



Press Release | 27 June 2018

Three out of four Ugandans have access to clean water But differences in access to water between rural and urban areas remain stark

27 June 2018, Kampala: Three out of four Ugandans (74%) have access to an improved water source, meaning one that provides cleaner and safer water.

Ugandans in urban areas (86%) are more likely to use improved water sources than those in rural areas (69%), as are richer Ugandans (84%) compared to poorer ones (71%).

One out of four citizens (24%) overall have access to piped water but this is much higher in urban areas (46%, compared to 15% for rural citizens) and among richer Ugandans (51%, compared to 14% of poorer citizens).

Nonetheless, in both urban and rural areas, boreholes are the main source of drinking water for more households (rural 38%, urban 23%) than any other type of source. Even in urban areas, just 2% of households have water piped into their dwelling. One out of six rural households (15%) depend on surface water sources such as rivers, streams, dams and lakes, though this water can be very unclean.

Rainwater can provide an affordable and accessible alternative source of clean water; and eight out of ten households (78%) do harvest it. However, less than 1% use it as their main source of drinking water. Further, for most households (69%), the rainwater ran out after a week or less, the last time they collected it. Fewer than one out of ten households (7%) was able to use it for a month or more.

These findings were released by Twaweza in a research brief titled *Clean and Safe? Ugandans' experiences and opinions on affordable access to clean and safe water*. 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 1,971 respondents across Uganda in January to February 2018.

Rural areas are also disadvantaged in terms of time. It takes 1 hour and 11 minutes on average to collect water in rural areas compared to 49 minutes in urban areas. Despite these differences, a similar and substantial proportion of rural (14%) and urban households (10%), as well as richer (10%) and poorer (15%) households have to spend over two hours collecting water.

In one out of four households (25%), the responsibility for collecting water falls on the women, the female head of household or the wife of the household head. And in nearly two out of four households (48%), children are fully or partly responsible for this task.

Nationwide, and in rural areas, the two main challenges cited by citizens in accessing clean drinking water are linked: a shortage of water points (43%) and distance to water points (39%). In urban areas, the cost of water (36%) and irregular supply (29%) are mentioned the most.

A large majority of Uganda's households (70%) treat their water before drinking, to make it safer. This is again higher in urban (82%) than in rural (65%) areas. It is also higher among wealthier households (89%) than among the poor (52%). Most of these households boil their water (60%).

Overall, citizens are not satisfied with the trends in access to water. Four out of ten citizens (40%) say their access to clean and safe water has become worse over the past 12 months, compared to three out of ten (30%) who say it has improved.

Similarly, half of citizens (47%) are not satisfied or not at all satisfied with the performance of their local government in terms of providing water services. A minority - one out of four households (28%) - are satisfied or very satisfied with their local governments water services.

Marie Nyanzi, Sauti za Wananchi Officer at Twaweza, said *"On the positive side, rates of access to improved water sources are high by regional standards and, according to other data sources, appear to have been steadily rising in both urban and rural areas. On the other hand, many citizens still use surface water, spend hours collecting water and find the number of water points insufficient and the cost of water high. And citizens are dissatisfied with how water services are being managed."*

Dr Mary Goretti Nakabugo, Uganda Country Lead of Twaweza and Regional Manager, Uwezo East Africa, said: *"Despite some important successes, the story around access to water is one of manifest inequity, with rural areas facing more marked challenges than urban areas across many dimensions. In addition, the slower rate of growth in access to improved water in urban areas presents challenges for the future with population growth and increased rural to urban migration. The government will need to double down on efforts in both rural and urban Uganda to ensure that the hard-won gains of the last 20 years are not eroded."*

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Notes to Editors

- This brief and the data contained can be accessed at www.twaweza.org/ 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. Follow us at Twaweza Uganda (Facebook), @TwawezaUganda (Twitter), Twaweza East Africa (Instagram)