicians that much, the President has the confidence of seven out of ten citizens (71%). In general, citizens trust those closest to them, with an average of 8 out of 10 people reporting they trusted their neighbours (76%) and relatives (88%) “a lot” or “somewhat” (Figure 1).

In general people also trust local level service providers, with 7 out of 10 reporting that head teachers (71%) and health facility workers (68%) could be trusted “a lot” or “somewhat”. However water suppliers fared less well with only half of citizens thinking they could be similarly trusted.

There was also considerable confidence in a safety net within the community: when asked about whether, after an unfortunate, unforeseen incident (such as a house burning down), the community would get together to help, 98% of Tanzanians responded that it was either “likely” (18%) or “very likely” (80%) (data not shown in Figure 1).

Figure 1: How much do you trust each of the following types of people?



Source of data: *Sauti za Wananchi*, Mobile Phone Survey – Round 20, July 2014.

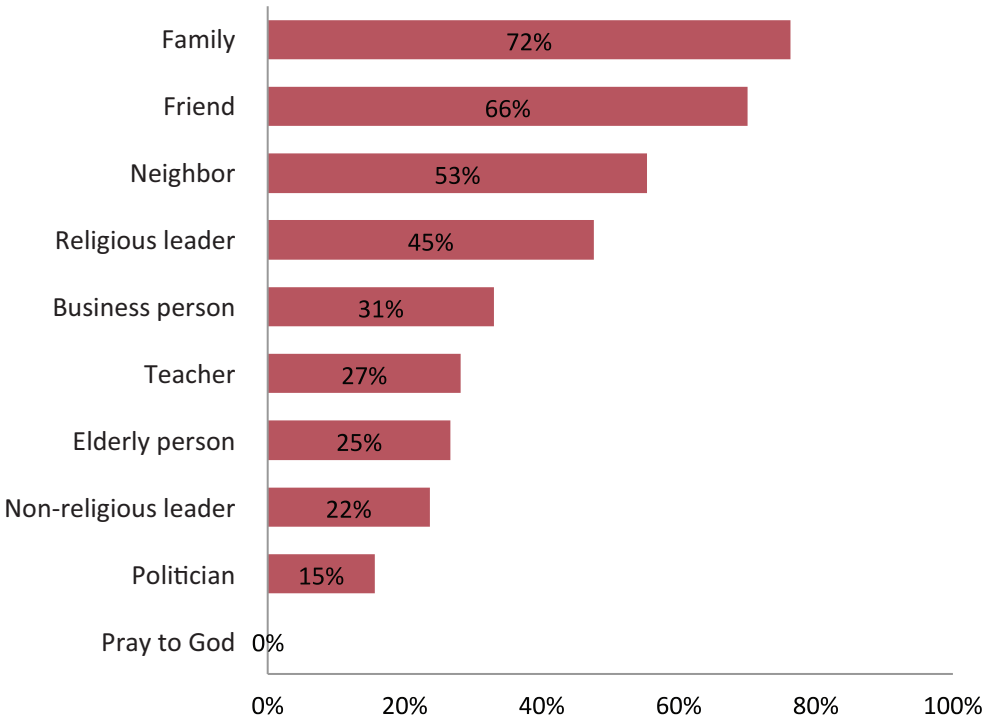
Fact 2: Seven out of ten citizens seek advice from relatives

Sauti za Wananchi asked respondents about how they make important decisions in three areas (general issues, government issues, business issues), and from whom they would seek advice.

For general issues (Figure 2), 72% of Tanzanians reported their family being the first port of call. Asking a friend (66% reported doing this) or neighbor (53%) was also popular (note that respondents could check all that applied).

After the people nearest to you, citizens reported that they would seek guidance from religious leaders. However, no one mentioned prayer as a method for seeking advice. Politicians were the least popular source of advice, with only 2 out of 10 citizens (15%) consulting them. Respondents were not asked why they made these choices but, generally, the level of responsiveness and the type of advice offered might contribute to how people make these decisions.

Figure 2: In the past 12 months, did you seek advice to make an important decision (on a general issue) from any of the following people?



Source of data: *Sauti za Wananchi*, Mobile Phone Survey – Round 20, July 2014.

For important decisions related to the government, Tanzanians were most likely (33%) to consult with an elderly person in the community (not shown in Figure 2). This raises interesting questions: elderly people are not often consulted for general advice, only 1 out of 4 citizens report doing this, but they are the main source for government advice.

