

THE STATE OF KENYAN YOUTH 2018

INTRODUCTION

With 3 in 5 Kenyans aged below 25, it is critical that youth are part of the decision-making process that governs their current and future state. Yet, as many as 40% of Kenyans aged 15-24 perceive governance as irrelevant to their lives and some already have had a negative experience with the government and its agents. By nurturing agency, celebrating role models and offering accessible mechanisms of engagement, Shujaaz aims to reboot youth perceptions about and engagement with governance issues by making them aware of opportunities that are relevant & useful to them.



YOUTH PARTICIPATION IN GOVERNANCE

Key barriers to effective youth participation include the shortage of specific knowledge, lack of relevance, prohibitive social structures, competing priorities imposed by financial struggles, and the lack of believe that youth can initiate change.

Youth have incomplete understanding of devolved government and devolution, and this knowledge does not explain the role they can/should play. As a result, many engage in selected governance activities (e.g., voting) because of social pressure (e.g., families and/or communities) or to earn money (e.g., small jobs offered by politicians). These stimuli shape unhealthy perception of what it means to be part of governance.

70% do not completely understand how basic devolved government systems function

80% are not completely sure what decisions their county government makes

38% do not believe that youth can play a role in governance

92% have never engaged with a government agent or agency

55% struggle daily to cover their basic needs

YOUTH ISSUES AND THE BIG 4 AGENDA



Yet, youth are very clear what the government should do for them.

In their mind, these issues are interconnected, and addressing even half of them will help youth achieve independence through work and entrepreneurship not government welfare. Where possible youth are already taking charge of solving the challenges within their power – e.g., via self-employment. However, shortage of funds and power limit the positive impact of their efforts.

If I were a president, I would start up schools that would train the youth on tailoring, masonry, hairdressing for free so that to make them *independent*

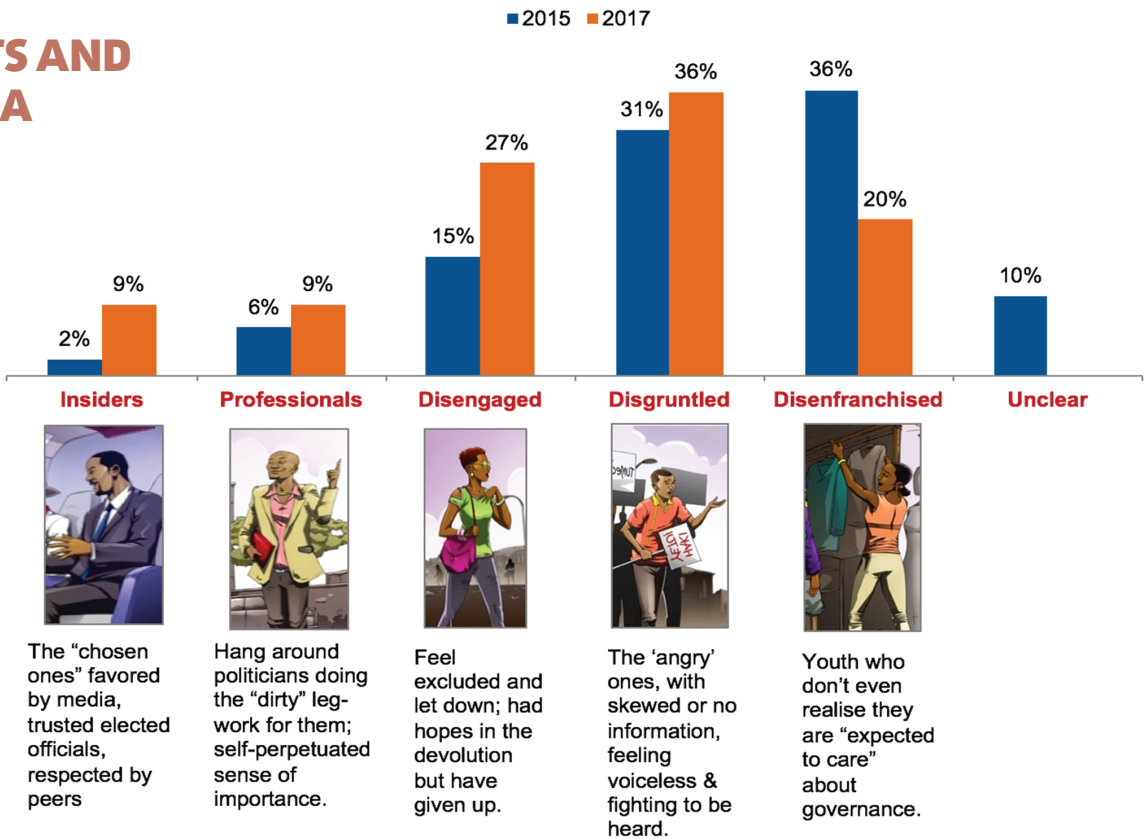


Contact us:
 Karen Office Park | Lang'ata rd
 P.o.box 1700-00502 | Nairobi, Kenya
 +254 (0)719 407 512
 Natasha.kimani@welltoldstory.com
 www.welltoldstory.com

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YOUTH SEGMENTS AND THE BIG 4 AGENDA

Despite believing that they are persistently raising the issues most important to them – all focused on the immediacy of time (now!) and location (my hood!) – youth find that political strategies continue to ignore their needs. Hence, even the forced engagement during the election year resulted in youth mostly shifting from disenfranchised to disengaged and disgruntled (i.e., angry and disillusioned). A small proportion of youth did find a way to positively engage with the government, albeit as youth groups not individuals. Common cases of positive engagements include youth groups lobbying for one issue or seeking start-up funds, having jointly developed a group strategy.



