



We the people

Ugandans' views on governance, information and citizen engagement

1. Introduction

Democracy is sometimes defined ideally as government of the people, for the people and by the people; where governments take careful account of citizens' interests, experiences, needs and preferences when making and taking decisions. In practice there may be no such thing as perfect democracy, but it remains a goal worth striving for.

In Uganda, as with many countries, citizens' views and experiences can easily be ignored by policy makers. Those who make key decisions and those who will be affected by them are often separated both by distance and by the nature of the lives they lead: urban and rural, male and female, age, education, wealth, and more.

This brief presents data on Ugandan citizens' lives, experiences and opinions on governance and related matters. Where do citizens get

information from, and how do they use new technology to communicate? What are the most pressing problem they perceive facing the country, and their households? And what are their experiences of corruption?

Data for the brief come from Twaweza's new *Sauti za Wananchi* survey. *Sauti za Wananchi* is a nationally-representative, high-frequency mobile phone panel survey. Information on the overall methodology is available at www.twaweza.org/sauti. For this brief, data were collected from 2,000 respondents in the baseline survey of the *Sauti za Wananchi* panel, conducted in August and September 2017.

The key findings are:

- 6 out of 10 citizens have a mobile phone, 1 out of 10 of them have a smartphone

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Sauti za Wananchi



- 1 out of 10 Ugandans is a member of at least one social network, mostly Facebook
- 7 out of 10 citizens listened to the radio and 1 out of 8 read a newspaper in the week before the survey
- Health services are citizens' top problem for the country, cost of living for households
- 8 out of 10 citizens say the government is doing a bad job at controlling inflation, creating jobs and fighting corruption
- Citizens don't think individual citizens can influence government decisions, but believe in collective action
- Citizens are divided on the civic duty of paying tax, but oppose corruption
- Citizens are more engaged with the management of education than other services
- Half the population say the last time they had contact with the police they paid a bribe

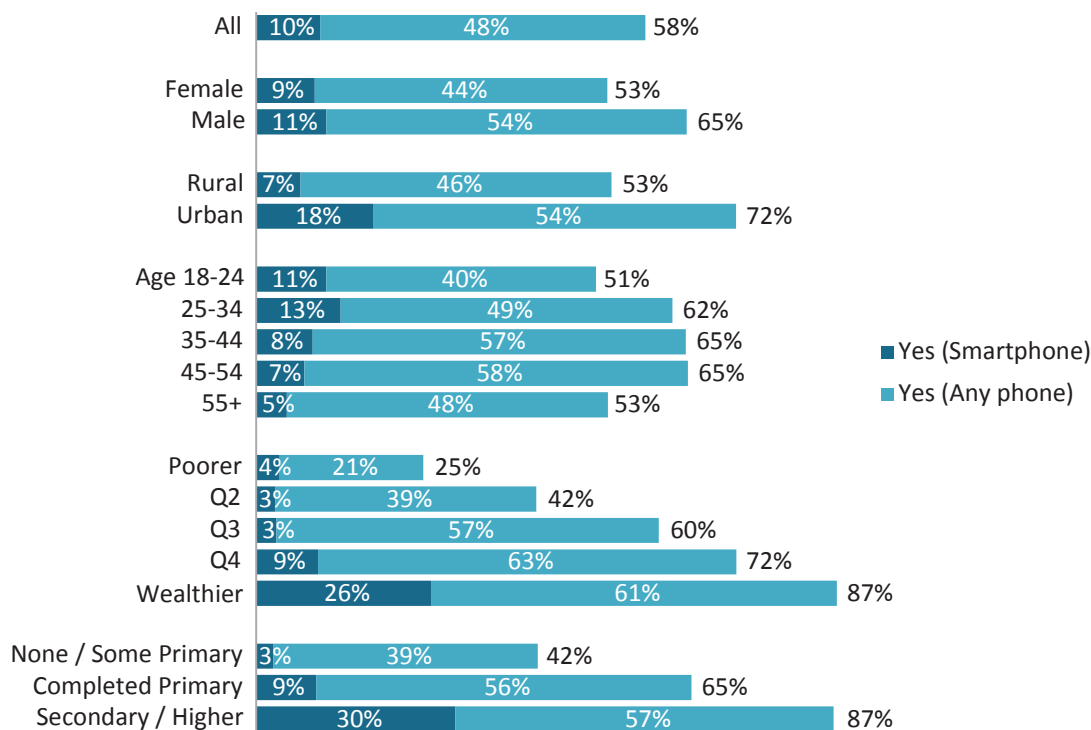
2. Seven facts about governance and citizen engagement

Fact 1: Six out of ten citizens have a mobile phone, one out of ten have a smartphone

One in ten Ugandan adults (10%) own a smartphone, and a further five in ten (48%) own a different kind of mobile phone (not a smartphone). Overall, six out of ten Ugandan adults (58%) own a mobile phone of some kind.

