



Press Release  
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## **Learning outcomes and malnutrition appear to be linked** **Twaweza calls for parents and schools to work together to ensure children are fed at school**

**Dar es Salaam, 22 December 2016:** New data released by Uwezo at Twaweza appear to show a link between malnutrition and children's learning outcomes.

Among children aged 10 to 14 years:

*English (ability to read a Standard 2 level story):*

- Severely malnourished children – 17.9% passed
- Moderately malnourished children – 16.4% passed
- Well nourished children – 25.8% passed

*Kiswahili (ability to read a Standard 2 level story):*

- Severely malnourished children – 46.3% passed
- Moderately malnourished children – 51.3% passed
- Well nourished children – 65.8% passed

*Numeracy (ability to do Standard 2 level multiplication):*

- Severely malnourished children – 35.5% passed
- Moderately malnourished children – 37.7% passed
- Well nourished children – 53.4% passed

Children who are well nourished are almost twice as likely to possess Standard 2 literacy and numeracy skills (Kiswahili and numeracy) than those who are severely malnourished.

These findings were released by Uwezo Tanzania at Twaweza at an event at the University of Dar es Salaam (UDSM). The event was part of the *JiElimishe* seminar series, a collaboration between UDSM and Twaweza. Data on children's learning outcomes and nutrition from 197,451 children and 68,588 households were collected between October and December 2015.

The data collected also show that, overall, 4% of children under 5, 5.6% of children aged 5 to 9 and 5.7% of children aged 10 to 14 are malnourished nationally. However there is significant district variation: in Songea Urban 23.9% of children under 5 are severely malnourished compared to 0.3% in Tabora Urban and Musoma Urban.

On average, 50% of families can afford three meals per day compared with 4% who survive on one meal per day. There is significant variation between districts, with some districts in which more than 85% of families have three meals per day (Mbulu 97.6%, Kishapu – 88.2%, Mafinga

Urban – 88%, Tunduma 86.4%, Moshi Urban – 86%) and others in which less than 40% of families have three meals per day (Masasi – 38.6%, Tandahimba – 35.5%, Ruangwa – 34%, Liwale – 32.3%, Mtwara Rural – 27.6%, Nanyumbu – 23.1%).

Nationally, one in five schools have a lunch feeding program (23%). This also varies between regions: in Kilimanjaro region, 79% schools provide lunch, compared to only 5% in Geita.

Zaida Mgalla, Manager of Uwezo Tanzania at Twaweza said *“These data provide insight into the nutritional status of our children and appear to show a strong link between nutrition in children and learning outcomes. The strength of this will need to be investigated further, to establish its extent. Already we can see that children’s nutrition levels seem to have less effect on English literacy when compared with Maths and Kiswahili. The good news is that children can be provided with meals at schools and this issue could be addressed. Providing meals to school children could also incentivize pupils and parents to attend school more.”*

Aidan Eyakuze, Executive Director of Twaweza commented *“In this case research confirms what intuitively we all understand: children’s ability to perform in school is affected by how well-fed they are. In the current fee-free era of education, school meals and feeding programs have fallen by the wayside. They are not catered for in capitation rants being provided directly to schools by the government. Parents are also increasingly unwilling to make contributions to schools, given the publicity around the abolition of parental contributions (michango). Yet malnutrition rates appear to increase slightly among older children, which means that schools would be sensible sites for any interventions. For relatively modest sums contributed by parents and school communities, and with strong collaboration between parents and schools, this issue could be addressed and children would have a better chance of learning in school.”*

\*\*\*\*\*End\*\*\*\*\*

**For more information:**

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**Notes to Editors**

- The School of Education, University of Dar es Salaam
- 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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