WHERE THE RUBBER HITS THE ROAD: SUB-NATIONAL CONVERSATIONS AND VIEWS ON EDUCATION

A FORMATIVE STUDY IN TEN DISTRICTS

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uwezo

Twaweza
ni sisi
evidence | voice | engagement

Executive Summary

In Tanzania, for many children schooling does not equal learning: official statistics have shown high rates of failure in national primary (as well as secondary) school leaving exams, and Uwezo, an independent monitoring mechanism, has over the last five years demonstrated that while millions of children attend primary school, the learning outcomes continue to be very low. In an effort to better understand the "production of education" in districts and schools, Twaweza commissioned a qualitative study to explore the state of debate and communication about education in general, and learning outcomes in particular, among district-level decision makers in ten selected districts in mainland Tanzania. The overall purpose of the study was to generate formative insights to enlighten Twaweza's future communication and engagement initiatives, and inform the design of initiatives geared at improving learning outcomes for primary-school children.

The districts were purposively selected, and within each district, a number of key actors were interviewed, including District Education Officers, Ward Education Coordinators, and Head Teachers of selected schools. The insights gathered are illustrative, and not intended to be representative of Tanzania overall. The discussions with key actors centered on different themes, such as financial inputs and resource mobilization, options to provide support to teachers as well as support to pupils, the link between school inputs and learning outcomes, and engagement with Uwezo materials and results.

Highlights of the qualitative exercise include:
- Understanding of quality of education is centred around the scores on the national exams (PSLE), as well as on the numbers (or proportions) of children advancing to secondary school. There is limited questioning of whether "passing" means that children have actually mastered the required skills.
- On the other hand, a number of respondents discussed the importance of mastering basic skills (basic numeracy and literacy) in the lower primary grades. The government's "3R" program, which trained many primary school teachers in enhanced literacy and numeracy for early grades, has very likely contributed to this.
- Two main factors were given most commonly as rationale for learning outcomes not being at desired levels: lack of resources, and the "local culture." In the latter, education stakeholders tended to single out parents as being "unsupportive" to education. In the former, all respondents noted that education resources received from central government are insufficient, as well as often untimely.
- When discussing how to improve learning outcomes, most respondents focused heavily on inputs (such as desks, and books).

- Much of the discussion around teachers centred around the support they are lacking (such as not being paid on time), and that they work under hard conditions (e.g. lack of appropriate housing, lack of teaching materials at schools).
- Support to pupils was mostly discussed in context of extra classes to prepare pupils for examinations, especially the PSLE in Grade 7.
- All districts in this study reported following the required administrative and budgetary procedures, however, a handful also reported some innovative management practices (for example, one district implemented a consultative process, drawing on a variety of stakeholders, to develop a jointly-owned plan on how to improve education).
- Regarding Uwezo, it is clear that although the majority of respondents seemed aware of the Uwezo assessment reports, engagement with the data and use of the reports is low.

To contextualize the qualitative results, the available PSLE rates for the ten study districts (from 2012 – 2015) were examined, together with available Uwezo data for the same districts. PSLE data shows that the proportion of students passing the exam has steadily increased from 2012 to 2015 in the ten districts examined. However, according to Uwezo, the learning levels of children upon leaving primary schools (in Grade 7) have not demonstrably improved over the same time period. The disconnect between the two datasets invites further debate as to what is the actual status of learning in Tanzanian primary schools, and how is the production of learning understood and managed.

There is much work to do overall, and it will require collaboration of a variety of stakeholders: national and sub-national government, civil society, teachers and head teachers. For Twaweza in particular, a few meaningful future steps emerge. In addition to advocating nationally for sufficient and well-managed resources, this study also shows that critically, our future engagement strategies on education at the sub-national levels should focus on shaping the attitudes of key stakeholders about what constitutes quality education. In particular, our engagement strategies ought to:
- Galvanize stakeholders around the question of learning outcomes beyond the pass rates in final national examinations, and encourage inquiry into what actually improves learning outcomes, as based on research and evidence.
- Study more closely districts and schools which are implementing practices that differ from the norm, and follow these over time to examine whether different management practices can be associated with improved learning outcomes.
- Challenge some of the "old truths" which are not supported by evidence. For instance, the focus on the importance of inputs as directly linked to improving learning outcomes persists, despite ample research showing that simply increasing inputs does not improve learning outcomes.
- Thoughtfully widen the discussion on what teachers can do better; the picture of teacher dedication in face of adversity as reported in this study is at odds with other recent Tanzanian research showing that reality is much more varied, and it includes high absenteeism, low motivation, and a low skill base among teachers.
- Involve various stakeholders (e.g. district officials, journalists) in the independent assessment processes to provide a first-hand experience about children's actual learning competencies, and to encourage a wider national debate on the subject.
- Organise periodic discussions about education at the national but also district levels, and make use of the national and local media to discuss education results, various data and their meaning.
- Draw on international evidence of what has been shown to improve learning outcomes (and what hasn't), and translate and communicate that evidence clearly and compellingly to inform debate of where resources ought to be focused nationally and locally within Tanzania to improve learning.
- Provide district based (and where appropriate and feasible even ward based) simplified Uwezo (and other) assessment reports, and encourage and enable various stakeholders to understand and engage with the data. Disseminate Uwezo results and materials more pro-actively.

1. Background and Context

Background & Context: Tanzania

Two-thirds of Tanzanian citizens report having faith in the education system; they believe that it adequately prepares students for further education and life after school (Sauti za Wananchi, 2015)[1]. The reality, however, appears to be different. As the government's own data show, there are high rates of failure in national exams at the end of primary school, and also at the end of secondary school[2]. In addition, Uwezo, an independent monitoring mechanism implemented by Twaweza East Africa, has demonstrated repeatedly over the last five years that while millions of children attend school, schooling often does not lead to learning of even basic skills, such as reading and simple arithmetic. For instance, the 2013 the assessment revealed that 74% of Grade 3 pupils cannot read and conduct simple math at Grade 2 level. By the time they are in Grade 7, nearly a quarter (23%) of pupils have still not mastered these basic skills[3]. The results of another recently released report on service delivery indicators in Tanzania again confirm that pupils' performance is poor, especially in English and Mathematics: only 37 percent of primary-level pupils tested passed the English test and 58 percent passed a Mathematics test[4].

Tanzania is in a unique state of governance transformation; the fifth phase government wants to be seen to deliver real outcomes, all the way to the highest levels. Education continues to be one of the core issue of President John Pombe Magufuli's presidency, and is key to many other sectors of economic and social development. At the same time, the factors contributing to the poor state of Tanzania's education system are multifaceted, ranging from the high teacher absenteeism rates (ibid),

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[1] The key to life: Citizens views on Education. Sauti za Wananchi @ Twaweza. July 2015. http://twaweza.org/uploads/files/Education-FINAL-EN.pdf

[2] http://www.pmoralg.go.tz/noticeboard/tangazo-1023-20141229-Basic-Education-Statistics-BEST/

[3] Are our children learning? Literacy and numeracy across East Africa 2014. Uwezo @ Twaweza. http://www.twaweza.org/uploads/files/Uwezo_EA_Report-EN-FINAL.pdf

[4] Service Delivery Indicators Tanzania 2016, World Bank & Repoa. http://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2016/05/27/tanzania-new-service-delivery-data-show-some-progress

to the amount of government funding allocated to schools as well as its disbursement and accountability[5]. In view of such entrenched challenges, change cannot come immediately or easily. However, substantive variations exist across the country in school environments, availability of material and human resources, as well as the ultimate test of the system – learning outcomes[6]. Local players and stakeholders are likely to be able to provide significant insight into the factors contributing to the varied, often poor, equilibrium of the education system. It is therefore useful to understand their perspectives, what they think constitutes quality education and how it can be achieved. These perspectives are not readily available in Tanzania, especially from the district levels. The need for such perspectives, and their direct relevance to planning and shaping initiatives aimed to improving the education sector, were the main driving forces behind the study described in this report.

Background & Context: Twaweza, learning outcomes, new strategies

What is Uwezo?

Uwezo is a citizen-led assessment of learning outcomes; it has been carried out on a national scale in Tanzania every year since 2011; the sample is drawn so that it is representative of each district included in the sample. In 2015, the assessment was conducted in all 156 districts in Tanzania, reaching 168,312 children. During the assessment, Uwezo volunteers go house-to-house to administer tests of basic numeracy and literacy (in both English and Swahili) to children between the ages of 7 and 16. These tests, which reflect Grade 2 (the second year of primary school) level learning objectives, were designed in accordance with Tanzania's national curriculum and vetted by relevant authorities. Immediately after administering the tests, Uwezo volunteers present parents with their children's results together with materials outlining strategies to improve their children's learning. Volunteers also collect data from the main public primary school serving each enumeration area. Assessment results are then tallied to establish national and sub-national indicators of learning capabilities, and form the basis of a communication and engagement strategy to reach policymakers, the media, and the wider public.

