



Press Release
17 May 2018

9 out of 10 citizens want to raise education standards, even if it means paying fees
In 2005, 6 out of 10 citizens preferred fee-free education even if it meant standards were low

17 May 2018, Dar es Salaam: Citizens' views on fee-free education have changed dramatically over the past 12 years: in 2005, just over half (56%) agreed that 'It is better to have free schooling for our children, even if the quality of education is low' while in 2017, 9 out of 10 (87%) instead think that 'it is better to raise educational standards, even if we have to pay school fees.' Similarly, 9 out of 10 citizens (87%) would rather the government spent money on a program to train and support teachers than on providing free school uniforms that relieve parents of that expense.

These findings were released by Twaweza in a research brief titled *For free or fees? Tanzanians' experiences and preferences on schooling*. 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 1,786 respondents across Mainland Tanzania (excluding Zanzibar) in September - October 2017.

Very few parents appear concerned with low school fees (6%) and distance to schools (18%) when choosing secondary schools. Instead the majority of parents report being influenced by secondary school exam pass marks and teacher motivation (both at 72%). Parents appear to be very certain of their desire for high education standards and they report being willing to pay for them.

Despite this reported willingness to pay for quality, the proportion of households with children in private schools has remained constant at 10% between August / September 2016 and September / October 2017. However, enrollment in private schools varies by level of school with 3 out of 10 parents (27%) choosing private schools for nursery and 2 out of 10 (17%) for secondary school levels compared to just one out of ten (7%) enrolling their children in private primary schools.

Further, although parents report they are concerned about the quality of education, they are also largely uninformed. Parents do not have a strong sense of how well their children's schools perform on primary school examinations. For schools with low average pass rates (below 51%), 6 out of 10 parents (56%) think the school's performance is good or very good while less than 1 out of 10 (5%) think performance is poor. While for schools with high pass rates (over 91%), 3 out of 10 parents (26%) describe performance as average or poor.

Nonetheless, parents appear to be trying to play their part: 5 out of 10 (53%) contributed towards school construction in the past year; 4 out of 10 (38%) provided money, 2 out of 10 (18%) contributed labour and 1 out of 10 (9%) gave materials. And naturally parents also pay for items such as stationary (98%), uniform (75%), school bags (26%) and books (15%). Furthermore; 85% report meeting their children's teachers at least once or twice in the previous year, compared to 79% who did so in 2016. More parents (30%) are also likely to report meeting teachers every few months compared to 2016 (21%).

Parents (52%) also describe themselves as bearing the primary responsibility for ensuring children learn although a significant portion (46%) also put the responsibility onto teachers. Almost no parents named education officials, politicians or anyone in government as being responsible for learning. Yet when asked how they support school management, most parents (52%) refer to their role in disciplining children with far fewer naming fundraising (22%), monitoring teacher attendance (14%) or commenting on the school audit (4%).

Aidan Eyakuze, Executive Director of Twaweza, said: *“There is a strong message on education from citizens here. Although decisions on policy can not be driven by popular will alone, but when they are ready to pay for them, citizen preferences must be taken seriously. Citizens are clear that they are willing to pay for quality education. This has shifted dramatically over time, showing that citizens have a nuanced understanding of policy trade offs. What this survey confirms is that citizens should be a central part of any national discussion on education reform.”*

---- Ends ----

For more information:

Risha Chande, Senior Communications Advisor, Twaweza
e: rchande@twaweza.org | t: (+255) (0) 656 657 559

Notes to Editors

- This brief and the data contained can be accessed at www.twaweza.org / www.twaweza.org/sauti, Twaweza Tanzania (Facebook) @Twaweza_NiSisi
- 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