

Terms of Reference

Twaweza Research & Evaluation Advisory Group



Background

Twaweza means “we can make it happen” in Swahili. Twaweza works on enabling children to learn, citizens to exercise agency and governments to be more open and responsive in Tanzania, Kenya and Uganda through independent research and innovative communications and engagement. Our work focuses on the education and governance sectors, with a strong transparency and accountability theme throughout. Our flagship programs include *Uwezo*, Africa’s largest annual citizen assessment measuring children’s learning levels across hundreds of thousands of households; this high-quality independent data source is a powerful comparison with government data, and we employ a range of public as well as targeted policy initiatives to engage education systems in an open discussion (with aim of improved service delivery) on national educational systems and achievements. We also run *Sauti za Wananchi*, Africa’s first nationally representative mobile phone-based survey of citizen perceptions, priorities and opinions on public services and other relevant policy topics, now in its fourth year in Tanzania, second year in Kenya, and starting in Uganda. We conduct a range of research initiatives, including a randomized trial of a pay-for-performance program among teachers in Tanzania, a mixed-method positive deviance approach to unearthing successful school management and accountability practices across the three countries, innovative media partnerships pushing the envelope on government responsiveness, and localized, grassroots-focused piloting of models to spark citizen-state collaboration and improved local governance. All the research we conduct is directly building on and informing a particular policy agenda (whether at formulation, adoption, implementation, or monitoring stage). Last but not least, we engage with and provide leadership of global initiatives such as the Open Government Partnership. More detail can be found in our [strategy](#) document.

One of the core components of Twaweza, along the data and implementing units, is our organizational commitment to research, evaluation, and learning. This is manifested throughout the organization and implemented by various units, and consists of evaluating our own initiatives as well as engaging in and supporting innovative research relevant to the East African context as well as bringing contributions to the global fields. The Learning, Monitoring and Evaluation unit is tasked with overall guidance and oversight of this portfolio.

We invite a selected group of researchers to join us in shaping Twaweza’s rich mix of design, implementation, evaluation and research by becoming members of the Research & Evaluation Advisory Group. Twaweza will benefit from your deep knowledge and research experience, and you will benefit by engaging with other governance thinkers and experts in this group, possibly finding opportunities to explore your own hypotheses, and jointly guiding the path of a unique practitioner-research hybrid organization.

Purpose of the Research & Evaluation Advisory Group

The Research & Evaluation Advisory Group (REAG) is a high-level advisory body that will provide substantive counsel and feedback on Twaweza’s research and evaluation plans, processes and results to the Senior Management Team (SMT) of Twaweza, and through the SMT, to the Twaweza Board. High on substance but low on burden, the Group will carry no governance, administrative, or management responsibilities. The REAG will leverage the deep, collective expertise of its members to provide valuable advice to the SMT on the direction of the organization’s evaluation and research portfolio. The group will also assist the organization in identifying potential research partners, as well as global platforms and audiences for dissemination and use of research and insights generated by Twaweza. The primary point of contact with the REAG is the Director of Learning, Monitoring and Evaluation at Twaweza.

The Research & Evaluation Advisory Group will engage in the following activities:

1. Provide substantive input, suggestions, and feedback on Twaweza’s current and prospective evaluation and research questions, hypotheses and methods
2. Review research findings arising from the above and suggest future directions, linking with ongoing research and research gaps in the education, governance, and transparency and accountability fields in East Africa and globally
3. Support Twaweza’s research dissemination efforts by identifying specific opportunities to link findings with national, regional and international opportunities for engagement and contributions to the various fields
4. Identify potential partnership and collaboration opportunities for Twaweza with other research initiatives and researchers
5. Advise on Evaluation and Research for Twaweza’s next strategic phase

Membership

The group’s membership will consist of researchers from selected universities and think-tanks from East Africa and globally. Selection of potential members shall be made by Twaweza on the basis of their influential research in relevant areas and themes (education, governance, transparency and accountability), focus on the global south and East Africa in particular, and their commitment to practitioner-focused research. Membership is by invitation only. Participation is voluntary.

The members agree to participate in the Group during 2017 and 2018, that is, for the last 2 years of Twaweza’s current 2015-2018 strategic period. Twaweza will create a new strategy for 2019-2022, and the Group may be re-constituted at that time.

The body is intended to be dynamic and responsive to change, and thus membership may be amended to accommodate individual availability as well as emerging actors and opportunities.

As the REAG is not a decision-making body, members of REAG are not excluded from collaborating with Twaweza on specific research or evaluation activities. However, to avoid real and perceived conflict of interest, any active collaboration will be openly declared, and members may be requested to abstain from giving advice on areas of work in which they are directly involved.

Meetings

The group will meet virtually on a bi-annual basis in 2017 and 2018 (precise timing to be decided, but likely around March/April and around October/November).

- The meeting is expected to last 2-3 hours
- The members will be expected to allocate preparation time for the meeting (e.g. by reviewing materials shared by Twaweza)

In the period 2017-2018 the group will meet at least once in person, at a time agreed between the Evaluation & Research Advisory Group and Twaweza

- These meetings will take place in East Africa, likely duration 1-2 days
- A core meeting is envisioned for mid- to late 2018, to review the range of findings and lessons generated through research and evaluation activities conducted by or in partnership with Twaweza in the 2015-2018 strategic period, and suggest future directions
- An in-person meeting in late 2017 can replace the scheduled virtual meeting, if it is deemed as most advantageous in shaping the core components of the current evaluation strategy and agreeable to most members
- Twaweza will organize and coordinate these meetings, and will cover accommodation and local costs for the Group members attending (other financial contributions to be discussed on an individual basis)

In addition, Twaweza may contact individual members for specific advice, limited to once or twice per year.