

The public agenda: Health care, education, and water top the list of Tanzanians' priorities

Afrobarometer Dispatch No. 50 | Rose Aiko and Stephen Mwombela

Summary

On 25 October 2015, Tanzanians will go to the polls to choose the government that will lead the country for the next five years. Once elected, the new administration will have its party's election manifesto as the blueprint for delivering results, in addition to existing government policy documents, most prominently Vision 2025 (dating back to 1995), the National Strategy for Growth and Reduction of Poverty (known by its Swahili acronym MKUKUTA), rolling five-year development plans, and the recent Big Results Now (BRN)¹ initiative.

However, in order to meet public demands, it is imperative for a government to be aware of its citizens' priorities. Using Afrobarometer survey data, this dispatch highlights the most important problems that Tanzanians want their government to address, areas where citizens suggest additional public investment should be channelled, and issues on which government performance is perceived to be in need of refinement.

Our analysis shows that health care is most frequently cited as the most important problem as well as the top priority for greater public investment. Notably, health care does not feature among the six priority impact areas of the current government's BRN initiative.

Popular assessments of government performance have improved significantly since 2012. Issues on which the government receives the lowest levels of public approval are bridging the gap between rich and poor and improving living conditions of the poor.

Afrobarometer survey

Afrobarometer is a pan-African, non-partisan research network that conducts public attitude surveys on democracy, governance, economic conditions, and related issues across more than 30 countries in Africa. Five rounds of surveys were conducted between 1999 and 2013, and Round 6 surveys are currently under way (2014-2015). Afrobarometer conducts face-to-face interviews in the language of the respondent's choice with nationally representative samples of between 1,200 and 2,400 respondents.

The Afrobarometer team in Tanzania, led by REPOA, interviewed 2,386 adult Tanzanians between September and October 2014. A sample of this size yields country-level results with a margin of sampling error of +/-2% at a 95% confidence level. Previous surveys have been conducted in Tanzania in 2001, 2003, 2005, 2008, and 2012.

¹ For more information about BRN priorities, see <http://www.pmoralg.go.tz/quick-menu/brn/> and <http://www.pdb.go.tz/?q=en/node/18>.

Key findings

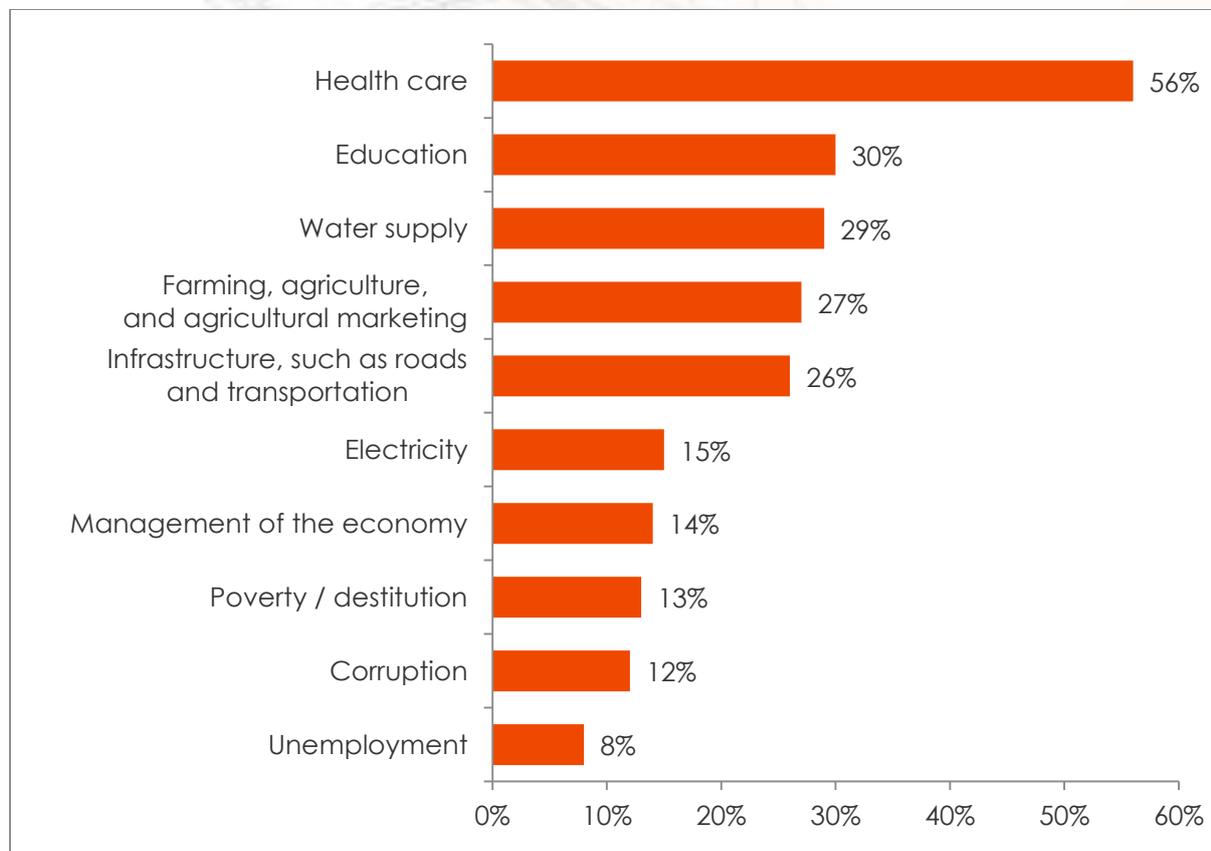
- Health care tops the list of the most important problems that Tanzanians want their government to address, followed by education, supply of clean and safe water, agricultural development, and infrastructure development.
- Health care also tops the list of priority areas where Tanzanians want additional public investment to be channelled. This is followed by education and agricultural development.
- Tanzanians express the lowest level of satisfaction with government performance in narrowing the gap between rich and poor, improving standards of living for the poor, job creation, keeping prices low and stable, and fighting corruption.