Twaweza, which means "we can make it happen" in Swahili, is a civil-society organization working on enabling children to learn, citizens to exercise agency and governments to be more open and responsive in Tanzania, Kenya and Uganda. Uwezo at Twaweza (Uwezo meaning "capability" in Kiswahili) is a multi-year initiative that aims to improve competencies in literacy and numeracy among children in the three East African countries. The program was designed to achieve three related goals:

- Independently establish actual levels of children's learning (basic literacy and numeracy)
- Actively share the evidence on learning outcomes with key policy makers, media and other players to spur and sustain a public and policy debate
- Actively share the evidence with parents and other citizens to spur practical local action that could improve education outcomes

Independent external evaluations[7] of Uwezo have highlighted three salient results. First, Uwezo appears to have had a significant effect on shifting the policy and public dialogue from refusing to acknowledge a learning crisis to a broad agreement on this issue, and a search for policy and program

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[5] Policy Forum position statement: Budget 2016/2017. http://www.policyforum-tz.org/position-statement-budget-20162017

[6] Are our children learning? The state of education in Tanzania in 2015 and beyond. Uwezo @ Twaweza. http://twaweza.org/go/uwezo-tz-2014

[7] R4D, for Hewlett: http://www.hewlett.org/sites/default/files/R4D%20-%20Bringing%20Learning%20to%20Light%20-%20June%202015.pdf ; Liberman, Posner and Tsai (2014) http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2228900 ; Carlitz and Lipovsek http://www.twaweza.org/go/lpt-synthesis

solutions which could help to improve learning outcomes. Linked to this is a second result, suggesting that Uwezo has played an influential role in shifting the national focus from the status of learning inputs as measures of the success of the education system (i.e. number of teachers, books, desks, etc.), to the learning outcomes – i.e., the attainment of at least basic learning competencies. The third result is about where change has not yet happened: although Uwezo hypothesized that action to improve schooling would be taken by parents and communities, this has by and large not been observed.

Moreover, the numerous years of releasing Uwezo data have not (yet) led to improvements in the schooling system, or indeed in learning outcomes. Perhaps this is not surprising. A policy dialogue, and even a change of policy at the national level, does not necessarily change how the education system is run, how schools are managed; indeed, we know that Tanzania generally has commendable policies on paper, but their implementation is very weak. Moreover, in a country where many parents struggle with literacy themselves, and where the normative system places even teachers and head teachers in a realm inaccessible to ordinary citizens, it is little surprise that individual parents have not actively demanded the improvement of the education system.

As a result, Uwezo at Twaweza intends to bring its communication and engagement strategies from the national to the sub-national, and from the household into the wider community. There are more opportunities and spaces for authorities and citizens (and civil society) to interface in districts, wards, and schools. These spaces are certainly influenced and to a degree dictated by national policies, but room remains to manoeuver and promote pro-learning strategies locally. Moreover, while citizens individually may not feel able to demand better from the system, available research suggests that if they are organized and equipped with clear, relevant information on how the system works, and what to expect and demand from it, they are able to interface productively with local authorities[8].

Twaweza is planning to design strategies to promote the engagement and response (and perhaps even collaboration) of citizens and local authorities. Prior to the design, however, we commissioned in late 2015 a qualitative study to explore the state of debate and communication about education in general, and learning outcomes in particular, among district-level decision makers in selected districts in Tanzania. **This study is therefore relevant to Twaweza's implementation going forward, as well as a formative study to understand the perspectives of key stakeholders within districts on how education is managed and produced.**

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[8] For example: http://policy-practice.oxfam.org.uk/publications/effectiveness-review-chukua-hatua-tanzania-303755

2. The purpose of the study

This overall purpose of the study was to generate formative insights to inform Twaweza's future communication and engagement initiatives. The study describes the current dynamics of decision making and information sharing at district level, and perspectives of key stakeholders within districts on how education is managed and produced.

This qualitative baseline examined the existing situation, context, identities, operations, structures and power relations in the education system in ten districts in mainland Tanzania. The study was conducted in Dodoma Municipality (Dodoma region), Ilemela Municipality (Mwanza region), Kakonko district (Kigoma region), Makete district (Njombe region), Mkuranga District (Coast region), Morogoro Municipality (Morogoro region), Moshi Rural District (Kilimanjaro region), Mpanda Municipality (Katavi region), Mtwara District (Mtwara region), and Sengerema District (Mwanza region). The approximate location of the districts is shown on a map in the Methods section.

The box below outlines the core questions of the study.

Study Questions
- To what extent does the education agenda feature in key decision making processes in the selected districts?
- To what extent do key education players understand and use the concept of learning outcomes?
- How and when do policy actors support making learning outcomes a policy priority?
- How do education stakeholders in the districts understand their role and support in improving literacy and numeracy learning outcomes? What is currently [being] done to improve learning?
- What resources/expenditure are allocated in improving education and learning outcomes specifically?
- What challenges and barriers do stakeholders face in advocating or promoting a learning outcomes agenda?
- What are the key sources of information among key education stakeholders and influencers in the selected districts?
- To what extent are key education players aware of, and how much do they understand the Uwezo learning assessment?

3. Methods

3.1 Sample selection

This study was conducted in 10 districts purposively selected by Uwezo on the basis of several criteria. First was the strength of the Uwezo implementing partner. In every district, Uwezo works through a local civil society organization for the purposes of collecting the assessment data and communicating the results. The selected partners have been working with Uwezo for multiple years, and have been rated as successful in fulfilling the terms of the engagement, both in the tasks related to the research and in related communication activities. The presence of community radio and other means of public media were also considered, on the assumption that these means of communication could stimulate discussions about education matters in general and learning outcomes in particular in the community. The approximate location of the districts is shown on the map below.
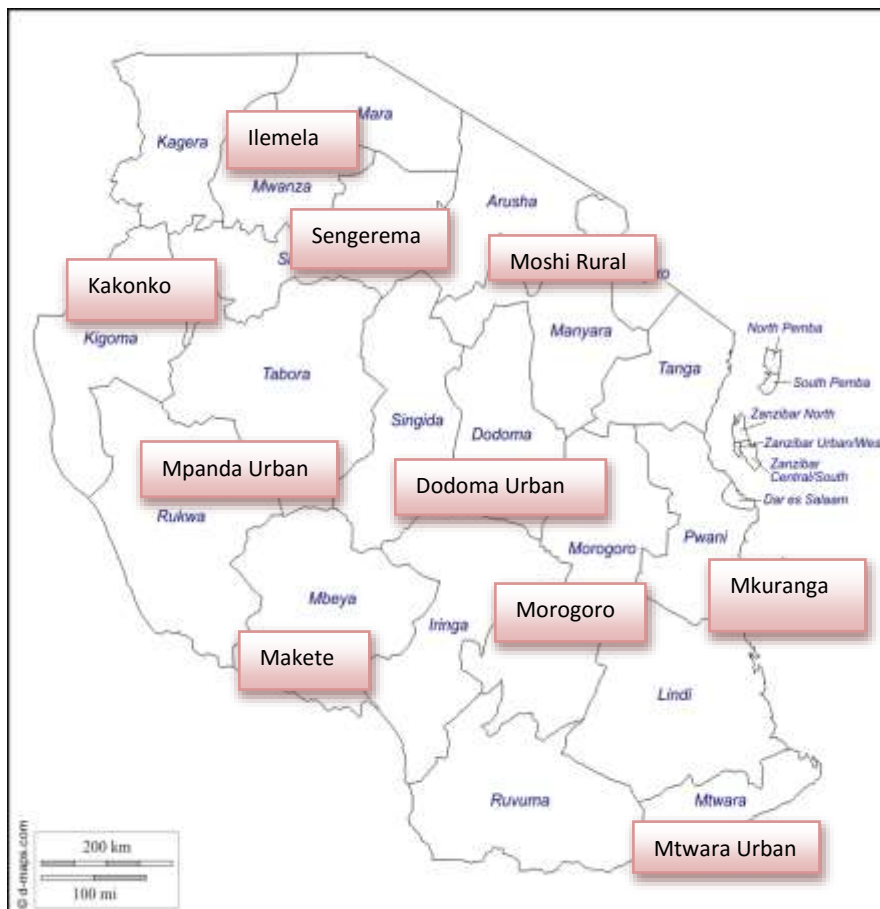
Administratively, districts are sub-divided into wards; ten wards, one from each sampled district, were selected to participate in the current study. The wards were selected on the basis of accessibility and in consultation with District/Municipal officers and District Education Officers. From each selected ward, two government-owned primary schools were randomly selected to participate. In total 20 primary schools, two from each ward (and each district) were included in this study.

