



Press Release

12 June 2016

8 out of 10 Kenyans think persons with Albinism are the same as everyone else But there are conflicting perceptions, 2 out of 10 citizens think of them with discomfort

12 June 2016, Nairobi: Kenyans have conflicting perceptions of persons living with albinism:

- Most of the time, 8 out of 10 Kenyans (79%) consider them as being the same as everyone else
- On the other hand, 7 out of 10 (68%) think that they need to be cared for
- 2 out of 10 or 19%, think of people with albinism with discomfort
- In addition 9% report that they never think of persons with albinism as the same as everyone else
- Nonetheless, 63% of Kenyans report never viewing persons with albinism with discomfort.

These findings were released by Twaweza, to mark International Albinism Awareness Day. The findings 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 1,763 respondents across Kenya in April and May 2016.

Albinism is a genetic condition where the body is unable to produce melanin, a natural pigment found in skin, hair, and eyes. The condition can impair vision and increase the risk of skin cancer. As a result of misconceptions and myths about their condition, people with albinism face discrimination and isolation in some parts of the world, most notably in East Africa.. In 2013, the United Nations Human Rights Council adopted a resolution "calling for the prevention of attacks and discrimination against persons with albinism."¹ The UN General Assembly has also proclaimed 13 June to be International Albinism Awareness Day

The contradictory statements by Kenyans may be the result of a lack of familiarity with albinism; 3 out of 10 citizens (28%) report having persons with albinism living in their communities.

Unfortunately, 1 out of 10 Kenyans (11%) think that people with albinism have supernatural powers and a further 16% say they don't know whether people with albinism have such powers. These types of beliefs can lead to discrimination and even violence against people living with albinism. Fortunately a large majority of Kenyans (73%) know that people with albinism do not have any such powers.

John Mugo, Director of Data and Voice at Twaweza, said *"International Albinism Awareness Day provides a moment for reflection and review: what are we doing to protect those who are often marginalized in our communities? How do we ensure that people are not discriminated against on the basis of their race, class, creed, gender or physical appearance? Although Kenyans are largely positive and focused on equity, these findings show that we still have a way to go before we can ensure that all Kenyans are treated equally"*

¹ <http://www.un.org/en/events/albinismday/>

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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
- You can follow Twaweza's work: **Web:** www.twaweza.org | **Twitter:** @SautizaWananchi