



Press Release

Embargoed: 10am Tuesday 18 September

Significant short term success has been achieved in healthcare But long-term improvements in health outcomes still hang in the balance

Dar es Salaam, 18 September 2012: Government programmes that have prioritised distribution of bed nets to households have achieved substantial success, with 95% of households in Dar es Salaam reporting ownership of at least one net. Use of bed nets is a vital preventative step in the fight against malaria. However at the same time just over half of Dar es Salaam residents reported treating their water before consumption. A number of water borne diseases can be prevented through chlorine treatment or boiling, including cholera and typhoid, so the low figures represent a public health challenge. These findings are presented in a policy brief *What does Dar make of health? Health service and practice in Dar es Salaam* which was released today.

The policy brief is based on a public service delivery survey conducted by Uwazi at Twaweza in August and September 2010. A total of 550 randomly selected households were visited by the survey team in Ilala, Temeke, and Kinondoni districts, and asked about citizens' living conditions and their experiences with public services.

The survey found that health continues to be major challenge for Dar es Salaam residents with one in three households reporting sickness among a member of the household in the week preceding the survey. Worryingly, one third of these cases were reported to be among young children, who are often most vulnerable to disease. The success achieved in front-line preventative measures, such as distribution of bed nets, is therefore an important step towards tackling public health issues. However the low levels of water treatment do require urgent attention.

Survey findings around public health facilities also offered some cause for optimism but with important issues that still need to be addressed, including:

- In households that reported having a sick member in the week before the survey, 86% reported seeking treatment at a health facility. The use of these facilities is a vital first step in appropriate diagnosis and treatment.
- There is significant demand for government healthcare facilities as 60% of respondents reported using these facilities for treatment. This figure increases dramatically when the income level of households is taken into account. Among the poorest households, 82% use government facilities.
- However there was a marked difference in overall patient satisfaction between private and public facilities with 60% of consumers of public facilities reporting satisfaction in comparison with 79% of users of private facilities.

According to Nyankomo Marwa, Research Analyst at Twaweza *“it is fantastic to see wide use of government healthcare facilities. Residents of Dar es Salaam are not suffering silently in their homes when they fall sick. However the levels of dissatisfaction with these facilities are cause for concern about the quality of services provided.”*

The brief shows that there is cause for cautious optimism when it comes to healthcare service delivery in Dar es Salaam. However, policy will need to incorporate all frontline preventative measures if success in health outcomes is to be achieved. Although access to public health facilities appears to be inclusive, work needs to be done to ensure that the quality of care and treatment at these facilities is improved, particularly in terms of the high levels of corruption.

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Notes to Editors

- The full data from the 2010 Uwazi Public Service Delivery Survey can be accessed at www.listeningtohear.org.
- Twaweza is a ten year citizen-centered initiative, focusing on large-scale change in East Africa. Twaweza believes that lasting change requires bottom-up action, and seeks to foster conditions and expand opportunities through which millions of people can get information and make change happen in their own communities directly and by holding government to account.
- Uwazi at Twaweza works to 'liberate' data and information so as to better inform public discussion. Uwazi's mission is to enable key actors to have access to timely, reliable, relevant and easy to understand information and analyses which enhance public debate and accountability, and that contribute to citizen agency and action.
- You can follow Twaweza's work
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