

GROUNDTRUTH COVID-19 BAROMETER

Week Ending
03/APR

In a socially-distanced world, Shujaaz Inc's SMS, USSD and social media channels allow us to stay in 24/7 contact with our network of 7.5m young people. Our GroundTruth briefs provide a weekly insight into the impacts of COVID-19 and associated quarantine measures on the lives of young people in East Africa. This week, as partial lock-down and curfew measures have come into force in Kenya, stories from our fans are a stark reminder that the responses to COVID-19 must be tailored to their context; balancing the immediate threat of poverty, alongside the public-health crisis.

SMS MESSAGES

"I want corona to end by April so that we can go back to work otherwise we will starve to death"

FEMALE, 21, KIAMBU

"Corona has affected my hustle negatively because I sell "mayai + kachumbari at the market and right now I get very few customers as there are restrictions on how many people get into the market.."

UNKNOWN, 21, KITUI

"I haven't gone to work for a whole week and right now I don't know what I will eat, I used to work at a hotel nightshift."

UNKNOWN

"Corona has brought a standstill for us juakali guys, there are no longer little jobs here and there that I used to do before, am just idle now. May God help us."

MALE, KITALE

'PEOPLE HAVE STARTED GOING TO BED HUNGRY SINCE THEY NO LONGER HAVE WORK'

As this week progressed, messages from young people across Kenya have been alerting us to the significant and immediate impact that the partial lock-down and curfew are having on their financial security. In simple terms; they highlight that the threat of hunger or starvation feels more immediate to them than the virus itself.

Based on data from our 2019 nationally representative survey, we estimate that, within two weeks, almost half of young people in Kenya will have exhausted the little savings they have; leaving no money to pay rent or feed their families.

96%

96% of 'working' young people are employed in the informal sector, which has been hit hard by quarantine measures – feedback from our fans suggest many have been forced to shut down.

Last year's survey data showed us that 63% of young people have tried to save money, but the majority of those 'savers' accumulate income for a specific purchase, or to repay a debt. Only 13% consciously set aside savings as a financial 'cushion' against crisis.

47%

According to research conducted with [BFA](#), 47% of our fans either have no savings, or only have enough to live on for 2 weeks or less.

That 47% includes fans with no financial cushion at all. Only 34% had enough to live on for 3-4 weeks, only 19% to cover 5-6 weeks.

SMS MESSAGES

"Lindafam. I have protected my family cos of Corona. Every time we wash our hands with soap and sit one meter apart. I planned and have enough food."

FEMALE, 25, KIRINYAGA

AWARENESS LEVELS RISE

After a week of running our analogue and digital COVID-19 campaign, a brief survey (N=2,660) conducted at the close of this week, shows that 76% of young people surveyed were able to correctly state that everyone in their community is at risk of being infected with COVID-19. However, even as quarantine measures are imposed, 24% have still misunderstood the risk posed by the pandemic.

SMS MESSAGES

"I am preventing corona virus by getting in the house before 7pm, washing my hands regularly and educating people in my area on how to protect themselves"

UNKNOWN, 23

"DJ B, I wash my hands with soap and water and I have put water and soap at our main gate just incase anyone wants to visit, they first wash their hands outside then come in. Could you please help the people in my community with more information on corona. "

MALE, 20, KERICHO

SMS MESSAGES

NEWS, there are sodas known as twist and below it they are written 666 from China. They have poisons that kills Corona and they have been brought secretly to save our lives. Forward if you love your fellow Kenyans. THIS IS TRUE."

MALE, 21, VIHIGA

"Covid-19 is treated with tea leaves without sugar."

FEMALE, 21

"What has amazed me is people misleading others that the medication for Corona is tea leaves."

MALE, 23, MOMBASA

SMS MESSAGES

"Am stranded now, there is no work and my family need to feed. Corona has put me in a fix and I don't know what to do."

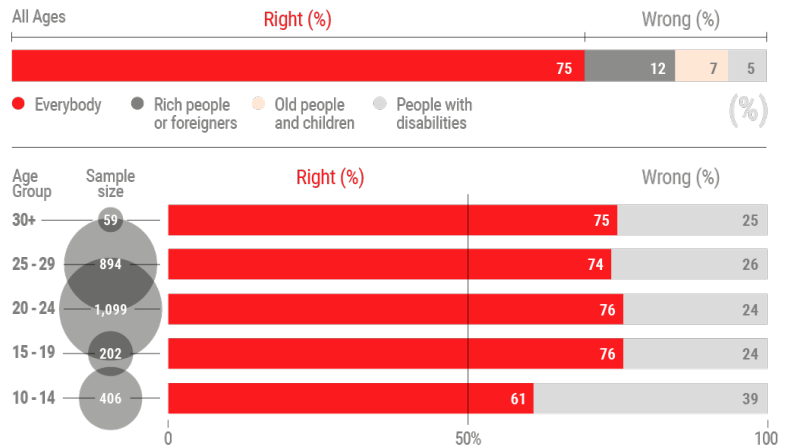
UNKNOWN

"The Government should pay "Wanjiku" 10k on top of the stimulus package. We don't want to hear that money got lost and so many people are suffering"

