

Press Release
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On International Women's Day, Sauti za Wananchi data show that women face multiple challenges that inhibit their opportunities

Women face violence, participate less in government processes and are denied education

Thursday 10 March, 2021, Kampala: As countries across the world celebrate International Women's Day, Twaweza is releasing new data on the challenges facing women before, during and after the Covid-19 pandemic.

These findings were released by Twaweza to mark International Women's Day. They are based on data from *Sauti za Wananchi*, Africa's first nationally representative high-frequency mobile phone survey. The findings are based on data collected from between 2,000 and 3,000 respondents across Uganda in December 2020, December 2021 and January 2022.

Half of citizens reported that in their communities, physical violence (51%), emotional violence (51%) and sexual violence or assault (46%) got worse during the Covid-19 outbreak. But the largest effect, as reported by citizens, was on teen pregnancy: 8 out of 10 citizens (79%) said these increased in their community during the outbreak.

When it comes to school closures and their social impact, 2 out of 3 citizens say girls are worse affected by school closures than boys. Women, residents of urban areas, younger citizens, wealthier and better-educated citizens are more likely than others to think girls are more affected by school closures than boys.

The main reason citizens say girls are more affected by school closures is that teenage pregnancy is increasing (45%), followed by early marriage (15%). Combining these reasons with others, almost all the reasons why citizens see girls as more affected by school closures relate to sexual behaviour.

When household members were asked directly, 1 out of 10 households (8%) have a girl of school-going age who became pregnant in the past six months. This figure is higher among poorer households (14%), those with no education or incomplete primary education (10%), and in eastern (13%) and northern (12%) parts of the country.

Among these girls who were (or are) pregnant in the past six months, 9 out of 10 of them (88%) were in school prior to becoming pregnant. About half of them (56%) intend to return to school after their pregnancy. Marriage is the most common reason given for why the girl will not return to school (11%) and for what she will do instead of school (10%).

In addition to these significant social and economic problems facing girls and women in particular, women are much less likely than men to be actively engaged in governance processes. Men (48%) are

more likely than women (35%) to have attended a community meeting in the previous twelve months. Men (22%) are also more likely than women (14%) to have spoken during such a meeting.

Similarly, women (82%) are less likely than men (85%) to seek information from public institutions. Men are more likely than women to seek information from: a political party office (57% vs. 44%), a village or street level government office (22% vs. 13%), government ministry or office (8% vs. 5%), a public school (10% vs. 6%), a water supplier (18% vs. 11%), a government or public website (17% vs. 8%), or another type of entity e.g. an NGO or company (35% vs. 26%). However, women (63%) are slightly more likely than men (60%) to seek information from a public health facility.

Marie Nyanzi of *Sauti za Wananchi* at Twaweza, said: *“The Covid-19 pandemic made existing inequalities worse. Through these data, we can see how deeply women and girls were affected by the pandemic. Many young girls became pregnant and will not have the chance to return to school. These impacts are made worse by lower levels of participation in local government by women, which means their voices and experiences are much less likely to be heard or considered in decision-making spaces.”*

Violet Alinda, Country Lead for Uganda at Twaweza added: *“As we celebrate International Women’s Day this year, let us recognize the heavier burden borne by women before, during and after the global Coronavirus crisis. We are calling on communities across the country to pay attention to these deep-rooted inequalities and exclusions faced by women and girls. They are marginalised from critical conversations, while bearing the brunt of any crisis. As long as this continues, we can never truly hope to progress as a nation.”*

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For more information:

Martha Chemutai

e: mchemutai@twaweza.org | t: 0782 405 210

Notes to Editors

- This brief and the data contained can be accessed at www.twaweza.org/ www.twaweza.org/resources
- Twaweza works to demonstrate how citizens can come together to collectively address their problems, and make government work better for them; enable citizens’ voices, interests and experiences to be heard and taken seriously in decision-making; promote and protect open civic space which enables citizens to freely assemble or organise, speak and act 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 *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. Follow us at Twaweza Uganda (Facebook), @TwawezaUganda (Twitter), Twaweza East Africa (Instagram).