Mobile phone ownership is slightly higher among men (65%) than women (53%), and in urban areas (72%) compared to rural (53%). Mobile phone ownership also rises with wealth and education levels.

Figure 1: Do you currently own a mobile phone? Is it a smartphone?¹



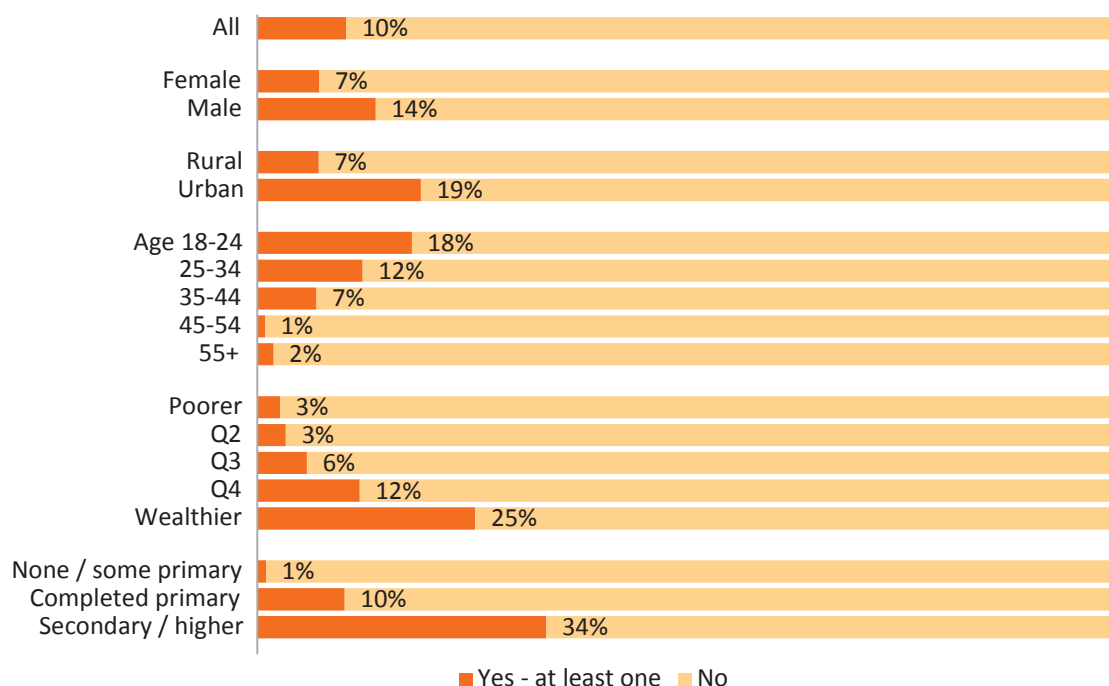
Source of data: *Sauti za Wananchi*, baseline survey, August-September 2017; n=2,000

Fact 2: One out of ten Ugandans is a member of at least one social network, mostly Facebook

One in ten citizens (10%) are members of at least one social networking service, rising to one in five (19%) in urban areas, one in five (18%) 18-24-year olds, one in four (25%) of the wealthy, and one in three (34%) of those with secondary or higher education.

¹ Percentages in the charts may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

Figure 2: Are you a member of a social networking site?



Source of data: *Sauti za Wananchi*, baseline survey, August-September 2017; n=2,000

