

NOVEMBER 2020

SHUJAAZ INC.

BAROMETER

Tracking the impact of COVID-19

**SHUJAAZ
INC.**

LETTER FROM OUR CEO.

**‘Young people
are starting a
new conversation
about how their
communities
are run.’**

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

Once again, a lot has changed since our September Barometer, and the first edition of our Covid-19 Compass series. New ‘waves’ of the Covid-19 pandemic have continued to hamper economies and societies all over the world, an uneasy US election has shaken democracies old and new, and raised vertiginous new questions about how to control relentless tides of misinformation.

In this edition of the Barometer, we’re tracking more tentative signs of recovery for young Kenyans, as early indicators show incomes starting to increase in the informal sector, and rates of hunger begin to fall.

But the long-term impacts of the pandemic are becoming clearer too. The strain of continued poverty and uncertainty is having a lasting impact on young people’s wellbeing and mental health.

And in Kenya too, the impact of widespread misinformation and fake news surrounding the pandemic is having stark effects, with 60% of respondents to a snap SMS poll this month saying they don’t feel confident about where to find reliable public health information.

In the [second edition of our Compass series](#), we’re looking ahead to 2022. We’re inviting you to look beyond the headlines; and get to know the generation who’ll shape Kenya’s next election.

We hope it gives you cause for optimism. Once again, young Kenyans are proving that they’re overwhelmingly committed to supporting their communities; that they’re increasingly eager to personally participate in local governance and to upholding their democratic right to vote.

There are challenges on the road ahead; Covid-19 has exacerbated young people’s frustration and dissatisfaction with politics. But it’s also started a new conversation about how their communities are run.

Make sure to give it a read, to watch the video report from our committed SuperFans (and super-citizen journalists). It’s a reminder to us all that healthy democracies and societies aren’t just about politics or elections, but networks of connected, committed citizens and communities. And this generation are overwhelmingly eager to help build exactly that.

ROB BURNET



INCOME & HUNGER.

SMS AND SOCIAL MESSAGES

"People have really been affected but as of now some have started getting back on their feet. What's important is knowing what people want because you cannot sell lemons where they like oranges. Don't give up."

MALE, FACEBOOK

"My parents have not been working, so I decided to start selling masks to help and now I also got a hotel job which will help more."

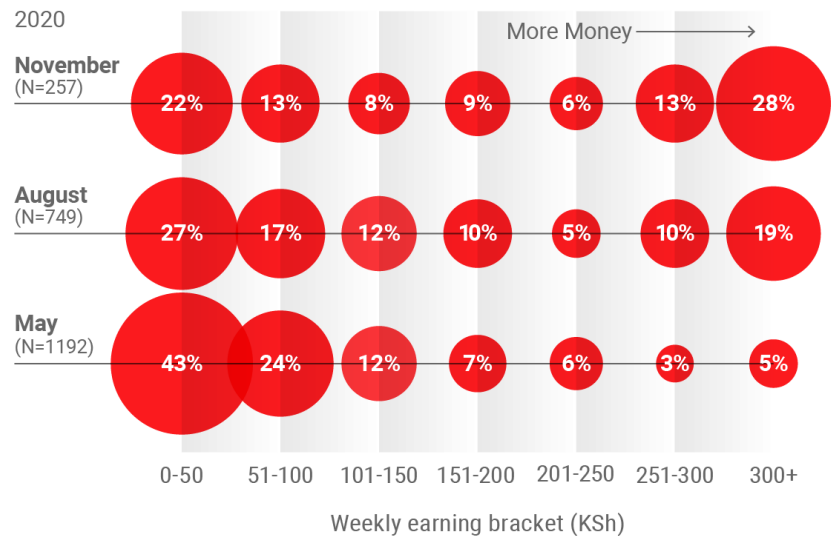
FEMALE, NAIROBI, SMS

"When corona hit, I had no job but I got an opportunity through my Uncle to go work at a sugar company. This helped me start my hustle of chicken rearing. It has been three months now; they lay eggs and I go sell at the market."

UNKNOWN, FACEBOOK

INFORMAL SECTOR INCOMES SHOW SIGNS OF RECOVERY

Four months after the removal of lockdown measures in Kenya, and the easing of curfew measures (currently 10pm-4am) we are beginning to track some early signs of recovery. In an SMS poll in August, 70% of young people reported having gone to bed hungry on at least one evening in the previous week, while in a snap SMS poll last week (N=257), that number fell by almost a third to 51%. Similarly, we have tracked incremental improvements in income levels between May and November as the informal sector begins to revitalise. The proportion of young people reporting earning less than KES 100 (~\$1) appeared to fall by 30%, based on this week's snap-poll, while the proportion of those earning over 300 KES (~\$3) increased by 23%. While these suggest early signs of recovery, they remain below pre-pandemic levels, and far below international poverty lines.



AWARENESS & ADOPTION.

SMS AND SOCIAL MESSAGES

"Right now, people are worried about their hustles more than corona."

FEMALE, ELDORET, SMS

"Handwashing is no longer a big thing in my community because people feel they have washed their hands too much."

MALE, 23, NAKURU, SMS

"Corona is ending soon, we also stopped sanitizing because we got tired...we must go on with life."

UNKNOWN, FACEBOOK

"People are not washing hands because we have resumed our normal routines."

