Eight thousand citizen volunteers to collect data on children’s learning
Assessment of basic literacy and numeracy levels to provide insight into the education sector

21 August 2013, Dar es Salaam: A total of 7,980 citizen volunteers will be assessing children’s ability to do basic mathematics and read in Kiswahili and English in 133 districts in mainland Tanzania. The volunteers will be working as part of the annual learning assessment conducted by Uwezo Tanzania to investigate the quality of education provided to children.

The idea of Uwezo is very simple. Parents send children to school because they expect them to learn the basic skills and competencies necessary to succeed in future. So Uwezo – instead of focusing on impressive numbers of classrooms built, teachers recruited, and books supplied – asks the simple question ‘Are Our Children Learning?’ This large scale data collection exercise seeks to establish actual ability of our children in doing simple arithmetic as well as in reading in both Kiswahili and English.

The assessment test is based on the Standard 2 curriculum and measures attainment of basic literacy and numeracy skills. Over 155,000 children, aged 7 – 16, in 79,000 households will be tested in 4,000 communities nationwide. Instant feedback is then provided to parents at the time of the tests so that they are aware of their children’s abilities in numeracy and literacy and can take action to improve any shortcomings.

Future success in education is based on a grasp of the foundational skills of literacy and numeracy. Uwezo contends that the low performance in Form 4 examinations can, at least partially, be traced back to the lack of these basic skills among children. Previous years assessments have found low levels of literacy and numeracy among children, with only 1 in 5 children in Standard 3 able to read and count at the Standard 2 level.

To develop the tools and tests to carry out the assessment exercise, Uwezo Tanzania works with a wide range of partners. In developing the tests, Uwezo collaborates with the Tanzania Institute of Education, university experts and primary school teachers. The National Bureau of Statistics provides technical support to ensure that the sample for the survey is nationally representative. The Tanzania Commission for Science and Technology (COSTECH) provides research clearance while the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training and the Prime Minister’s Office – Regional Administration and Local Governance provide support and guidance in visits to communities, schools and households in each district in mainland Tanzania.

Similarly, in implementing the tests, Uwezo Tanzania works with 24 regional coordinators, who oversee the work of 133 district partner organisations, each of whom provide a district coordinator who oversees the work of 60 volunteers in each district. The co-operation of local leaders, schools and the households themselves is also essential.
Mathew Chungu, District Coordinator for Kibaha, said “I am delighted to be part of this important initiative which puts the question of learning outcomes at the forefront of debates about education. We need to move away from focusing on inputs and Uwezo, with its citizen driven approach, provides a unique opportunity for us all to be part of this change.”

Zaida Mgalala, Country Coordinator for Uwezo Tanzania said “By involving a range of partners and stakeholders, and by emphasizing the communication of these results, Uwezo works to stimulate debate on levels of children’s learning and to spark all citizens, from parents to policy-makers, to take action to improve these.”

The assessment will be complete by the end of September 2013 and results will be released in early 2014.

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Notes to Editors
- Uwezo means ‘capability’ in Kiswahili. Uwezo is a four year initiative that aims to improve competencies in literacy and numeracy among children aged 6-16 years old in Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda, by using an innovative approach to social change that is citizen driven and accountable to the public.
- In Tanzania children between 7 and 16 are assessed because this is the age most children are expected to be in primary school level including late entry to Class 1.
- You can see a sample of the Uwezo test here: www.twaweza.org/go/uwezo-2013assessment-launch
- A summary of results from previous assessments can be found here: http://www.uwezo.net/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/TZ_2011_AnnualAssessmentReportSummary_English.pdf
- Twaweza is a ten year citizen-centered initiative, focusing on large-scale change in East Africa. Twaweza believes that lasting change requires bottom-up action, and seeks to foster conditions and expand opportunities through which millions of people can get information and make change happen in their own communities directly and by holding government to account.
- You can follow Uwezo’s and Twaweza’s work
Web: www.twaweza.org or www.uwezo.net
Facebook: Twaweza Tanzania Twitter: @Twaweza_NiSisi