Most important problems

The Afrobarometer survey asked people to indicate what they perceive as the most important problems facing the country. Each respondent was given an opportunity to list up to three problems that s/he would like the government to address.

Results show that at the top of the list of people's priorities are health care, education, and water supply. These are followed closely by agricultural development (farming, agriculture, and agricultural marketing) and infrastructure such as roads and transportation (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Most important problems the government should address | Tanzania | 2014

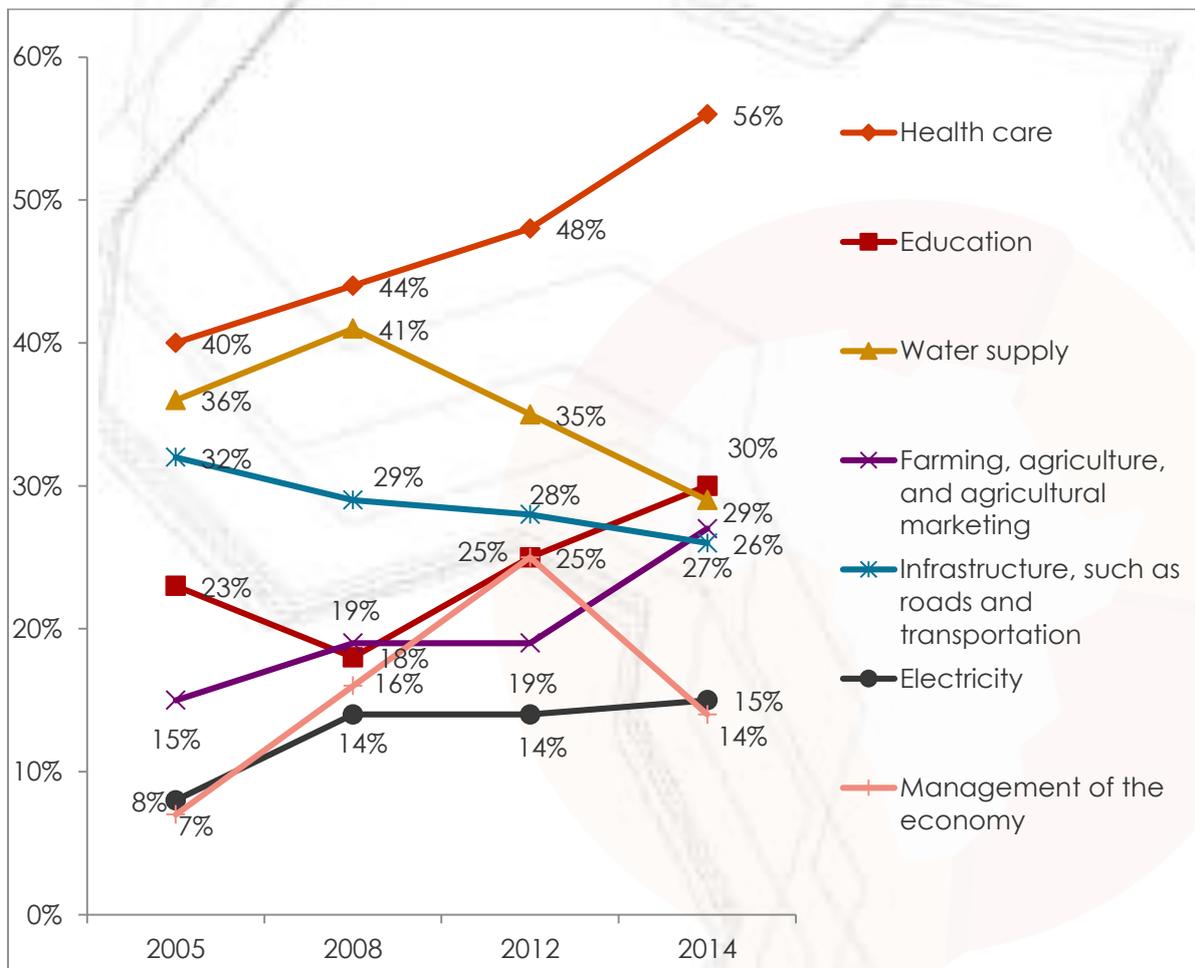


