



Press Release

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Education is failing to deliver basic skills But children in urban areas, in private schools and from wealthier households outperform their peers

Dar es Salaam, 17 December 2013: While 100% of children in Standard 3 and higher classes are meant to be able to do basic reading and mathematics, the Uwezo findings reveal that very few are able to do so. In Standard 3, one out of four children can read Kiswahili at the right level. Private schools do relatively better than Government schools, with 61% of children aged 9 years unable to read Kiswahili and do multiplication compared to 85% in Government schools.

These findings were released by Uwezo Tanzania at Twaweza, in its third Annual Learning Assessment report. The findings are based on Tanzania's largest annual household assessment to test children on basic literacy and numeracy skills. The assessment was carried out nationally in 2012; testing 104,568 children aged 7-16 years in 55,191 households in 3,752 enumeration areas (villages) in 126 districts of Tanzania.

The Uwezo assessment shows that performance is poor across the country. Key findings are:

Kiswahili Literacy – Performance still poor and largely unchanged from 2011

- Only 1 out of 4 (26%) Standard 3 children could read a Standard 2 level story.
- By Standard 7, 1 out of 4 (24%) children still could not read a Standard 2 Kiswahili story.

English Literacy – Performance significantly poorer than Kiswahili

- In Standard 3, only 1 out of 10 (13%) children could read a Standard 2 level story.
- Even by Standard 7, 5 in 10 children could still not read a Standard 2 story. This means that half of all Standard 7 children have not acquired basic skills in English.

Numeracy – Performance improved compared to 2011 but still poor

- In Standard 3 children, just over 4 out of 10 (44%) children could do multiplication.
- By Standard 7, however, 1 out of 10 (11%) children still could not do Standard 2 level multiplication.

The results show that vast numbers of children are not acquiring basic skills in primary education. Even by the time they leave primary school, many children are still unable to complete Standard 2 level work.

Large Inequalities:

In addition, the Uwezo assessment highlights a growing trend of inequality. Children in urban areas outperform their rural counterparts in literacy and numeracy. Children from wealthier households also do markedly better in acquiring these basic skills, as do children in private schools. Although learning outcomes are poor across the board, these persistent gaps point to an education system that serves the privileged.

All children, regardless of age, grade or schooling status were tested at Standard 2 level literacy and numeracy competencies. Key findings are:

Location

- At age 9 years, only 3 out of 10 (32%) children in urban areas possess basic skills, compared to 1 out of 10 (11%) in rural areas.

Wealth

- At age 9 years, only 2 out of 10 (21%) children from wealthier households possess basic skills, compared to less than 1 out of 10 (6%) in the poorest households.

School Type

- At age 9 years, just over 1 out of 10 (15%) children in public schools can pass the tests while 4 out of 10 (39%) children in private schools can do so.

“There are two main stories in education in Tanzania today,” noted Zaida Mgalla, Uwezo Tanzania Country Coordinator *“First, the vast majority of our children are not learning. Second, we are a society of two classes; the privileged with more wealth or in urban areas or who can afford private schooling do much better than most people. When it comes to education, Tanzania is not one nation.”*

The Uwezo assessment in 2012 was carried out by 7,560 citizen volunteers, who in turn were overseen by partners in 126 districts of the country (Mtwara districts not included because the authorities did not allow the research to take place in 2012). The aim is to engage all citizens in the process of improving our education system and ensuring our children learn.

Rakesh Rajani, Head of Twaweza, said *“While government has the primary responsibility, the challenge of quality education is a societal one that involves us all. Action should be taken at every level, everyone - from parents to policy-makers, from teachers to district officials - has a vital role to play in ensuring that our children learn.”*

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Notes to editors

About Uwezo

Uwezo means ‘capability’ in Kiswahili. It is an East African initiative that aims to improve competencies in literacy and numeracy by using an innovative approach to social change that is citizen driven and accountable to the public. Uwezo promotes debate and dialogue on learning outcomes in East Africa. By engaging everyone in national conversations, Uwezo aims to spark action at all levels to improve learning outcomes. www.uwezo.net

About Twaweza

Twaweza means “we can make it happen” in Swahili. It is a ten year citizen-centered initiative, focusing on large-scale change in East Africa. Twaweza believes that lasting change requires bottom-up action. We seek 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. www.twaweza.org