FEMALE, 18, SMS

CORONAVIRUS NO LONGER SEEN AS A PRIORITY

While the number of confirmed COVID-19 cases in Kenya has doubled since September 2020, reports from young people in our network suggest that the urgency surrounding the pandemic has rapidly dissipated. In this week's snap poll, only 16% of young people reported that monitoring the pandemic was a significant focus for them, while 49% said most of their time was going into finding new ways to earn money. As focus on the pandemic wanes, we are also seeing a decline in adoption of key handwashing behaviours.

30%

SAY FINDING AND USING A MASK IS THE MOST CHALLENGING PUBLIC HEALTH MEASURE

34%

SAY ALL OR MOST OF THEIR FRIENDS WASH THEIR HANDS REGULARLY

In an SMS poll in October (N=574) only 34% of young people reported that all or most of their friends regularly wash their hands with soap and water. This is a crucial measure, as 'peer' behaviour plays a key role in the continuation of positive health behaviours. Such a relapse in the behaviour change process is not unexpected, and is especially common in short-term, intense behaviour-change drives. To build on the early progress in improving handwashing among Kenyan youth, the co-ordinated public health effort in Kenya must adapt to deliver consistent, long-term messaging that responds to a changing context and new priorities of young people, to ensure relevance.

TRUST & FAKE NEWS.

SMS AND SOCIAL MESSAGES

"Corona is not for us hustlers because so far, I haven't heard of any hustler who has died. It is only for the rich."

MALE, FACEBOOK

"People are not following the directives because we do not have facts about the disease."

UNKNOWN, FACEBOOK

"Many people are still thinking there is no corona, so washing hands is a dream."

FEMALE, NAKURU

"Corona was a money-making scheme because it never reached my area."

UNKNOWN, FACEBOOK

CONFUSION AROUND FAKE NEWS LEAVES YOUNG PEOPLE UNSURE WHERE TO TURN FOR RELIABLE PUBLIC HEALTH INFORMATION

Over the last few months, young people in our network highlighted a rise in fake news circulating among their peers. The key themes we tracked were that: coronavirus isn't real; people like me are not affected; and that home remedies could cure the virus. These narratives have been particularly potent, because many young people report not knowing anyone who has suffered from Covid-19. The long-term impacts of the misinformation surrounding the virus are concerning. In an SMS survey in October (N=574) only 39% of young people reported that they knew 'very well' where to find resources and reliable information about Covid-19 and public health.



The lack of trust in official information sources is a significant concern and could be a pernicious symptom of the Covid-19 pandemic in Kenya. In our November snap-SMS poll, only 25% of young people reported that they were 'planning to get vaccinated against Covid-19', with 44% reporting that they 'weren't sure' and 31% reporting that they didn't plan to. While only an early indicator, these two trends pose a significant risk to the roll out of a vaccine in Kenya – work to rebuild trust must begin early.

MOOD & RESILIENCE.

SMS AND SOCIAL MESSAGES

"I have been hopeless during this pandemic time because there is no money, making me go without food sometimes."

FEMALE, MERU

"Corona has affected me badly, I started doing drugs."

MALE, 20, KISII

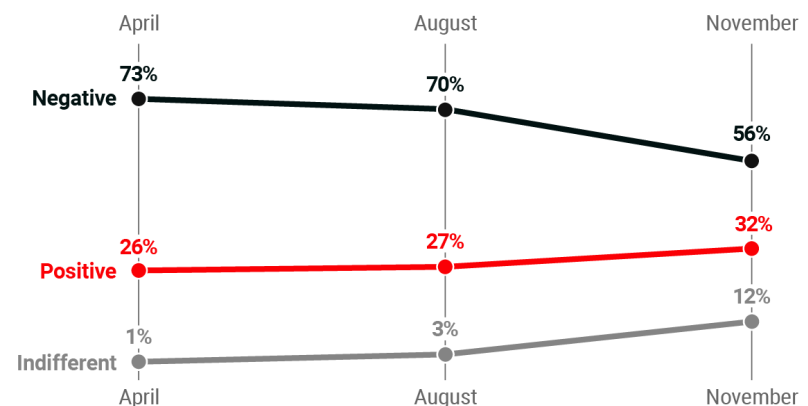
"It has really affected my studies, at the moment am just in the house and I can't study anymore, it has become a boring thing to do."

FEMALE, 20, KITUI

'CORONA HAS AFFECTED ME BADLY' – YOUNG PEOPLE'S OPTIMISM HASN'T RETURNED YET

Though we have begun to track some signs of recovery, young people's optimism hasn't yet rebounded. Our snap SMS poll (N=257) this week shows that only 32% of young people in our network report feeling positive (hopeful or joyful) most of the time, holding at about the same level as August (27%, N=1248).

HOW DO YOU FEEL MOST OF THE TIME?



However, young people reporting feeling negative emotions 'most of the time' (loneliness, sadness, fear, hopelessness) appears to have fallen to 56% – though it seems that group have transitioned to feeling neutral or 'indifferent'. In an in-depth series of interviews with young people around the country between April and August, young people told us about feeling a sense of 'constant pressure' and stress since the pandemic. As for young people all over the world, the impacts of that consistent stress, on mental health and wellbeing are likely to be long-lasting.

ABOUT THE COVID-19 BAROMETER SERIES

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, we have harnessed our SMS, USSD and social media channels to ensure we're in 24/7 contact with our network of 7.5m young people across Kenya and Tanzania.

We launched the COVID-19 Barometer series in April 2020, to track the impact of the pandemic and to help amplify the voices, experiences and opinions of young people across Kenya.

You can find the full collection of Barometers [at our website here](#), alongside a range of videos, produced and recorded by Shujaaz fans in our network.