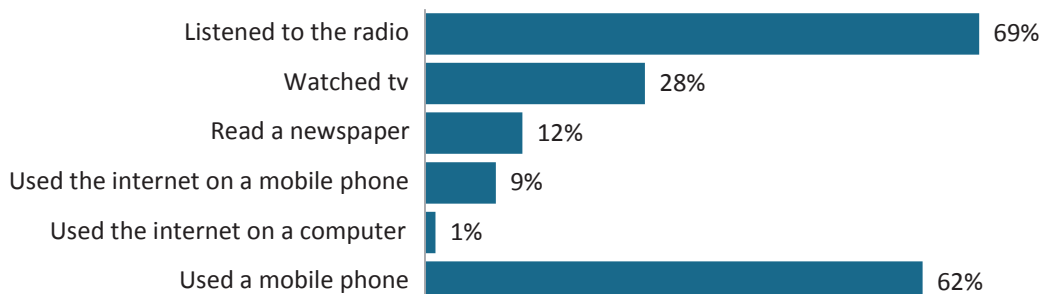
Social media usage is dominated by Facebook and WhatsApp. One in ten citizens (10%) are on Facebook, which means almost nobody is on social media but not on Facebook, followed by one in twenty (5%) on WhatsApp and smaller numbers on Twitter (2%) or Instagram (1%) (not shown in charts).

Fact 3: Seven out of ten citizens listened to the radio and one out of eight read a newspaper in the past week

Newspaper reading habits lag well behind radio listening and TV viewing. One in eight citizens (12%) read a newspaper in the week before the survey, compared to seven in ten (69%) who listened to the radio and three in ten (28%) who watched TV during the same time.

One in ten (9%) used the internet on their mobile phone during the same seven-day period, higher among men (13%) and in urban areas (16%) than among women (5%) and in rural areas (6%). Just 1% used the internet on a computer.

Figure 3: % who did the following in the past 7 days



Source of data: *Sauti za Wananchi*, baseline survey, August-September 2017; n=2,000

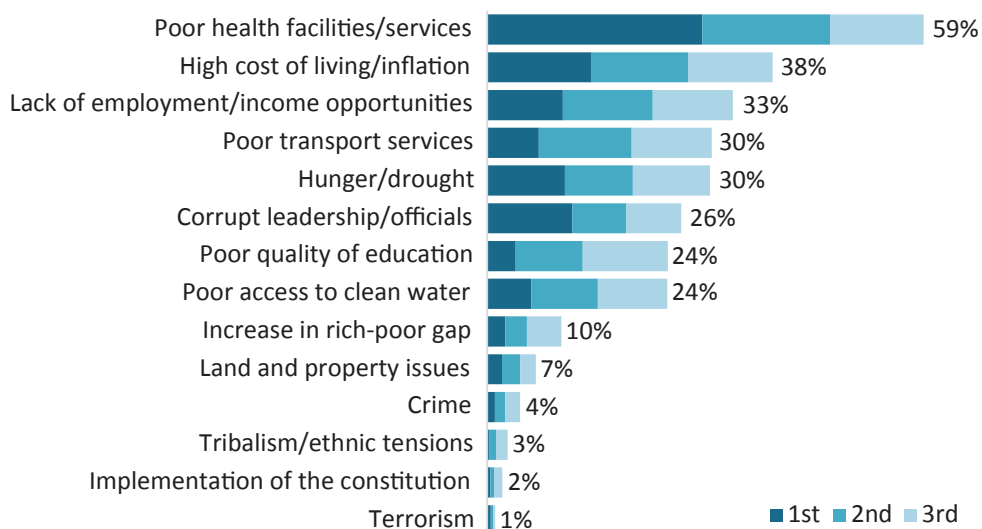
Fact 4: Health services are citizens' top problem for the country, cost of living for households

Six in ten citizens (59%) cite poor health services as one of the top three problems facing Uganda today, more than for any other issue. Inflation and the high cost of living is cited by four in ten (38%) and a lack of jobs by one in three (33%).

Also cited by substantial numbers are poor transport services (30%), hunger/drought (30%), corruption (26%), poor quality of education (24%) and poor access to clean water (24%).

Just one in a hundred (1%) cite terrorism as among the top three problems in the country.

Figure 4: In your opinion, what are the top three most serious problems facing Uganda today? (% mentioning these issues as one of the top three)