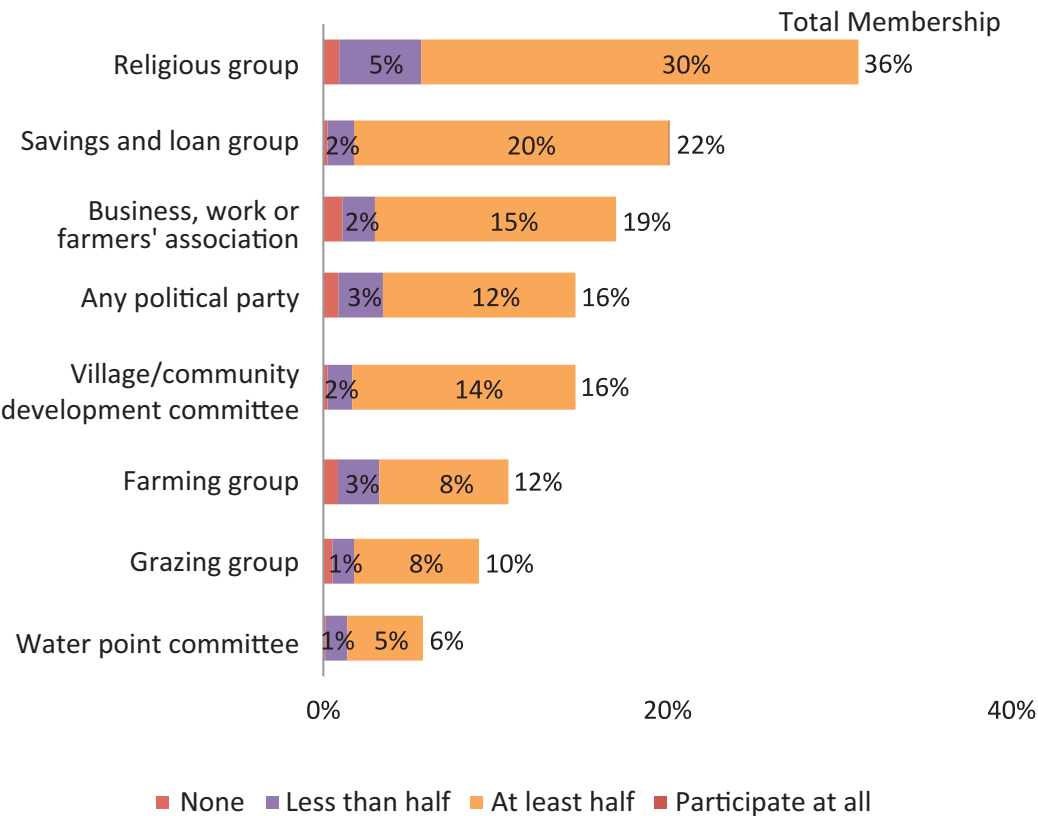
Fact 3: One out of seven Tanzanians are members of political parties

Most Tanzanians (72%) are members of a community organization. This includes religious groups, savings and loan groups, or any political party. The most popular groups were religious, with 1 out of 3 citizens (36%) saying they were part of one (Figure 3). One of the most striking findings is that only one in seven (16%) Tanzanians are members of political parties. This is significant, because views collected through party machineries, especially during the polarized debates such as the constitutional review process, may be representative of only a minority of Tanzanians.

Aside from a strong preference for religious groups, people largely belonged to practical groups related to income and finances such as savings and loans groups (22%) or business, work or famer groups (19%).

In general, self-reported participation was high (relative to membership), which suggests that people are not holding “empty” memberships. Indeed, most people indicated attending at least half of their group’s meetings (Figure 3).

Figure 3: Are you a member of any of the following groups, associations or clubs and do you attend their meetings?



Source of data: *Sauti za Wananchi*, Mobile Phone Survey – Round 20, July 2014.