3.2 Data Collection

Field work took place in October and November 2015. Face-to-face in-depth interviews were conducted with a total of 65 participants from the following pre-selected categories: District Executive Directors (DED), District Education Officers (DEO) (primary education), Ward Executive Officers (WEO), Ward Education Coordinators (WEC), Head Teachers (HT) and journalists. The categories were selected based on the analysis of who has influence over education decisions, and their implementation, in the respective districts. Journalists were added to explore the influence of local media. The figure below shows the total numbers of respondents included in the study.
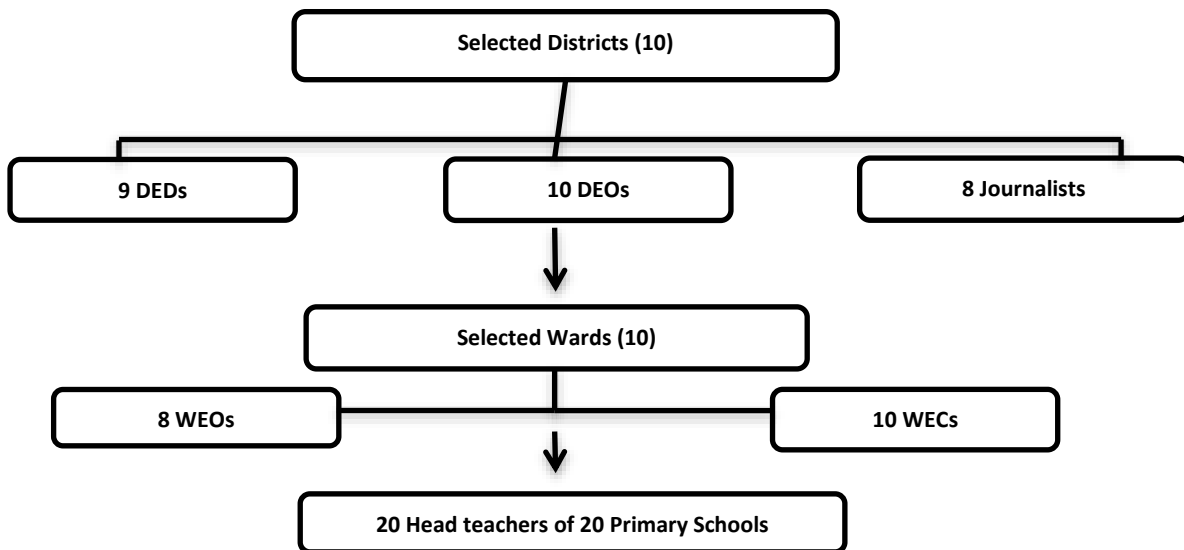
The study employed face-to-face semi structured interviews, one 'mini' focus group discussion (in the case where three officials together were designated to represent the DEO), and content analysis of key documents. The interview sessions lasted between 30 and 60 minutes. They were conducted in Kiswahili. All interview proceedings except two were audio recorded. This allowed preservation of participants' words and retrieval of information during data processing and report writing. In the cases where the participants did not consent to audio recording, field-notes were taken by the researchers.

Prior to the actual fieldwork a pilot study was conducted in Ilala Municipality in Dar es Salaam region. This area was conveniently selected on the basis of accessibility as well as not being among the sampled districts for the field work. The main purpose of the pilot study were to determine whether the interview protocol including interview guide would operate as planned as well as to identify flaws, such as unclear or redundant questions. The pilot involved an interview with the DEO, an interview with the WEC, and a mini-focus group discussion with three heads of schools. The researchers and Twaweza reviewed the results of the pilot and adjusted the instruments accordingly.

3.3 Data analysis

The method used was thematic analysis. The process followed three main steps, outlined below.

Step One: Preparation and organisation of data

Preparation and organisation of data for analysis involved listening to each audio taped interview, followed by verbatim transcription conducted by trained research assistants under close supervision of researchers.

Step Two: Creation of themes

Creation of themes was first informed by the study questions; thereafter, data was approached inductively. An inductive approach allowed unanticipated themes to emerge from the dataset and to determine whether the deductively derived themes were well supported by the data from the field. The inductive phase involved reading the transcripts repeatedly. Themes were created in collaboration with the Twaweza team. Researchers cross-checked each other's themes and datasets for verification.

Step Three: Coding, presentation, and interpretation

After creation of themes, transcripts were re-read for coding. This was done by identifying text elements – words, sentences, and/or paragraphs – from each transcript and dragging-and-dropping them into respective themes. NVIVO computer software was used for the coding process. Furthermore, the coded data extracts for each theme were reviewed to determine whether they formed a coherent pattern. This enabled the researchers to rework and refine the themes and related extracts. The interpretation of the findings are informed by a spiral-like movement, which involves going back and forth from the data and the evolving interpretation. Data are presented in a simple and straightforward fashion with rich descriptions supported by representative quotations from the interview proceedings.

3.4 Ethical considerations

This research was guided by national and international ethical regulations and professional codes of conduct such as Belmont Report on Ethical Principles and Guidelines for the Protection of Human Subjects of Research (1979). Research permissions were obtained from responsible authorities. Prior to conducting the interviews and discussion, informed consent was obtained from all participants. Data and sources have been treated confidentially and data securely stored for access only by the team members.

4. Emerging themes and highlights of results

4.1 Emerging themes

During data analysis several distinct themes emerged which lent a coherent framework to the results. The themes are broadly related to the original research questions, although the original questions were, by design, very open: for example "How do education stakeholders in the districts understand their role and support in improving literacy and numeracy learning outcomes? What is currently done to improve learning?" Under this broad question, several specific themes emerged, including motivation and support for teachers, and extra support for pupils. These now constitute two of the main themes. Another broad starting research question was "What are the challenges and barriers stakeholders face in advocating or promoting a learning outcomes agenda?" Respondents' answers to this question were grouped clearly into two themes: the financial constraints, and the perceived lack of support from parents. Again, these now constitute two main themes.

In this manner, the main findings were grouped according to eight themes, which give considerable insight into priorities in education, and how education is produced and managed in each of the districts. The last theme focuses purposefully on the awareness and engagement with Uwezo, this being part of our baseline to understand how much of a presence Uwezo data and insights already have in the minds of the key district decision makers. The eight themes are:

1. Understanding of learning outcomes as the key function of schooling
2. Perception of causal link between school inputs and learning outcomes
3. Financial inputs and resource mobilization
4. Focus on teaching process and practices and link to learning outcomes (teacher motivation, supervision, accountability, professional development)
5. Focus on providing extra support to learners and link to learning outcomes (extra/remedial classes)
6. Perceptions of parental and community engagement
7. Sources of key information and how information travels within the district
8. Engagement with Uwezo (awareness, understanding / participation in the assessment itself, interest in materials, use of materials)

4.2 Summary of Results

Using qualitative methodological approach, this study examines the contextual factors that inform and shape the discourse about education at district level in Tanzania, focusing on communication discourse among key actors within the districts, and the extent to which learning outcomes are prioritised in education policy decision making within districts. Furthermore, the study examines the challenges and barriers associated with understanding, promoting and prioritising learning outcomes as an important education agenda. Qualitative data was collected from 65 respondents drawn from amongst District Executive Directors (DEDs), District Education Officers (DEOs), Ward Executive Officers (WEOs), Head Teachers and Journalists based in participating districts.