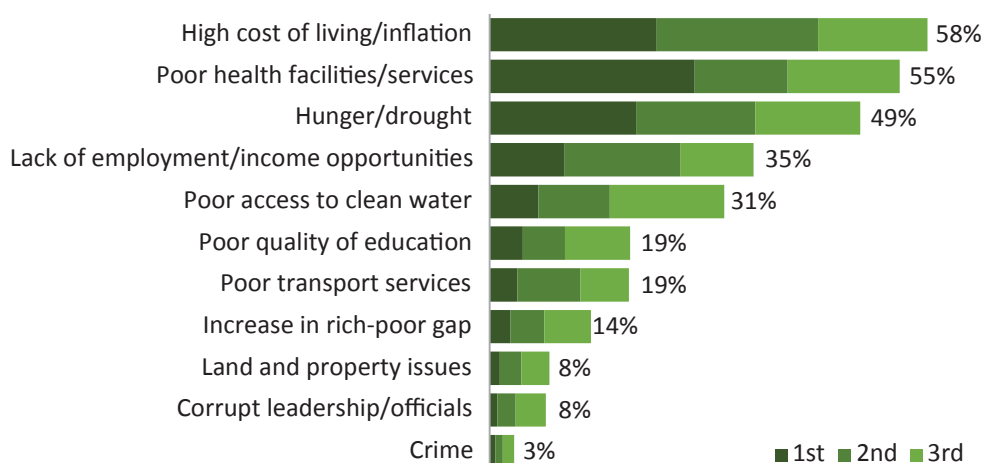


Source of data: *Sauti za Wananchi*, baseline survey, August-September 2017; n=2,000

When it comes to their own households, six in ten citizens (58%) name inflation and the high cost of living as one of the top three problems they face. This is more than for any other issue, though the poor quality of health facilities follows close behind, named by just over half the population (55%), and hunger / drought, also mentioned by half (49%).

Lack of job opportunities is also cited by a third of the citizens (35%), as are poor access to clean water (31%), poor quality of education (19%) and poor transport services (19%).

Figure 5: In your opinion, what are the top three most serious problems facing your household today?
(% mentioning these issues as one of the top three)



Source of data: *Sauti za Wananchi*, baseline survey, August-September 2017; n=2,000

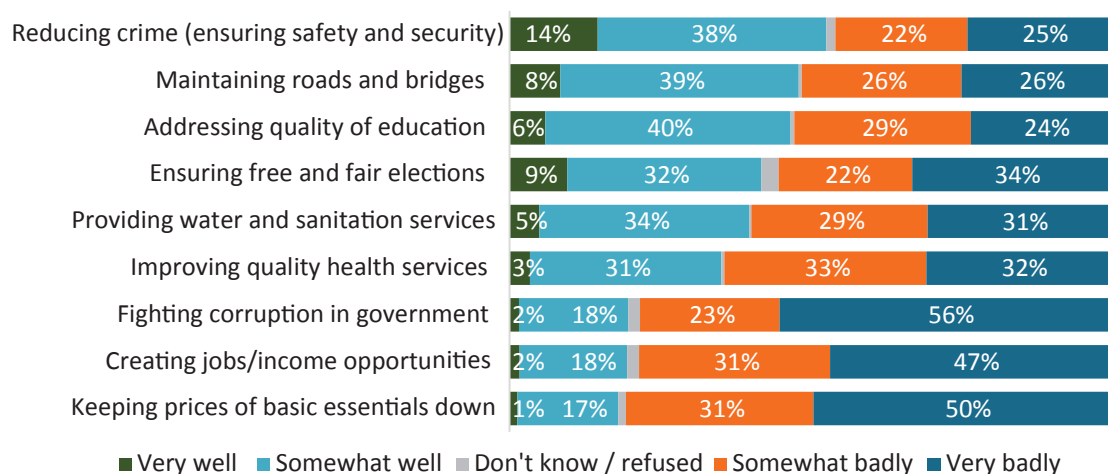
Fact 5: Eight out of ten citizens say the government is doing a bad job at controlling inflation, creating jobs and fighting corruption

A clear majority of Ugandans (81%) feel the government is not doing a good job of keeping the price of essential goods down. Similar numbers feel the government is not doing well at creating jobs (78%) and fighting corruption (79%).

The government's best ratings come for its efforts to reduce crime, where half the population say the government is doing well. However, even in this case, just one in eight citizens (14%) say the government is doing very well.

In all other areas, more citizens think the government is doing badly than think it is doing well, including maintaining roads and bridges (52%-47%), addressing the quality of education (53%-46%), ensuring free and fair elections (56%-41%), providing water and sanitation services (60%-39%) and improving the quality of health services (65%-34%).

Figure 6: How well do you think our national government is ...?



Source of data: *Sauti za Wananchi*, baseline survey, August-September 2017; n=2,000

Fact 6: Citizens don't think individual citizens can influence government decisions, but believe in collective action

Six in ten citizens (62%) say that because government is run by a few powerful people there is not much that an ordinary citizen can do to influence government, preferring this over the statement that the average citizen can have an influence on government decisions.

Similarly, two in three (65%) say that because government is a complex bureaucracy, there is not much single individuals can achieve, preferring this over the statement that individuals who speak up can have a real influence on government plans.

