



Press Release  
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## **New Uwezo data show improvements in basic Kiswahili literacy But, inequalities persist across the country. The gap between the lowest and highest performing districts is 60 percentage points**

**10 April 2017, Dodoma:** Among children aged 9 to 13, many are unable to complete Standard 2 work and the differences between districts are huge. In Iringa Urban, the best performing district, 74% of children aged 9 to 13 are able to pass basic literacy tests in English and Kiswahili and basic numeracy tests, while the corresponding figure in Sikonge is 15%. Regionally, 64% of children in Dar es Salaam aged 9 to 13 years are able to pass the three tests while 23% of their peers in Katavi can do the same.

Similarly, four out of ten children (42%) in ultra-poor households passed all three tests compared to close to six out of ten (58%) of their counterparts in non-poor households. These differences show that locational factors exert a far greater influence on learning outcomes than poverty and other variables often thought to be linked to educational achievement.

Aidan Eyakuze, Executive Director of Twaweza said *“It is very encouraging to see the improvements in basic Kiswahili literacy among our children, but we still have a very long way to go. One cause for worry is the growing inequality in outcomes based on location. Our data indicate that where a child lives has the most profound effect on whether or not they will learn, more than, whether a child’s mother is educated, whether the child attended pre-school or even whether they are stunted or not.”*

These findings were released by Uwezo Tanzania at Twaweza in a report entitled *Are our children learning? The Sixth Uwezo Tanzania Annual Learning Assessment Report 2017*. The report is based on data collected by Uwezo Tanzania which is part of Africa’s largest citizen-led assessment of learning outcomes implemented in Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda. In the sixth round of data collection by Uwezo Tanzania in 2015, a total of 197,451 children were assessed from 68,588 households. Data were also collected from 4,750 primary schools.

Overall learning outcomes remain low against curriculum expectations in all three subjects tested, at Standard 2 level, for the Uwezo Annual Learning Assessment. Among pupils in Standards 3 and 7:

	<b>Standard 3</b>	<b>Standard 7</b>
Able to read a Kiswahili story :	56%	89%
Able to read an English story:	13%	48%
Able to do multiplication:	35%	78%

However there are some positive findings: between 2011 and 2015 the pass rates for Kiswahili among Standard 3 pupils almost doubled from 29% to 56%. In Standard 7, the pass rate has increased from 76% to 89% during the same period. Although this still indicates that many pupils especially in lower grades are falling behind of curriculum expectations, there is cause for optimism. There is an indication that concerted efforts of government, including the support of donor partners, to focus on early grade literacy skills through a range of programs, are beginning to pay off.

Similarly the pupil to textbook ratio has seen rapid improvements moving from 30 pupils sharing a book in 2013, to 8 pupils sharing one book in 2014, down to 3 pupils sharing a book in 2015. These data clearly show the rate of change that is possible with strong and well-managed interventions.

On the other hand, this Uwezo report provides strong indications that enrolments are declining, especially in rural areas. In 2011, 77% of pupils aged 7 were enrolled in primary school compared to 55% in 2015. When considering enrolment of the same age group in any educational institution (including pre-school), the figures have dropped from 86% in 2011 to 81% in 2015. Further analysis shows that these declines are happening almost exclusively in rural areas: the enrolment among pupils aged 7, in any educational institution (including pre-school) dropped from 84% in 2011 to 78% in 2015. In urban areas the corresponding figures are 94% (2011) and 93% (2015). Similarly rural enrolment rates show declines among all age groups while urban enrolments have remained stable.

Overall one out of four teachers (25%) were absent from school on the day of the assessment. Similarly, about three out of ten pupils (29%) were absent from school on the same day. This limits pupil-teacher contact hours and can limit learning.

Zaida Mgalla, Manager of Uwezo Tanzania, said *“We commend the government for their efforts to ensure children are mastering basic Kiswahili and for providing more children with textbooks. These data show that change is possible. Yet this is no time for complacency. The declining rates of access to school could signal a fading of the initial enthusiasm over free primary education that produced a surge in enrolment. The experience that followed - the struggles with under-resourced schools and classrooms, over-stretched teachers and low quality learning outcomes - led to declining rates of enrolments. Our common challenge is to ensure that this does not happen again. We will do this by checking our children books and homework every day, by paying close attention to how our schools are managed, and by focusing at least as much on improving the results that come from schooling as on the inputs that go into our schools.”*

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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](http://www.twaweza.org), or [www.uwezo.net](http://www.uwezo.net)
- 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 world 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 [www.twaweza.org](http://www.twaweza.org) | [www.uwezo.net](http://www.uwezo.net) | @Twaweza\_NiSisi (twitter) | Twaweza Tanzania (Facebook)