Take-away messages from the study:

- Education matters: it is an important topic and forms a critical part of discourse among various stakeholders when discussing overall budget allocations within the districts. Some alluded to wanting to "protect" the education budget even at the expense of other sectors.
- The discourse around what it means to succeed within basic education is centred around the scores on the national exams (PSLE), as well as on the numbers (or proportions) of children advancing to secondary school. There was little to no discussion at all on whether these markers actually correlate with learning outcomes and skills. On the other hand, numerous respondents were concerned with the children's mastery of basic literacy and numeracy skills. Respondents from a few districts talked about learning in context of the 3R initiative, which focuses on ensuring children in early grades (1 and 2) have the basic literacy and numeracy skills; the importance of these foundational skills was emphasized by all respondents who commented on this topic.
- When thinking about why education was not improving, two main factors were given as rationale: (1) the "local culture" and (2) lack of resources. Expanding on local culture, respondents often described what they termed "customs" (e.g. the "pastoralist way of life," or the "customs of coastal communities" etc.), which are seen to be at odds with education norms and results. Often, the blame was specifically pointed at parents, usually noting that "parents do not value education."
- In terms of resources, respondents from all district (and from various tiers in the system) reported a universal lack of adequate resources to finance education, despite following the budgeting rules. The central government is the main source of education funding, which is usually channelled through local government authorities. A few districts are resourceful in raising other funding for education matters – but these tend to be ad-hoc donations, usually linked to limited inputs (such as building a number of classrooms or buying desks). There are roles within the system that appear to be nearly incapacitated due to lack of resources, such as the school inspection units. Respondents observed that the education budget at the district level was very small, and that it was released inconsistently and sporadically.
- In terms of what could be done to improve education outcomes, many respondents focused on school inputs: more classrooms, desks, books, chalk. Thus, the performance of the education system in the participating districts was frequently measured with respect to the level of school infrastructure, such as having an adequate number of classrooms and desks, as well as availability of teaching and learning materials.
- Two other areas were discussed in terms of improving learning outcomes: support to teachers, and support to learners. Many respondents noted that teachers need more support, including improving teaching skills. Teachers are generally held with high regard and are seen as the main engine of the education system. The picture painted overall was of teachers working hard in difficult circumstances, and teachers' living and working conditions were presented as demotivating to the profession. Support to learners was mostly centred on

remedial courses organized around major exams (PSLE, and also Grade 4 exams), and, more recently with the addition of 3Rs, remedial classes to ensure basic skills in early grades.

- Respondents from all districts reported comprehensive formal structures of management, oversight and monitoring. The system has many layers, not all of which appear to have functional roles: for example, a number of Ward Education Officers expressed frustration at their own role, noting they are meant to provide "support" to schools but are routinely "left out." One the core tasks of the WEO is to collect and collate data from schools in the ward, and channel this to the District, for further reporting upward (to regional and national level). On the other hand, only one district reported using the data to internally assess how various schools were performing, and to focus additional resources (and teacher training) accordingly.

- Regarding Uwezo, it is clear from the results of this study that although the majority of respondents seemed aware of the Uwezo assessment reports, we do not seem to have done enough engagement activities around these reports. The majority of respondents acknowledged having received or seen the Uwezo materials, but they did not seem to have internalised their contents. This implies that the dissemination ways for Uwezo assessment reports are relatively passive and not actively engaging for the key stakeholders and the general public at large.

The above key-take away messages were drawn from rich qualitative data. To illustrate each theme further, excerpts and illustrations of these data, grouped by theme, can be found in Annex 1. Full transcripts are available upon request at info@twaweza.org.

5. Interpreting the results in context: data on learning outcomes
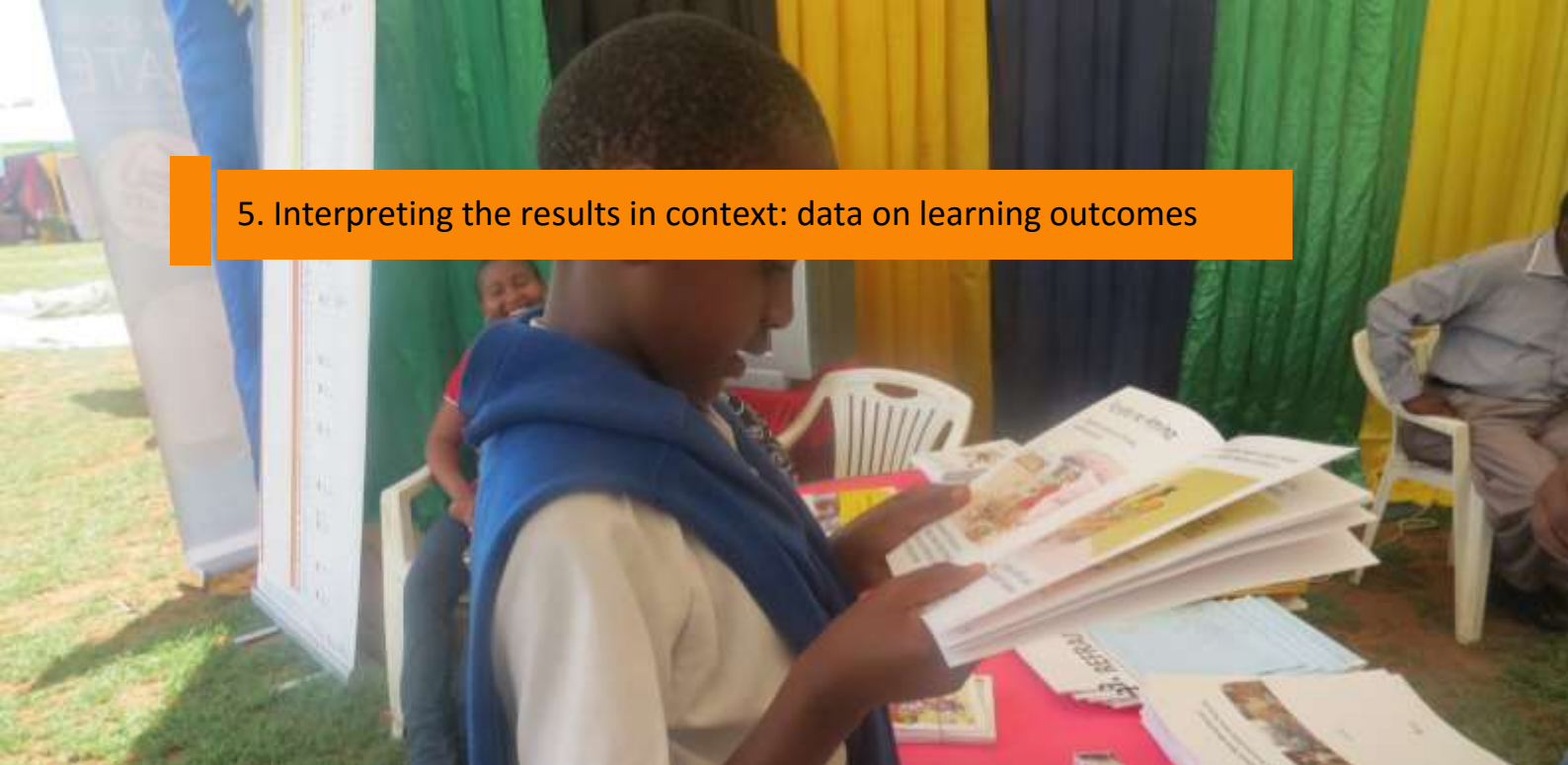
This rich qualitative research revealed there is variety in management, planning, and support practices in the districts included in the study. For example, officials in one municipality had convened a variety of stakeholders to design a district-wide strategic plan on how to improve education; the plan was, reportedly, being followed through and monitored. The officials in this district attributed the improvement in their PSLE scores to this new way of management. In another district, innovative methods of drawing parents into the education sphere were described, together with public recognition and praise, as well as financial incentives, for teachers whose students performed well.

Is it possible to associate different practices (as reported in this research) with different levels of learning outcomes? To get a sense of this, we look at the education results for the districts included in this study according to the PSLE pass rates, and according to the Uwezo assessment. Table 1 shows the PSLE pass rates for the years 2012-2015 for the districts in this study; it also shows the proportion of pupils *in Grade 7* who passed the combined Uwezo test (basic Swahili, Arithmetic and English), which is calibrated at Grade 2 level. The PSLE data were obtained from the National Examination Council (NECTA), while the Uwezo data were compiled internally by Twaweza[9].

	2012		2013		2014(a)		2015	
DISTRICTS	PSLE %	UWEZO %	PSLE %	UWEZO %	PSLE %	UWEZO %	PSLE %	UWEZO %
Morogoro Municipal	55	65	74	67	75	65	76	57
Moshi Rural	38	52	65	58	66	58	77	60
Ilemela Municipal (b)	48	60	71	56	72	--	89	47
Dodoma Municipal	44	46	62	55	60	--	62	22
Mpanda Municipal	31	38	63	55	90	52	98	30
Makete	37	48	59	48	70	--	84	50
Sengerema	30	29	52	30	61	--	78	60
Mtwara Rural (c)	24	--	54	28	71	--	87	25
Mkuranga	19	33	37	26	47	--	47	35
Kakonko (d)	--	29	--	28	44	--	49	35

(a) Uwezo 2014 was conducted on a restricted sample of districts, and did not include most of the districts captured in this study

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[9] These are preliminary results of the Uwezo 2015 data.

(b) In 2012, Ilemela was combined Nyamagana, under "Mwanza City"
(c) Uwezo was unable to conduct the assessment in Mtwara in 2012
(d) In 2012 and 2013, Kakonko was part of Kibondo

As the table shows, one notable observation on PSLE is that the proportion of students passing the exam has steadily increased from 2012 to 2015 in all districts shown. Second, the improvements in a number of cases are astounding: for example, Mpanda municipal had 27% of students passing PSLE in 2012, while in 2015, it reported that 98% of its students passed. Another "star" performer is Sengerema, where 30% of students passed PSLE in 2012, as compared to 78% in 2015.

