



Press Release
26 April 2016

**91% of citizens think that Government newspaper bans need to be defended in court
Citizens are broadly supportive of access to information with 8 out of 10 saying it would
reduce corruption and wrong doing**

26 April 2016, Dar es Salaam: While long-term legislation allows the government to unilaterally ban newspapers, 91% of citizens think that any ban should first be justified and defended in Court. More broadly, 8 out of 10 citizens (78%) say that access to public information would reduce wrong-doings and corruption, and 6 out of 10 (60%) think that the government should only be able to restrict information that is vital to national security. Citizens, therefore, are largely supportive of greater transparency and accountability.

These findings were released by Twaweza in a research brief titled *Into the light? Citizens and access to information*. The brief is 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 1,811 respondents across Mainland Tanzania (Zanzibar is not covered in these results) between 10 and 25 February 2016.

In addition, more than half of citizens believe they would be able to access the following information: how to register a birth (71%), how to report a broken water point (63%), and information on how to report corruption (56%). However less than half of citizens think they will be able to get information on district budgets, spending and plans (42%), how much capitation grant their local school received (39%) or stock outs at local health facilities (35%).

Interestingly, such optimism is not based on experience as more than 8 out of 10 citizens report that they have never been to their water supply office, public primary school, local health facility or local government offices to seek information. In fact, citizens rely largely on radio (70%) and less on television (21%) as their main sources of information. When asked which media sources they trust, both radio (trusted by 80% of citizens) and television (trusted by 73% of citizens) were cited as the most trusted. By contrast newspapers are only trusted by 27% of people. Although social media is the least trusted and least used source of information, the *Sauti za Wananchi* survey indicates that 47% use social media while 53% do not.

Whatever their sources of information, citizens are not necessarily well informed about all issues. Only 2% know about the Cybercrimes Act in detail, although 31% have heard about it. Given that the Cybercrimes Act was one of the more widely debated pieces of legislation that came before Parliament in 2015, and that it directly affects citizens' rights in terms of social media use, this level of knowledge is low.

Aidan Eyakuze, Executive Director of Twaweza, said *"Although local power and politics may prevent citizens from seeking information directly from public institutions, they are overwhelmingly supportive of the principles of greater transparency. They are also clear on what sources of information they use and trust. The new administration has, so far, been active in providing information, especially from the*

highest office in the land. It would do well to make information available to citizens in accessible ways through channels that they already use. We should also ensure that the underlying call from citizens, for government to account for its actions - whether banning a newspaper or acts of corruption – is heard. Informed citizens, with clear signals that their input would be welcome and utilized, and with redress mechanisms if they are not given information they need, can become powerful allies in the ambitious agenda of the fifth phase government.”

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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
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