

Why Effective Communication is Key

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The citizen led assessment of basic literacy and numeracy are now well grounded in India, Pakistan, Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Mali and Senegal. A common thread uniting all seven initiatives is the recognition of the power of communication. Since inception in 2009, Uwezo in East Africa has sought to communicate the assessment results in ways that connect with the citizens, informs them and urges their agency to act. Our organizational theory of change supports the idea that when findings are communicated creatively and in ways that make meaning to citizens, they will understand the implications of the findings and decide to act. When this happens they will exert pressure and momentum will build over time and result in a tipping point that creates national conversation about the measure of education in East Africa. Our creation of a citizen movement who care about raising the quality of learning is almost hinged on effective and powerful communication. Uwezo communication is based on the following five tenets which are articulated as follows:

1. Every citizen has the right to know. We are compelled to present materials in ways that are understandable, simple, attractive and have reach.
2. All contact is communication. We plan and weave communication in all activities, before, during and after the national assessment.

3. Communication is of scale. Mass media is exploited for its massive reach. To delimited the effects of the 'spray and pray' we collect data on popular radio presenters and popular radio stations thereby allowing us to target a specific audience group.
4. Communication is interactive. Uwezo communication is designed to be 2-way. Citizens often reach back via telephone or SMS.
5. Repetition is used for effect. Given that messages that are remembered have a higher possibility of imploring action, we repeat the same message in different forms and formats, and in accessible languages.

The investment in communication has yielded fast returns, as today, our initiatives, across the continents are known for their focus on learning. We congratulate ASER Pakistan for the 2012 release. It offers a critical communication moment.