Is such a significant improvement plausible? Can it be that the cohort of Mpanda students who were in Grade 4 in 2012 benefitted from such improvements in their learning environment, in education policy or in teachers in the subsequent three years that 98% of them passed the PSLE in 2015? Or could it be that there are other ways of understanding these results?

In this situation, it may be insightful to consider rigorous independent data. The Uwezo data, also shown in the table above, suggests a story quite different from PSLE: while there are some ups and downs across the years in the selected districts, the picture is largely of a steady state without any change over time. This is entirely in line with the longitudinal analysis of the Uwezo data (national trends, not for these specific districts), as reported in the 2013 Uwezo East Africa report: for all three subjects tested, there is no significant difference in Tanzania over the years[10]. The Uwezo report released in 2015 (based on 2014 data) re-emphasizes this point: while there appear to be increases in the proportion of children who can pass particularly the Kiswahili reading test between the years 2012, 2013 and 2014, these changes are not statistically significant[11]. There could well be positive changes underfoot, but so far, we cannot prove this with scientific certainty. Overall, according to Uwezo, the learning levels of our children upon leaving primary schools have not demonstrably improved.

We included the learning outcomes data because we wished to explore if the variety of education management practices as described in the ten districts in this study could be associated with trends in learning outcomes. When considering both PSLE and Uwezo data, we cannot say that there is an improvement in learning outcomes for these districts (for the years shown), and are therefore unable to link district-level practices to these outcomes.

It is beyond this report, and the data collected within it, to ascertain why PSLE and Uwezo show divergent results for the ten districts included in this study. However, the conflicting picture painted by the Uwezo and the PSLE data do merit some consideration. The focus of Uwezo has been consistent since its inception, the methodology largely unchanged through the years, and given that the sample size is so large, the data can fairly be considered to paint a true picture of children's basic literacy and numeracy skills at Grade 2 level. At the same time, PSLE results are of significance nationally, the sample size is even larger, and the examinations are protected by fairly strong security protocols. So it is fair to say that the PSLE exam results also paint a true picture of what they measure. The critical question is whether the PSLE exams accurately assess children's actual learning outcomes. The significant divergence with independent monitoring data collected and analysed by Uwezo, suggest that they may not.

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[10] http://www.uwezo.net/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/2013-Annual-Report-Final-Web-version.pdf
[11] Are our children learning? The state of education in Tanzania in 2015 and beyond. Uwezo @ Twaweza. http://twaweza.org/go/uwezo-tz-2014

6. Concluding Thoughts and Areas for Future Engagement
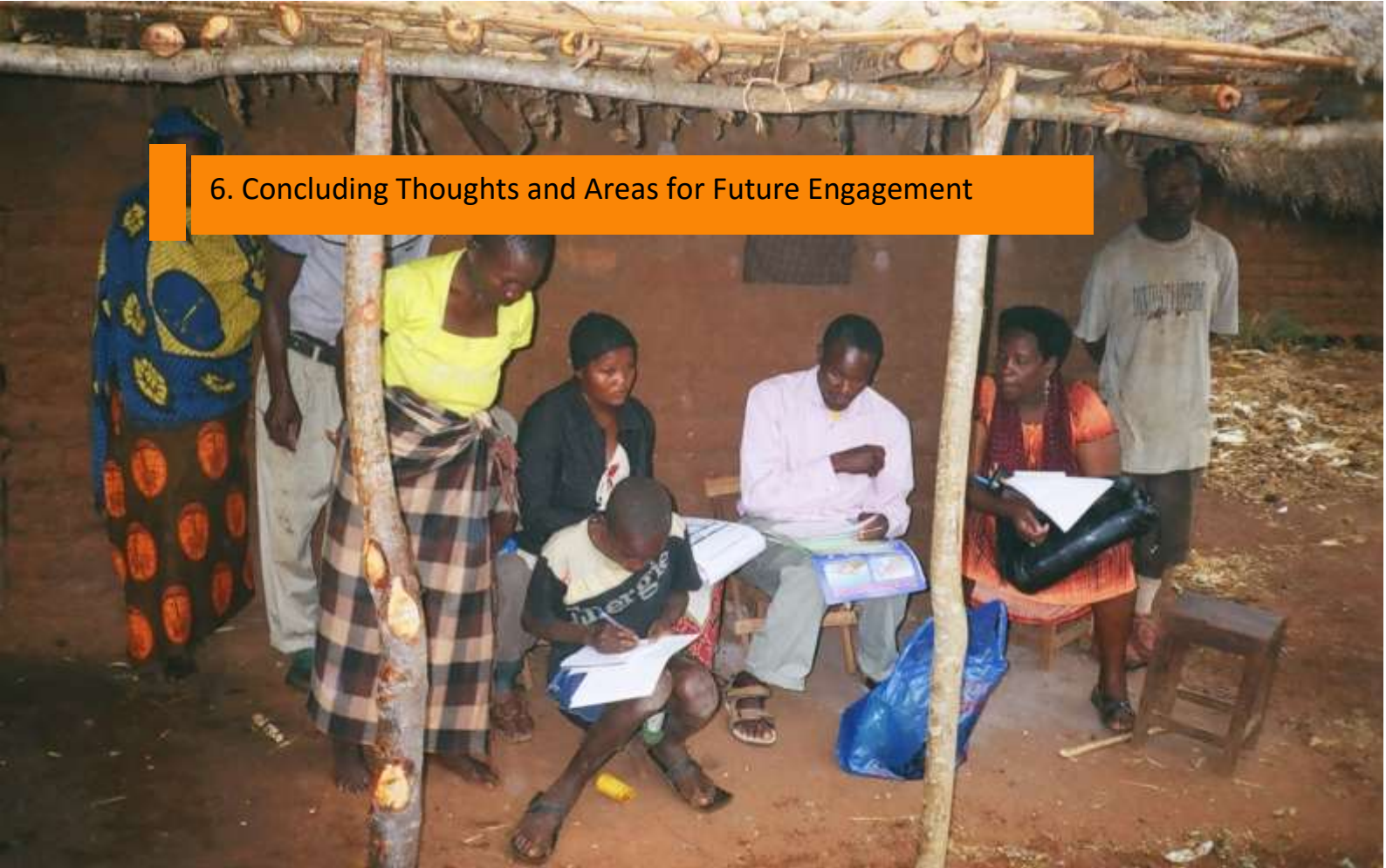
The results of this study have provided useful insights about education management at the district level by identifying the key stakeholders and the education priority issues that matter to them. In particular, the results provide useful areas of intervention in the area of public engagement and communication on education, and how various stakeholders at the district level can be engaged to play an active role in promoting learning outcomes.

It is clear from this qualitative research that education is highly regarded by various stakeholders in the sub-national communities and forms an important part of the discourse. However, the perspective of various stakeholders regarding the notion of *quality of education* is clearly limited to the extent to which primary school leavers are able to proceed with further education and the level of pass rates in primary school leaving examinations. As such, the current communication discourse about education does not seem to centre on exposing and addressing the crisis in the learning outcomes. Some of the old "truths" remain largely unchallenged. For instance, the focus on the importance of inputs as directly linked to improving learning outcomes persists, despite ample research showing that simply increasing inputs does nothing to improve learning outcomes.[12] And while it is unquestionable that good teachers are critical to achieving learning outcomes, the reverence of teachers as selfless and utterly dedicated in face of adversity as reported in this study is at odds with recent Tanzanian research showing that reality is much more varied, and it includes high absenteeism, low motivation, and a low skill base among teachers.[13]

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[12] International Initiative for Impact Evaluation 2013: http://www.3ieimpact.org/en/publications/working-papers/working-paper-20/ ; Evans & Popova, World Bank, 2015: http://www-wds.worldbank.org/servlet/WDSContentServer/WDSP/IB/2015/02/26/090224b082b5cbf1/1_0/Rendered/PDF/What0really0wo0n0systematic0reviews.pdf

[13] Service Delivery Indicators Tanzania 2016, World Bank & Repoa. http://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2016/05/27/tanzania-new-service-delivery-data-show-some-progress; http://www.twaweza.org/uploads/files/SzW-Education-Feb2016-EN-FINAL.pdf

On the other hand, some changes in perceptions and practice do appear: for example, answers from a number of respondents suggest the discourse on what it means for a child to have learned is shifting from simply passing from one grade to the next, to actually having mastered basic literacy and numeracy skills. This has been the consistent emphasis of Uwezo, and is also the focus of the 3R initiative, which many respondents mentioned by name.