Respondents were asked: *In your opinion, what are the most important problems facing this country that government should address?*

Note: Health care includes health, sickness/disease, and HIV/AIDS.

These priorities have not changed much over the past decade. Social services and infrastructure development have remained at the top of the list of problems that people want addressed since the current government took office. Health care has not only been at the top throughout the past 10 years but has gained further prominence in recent years (Figure 2).

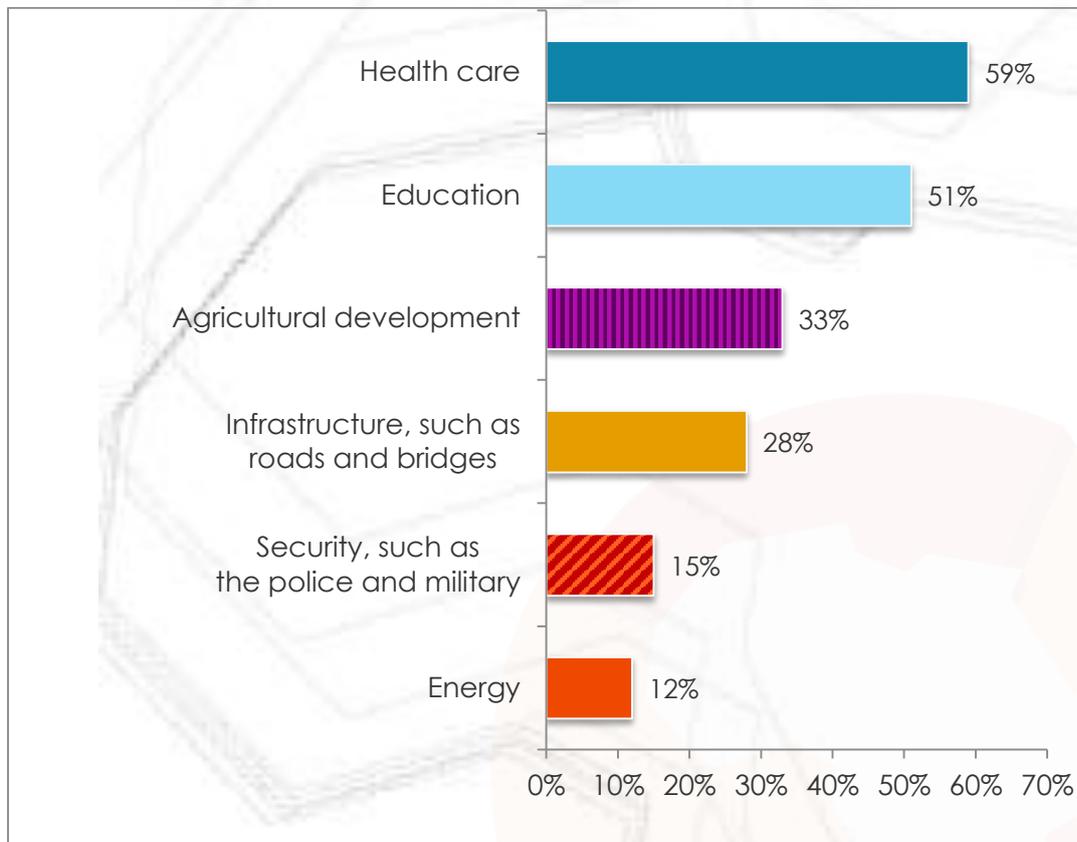
Figure 2: Trend in ranking of most important problems | Tanzania | 2005-2014