UNKNOWN

02

SURVEY RESULTS: WHO CAN GET CORONAVIRUS?



Importantly, SMS messages also indicate that young people are beginning to understand the measures they need to take to safeguard against contracting the virus.

FAKE NEWS PERSISTS – BUT OUR FANS RESIST

From the first days of the outbreak, we began to hear reports from Shujaaz fans about misinformation around treatments that they'd been hearing within their networks.

MISINFORMATION TRENDS

1. A repeated cure cited by many fans centered around the role of tea leaves in treating COVID-19.
2. Various soft drinks imported from China can treat Coronavirus
3. Bitter food, including lemon and oranges can treat and prevent Coronavirus

However, we're encouraged to see that many of our fans are either outright rejecting fake news, deliberately highlighting them to us, or asking 'Shujaaz' characters to verify them.

SCARED, STUCK AND ASKING FOR HELP

The overwhelming mood of SMS and social media messages this week have been fear; fear for their safety, their futures and their family's ability to survive this crisis. Young people impacted by the partial lock-down of schools, or whose 'hustles' (micro-enterprises) have been ground to a halt are suddenly stuck and searching for what to do to keep income coming in.

As our COVID-19 #LindaFam (#ProtectYourFamily) campaign has rolled out across our analogue, radio and digital platforms they're turning to Shujaaz and to its lead character 'DJ Boyie' for help – and beginning to ask how government can protect them.

FAN STORIES

01

NAME

Jacinta

MESSAGE

“My biggest fear right now is providing for me and my daughter and when my Aunts work ends”

WHO ARE THEY?

A 21-year-old female living in Kiambu county, Kenya.

“

About two weeks ago, our chief went around our area and asked us all to shut down our businesses because of the corona virus outbreak. My hustle is selling viazi karai at the roadside and I had no other option than to obey. I live with my daughter alone and since then our lives have been so difficult. I approached our landlord and asked him to bear with me, but he decided to lock my house at the beginning of this week till I get money to pay my rent arrears. As we speak right now, I am at my Aunt's place and am glad at least she accepted to house us. She still goes to work though it may end soon. My biggest fear right now is providing for me and my daughter and when my Aunts work ends because it means we will lack food and rent.

Before corona virus outbreak, I used to get a profit of 200 shillings from my business and I belonged to a chama where I'd save 100 bob daily. Then the other 100 bob I'd use it for our daily needs, this helped a lot and now I can't do nothing am broke. The members of the chama decided we stop it till things get back to normal again. My hopes are this corona things comes to an end so that I can continue doing my hustle.

I am avoiding the spread of corona virus by staying at home and regularly washing my hands, also at our flats there is a tank for washing hands outside in case anyone comes from outside. The main door has been locked to avoid many people getting in and out.

02

NAME

Geoffry

MESSAGE

“Life is hard and people with disability like me have not been taken care of, corona is threatening our lives.”

WHO IS HE?

He is a 24-year-old college student in Nyamira living with physical disability.

“

I live in a school hostel which I have now been left alone since everybody else went home after the corona virus outbreak. Life has become harder for me since there is no around to help me with movements or chores. If I get a chance I walk slowly to the shop and get something to eat then return to the hostel, I don't have any morale because my friends who have left used to give me hope and encouragement. I reached out to my mum to help me out, but she doesn't have any money to send me so that I can join her home, leaving me stranded and alone. I had saved a little money which will be over by next week and my biggest fear right now is hunger. There are limited things I can do to help myself out since my disability only allows me to do things while bended. I decided to text DJ Boyie because I trust him and am sure he can help me out. I had 100 bob remaining and since the fare to my home was 300 and I decided to use it for food since it can't even facilitate me home. The hostel management allowed me to stay as I look for money. Life before corona was better because I had friends all over helping me with chores and even at school, right now I feel hopeless with this situation. Am trying my best to prevent the spread of corona virus by washing my hands regularly with soap and water.