

Press Release  
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## On budget day, Sauti za Wananchi shows that most citizens are deeply concerned about the cost of living

*The top three problems facing the country, according to citizens, are all related to poverty*

**Thursday 15 June 2023, Kampala:** As the budget is being read in Kampala, Twaweza is releasing new data on citizens' priorities and their views on poverty.

These findings were released by Twaweza in a factsheet titled *Priorities and Poverty*. 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 3,000 respondents across Uganda in January and February 2023.

When asked to name the top three problems facing Uganda today, 6 out of 10 citizens (60%) cite the cost of living as their main concern, more than mention any other issue. Other major problems are about similar issues: unemployment (48%) and hunger or drought (37%). Other issues that were mentioned by more than 1 out of 10 citizens include health services (29%), corruption (25%), poor transport services (13%) and the quality of education (12%).

At household level the picture is similar with the top three problems named by citizens as the cost of living (62%), unemployment (45%) and hunger or drought (42%). Health services (29%), the quality of education (13%), and poverty (11%) also feature at the top of the list of problems citizens are facing in their households.

Since 2019, there has been a significant increase in citizens' concerns around economic issues. The number of citizens citing the cost of living as one of the three most pressing problems facing the country more than doubled between late 2019 and early 2023, from 24% to 60%. Over the same period there have been sharp increases in the number who point to unemployment (23% to 48%) and hunger / drought (20% to 37%) as the main challenges.

Previously, even before the Covid-19 pandemic, citizens were most concerned about health services but since 2021, the share of citizens who are worried about health issues has fallen from 52% to 29%. Concerns about corruption have been consistently high, although they have fallen slightly in 2023. Nonetheless the number of citizens naming corruption as among the top three problems facing the country is much higher in Uganda (25%) than in Kenya (5%) or Tanzania (4%).

Citizens also relate these issues to the significant levels of poverty in the country. More than half of citizens (54%) say that limited opportunities for employment are the main reason why many households in Uganda are poor. Half of them (27%) say this is the main cause.

Other reasons that are widely cited as contributing factors to poverty include lack of capital for investment (34%), lack of education (28%), widespread corruption in society (26%) and unwillingness to work hard (25%).

When asked to think of solutions to these issues, citizens see government as wholly responsible. They would like to see government: create more jobs (56%) to address the lack of employment; provide capital for businesses (27%) to address this; encourage Ugandans to enroll their children in school (31%) and provide education for free (25%) to address the lack of education; arrest corrupt officials (75%) to combat corruption; and encourage people to work harder (61%) to address their unwillingness to do so.

Contrastingly, two out of three citizens (68%) say the most important thing that people need in order to get ahead in life or improve their status is to work hard. This is followed by education (13%) and connections to people in authority (6%).

Violet Alinda, Country Lead for Uganda at Twaweza added: *“As budgets are being read across East Africa, it is clear that the region is facing a crisis in terms of the cost of living. Citizens are struggling to make ends meet. We hope that these concerns and priorities can be reflected in the budget.”*

*“At the same time,” she continued “citizens sometimes have contradictory views on what can really be done to address poverty in the country. On the one hand they look to government, even to create jobs, provide them with capital to start businesses and encourage them to send their children to school. On the other, Ugandans are convinced that working hard is the way to get ahead. It is important for us to have a public conversation about who can and should do what to address Ugandans’ suffering. We need changes across the board, from government, the private sector, civil society and citizens themselves.”*

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**Notes to Editors**

- This brief and the data contained can be accessed at [www.twaweza.org/](http://www.twaweza.org/) [www.twaweza.org/sauti](http://www.twaweza.org/sauti)
- 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).