



Press Release | 25 August 2015

## **Mkikimkiki 2015 Election debates launched**

**Major political parties to debate policy positions in the run up to election in order to promote issue-focused public conversation around the elections**

**25 August 2015, Dar es Salaam:** Twaweza announces the launch and commencement of the election dialogues series, Mkikimkiki 2015. The debates are set to provide an opportunity and platform for political parties to share their plans and priorities for the country with citizens.

The debate series is timely. In recently conducted research for Twaweza, Ipsos Tanzania found that 8 out of 10 citizens think parliamentary (78%) and presidential (79%) candidates should debate each other. Aside from political rallies citizens have little opportunity to hear extensively about what parties actually plan to do to make change happen.

In addition, a qualitative study of the political preferences and knowledge of citizens, commissioned by Twaweza, found that the truthfulness of campaign promises was a key preoccupation for voters. Citizens were keen to have the opportunity to interrogate candidates and try to determine whether they would implement these promises. Public debates with unscripted responses are an important opportunity for citizens to do this. The Mkikimkiki 2015 debates also allow for interactivity as citizens are able to submit potential questions for the debates online and via SMS. In addition audience members will also be able to ask questions during the debates.

The debates are designed to connect evidence and data to policy commitments and ensure that political party representatives provide concrete and achievable plans. A series of four debates based on the manifestos of five major political parties is planned. These will cover: nationhood; the economy and inequality; social services particularly health and education; and corruption, governance and integrity.

The five political parties fielding the largest number of candidates in the elections (at constituency or ward level) have been invited to send their experts to outline their visions and plans for these critical areas. These representatives will be interrogated by a panel composed of sector experts drawn from civil society.

In addition three separate debates are planned for Union vice-presidential, Zanzibar presidential and Union presidential candidates.

Each debate will last two and a half hours and be broadcast live on Star TV and RFA by the media partner for the event, Sahara Media Group. The debates are produced by Compass Communications with social media support from Jamii Forums. The schedule for the debates is as follows:

<b>DATE</b>	<b>TOPIC</b>	
30 AUGUST 2015	<b>Nationhood / National Unity</b>	Manifesto debate
06 SEPTEMBER 2015	<b>Debate for candidates for the post of President of Zanzibar</b>	
20 SEPTEMBER 2015	<b>Public Service Delivery – Education and Health</b>	Manifesto debate

27 SEPTEMBER 2015	<b>Economy and Inequality</b>	Manifesto debate
04 OCTOBER 2015	<b>Debate for candidates for the post of Vice President of the United Republic of Tanzania</b>	
11 OCTOBER 2015	<b>Corruption, Governance and Integrity</b>	Manifesto debate
18 OCTOBER 2015	<b>Debate for candidates for the post of President of the United Republic of Tanzania</b>	

Aidan Eyakuze, Executive Director of Twaweza said *“In a bid to re-focus political debate from the current personality driven agenda to the issues that concern ordinary citizens, Twaweza is supporting a series of debates on party manifestos and with vice-presidential and presidential candidates. At this historic moment in Tanzania’s history, citizens must be well informed about how those seeking public office plan to address our challenges.”*

*“The data Twaweza has collected over the past few years through Sauti za Wananchi and Uwezo, show that citizens are clear and consistent about three things,”* he continued. *“Firstly there is a strong desire for government just to work better. Although citizens may not be focused on strong enforcement mechanisms for accountability, they do want responsiveness. Many citizens who conclude that their MPs have not delivered on electoral promises say they will not vote for the incumbent MPs. Secondly citizens are focused on their livelihoods and critical social services - they have consistently referenced poverty and the economy, health and education as the core challenges facing the country. Finally, despite their concerns, citizens are optimistic. They look forward to the future and, with some exceptions, see possibilities for change. And since they see voting as a critical way in which they hold government accountable, political parties would do well to present their vision, priorities and plans in an accessible and compelling way. These debates offer a free and widely distributed way for parties and their candidates to connect with citizens, and we look forward to their enthusiastic participation.”*

Media are welcome to attend the debates but must register in advance to do so. Please send an email to [pr@compass-tz.com](mailto:pr@compass-tz.com) or call +255 768 129974.

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**For more information:**

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**Notes to Editors**

- 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
- Compass Communications is a Tanzanian production house founded by Maria Sarungi Tsehai. Other partners for Mkikimkiki 2015 are Sahara Media Group and Jamii Forums.
- You can follow Twaweza’s work  
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