Another example of different practice comes from a district where the education administration has devoted considerable energy into drawing various stakeholders (from district, to ward, to local level, including teachers and parents) into creating and implementing a district-wide plan on how to improve education. And although independent data (Uwezo) for that district doesn't show an improvement in learning outcomes yet, it would be very insightful to follow the implementation of such innovative practices closely to see whether they can be associated with significant shifts in learning outcomes (which are known to take years to become manifest).

The question of resources allocated for education cannot be ignored, and indeed, the current Government of Tanzania has made this a central point with the pronouncement of "free education." After this study was conducted, it emerged that this "free education" policy seems to have worsened the resource availability in various districts, because it was understood to ban all parental distributions. There are anecdotal reports that many schools are struggling to meet the basic needs (in particular meals and security services), which were primarily funded from such contributions. A less publicly debated but equally important point has been the government's commitment to deliver capitation grant funding directly to schools, largely bypassing the district hierarchy. This is a laudable step, insofar as it aims to cut out unnecessary bureaucratic steps and give more trust to schools to manage the resources. It will be critical to follow how this is working in practice.

There is much work to do overall, and it will require collaboration of a variety of stakeholders: national and sub-national government, civil society, teachers and head teachers. For Twaweza in particular, a few meaningful future steps emerge. In addition to advocating nationally for sufficient and well-managed resources, this study also shows that critically, our future engagement strategies on education at the sub-national levels should focus on shaping the attitudes of key stakeholders about what constitutes quality education. In particular, our engagement strategies ought to galvanise stakeholders around the question of learning outcomes beyond the pass rates in final national examinations, and encourage inquiry into what actually improves learning outcomes. In the near future, we could:

- Involve various stakeholders (e.g. district officials, journalists) in the independent assessment processes to provide a first-hand experience about children's actual learning competencies
- Change the way we disseminate our Uwezo assessment reports, becoming more localized, and interactive
- Provide district based (and where appropriate and feasible even ward based) simplified Uwezo (and other) assessment reports, and encourage and enable various stakeholders to understand and engage with the data
- Organise periodic discussions about education at the national but also district levels, and make use of the national and local media to discuss education results, various data and their meaning
- Draw on international evidence of what has been shown to improve learning outcomes (and what hasn't), and translate and communicate that evidence clearly and compellingly to inform debate of where resources ought to be focused nationally and locally within Tanzania to improve learning

Theme 1: Understanding of learning outcomes as the key function of schooling

Highlight 1.1: Across the board, respondents equated learning outcomes with standard examination results, mostly the Standard 7 exams (Primary School Leaving Exams or PSLE), as well as with being promoted to attend secondary education. It appears an assumption is made that when children pass the exam, and-or are accepted into secondary school, they have learned adequately. This is not surprising, as exams and "passing onto" secondary schools are the accepted national metrics of educational success.

> *The results are good, in general the situation is good. When I say it is good I mean that the number of pupils who join secondary education every year … is more than seventy percent. (Moshi)*

> *The pass rate for pupils who sat for PSLE since 2011 has never been lower than approximately 70%. Most … are satisfied with the performance and hope that it will continue to improve. The Municipal leadership and teachers receive praise for keeping the pass rate high. (Morogoro)*

Highlight 1.2: Many respondents (in nearly all districts) have been exposed to and have actively taken on board the recent "3 R's" (reading, writing and arithmetic) governmental directive.[14] There is a general understanding that basic competencies in reading, writing and arithmetic in the early grades matter significantly for later success.

> *The learning situation is not bad, but what used to be practised before the introduction of three Rs was too heavy for young children. Children had too many lessons for their age, and it led to children passing through grades without even the basic knowledge of reading, writing and arithmetic. But now things are much smoother. (Moshi)*

> *But coming back to my young children in pre-school education, they are doing well in the 3Rs, and this gives me confidence that in the near future we won't have pupils who can neither read nor write. So when I take this alongside the standard seven national examinations results, I can say that I'm doing well. That's my assessment. (Mtwara)*

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[14] http://lanes.moe.go.tz/

Theme 2: Focus on school inputs as linked to learning outcomes

Highlight 1: A link was consistently made between the low level of inputs and low levels of learning outcomes. From the perspective of nearly all interviewees, school infrastructure plays a crucial role in achieving good learning outcomes. In many cases, there is good reason to worry about the low level of inputs – after all, basic infrastructure and basic materials are essential components of a good learning environment. In addition the absence of basic facilities can demotivate both teachers and students. In the interviews, classrooms, desks and pit latrines were mentioned by many respondents as challenges and linked to learning outcomes.

> *There is a shortage of infrastructure such as classrooms and desks, particularly in primary schools. This is a big challenge. Currently there are schools which are enrolling more than two hundred pupils for Standard One. But we don't have classrooms to accommodate this many students. With this number of pupils, those who did not attend pre-school could be at a disadvantage all the way to the end of primary school. Or if they did not master basic skills early enough, they may not catch up. (Ilemela)*

> *In our budget at the department of education, learning outcomes are given priority. We make sure that budgets for school infrastructure are in place. It is our belief that when we improve infrastructure like classrooms, a conducive learning environment will be created, and therefore learning outcomes will improve. (Mkuranga)*

> *We lack classrooms. This means that one classroom can be severely congested and is a significant problem in lower levels of primary schools where the number of pupils is always high. This means that children have poor educational foundations. (Mtwara)*

> *When we talk of education matters in our meetings, most of our discussions revolve around school infrastructure, teaching-learning materials, shortages of classrooms and desks. We have been trying to figure out what we can do to overcome these challenges which are long-term. We also still work on other issues, including lack of teachers' houses. We discuss these issues in almost all of our meetings at Council Management Team level. (Sengerema).*

Theme 3: Financial inputs and resource mobilization

Highlight 3.1: Budgetary allocations to education at district level and consequentially to schools are inadequate and delayed. The budget process is followed as prescribed – i.e., schools and districts compile budgets, and send them "upward" in the system. What returns from the central level is invariably less than was requested, but also usually includes a ceiling. The disbursement of the capitation grant was, across the board, reported to be too slow and generally insufficient. The result, as reported by all participants who spoke on this point, is inadequate resources overall.

We have been budgeting but the government always approves half or below half of the budget. They give us a ceiling budget which is always below the real budget. ... The frustrating issue is that even the approved budget never really materializes; the government tends to disburse something like one third of the ceiling budget. Frankly speaking, it is very difficult for us to carry out all our plans in this financial situation. And for your information we have no other reliable sources of income. We have small business owners from whom we sometimes collect some revenue but the amounts are small. (Kakonko)

What I can currently say is that, we are getting zero or may be five percent [of capitation grant funding]. For instance this year, I have only received about one hundred and fifteen thousand that has to be divided into four categories; administration, school maintenance, teaching materials and others. So you find that you have allocated about 25000 for each category. The funds are not enough at all. (Mkuranga)

By the way you know the policy states that primary schools will receive 10,000 Shillings for each child and the budgets over the years reflect this. But we never receive these funds! We expect 10,000 shillings per child but I assure you if you look at the money we receive it's ridiculous. For the last financial year that ended in June we expected to get 170,000,000 (one hundred and seventy million) shillings but we have just received approximately 40,000,000 (forty million) shillings. We have forty four thousand (44,000) pupils. If you divide the money equally for each pupil you find that each is allocated less than a thousand (1,000) shillings. It is hard to improve education in such circumstances for sure! (Morogoro)

Capitation grants are expected to be disbursed quarterly and on time for schools to run smoothly. But […] this is not the case. We are not sure when the money will be disbursed. Besides, even when the money is disbursed, it is often too late and is always less than the money requested. This makes it difficult to run the school. Consequently, we are performing poorly. How can you expect improved learning outcomes with the little money we get, it is difficult. (Dodoma)

Highlight 3.2: Parents are routinely asked to contribute towards meals, security and other necessities, which are seen as essential for the functioning of the school, but are also a contentious issue between parents and school management. The research was conducted before the Tanzanian government's announcement of "free basic education" which has subsequently led to a near disappearance of parental contributions in many schools.

