



Press Release

Embargoed 1 July 2014

**Most citizens do not expect children to learn in school  
Parents have low but correct assessments of children's skills  
and do not express an urge for this to change in the future**

**1 July 2014, Dar es Salaam:** Only 1 out of 10 citizens think that most children who finish Standard 2 are able to read and do maths at Standard 2 level. Even worse, only 3 out of 10 (31%) think that these children *should* be able to perform at the right level; meaning that citizens have no expectation that the education system will actually teach children the skills it is supposed to.

These findings were released by Twaweza in a research brief titled *What's going on in our schools: citizens reflect on the state of education*. The brief is based on data from *Sauti za Wananchi*, Africa's first nationally representative mobile phone survey that polls households across Mainland Tanzania.

The brief examines the state of schools, learning practice and parents' involvement in their children's education. Despite low expectations from the education system, parents often do play their part in promoting learning. Seven out of ten pupils report that their parents review their exercise books most of the time or always.

Teachers, naturally, also have an essential role to play in whether children are learning in schools. However they cannot perform this function if they are not in class. Only 3 out of 10 students confirmed that their main teacher was in class for the whole previous day of school. Most (4 out of 10, 38%) report that their teacher was not in class at all and the remaining 3 out of 10 (28%) say that the teacher was only in class for part of the day.

*Sauti za Wananchi* also asked questions about the conditions in primary schools. Almost all (99%) pupils are taught in classrooms, not outside, and 9 out of 10 (91%) sit on a bench or desk in school. However only half of them (49%) reported receiving food at school. Although chairs and classrooms are unlikely to impact learning levels, when children are hungry they will be less able to take in new knowledge.

Another way in which children retain knowledge is through homework. Homework helps pupils to remember and review the day's lessons and to practice what they have learned independently. However 7 out of 10 (69%) pupils report that they are rarely (or never) given homework. When they are assigned work at home, pupils report that it is often marked.

Tanzania's recently launched Big Results Now (BRN) initiative has prioritised education as a key sector to target. *Sauti za Wananchi* found that only 1 out of 7 (16%) citizens have heard about BRN.

Rakesh Rajani, Head of Twaweza, said *"The Government's and our research (through Uwezo) has shown that children are in school but not learning. This survey also finds that a shocking two thirds of teachers are not in class for all or part of the previous day. The poor state of our education system is now common knowledge to the point that parents do not even expect that children will learn the skills they are*

*supposed to. If we continue in this way, we will have a future of under-achievement. Although initiatives like BRN seek to improve quality of education, it is not clear that we are prioritising the key issues of the day.”*

*“Each shilling that is spent in education can only be spent once. As citizens we should demand that all education policies, actions and interventions credibly improve learning outcomes. Without this, there is no assurance that value for money is obtained. In other words, policy makers should use evidence to convince taxpayers, sector partners and politicians that tax money is spent on policies that work and that “buy” learning outcomes.”*

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**Notes to Editors**

- This brief and the data contained can be accessed at [www.twaweza.org](http://www.twaweza.org), or [www.twaweza.org/sauti](http://www.twaweza.org/sauti)
- 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.
- You can follow Twaweza’s work

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