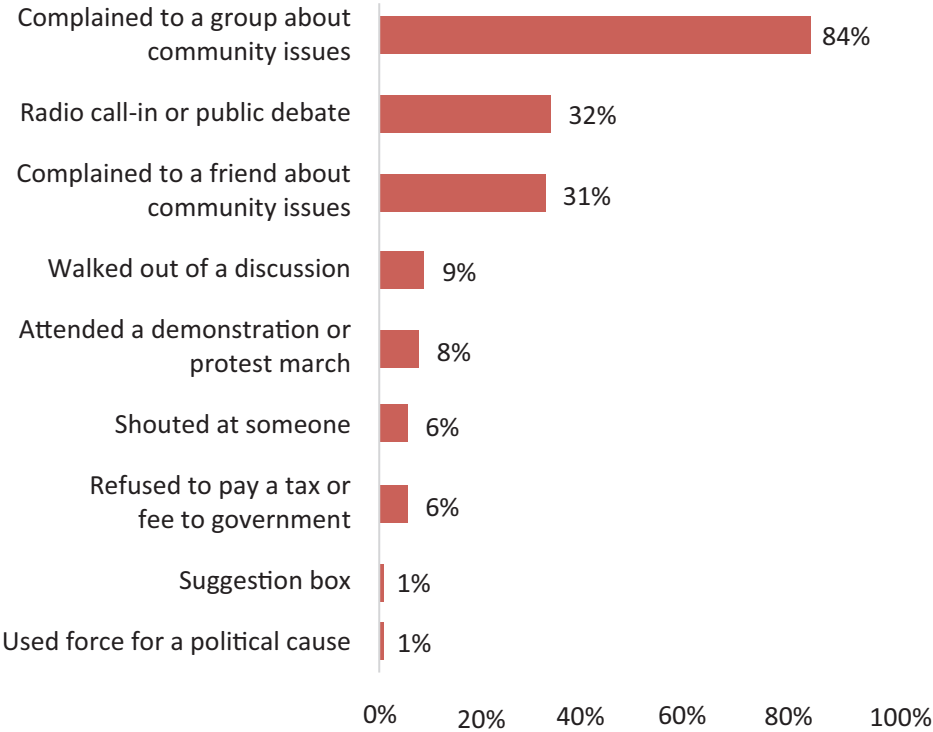
Fact 4: 84% complained to a group about a community issue

Sauti za Wananchi asked about a variety of actions which a person could take when facing a problem, from more “personal” forms of civic engagement, such as complaining to a friend or group about a community issue, to the more “public” behaviors of refusing to pay a tax or attending a protest march. Tanzanians tend to engage in the former; this may relate to the general preference or reliance on informal rather than formal structures. Figure 4 shows that citizens report vocalizing their issues (whether to friends, community groups or more publicly) but are much less willing to take any further steps.

One of the most common actions was complaining to a group about something going wrong in the community, with 8 out of 10 reporting to have done this (84%) (Figure 4).

People also reported calling into a radio show or engaging in some other type of public debate (32%). It was far less popular to attend a demonstration, refuse to pay a tax, or submit something to a suggestion box.

Figure 4: Have you done any of these during the past year?



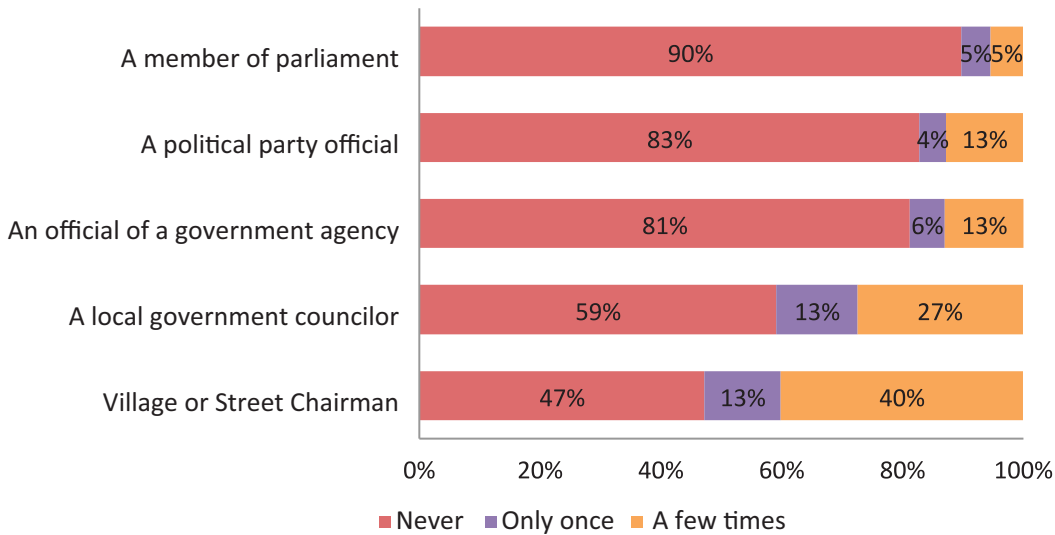
Source of data: *Sauti za Wananchi*, Mobile Phone Survey – Round 20, July 2014.