> *Here we have three ways in which we raise funds: self-help economic activities famously referred to as Education for Self Reliance; second, we have development and capitation grants which are very little and are disbursed late; and lastly, contributions from parents. Parents contribute mainly for food and other school activities (Makete)*

> *Frankly speaking we don't have any projects that generate extra income for us. When capitation funds come, it is always used to purchase teaching and learning inputs, that's fine, though it is always insufficient. So because the capitation funds are meagre, the community chips in, as well as parents so that certain amount of money can be generated to complement capitation funds. (Ilemela)*

> *Usually the contributions we seek from the parents get approval from the parents themselves at various meetings. We even jot down the summary or minutes of agreement. Once we do that, then we plan for certain tasks based on what we expect to get from the parents but ultimately the parents let us down! (Morogoro)*

> *For instance in our case here parents have been very challenging, so we have two small projects that help us meet small needs. We sell firewood and brooms and whatever we get is used for different school needs like facilitating teaching in extra hours and during weekends where we pay each other two thousand (2,000) shillings. (Mtwara)*

Highlight 3.3: There are various accounts of private donations (mostly directly to schools for purchase of desks, building classrooms, and similar), and most appear to be ad-hoc. Several respondents did not want to reveal the sources of additional funding. No school or district had an articulated plan for raising additional revenue.

> *It was 2014 last year, when were obliged to write a proposal for sponsorship to different people, institutions and companies, including our member of parliament. We didn't get positive responses from most of these entities, but our member of parliament responded. He did not provide what we had requested, but he gave according to his wishes. Thus, by June this year we had trainings for teachers. We had planned to do it for three subjects but we only managed one subject, mathematics. (Mkuranga)*

> *When you visit (name withheld) primary school you will see two new classrooms. There is one Tanzanian lady who lives in France, she once visited us and promised to work with us in improving the situation of classrooms in our schools. Frankly, she has facilitated the building of two classrooms. (Moshi)*

> *I once wrote a financial proposal to (name of bank whitheld) requesting for some funds to support the school in improving infrastructure and facilities such as desks and teaching-learning materials. I invited a Lake Zone Manager based in Mwanza to attend a Standard Seven graduation, which his representative attended and there they promised to buy us a photocopy machine. Unfortunately, they have not fulfilled their promise to date although I have followed up and reminded them several times. I am still investing efforts on this by seeking funds to other organizations such as (name of another bank withheld). I hope I will succeed one day. (Sengerema)*

> *I have just been here for few months but we have been assisted by people with whom we were not familiar. They are Canadians, they were involved in educational and health issues, that's what I know. They visited me here, and saw our teaching-learning environment. I showed them the kids learning while sitting on the floor to see if they could help. They went to Canada, when they came back they contacted me and they wanted to meet the school board. They supported me with thirty desks, each costing ninety thousand shillings. (Ilemela)*

Theme 4: Focus on teaching process and practices

Highlight 4.1: District level officials are keenly aware of the need to motivate teachers. However, in most cases the responsibility to do so was seen to rest with the "higher authorities" who set and dispense salaries, and allocate funding to the district for upgrading school infrastructure, teacher housing, etc. A majority of district-level professionals cited the lack of resources as the main problem in not being able to reward or motivate teachers. Quite a few mentioned that "paying teachers what they are due, and on time" was a way to motivate them – suggesting that the District does play a role in ensuring salaries are dispensed as planned. Additionally, a number of respondents noted that extra classes for pupils (mostly those who will sit for a national exam) are supposed to be paid by parents, and this could serve as an incentive for teachers.

> *But I think education management at our district level is not doing well because they are supposed to give us money so that we can motivate our teachers when they do good work. You see, if the DEO does not give me money to devise the mechanism for rewarding my teachers, what do I do? I just thank them empty handed! (Kakonko)*

> *We motivated teachers, we paid what teachers are entitled to and deserve, on time. Then we conducted a series of meetings with teachers and other stakeholders. We also supervised and monitored the teaching and learning process. (Mpanda)*

Teachers who support pupils with learning difficulties, especially those in Standard seven, are provided with a certain amount of money. We ask parents of the children involved in extra support to contribute two thousand for each child. We use this money to motivate teachers. It's not a lot, but it's something…it helps teachers to at least buy some soap. (Sengerema)

For example, in 2015 the MP gave air tickets to teachers who did well in their subjects to Dubai for a tour. Others were taken to Zanzibar for a one week tour. (Mtwara)

Highlight 4.2: There were a number of district-level respondents who described non-monetary incentives as a way to keep teachers motivated and engaged. Many respondents praised the teacher's efforts overall, noting that teachers are dedicated to their work in very difficult circumstances, and, in the words of one respondent are "intrinsically motivated but extrinsically despairing."

We have strategies. First of all is to motivate teachers, where they are. Most people think that motivating teachers is only giving them tangible things, but it doesn't have to be like that. Even just recognising someone is enough; listening to them is a motivation by itself. I have talked to responsible departments that they should not take teachers for granted, they should not ignore teachers. (Ilemela)

For example, when the teachers did well in teaching and other school related activities I just organize a get together, partly as a means to recognize the efforts of each and every one of us. To be sincere we recognize and award teachers who did well in teaching. We also recognize parents and when necessary award them. For the get together we also invite district and regional leaders. We also ferry people from villages to come and participate in the get together. (Mpanda)

During the Education Week ceremonies which are celebrated every year we usually invite all teachers, parents and pupils to participate and one of the important aspects in these ceremonies is to reward the schools which had excellent passes in their national examinations … Of course, we do this in order to express that we value teachers. It may be seen as nothing but it encourages teachers to work hard in order to keep their position and also makes those who did not do well feel jealous so they maximize their efforts so that the school does well in the next exams. Actually, it creates a state of competition which is good for us. (Kakonko)

Highlight 4.3: Monitoring of teachers and schools is mostly the function of Ward Education Officers, and also the school inspection unit – although the latter was consistently reported to be without any funding and therefore unable to do its work. The WEOs are generally seen as having a close and

supportive relationship directly with schools, with the purpose of "helping to solve problems" (or at least that is how WEOs described it themselves). In practice, the WEOs main role appears to be reporting to the District Education Office, and to act as a gatekeeper between schools and District authorities.

> *I normally visit my schools, being ward education officer doesn't does not mean just staying in the office. We call ourselves 'field workers' which means you must follow the clients. So when I visit a school I check on learners' and teachers' attendance, go through teachers' lesson plans to see whether the lessons are well prepared. I also go through the learners' exercise books to find out whether any assignments have been given, whether they are marked, and whether they are relevant to the level of learners. This is what I do to make sure that teachers are responsible. (Mkuranga)*

> You see, if you look at what we are doing, there are mostly routine tasks but they help in detecting where the teaching and learning problems lie. In fact when the officer visits a particular school, among other tasks, he has to talk with teachers in a meeting and also talk with individual teachers in case there are complex issues. This move gives us information to solve some problems at our levels and if we find more complex problems we forward them to the proper authorities. (Morogoro)

> *The Education Department in this district has ignored the Ward and Village Officers. I remember in the past few months one school had a shortage of chalk. My office was approached to assist. I did not object. I convened a meeting with parents and we convinced them and they contributed some money which enabled the head teacher to buy enough chalk. This indicates the importance of my office in teaching. But nonetheless, we are ignored! (Kakonko)*

Highlight 4.4: Professional development of teachers takes place in all districts visited, albeit in different forms and to varying degrees. Training opportunities for teachers are mostly based on having own funding, being "lucky" to be financed by the employer, or by chance being able to participate in sporadic trainings offered by NGOs or international development agencies. Interestingly, there were a number of mentions also of active Teacher Resource Centres.

> *We have not fully succeeded in providing in-service trainings, maybe I can say we have only achieved twenty percent. The major problem is funds, limited funds. I remember last time we conducted in-service training for Standard One and Two teachers in 2013. This was before the national trainings, which took teachers to Dodoma. Although we have planned several times to train teachers who teach maths, science, English and Kiswahili; subjects in which we see pupils do badly, we have not managed due to lack of funds. (Mkuranga)*

> *In our ward, we usually evaluate exam results after they have been released by the National Examinations Council of Tanzania. We analyze the trend of the results by looking at the performance in every subject. Upon detecting weaknesses in some areas we organize expert teachers to train our teachers in these particular areas. For example when we know some schools have done well in Mathematics while others have not, the Ward Academic Committee lists the topics which seem to be difficult and invites expert teachers to train their peers. We tend to conduct professional development seminars here at our Teacher Resource Centre. (Morogoro)*

Theme 5: Providing extra support to learners

Highlight 5.1: Remedial and extra classes were common in almost all districts visited, usually set up to help students pass examinations (focused on Standard 7 exams, somewhat less on Standard 4). These classes appear designed strictly around the exams.

