



Press Release
26 May 2016

Children in Western region are more than five times more likely to be able to identify letters and numbers than children in Nairobi
The country is deeply divided in access to education and learning outcomes

26 May 2016, Nairobi: Despite marked progress in increasing access to education across Kenya in recent years, Kenya has not fully met its commitments under the Education for All Goals. And the improved national average figures conceal stark contrasts between the different regions of Kenya. Children in North Eastern region are much more likely to face challenges in access to school, school readiness and learning outcomes.

These findings were released by Uwezo at Twaweza in a report entitled *Are our children learning? The state of education in Kenya in 2015 and beyond*. The report is based on data collected by Uwezo, a citizen-led assessment of learning outcomes in Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda. In this report data from all five Uwezo assessments are used, meaning data points were collected from over 600,000 children drawn from all the counties in Kenya.

The findings of this fifth Uwezo report are clustered around the six Education for All Goals and focus on: early childhood education and school readiness (EFA Goal 1 on early childhood care and education), access to, and progression through, primary school (EFA Goal 2 on access to and completion of primary education for all), adult school attendance and mothers' literacy (EFA Goals 3 and 4 on adult literacy and lifelong learning), inequalities including gender (EFA Goal 5 on gender and other inequalities) and learning outcomes (EFA Goal 6 on the quality of education).

Nationally, 84% of children aged 7 or below, currently enrolled in Standard 1 attended pre-school. However this masks significant regional variation: in North Eastern 57% of children went to pre-school while in Coast region it was 87%. In order to fully assess early childhood development and education, Uwezo considered a wider range of metrics on child readiness, family readiness and community readiness. The significant divisions within the country are apparent throughout.

Child readiness – children aged 7 or under, enrolled in Standard 1

- Nationally, 9% cannot identify letters (16% in Western, 2% in Nairobi) and 11% cannot recognise figures (18% in Western, 3% in Nairobi)

Family readiness – children aged 7 or under, enrolled in Standard 1

- 11% of children have mothers who have no education (77% in North Eastern, 2% in Central)
- 63% of children have mothers with primary education or below (86% in North Eastern, 63% in Nyanza)
- 34% are born to teenage mothers (41% in Nyanza, 24% in North Eastern)

Community readiness

- Nationally, 93% of 6-16 year olds are enrolled in school (96% in Central, 83% in North Eastern)
- 34% of children (aged 7 or under, in Standard 1) live in communities where most households are poor (77% in North Eastern, 5% in Nairobi)

- 8% of children (aged 7 or under, in Standard 1) live in communities where most mothers do not have an education (82% in North Eastern, 8% in Central)

When it comes to access to primary school, enrolment rates are high: 90% of children aged 6 to 13 are enrolled. However overall they are 31% behind their expected grade level; children are not progressing through school at the right pace. Again there is regional variation: in North Eastern 80% are enrolled while in Central 96% are. And in Central, children are 19% behind their expected grade level while in Coast they are 41% behind.

In terms of adult literacy, 8% of adults in Kenya did not attend school and 45% of mothers cannot read a Class 2 English story. The regional contrasts continue to be stark: in North Eastern 82% of adults did not attend school and 5% of mothers can read a story, while in Central 0.1% of adults (1 in 1,000) did not attend school and 71% of mothers can read a Class 2 English story.

The Uwezo report also considers inequalities in education around gender, geography and wealth

- **Gender:** across the country, girls enrol more and progress faster than boys through school except in North Eastern where the opposite is true. Nationally the gender discrimination index is 6.7 while in North Eastern it is -10.1 and in Western it's 14.7.
- **Wealth:** children from less privileged items do worse in terms of access to, and progress through, school than children from wealthier households.
- **Geography:** children from arid and semi-arid areas have less access to education and progress through school slower than those from non-arid areas. In North Eastern region, one third of the test score variance is explained by location while in Western it is only one tenth. Children from North Eastern are more likely to perform poorly due to location.

And when it comes to learning outcomes, the fifth Uwezo report finds that children are not learning at the right pace. Learning outcomes are low and have been static for the five years that Uwezo has been assessing them. In 2011, 40% of children aged between 7 and 13 could read a Class 2 story and solve Class 2 division. In 2014, the figure is 39%. The same is true for each individual subject: there has been no significant change in numeracy, Kiswahili literacy or English literacy in the five years that Uwezo has been conducting learning assessments.

Emmanuel Manyasa, Manager of Uwezo Kenya at Twaweza said *“The regional disparities are troubling. Our data clearly show that Kenya is starkly divided when it comes to school readiness, access to school, progression through school and learning outcomes. Children from North Eastern are at a disadvantage on almost every indicator. If we are to realise a vision for a middle income country by 2020, we need to pay urgent attention to the low levels of achievement in learning outcomes throughout the country and the significant marginalisation of children along geographical and socio-economic lines.”*

John Mugo, Director of Data and Voice at Twaweza said *“As we move through a process of curriculum reform, these findings prompt us to look beyond individual issues within education. Every part of the education system needs to prioritise the quality of learning; and we need to make sure that every school delivers quality learning. If we are not careful, our education system will further entrench the divides and disparities it is supposed to eliminate. We need to look carefully at funding, processes and outcomes to ensure every Kenyan child learns.”*

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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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