



Press Release
31 May 2017

Almost all parents (97%) do not know how much money public schools get per child to cover the costs of free primary education
1 in 4 parents has visited school to ask about financial information

31 May 2017, Nairobi: Nine out of ten citizens (89%) admit that they do not know how much money per child the government has allocated to schools to support the free education policy which has been in place since 2003. Only 3 out of 100 Kenyans could name the correct figure of KES 1,500 per year per pupil. Another 8 out of 100 Kenyans claim that they do know the amount but cite an incorrect figure. In addition to that 71% of citizens admit that they do not know whether free primary education funds arrived at their local school.

Despite these low levels of knowledge on school funding, almost 1 out of 4 citizens (23%) have visited their local primary school to ask about general school finances and expenditure. A majority of those who visited said they received the information they were looking for, while about 1 out of 5 (20%) saying they did not. Though majority of the parents who visited their children school to ask about finances and expenditure were given the requested information, over 6 out of 10 citizens (64%) believe that the head teacher in their local school would not share this information if they asked for it, showing that citizens' expectations about transparency are low while the reality appears to be more positive.

On issues unrelated to finance, parents seem more engaged in their children's school lives. Eight out of ten parents visit their children's schools (79%) and discuss their progress with teachers (78%) at least once per term and half (54%) help their children with academic work once or twice a term or less while at home. Overall, parents with at least a primary level of education are more engaged in their children's school lives than those who have no education. Despite relatively low levels of engagement with schools, a significant majority of citizens (89%) feel that they have a role to play in improving education.

Citizens have fairly strong opinions on some of education sector policies. Despite a policy to the contrary, 3 out of 4 parents (75%) believe that children in primary schools should repeat years when they are not doing well and 33% think that all pupils should be allowed into secondary schools, even if they fail their exams.

Additionally, citizens, and parents in particular, are familiar with the main challenges facing schools. Six out of ten (56%) mention a shortage of teachers and 89% think that poor student performance is a serious challenge. Interestingly, 3 out of 4 citizens (72%) disagree that students who leave primary school have useful skills to help them succeed in life.

Despite knowing all the challenges facing education, about half of Kenyans (47%) believe that the quality of education in public schools has improved since it was made free. However, one in four Kenyan households have at least one child who is in private school with urban and wealthier households more likely to have children who attend private school. But even among the poorest, 13% of households have at least one child in private school.

Dr John Mugo, Director of Data and Voice at Twaweza, said: *“Citizens have spoken with a strong voice about education. Although they recognize the challenges facing the sector and see an improvement in quality since the introduction of free primary education, huge numbers are voting with their feet and taking their children to private schools. Those with children in public schools are largely disengaged with how schools are managed and with the critical ways in which they can support their children to learn. Parents are the first and primary guardians of our nation’s children. If they are not playing their role at home and not holding schools to account for resource use and performance, then we have little hope of improving our education system in the future. The national government cannot be everywhere; although they have an important role to play in overseeing school management and ensuring basic standards, it is us individual parents who must push harder and further to get the best for our children.”*

---- Ends ----

For more information:

Brezhenv Otieno, Advocacy Manager, Twaweza
e: botieno@twaweza.org | t: (+254) (0) 718 351 696

Notes to Editors

- This brief and the data contained can be accessed at www.twaweza.org, or www.twaweza.org/sauti
- Twaweza works on enabling children to learn, citizens to exercise agency and governments to be more open and responsive in Tanzania, Kenya and Uganda. We have programs, staff and offices across all three countries, and a globally respected practice of learning, monitoring and evaluation. Our flagship programs include *Uwezo*, Africa’s largest annual citizen assessment to assess children’s learning levels across hundreds of thousands of households, and *Sauti za Wananchi*, Africa’s first nationally representative mobile phone survey. We undertake effective public and policy engagement, through powerful media partnerships and global leadership of initiatives such as the Open Government Partnership
- You can follow Twaweza’s work

Web: www.twaweza.org **Facebook:** Twaweza Tanzania **Twitter:** @SautizaWanachiKe