Insiders
 The "chosen ones" favored by media, trusted elected officials, respected by peers

Professionals
 Hang around politicians doing the "dirty" leg-work for them; self-perpetuated sense of importance.

Disengaged
 Feel excluded and let down; had hopes in the devolution but have given up.

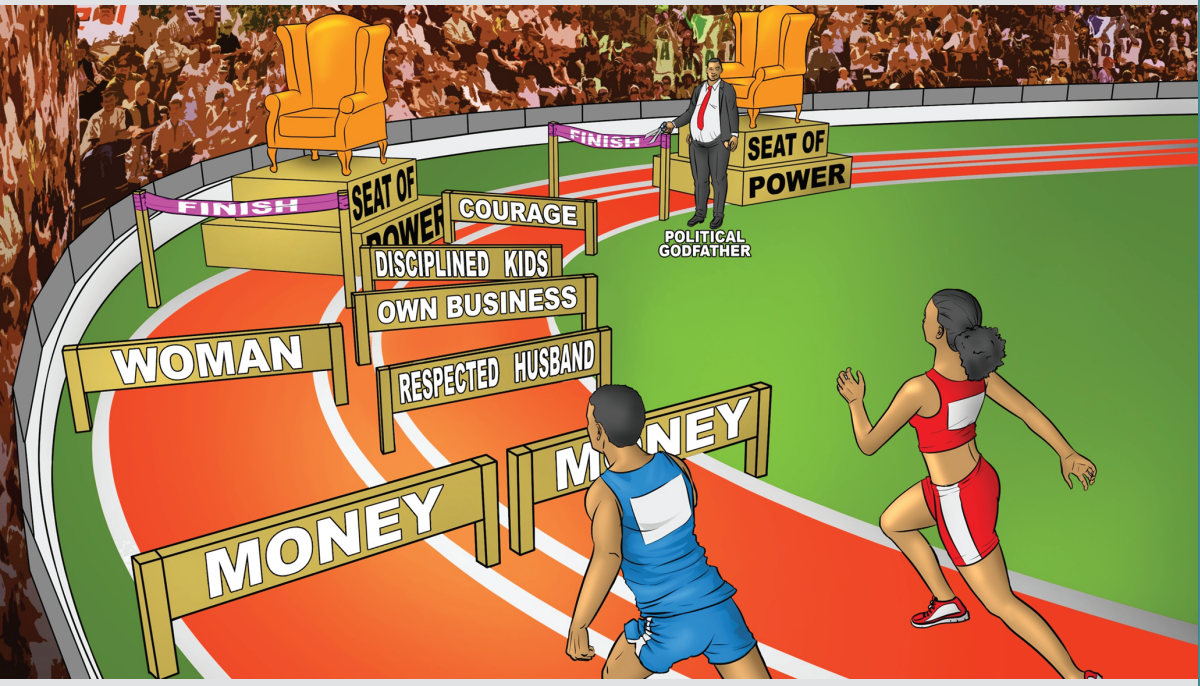
Disgruntled
 The 'angry' ones, with skewed or no information, feeling voiceless & fighting to be heard.

Disenfranchised
 Youth who don't even realise they are "expected to care" about governance.

Source: Qualitative study with youth (15-24), August-September 2017.

GIRLS MATTER: GENDER REPRESENTATION AND RESPONSIVENESS

Girls with inspiration to become leaders are particularly vulnerable as they are socialized to excel as wives and mothers, but not as businesspersons or political leaders. Role models – females in power positions – are few, and for those elected (a) the requirements are much higher than for males, (b) typical political roles (e.g., women representatives) are unclear, have limited responsibilities and are not visible in the community, and (c) even among females, women in politics can find limited support. This all conspires to prevent & disincentivize female engagement in governance at any level.



Shujaaz's two-tiered governance campaign offers tailored opportunities for engagement to the priority youth segments:

1. **Facilitated engagement:** Disgruntled and disengaged youth get an opportunity to talk in person with local leaders, to voice problems / priority issues AND share solutions during 'Mic Yetu' events (your say) – an initiation into positive relationships with the government representatives. These engagements are captured and shared in the Shujaaz media to engage thousands more youth in conversation about the issues discussed
2. **For disenfranchised youth** (mostly girls) who have no interest in traditional engagement Shujaaz takes democracy to the micro-level, "fractal democracy", exploring democratic practices within real-life non-political groupings in which youth can identify themselves and their peers. How do you handle corruption in your dance club / savings group? The campaign aims to build democratic muscle at the micro level so that when an opportunity to engage at the macro level arises, youth have the confidence to do so.