However, citizens are more positive about the potential for collective action. Six in ten (61%) say people can improve the country's economy through responsible action, and a similar number (57%) say that with sufficient effort, political corruption can be eliminated.

Figure 7: Among each pair of statements, which do you agree with more?



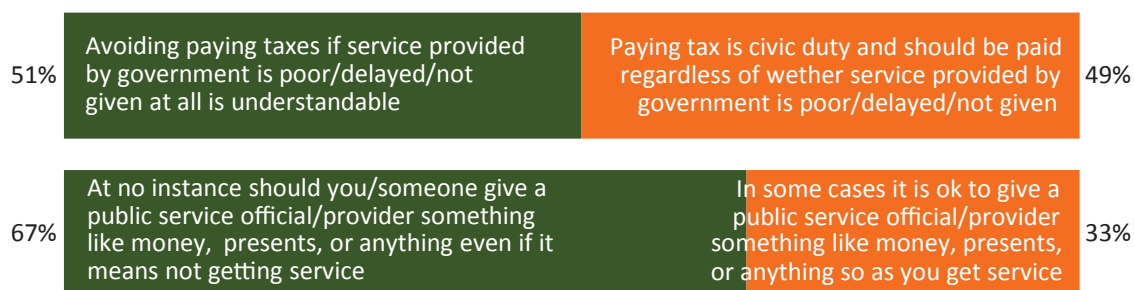
Source of data: *Sauti za Wananchi*, baseline survey, August-September 2017; n=2,000

Fact 7: Citizens are divided on paying tax, but oppose corruption

Citizens are evenly split on whether avoiding tax is “understandable” when services are not provided or paying tax is a civic duty (51%-49%).

However, two in three (67%) say bribing public officials or service providers is not acceptable, even if that is the only way to get a service. One in three (33%) choose the alternative: that bribing public officials can be acceptable in some cases.

Figure 8: Among each pair of statements, which do you agree with more?



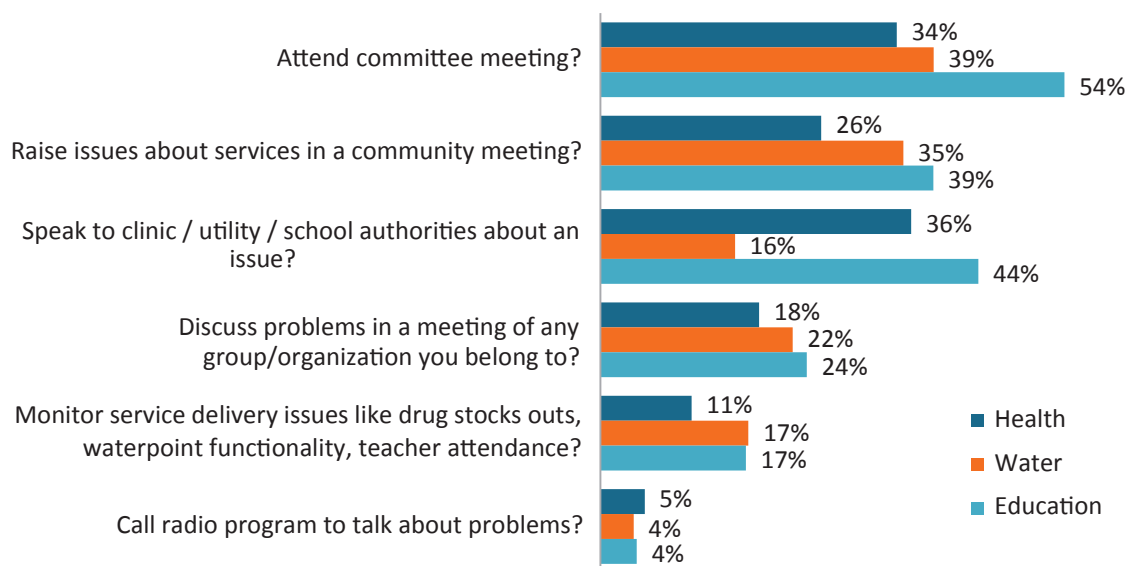
Source of data: *Sauti za Wananchi*, baseline survey, August-September 2017; n=2,000

Fact 8: Citizens are most engaged with the management of education

Over half of all Ugandans (54%) say they have attended an education committee meeting in the past 12 months, compared to four in ten (39%) who have done the same on water services and just over three out of ten (34%) on health services.