I have been convincing teachers to spend some time after normal school hours in order to re-teach the complex topics which were not well comprehended by pupils … this also benefits the school. I remember my school adopted this idea two years ago and since then we have been improving in the Standard Four national examinations. For example in 2013 we were ranked 8th district wise. In 2014 we improved and we were ranked 5th and this year we have been ranked 4th. So the remedial classes are successful, so to speak. (Kakonko)

We also set aside classes, we call them examinations classes, for pupils in Standard Four and Seven. Pupils in these classes usually have extended time for learning, they are taught on Saturdays from morning to twelve noon. And during holidays, for instance if it is a four weeks holiday, three weeks are spent teaching and learning. If it is a mid-term holiday, they attend classes throughout the holiday. (Mkuranga)

Our strategies include, first encouraging every teacher to work hard so as to achieve the intended goal. Second, we teach Standard Seven and Four during holidays. This is done mostly in the June vacation and other mid-term holidays. We do this every year. (Sengerema)

Highlight 5.2: In a number of districts, remedial classes were also organized for early grades in order to help with the acquisition of basic literacy and numeracy skills; these were often in districts and schools that had taken actively on board the new "3 Rs" directive. In every case, these classes mean that children must stay in school additional hours; a number of respondents also stated that these extra hours required extra payment.

Remedial classes are organised. We consider this part of our job - ensuring that all children master the 3Rs at the earliest level and time possible. (Makete)

Yes, we had a remedial class, which involved about thirty learners who could neither read nor write. They were identified from Standard Three to Standard Seven. So what we did is to distribute those learners between a few teachers so they could be assisted in extra hours. Approximately ten pupils, every teacher got ten learners, and the exercise (remedial classes) did not involve all teachers, just a few of them who had the 3Rs skills. (Mkuranga)

> *Here what we do in order to improve the learning outcomes of our pupils is that we have devised our own school programme in which all pupils with difficulties in learning, especially those who do not know reading and writing are gathered in one class and they work on a special drill. We usually require these pupils to remain after the normal school day has ended. We usually involve the parents of the children and we tell them to contribute only 200 shillings which is not much for the parents. (Morogoro)*

> *Remedial classes are those classes that involve pupils who perform below expectations. These classes provide support to such pupils. There are teachers in each class who attend these classes. They are regular teachers. They teach various topics depending on the problems and needs of the children. We do not pay them, they just volunteer to help the children. For sure these classes have proved useful. (Sengerema)*

Theme 6: Parental and community engagement

Highlight 6.1: Parental and community participation in school activities is varied; in some instances it's reported to be very high, while in others, the opposite. There appears to be a link between parental participation and the pro-activeness of the school itself in reaching out and encouraging parents to be involved (not only to contribute financially or in-kind).

> *If the community supports me, I can do wonders. At my school I have meetings, series of meetings, not only meetings with parents, but sometimes I meet parents with children in particular classes…. What I do is write letters to invite them to come to school. I also involve the ward education officer for support, I also involve hamlet leaders. Then, my meetings are very short, I don't want people to get bored, I go directly to the point. (Ilemela)*

> *So, they requested some funds to develop a strategic plan. I accepted the idea and approved funds for that activity. Education officers at Municipal level, Ward Education Officers, head teachers and teachers [developed] the strategy. It is to improve the performance of learners and increase parent/community participation in the development of the school. As a result there have been monthly parent-teacher meetings to see the academic development of the children and in some cases contributions to school infrastructure and other teaching and learning materials. (Mpanda)*

Highlight 6.2: Much of the feedback on parents was characterized by describing the "problematic attitude" parents have towards learning and schooling; a statement repeated several times was that "parents do not value education." Truancy was largely seen as a parental problem. Few explanations were offered for why parents may not "value" education; the impression is one of assigning blame rather than understanding or looking for solutions.

> *Most parents do not follow the learning progress of their children. Once a child is enrolled, no one bothers to know whether the kid learns or not. This leaves the supervision of learning to the teachers only, which does not lead to effective learning. (Ilemela)*

> *Sometimes pupil absenteeism is caused by their parents. For most of them instead of making sure that their children go to school every morning, they sometimes don't bother to do so. A child can act like they are going to school, yet end up somewhere else. So there is generally no follow up to make sure that children attend schools and learn. (Mkuranga)*

One of the great challenges in this municipality is low parental participation in education matters. Parents have little awareness of the education of their children. The issue is that most of them for example for those who reside in the periphery of the municipality, did not themselves get enough education so they don't bother making sure their children go to school. They do not see the value of education. Instead they might force the girls to get married so they receive bride price money. And we have many cases of this kind! (Morogoro)

There are those [parents] who are fully engaged with economic activities like farmers and pastoralists. A parent weighs between taking you to school or to the farm. So I think some parents or the community at large need to see the importance of taking their kids to school, or at least letting them go to school. They should avoid mixing school and other activities, otherwise there won't be any effective learning. (Moshi)

Another thing is that the community members believe that the government will provide enough financial support to improve school infrastructure…In some places along the lake, parents' do not value children's schooling as a result they do not see school attendance as important. They would rather prefer to engage their children in small business. (Sengerema)

Some parents intentionally do not enroll their school going children to kindergarten. There are even a number of parents who prohibit their children to go to school and others convince them to perform poorly so that they are not forced to pay for secondary school. Generally parents are causing truancy. (Kakonko)

Theme 7: Sources of key information and how information travels within the district

Highlight 7.1: There appears to be a lot of meetings up and down the system, both to extract and transmit information. But it remains unclear how information is really used other than for reporting purposes. Very few examples were gleaned of information actually being a tool, for example for re-allocating resources, supporting under-served areas, etc.

We use letters as source of information. We also receive school reports monthly and ward reports from the ward education coordinators quarterly. Another source of information is our meetings that we have. For example, we get information from the council management meetings and the ward development committee. The meetings are held every three months. This means that we have four meetings in a year. Schools also organize meetings to discuss various issues. Not only at these levels but also schools and villages organize meetings with parents. (Sengerema)

At the district level, there is the Full Council where all educational matters are presented, including the status of learning and academic performance. At the same level where educational matters including learning outcomes are discussed is in the Education sub-committee. At the ward level, educational matters/learning outcomes are discussed in the Ward Development Committee (WDC) and in the education sub-committee. At school level, educational matters are discussed in formal meetings like the school board meetings, academic committee meetings, parent-teacher meetings […] and informal discussions also take place. (Makete)

Highlight 7.2: Local media currently plays a minimal role in disseminating information on learning overall. The potential of the local media is unclear, and the interviews with locally-based journalist yielded limited insights – with one notable exception (as per second quote, below).

> *The coverage of education on the radio is below expectations. I have been working here for more than three years now. I am the producer and broadcaster. I have not seen or heard, for example, district officials including the district executive director or district education officer bring an issue to be broadcasted. This could be attributed to lack of investment, funds to support coverage of education matters. (Sengerema)*

> *These reports as you have explained seem to be very useful. I am sure people do not know the value of these reports and I wish they did. They have statistics which can be of value to my work for example with these statistics I can write a story which can raise awareness of educational matters. […] So, Twaweza has to use lots of avenues to distribute these reports but if you depend on dumping them at the Office of the Director of the Municipality, they will end up in cupboards. (Morogoro)*

Theme 8: Engagement with Uwezo

Highlight 8.1: Twaweza, Uwezo and the assessment of learning outcomes are not known by many participants, although there was variety: some have never heard of the organization or the activities, while others had interacted with the assessment directly (e.g. by facilitating the assessment in their district). There was also a fair amount of confusion on what Twaweza/Uwezo actually does, or a confusion between this and other initiatives – for example, a number of respondents reported that Twaweza/Uwezo tests children in school.

> *I will be lying if I would say yes though I am not sure if I have seen an advert or something somewhere. I am not sure whether that was Uwezo or something else. I cannot recall. (Mpanda)*

> *Yeah I know Twaweza or Uwezo and I have participated in their various seminars and workshops. Also I have worked with Twaweza because they have used our municipal as a sample council in conducting their assessment of children's literacy. (Morogoro)*

Highlight 8.2: Even when the Uwezo reports were available, there appeared to be limited engagement with the content. Rather generally, the majority of participants stated they thought such information "could be" useful, although it's not immediately clear how. The issue is less about Twaweza publicizing itself, than about getting compelling, useful information to people who might be able to use it when making plans and decisions. This prompts a good question: are the reports, in their current format, the most compelling, useful and inspirational material for these decision makers?

The reports came to me 'silently', very silently. So we also receive them silently and keep them 'silently'. I mean no explanation, no summary on what the report is all about. People do not have time to read books. To me, for a document to be understood, it should be self-explanatory. What a nice job if you receive a report like this one with an attachment [cover letter] a synopsis/ summary detailing what is contained in the report. (Makete)

The results challenge us, show us that we need to work hard in order to reduce the gap between those who cannot neither read nor write, and those who can. We need to know where we are so that we can adjust ourselves accordingly. Unfortunately, we don't have access to the assessment reports. Thus, we cannot make use of them. (Ilemela)

I was ignorant of these reports and I swear not only me but many others don't know. I wish to be getting the reports and I promise to read this one that has been in the cupboard. (Kakonko)

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