Press Release | 1 September 2016

**Millions of students are completing primary school without mastering basic Standard 2 level work**

At the same time there are stark divisions in access to education, school facilities and learning outcomes by geography and household wealth

1 September 2016, Dar es Salaam: Among children in Standard 7, many are unable to complete Standard 2 work. Among Standard 7 pupils, four out of ten (44%) are unable to read a Standard 2 level story in English, two out of ten (16%) are unable to read a Standard 2 level story in Kiswahili, and two out of ten (23%) are unable to complete Standard 2 level multiplication.

Although learning outcomes are poor across the board, children from wealthier homes in urban areas are far more likely to master basic reading and arithmetic skills, than their peers from poorer or rural homes. Despite marked progress in increasing access to education, Tanzania has not fully met its commitments under the Education for All Goals. In particular, deep inequalities exist in terms of school inputs and environments, school enrollment and learning outcomes.

Aidan Eyakuze, Executive Director of Twaweza said “Major new changes in education policy and practice are being implemented. The Uwezo data provides an opportunity for decision-makers to understand where we are starting from and how to prioritise our actions and investments. Uwezo show that access to education is only one side of the story. The Primary Education Development Program succeeded in providing access to school for millions of Tanzania’s children. However, this Uwezo data reveals a very sobering picture of children attending years of primary schooling without mastering the most basic of literacy and numeracy skills. As we anticipate increased school enrolment we should reflect on these insights and ask tough questions about what we are harvesting from the huge investments in our schools. What is working? Where are we failing our children? What are we learning from our mistakes? If more and more children are going to school how do we ensure that there are enough resources, teachers, books and facilities for them all? Most importantly, how do we ensure that they all learn?”

These findings were released by Uwezo Tanzania at Twaweza in a report entitled *Are our children learning? The state of education in Tanzania in 2015 and beyond*. The report is based on data collected by Uwezo, Africa’s largest citizen-led assessment of learning outcomes in Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda. In the fifth round of data collection by Uwezo Tanzania in 2014, a total of 32,694 children were assessed from 16,013 households. Data were also collected from 1,309 primary schools.

Overall learning outcomes remain low in all three subjects tested for the Uwezo Annual Learning Assessment. Among pupils in Standard 3:

- 54% could read a Standard 2 level Kiswahili story
- 19% could read a Standard 2 level English story
- 35% could complete Standard 2 level multiplication

Over the five years of Uwezo assessments, there has been very little change in learning outcomes. However, Kiswahili pass rates appear to show a positive trend. For example between 2012 and 2014, the number of children in Standard 3 who could read a Standard 2 level story went from 26% to 54%. Nonetheless these findings are still well below the standard set by the curriculum.
The findings of the fifth Uwezo Tanzania report relate to the six Education for All Goals and focus on: access to pre-primary education, access to primary education, the link between mothers’ and children’s literacy, inequalities including gender; and quality of learning outcomes.

Inequality is seen throughout the education cycle in access, equipment and outcomes.

- Nationally, 65% of children were not enrolled in pre-primary education; and 84% of them were living in rural areas.
- Of the children enrolled in primary school, 62% were from rich or very rich households, while only 23% were from poor or very poor households.
- Overall, 19.2% of children were out of school; over half were from poor or very poor families.
- Less children were out of school in urban districts compared to rural ones.
- There were also regional variations - 8% of children in Dar es Salaam were out of school compared to 35% in Shinyanga.
- In terms of school environments there are substantial differences among the regions.
  - Teacher absenteeism: 58% in Singida compared to 17% in Ruvuma and Manyara
  - Pupil-teacher ratio: 126 to 1 in Mara and 56 to 1 in Pwani
  - Pupil-textbook ratio: 26 to 1 in Tabora and 3 to 1 in Mtwara, Kilimanjaro, Katavi, Ruvuma and Njombe
  - Pupil-Latrine Ratio: In Simiyu, 261 girls share one pit latrine compared to 259 boys sharing. In Njombe region the pit latrine ratio is 52:1 for girls and 59:1 for boys
- In terms of learning outcomes, children in urban areas outperform their rural peers.
- There are also stark regional variations: 81% of children aged 9 to 13 years in Dar es Salaam passed the Kiswahili test compared to 28% in Mara and Rukwa. In Arusha, 55% of children aged 9 to 13 years passed the English test while only 6% passed in Rukwa. In numeracy, 67% of children aged 9 to 13 years in Arusha could do multiplication while in Rukwa only 20% could.
- Household wealth also seems to influence learning outcomes. Children from very rich households are two or three times more likely to have basic literacy and numeracy skills as those from very poor households. Almost half of children (44%) from very rich households passed the Kiswahili literacy test compared to just 15% from the very poor ones.

“Although it is heartening to see some positive changes, particularly in terms of performance in Kiswahili, the performance is still not as it should be,” commented Zaida Mgalla, Uwezo Tanzania Manager. “The inequality in terms of access, facilities and quality is very worrying. Children from wealthy, urban homes are far more likely to be in pre-primary and primary school, to have more books and teachers at school, and ultimately perform better than their peers from rural areas and poor households. Our education system seems to be deepening the very social divisions it is supposed to eliminate.”

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Notes to Editors
- This report, the tools used for the assessment and the underlying data can be accessed at www.twaweza.org, or www.uwezo.net
- Twaweza is a not-for-profit company working in Kenya Uganda and Tanzania with a vision of an open society, built on the human impulse to make a difference; where information and ideas flow, citizens engage, and authorities are responsive to the needs of the people. 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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