



Press Release
24 November 2016

**50% think that quality has improved since the introduction of fee free education
At the same time, 6 out of 10 citizens would send their children to private school if they could**

23 November 2016, Dar es Salaam: Following the introduction of fee free education up to secondary level, 50% of citizens say the quality of education has improved. At the same time 35% think the quality has stayed the same while 15% think it has become worse.

These findings were released by Twaweza in a research brief titled *Reality check: Citizens' views on education in a fee free era*. 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 1,806 respondents across Mainland Tanzania (Zanzibar is not covered in these results) between 7 and 14 August 2016.

Despite half of citizens having this positive view, citizens do think that schools are facing challenges in the fee free era. In particular, the most commonly reported issues facing schools, according to parents, are lack of teachers (34%), and lack of desks (30%). Other challenges mentioned include lack of classrooms (13%) and lack of books (7%).

Currently, among the 8 out of 10 households (80%) with children, 90% of these have children attending public schools. While citizens appear to be positive about education quality in government schools in general, a majority - 6 out of 10 - would send their children to private school if both public and private schools were free. Although a significant minority of citizens (36%) say they would send their children to public school even if they had the choice, this strong preference for private schools does indicate that citizens have some doubts about the quality of education in public school. The most popular reason for wanting to send children to private school is that the quality of education is better there (45%). But citizens also mentioned hard-working and motivated teachers (21%) and sufficient numbers of teachers (12%).

Citizens were asked to rate the quality of schools in their community. Many more citizens think that education is good in private primary (51%) and secondary (56%) than in public primary (22%) and secondary (19%) schools.

When asked to rate the seriousness of various critical challenges facing education in Tanzania, more citizens (85%) rated the lack of parental involvement in schools as serious than any other problem. The other challenges included school infrastructure (83% thought this problem was serious), poor pupil performance (83%), pupil discipline (79%), motivating and retaining teachers (66%), and the quality of the curriculum (62%).

The lack of parental involvement in schools is evidenced by the number of parents who have never helped out at their child's school (88%), have only met with their children's teachers once or twice in the last year (52%) or have only visited their children's school once or twice in the last year (57%).

“Despite parents’ enthusiasm for fee free education, these data show that a sense of reality is beginning to set in,” said Aidan Eyakuze, Executive Director of Twaweza. “Twelve months ago, on the eve of implementation of the fee free education policy, 76% of citizens thought that the policy would improve the quality of education. Now, only half of citizens think that the quality of education has improved. It seems citizens realise what our government may not have considered: the massive expansion in enrollment or access to school will strain the school system’s ability to deliver quality education. We can avoid deepening the crisis of learning outcomes by looking at the issues of access and quality together. To do otherwise is to risk repeating the mistakes of Universal Primary Education, expanding access at the expense of quality.”

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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
- 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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