Fact 5: Most citizens don't communicate with their representatives

In the past year, about half (47%) of respondents reported not to have spoken to their local village or street chairperson (Figure 5). Yet these representatives or officials are meant to be closest to citizens. In addition, a vast majority have never spoken to a Member of Parliament (90%).

Similarly, citizens report not having raised issues with a political party official (83%), or an official of any government agency (81%) in the past 12 months.

Figure 5: During the past year, how often have you contacted any of the following persons about some important problem or to give them your views?



Source of data: *Sauti za Wananchi*, Mobile Phone Survey – Round 20, July 2014.

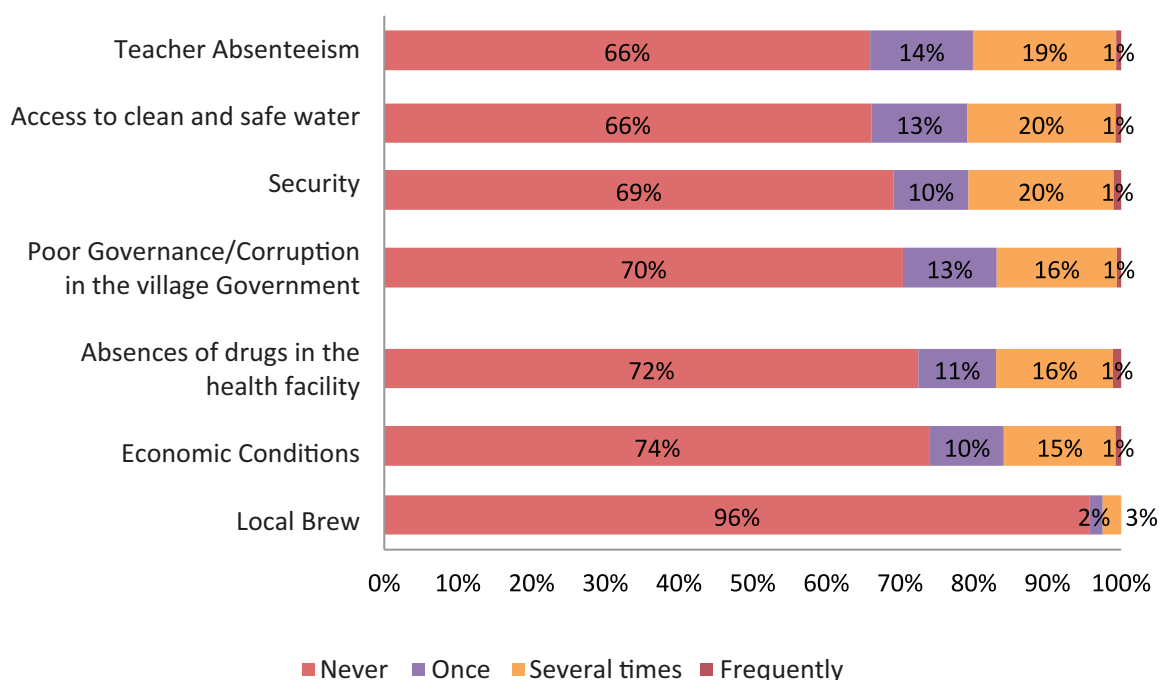
Fact 6: Many citizens observe collective complaints to officials

The majority of Tanzanians – 6 out of 10 (58%) – report that they observed joint or collective complaints to officials in their community in the last 12 months (note that respondents are from 200 communities or enumeration areas so there may be multiple reports of the same complaint). These complaints are normally organized in order to seek improvement in a public facility at the local level. The most common issues are teacher absenteeism and access to clean and safe water (Figure 6).

Only 2 out of 10 citizens (23%) were explicitly invited by other members of the community to participate in petitions. These invitations count, though: when they were asked, almost everyone said yes (95% of those invited, or 22% of the entire sample).

