



## Collecting high frequency data using a mobile phone panel survey

### A case study of Tanzania

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Policy makers regularly make decisions for the whole country, but with poor access to the experiences and realities of a large majority of citizens. It is also difficult for them to know whether policies are properly implemented or actually working. Citizens also do not have an easy way to know what is going on around the country, and to compare their situation with others'. Policy makers typically use administrative data – information collected by government bodies at lower levels and compiled at district, regional and national levels – to inform their work. But there can be issues with the integrity of administrative data, due to inadequate technical, logistical and quality assurance arrangements. Alternatively, policy makers resort to using survey data, which can have more robust technical design, sampling, and quality assurance procedures. But traditional surveys based on face-to-face interviews tend to be costly and time-consuming. Surveys can cost millions of dollars each and often take more than two years from concept to the data becoming available. This state of affairs has meant policy makers have to either deal with poor or delayed and expensive data. Twaweza's Sauti za Wananchi offers a solution that overcomes these limitations. It provides access to frequently updated statistics on a range of topics, with a focus on quality of public services and citizens' realities. Sauti za Wananchi embodies the rigor and quality of traditional survey methodology but uses mobile phones to lower costs and speed up the process of data collection. Through the infrastructure created, policy makers, analysts, media, other organizations and the public can access data that are collected frequently on a range of issues. The initiative has two phases: the first consisted of a standard household survey with face-to-face interviews. A representative sample of 2000 respondents from all regions of mainland Tanzania was randomly selected to participate. During the household visits that made up the first phase, mobile phones and solar chargers were distributed to those who agreed to become Sauti za Wananchi respondents. During the second phase, which started in February 2013, these respondents have been called once or twice a month through a call centre. To date, Sauti za Wananchi has undertaken 38 call rounds, with a response rate of above 70%. Using the survey results Twaweza has published 25 policy briefs on a wide range of issues so far.

**Key words:** Twaweza meaning “we can make it happen”, Sauti za Wananchi “Voices of citizens”, Call rounds, Call center