Similarly, public engagement in other forms – raising issues at community meetings, speaking to authorities about an issue, and discussing in a community group – is higher in the education sector than on health or water issues.

Figure 9: In the past 12 months, have you taken any of the following actions



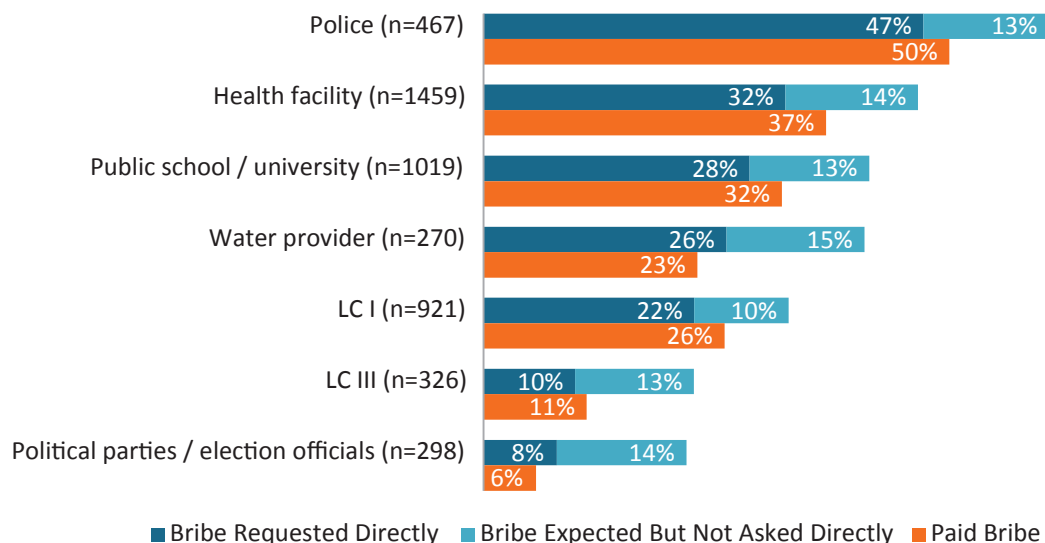
Source of data: *Sauti za Wananchi*, baseline survey, August-September 2017; n=2,000

Fact 9: Half of the population say the last time they had contact with the police they paid a bribe

A majority (60%) of those who had contact with the police in the last year, say a bribe was either directly requested (47%) or expected (13%) in order to get assistance or speed up services. Half (50%) say they paid a bribe.

Citizens' experience fewer requests or expectations of bribes when interacting with other service providers. Compared to how often they are asked for or expected to pay bribes, citizens are least likely to pay bribes to water suppliers and political parties and most like to pay the LC I.

Figure 10: The last time you or anyone from your household had contact with these institutions, were you asked/expected to give something to help in getting/speed up services? Did you give something? (Among those having had contact in past 12 months)



Source of data: *Sauti za Wananchi*, baseline survey, August-September 2017; n=2,000


3. Conclusion

This brief presents evidence across a range of key issues affecting the lives of ordinary Ugandans in terms of media and governance in particular.

When it comes to the broad concerns of Ugandan citizens, two issues stand out: livelihoods and health services. These were the top two issues cited by citizens as problems facing both their own households and the country as a whole. Further, asked how well the government is addressing some of these problems, satisfaction was lowest with the governments' efforts to keep prices down and create jobs, with efforts to improve health services also rated as poor.

We also find a worrying sense among many citizens that they are powerless to influence government – blaming both bureaucracy and powerful elites for making it difficult for an ordinary citizen to make their voice heard. On the other hand, when it comes to the prospects for change brought about by collective action, citizens are more positive, with majorities arguing that corruption and the national economic situation can be improved in this way.

The data highlight the need to tackle some of the pressing governance challenges in the country with a dual approach. On the one hand the data provide insight into areas of weakness for the government to address: particularly around health services, the cost of living and corruption. But they also unearth areas where norms and expectations among citizens need to change. A



substantial number of citizens think paying a bribe can be acceptable; this does not bode well for efforts by government or others to address corruption. In addition citizens are most concerned about health services but also the least engaged in their management.

For governance to work citizens need to be engaged and government be responsive to that engagement. These data highlight gaps on both sides of this relationship. At the same time it is positive to see that citizens are engaged in education, believe in the power of collective action and see areas of strength in government work. These can provide solid building blocks for constructive engagement in the future.