Despite a high volume of local petitions, huge service delivery challenges remain. This indicates that the petitions are largely unsuccessful or meet with little response or action on the part of relevant authorities.

Figure 6: In the past 12 months, how often have members of this village/neighborhood jointly approached village officials or political leaders to improve some aspect of their community?



Source of data: *Sauti za Wananchi*, Mobile Phone Survey – Round 20, July 2014.

Fact 7: Seven out of ten citizens contribute to maintaining public facilities - of these four out of ten are forced

Citizens of a nation pay taxes to their government and, in return, the government is supposed to offer them certain goods and services. In Tanzania, budget deficits are commonly supplemented through international aid or borrowing. However all these sources of funding can be unreliable: international funds can be delayed and government revenue collections have in recent years fallen short of projections. For example, in 2013, Parliament approved a budget of TZS 312 billion for the completion of various water projects, but, as of March 2014, the Ministry of Water had only received TZS 86 billion (28% of the approved budget)¹.

Such shortfalls may result in government officials calling on citizens to directly contribute to development projects in their areas. The contributions are community-led activities; yet there are no clear policy guidelines on the modes of contribution, the collection mechanisms, expenditure tracking or any other checks and balances. This stop-gap measure may therefore introduce new problems: varying standards, unequal contributions, and new opportunities for corruption.

When asked about whether they had contributed time or money to constructing or

¹ <http://www.ippmedia.com/frontend/?l=68485>

maintaining a public facility (e.g. a school, town hall, road, health clinic, public toilet), 68% reported that they had contributed something. Of these, 88% contributed money and 12% contributed time. When we furthermore asked whether this contribution was entirely voluntary, only 61% reported that it was voluntary – the remaining 39% said they had been “forced” to contribute (Figures 7a and 7b).

Figure 7a: Did you contribute time or money?

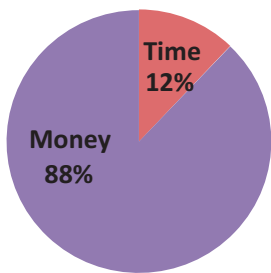
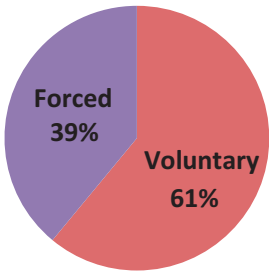


Figure 7b: Was it voluntary or were you forced to make the contribution?



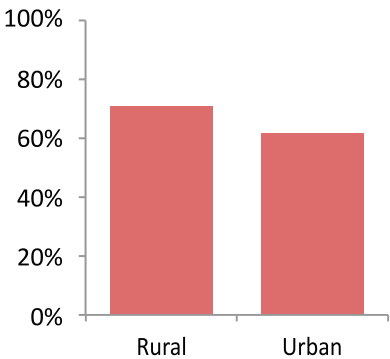
Source of data: *Sauti za Wananchi*, Mobile Phone Survey – Round 20, July 2014.

It is interesting to examine correlations between contributions and individual characteristics. The longer a resident had lived in the community, the more likely they were to participate (data not shown). Resident of urban areas were less likely to contribute. The wealthiest individuals, those in the top 20%, contributed less often (Figure 8).

Figure 8a: Contributions by wealth category



Figure 8b: Contributions by location



Source of data: *Sauti za Wananchi*, Mobile Phone Survey – Round 20, July 2014.

Fact 8: Citizens feel they cannot influence Government

Table 1 and 2 present a series of statements about self-efficacy (a person's perception of their own ability to achieve goals and overcome obstacles, Table 1) and political self-efficacy, internal and external (the person's perception of their own capability to achieve political goals and their perception of whether the external environment is supportive of this, Table 2).

Citizens respond positively to many of the statements listed in Table 1 about self-efficacy; more than 70% of respondents agreeing with all the statements. Most of these statements are positive and relate to the respondent's sense of their ability to exert control over their own lives.

However citizens also have a strong perception of the non-responsiveness of Government, agreeing strongly with the idea that the only influence they exert over Government is through voting (71%) and that politics is too complex (83%).

This provides a strong indication that people are willing and able to address the issues they face but they find the formal means of seeking solutions or services through Government to be largely unavailable to them.

