



Press Release | 10 December 2019

Kiswahili literacy is improving steadily according to the latest Uwezo data

But inequalities continue to be a major challenge, affecting learning outcomes

10 December 2019, Dar es Salaam: New data from the Uwezo learning assessment confirm a steady improvement in Kiswahili literacy skills among children in Standards 3 and 7. At the same time, there has been a marked decline in English literacy and fluctuations in numeracy.

Kiswahili (pupils able to read a Standard 2 level short story)

- In 2017, in Standard 3, 6 out of 10 pupils (62%) passed the test. In 2014, 55% did.
- In 2017, in Standard 7, 8 out of 10 pupils (86%) passed the test, about the same (85%) as in 2014.

English (pupils able to read a Standard 2 level short story)

- In 2017, in Standard 3, 1 out of 7 pupils (15%) passed the test. In 2014, 1 out of 5 (21%) did.
- In 2017, in Standard 7, 5 out of 10 pupils (47%) passed the test. In 2014, 6 out of 10 (56%) did.
- Half of Standard 7 pupils cannot read English, the language of instruction in secondary school.

Numeracy (pupils able to do Standard 2 subtraction)

- In 2017, in Standard 3, 6 out of 10 pupils (59%) passed the test. In 2014, 5 out of 10 (50%) did.
- In 2017, in Standard 7, 8 out of 10 of pupils (80%) passed the test. In 2014, 9 out of 10 (88%) did.

These findings were released today by Uwezo at Twaweza, in a report titled *Are our children learning? (2019)*. This is the seventh report presenting findings from Uwezo's large-scale learning assessment. This assessment was conducted in 2017 to measure literacy and numeracy competencies of children aged 6-16 years both in and out of school. Uwezo partners assessed 48,530 children and collected data from 1,677 schools.

Despite mixed results in learning outcomes for the three subjects, the Uwezo data also demonstrate the clear value of children attending school. Nationally, only 2 out of 10 out-of-school children (19%) aged 9-13 years passed all three Uwezo tests. In comparison, the average pass rate for all three tests among children enrolled in Standards 3 to 7 (most of whom are aged 9-13 years) was 60%, three times higher than the rates among their out-of-school peers.

The data also highlight significant inequalities across the country in terms of learning outcomes, school environments and enrollment.

Access

- Among children who are out of school, half come from very poor households (46%) while 2 out of 10 (22%) are from non-poor households.

Outcomes

- The gap between the best and worst performing district is significant: in Meru, 3 out of 4 children (73%) age 9 to 13 were able to pass all three tests while in Nzega 1 out of 4 (24%) could was able to pass all three tests.

Learning environment

- Electricity: in Temeke, 97% of schools have electricity, in Namtumbo, 3% do.
- Toilets: In Ubungo, 133 boys or 114 girls share one toilet, while in Moshi 19 boys share one toilet and in Rombo, 16 girls share a toilet.

The Uwezo assessment includes data on a range of important factors related to learning; given the importance of teachers, parents and community members, and school systems, particularly oversight bodies, to learning outcomes, the data offer insight into how each one is playing their role.

Teachers

- On average, the pupil-teacher ratio (PTR) for pre-school was 86:1, compared to the recommended national ratio of 25:1. In primary school (Standards 1 to 6 only), the average ratio was 44:1 almost the same as the national standard of 45:1.

Systems (oversight)

- On average, 8 out of 10 schools (77%) were visited for inspection by school quality assurance officers. Even in the more poorly performing districts, Uyui (43%), Ubungo (41%), close to half of schools were inspected.

Parents

- Parents are fairly active when it comes to engaging in schoolwork: 7 out of 10 report reading with their children in the past week while 2 out of 10 checked their children's exercise books. And half of parents (50%) visited their child's school to discuss progress
- On average, 23% of schools provide meals to children at school. The cost of meals is not catered for in school grants and so it can only be met through parental contributions.

"Although the Uwezo assessment results continue to show steady improvement in Kiswahili literacy especially for Standard 3 children, there are significant disparities. Where a child lives influences their access to school, how much they learn and where they learn," commented Zaida Mgalla, Country Manager for Uwezo Tanzania. "The elimination of gender difference - in terms of access to primary education and Standard 2 skills - is a notable accomplishment and demonstrates that concerted local efforts can make a difference."

Aidan Eyakuze, Executive Director of Twaweza said *"These data contain unique insights. They paint a rich picture of the education system, touch on the influence of key actors on outcomes, and thus contribute to a more informed public discussion about how to transform our education sector."*

"The breadth and depth of Uwezo data," he continued, "helps us all to identify those children who are at risk of being left behind, so that we can focus our efforts there. And by training thousands of young men and women to collect these data, to take an interest in service delivery in their area and to engage with local leaders, Uwezo helps to support the next generation of informed and empowered citizens, who are actively engaging in public service."

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Notes to Editors

- This report, the tools used for the assessment and the underlying data can be accessed at www.twaweza.org, or www.uwezo.net
- The Uwezo learning assessment is conducted in Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda by thousands of volunteers. Children aged 6 to 16 are assessed in basic literacy and numeracy using a test based on the Standard 2 curriculum. Uwezo aims to create a national dialogue about education, learning outcomes and policy priorities to ensure that all children access equitable and quality education.
- You can follow Twaweza's work
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