Priorities for additional public investment

Survey respondents were asked to list two areas where they would like to see additional public investment. Results show that health care stands at the top of the list, followed by education and agricultural development (Figure 3).

Figure 3: Citizens' priorities for additional public investment | Tanzania | 2014



Respondents were asked: *If the government of this country could increase its spending, which of the following areas do you think should be the top priority for additional investment? And which would be your second priority? (% who cite the issue as their No. 1 or No. 2 priority)*

Areas where government performance needs to improve

Meeting public expectations requires government effectiveness in delivering on its commitments. Table 1 below shows how citizens rate government performance on a variety of issues in 2014 (the survey closest in time to the end of the current government's second term in office) compared to 2012 (the closest survey to the end of its first term).

Results show substantial improvements in public evaluations of government performance on nearly all issues. The lowest levels of approval, indicating priority areas for improvement of government performance, are in narrowing the gap between the rich and the poor and improving the living standards of the poor. These are followed by creating jobs, keeping prices low/stable, and fighting corruption in the government. Even in areas where approval rates are relatively high, they indicate there is still considerable desire for government performance to improve. Such areas include fighting crime, addressing educational needs, maintaining infrastructure, and improving health services.

Table 1: Approval of government performance | Tanzania | 2012-2014

| Results area | Fairly/very well 2012 | Fairly/very well 2014 |
|---|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Narrowing the gap between the rich and the poor | 13% | 26% |
| Improving the living standards of the poor | 18% | 29% |
| Creating jobs | 21% | 35% |
| Keeping prices low/stable | 11% | 35% |
| Fighting corruption in the government | 34% | 37% |
| Providing reliable electricity | 33% | 42% |
| Managing the economy | 26% | 43% |
| Providing water and sanitation services | 33% | 43% |
| Ensuring everyone has enough to eat | 24% | 43% |
| Improving basic health services | 42% | 49% |
| Maintaining roads and bridges | 47% | 52% |
| Addressing educational needs | 55% | 54% |
| Reducing crime | 50% | 59% |

Respondents were asked: How well or badly would you say the current government is handling the following matters, or haven't you heard enough to say? (% who say the government is doing "fairly well" or "very well")

Conclusion

As political candidates wrap up their 2015 campaigns and the winning party refines its agenda for the next five years, these results point to citizens' priorities. Health care, in particular, tops the lists of most important problems and of areas needing more public investment, but appears to have been skipped in the current Big Results Now agenda. Without allowing slippage in areas where popular approval of government performance has been improving, the next administration will need to consider how to take these priorities into account.

To further explore this data, please visit Afrobarometer's online data analysis facility at www.afrobarometer.org/online-data-analysis.

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Afrobarometer is produced collaboratively by social scientists from more than 30 African countries. Coordination is provided by the Center for Democratic Development (CDD) in Ghana, the Institute for Justice and Reconciliation (IJR) in South Africa, the Institute for Development Studies (IDS) at the University of Nairobi in Kenya, and the Institute for Empirical Research in Political Economy (IREEP) in Benin. Michigan State University (MSU) and the University of Cape Town (UCT) provide technical support to the network.

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For more information, please visit www.afrobarometer.org and www.repoa.or.tz.

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