Table 1: Internal and external self-efficacy

Hypothetical statement	"Agree" or "Strongly agree"
If I am in trouble, I can usually think of a solution	93%
I can always manage to solve difficult problems if I try hard enough	88%
It is easy for me to stick to my aims and accomplish my goals	87%
If someone opposes me, I can find the means and ways to get what I want	87%
I can solve most problems if I invest the necessary effort	85%
When I am confronted with problems, I can usually find several solutions	82%
I can usually handle whatever comes my way	79%
I am confident that I could deal efficiently with unexpected events	76%
I can remain calm when facing difficulties because I can rely on my coping abilities	75%
Thanks to my resourcefulness, I know how to handle unforeseen situations	72%

Source of data: *Sauti za Wananchi*, Mobile Phone Survey – Round 20, June – July 2014.

Table 2: Political self-efficacy

Hypothetical statement	“Agree” or “Strongly agree”
Sometimes politics and government can seem so complicated that a person like me can’t really understand what is going on	83%
Voting is the only way people like me can have any say in how the government run things	71%
People like me don’t have any say about what the government does	70%

3. Conclusion

This Sauti za Wananchi survey finds that Tanzanians are confident in their abilities to solve problems; contribute to public facilities and join petitions for community improvement; but have low levels of confidence in official channels and are less able to engage successfully with Government.

Distant public leaders and officials are less trusted and membership of political parties is low. Notable exceptions are religious leaders and the President: 44% of Tanzanians report trusting President Kikwete “a lot”. In addition, Tanzanians place trust in their families and community members, and participation in community organizations is high.

Economists and political scientists have long noted the value and limits of informal networks, both historically, and in terms of future development². Specifically, one can contrast societies with strong, democratic states that protect the property of individuals and enforce contracts, and societies where the state is weaker and thus informal networks (based on family ties, religion, or ethnicity) are instead used to enable the enforcement of contracts and property rights. While these informal networks can be effective, and even economically successful, they are often limited – they do not, perhaps even cannot, grow beyond a certain size. Furthermore, they are based on insider/ outsider distinctions, and this can easily break down in large, diverse countries.

Tanzanians have limited interaction with their representatives and other political actors. In the past year, a little over half (53%) had not spoken to their village or street chairperson and 90% had not spoken to their MP. Yet in some ways, civic engagement is high, particularly when it comes to public debate: 72% are (mostly active) members of community organizations, 82% had raised a community issue with a local group, and substantial numbers had attended community meetings, or engaged in radio call-ins or public debates.

² See, for example, Avner Greif, “Contract Enforceability and Economics Institutions in Early Trade: The Maghribi Traders’ Coalition,” (http://web.stanford.edu/~avner/Greif_Papers/1993%20Greif%20AER%201993.pdf). Also, Michael Woolcock and Deepa Narayan’s book, *Social Capital: Implications for Development Theory, Research, and Policy*.

³ Twaweza, August 2014. “Have your laws, agencies, and commitments against corruption made a difference?” Sauti za Wananchi Brief..

In addition, 6 out of 10 citizens (86%) have been involved in a community petition in the past year. Additionally, 68% of Tanzanians had committed time or money to the construction or maintenance of public goods – though, it should be noted that, of these, 39% say they were forced to.

However, when it comes to more assertive forms of citizen agency, Tanzanians are more reticent. Only very small numbers reported having attended a demonstration or protest march (8%), refused to pay a tax or fee (6%), or used force for a political cause (1%).

Despite seemingly high levels of citizen debate and contributions, service delivery continues to be a huge challenge in Tanzania, with bribery³, absenteeism⁴ and mismanaged resources being experienced across various government services. This may relate to the responsiveness of authorities: petitions, radio call-ins and community debates can result in improvements if those responsible for management of the service in question are willing and able to hear people's issues and concerns, and address them. Without commensurate action from authorities, citizen engagement falls on deaf ears. And so a vicious cycle of inaction on the part of service providers, and a lack of trust and engagement in formal institutions on the part of citizens, may become entrenched, and the country cannot progress. Breaking this cycle will require a norm shift which must start with citizens knowing and demanding their rights from officials who listen and respond.

⁴ Twaweza, July 2014. "What's going on in our school?" Sauti za Wananchi Brief. <http://twaweza.org/uploads/files/Education-EN-FINAL.pdf>

⁵ Twaweza, September 2013. "Stock out or in stock?" Sauti za Wananchi Brief. <http://twaweza.org/uploads/files/SzWAccesstoMedicinesBrief5190913EN.pdf>

