

SEPTMBER 2020

SHUJAAZ INC.

BAROMETER

Tracking the impact of COVID-19

**SHUJAAZ
INC.**

LETTER FROM OUR CEO.

‘We know that young people hold the solutions to navigating the road ahead’

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

We shared the last edition of our first COVID-19 Barometer series with you at the start of June. In many ways, a lot has changed in the intervening weeks: Kenya’s lockdown has been lifted and curfew measures eased – and communities across the country have begun to return to a sort of normal.

But as you’ll go on to read: for young people in our network, the easing of lockdown measures has stopped the bleeding, but it hasn’t healed their wounds. While we’re beginning to see income levels creep back up, rates of hunger are still far too high. In a recent SMS survey, 70% of young people told us they’d gone to bed hungry in the last week.

Something else has happened in the last two months; we’ve all begun to look ahead and start planning for the challenging path in front of us.

At Shujaaz Inc, one of our founding values is something we call ‘Player First’; it means we put young people in our network first in every decision we make. More than that, it means we know that young people hold the solutions to overcoming the barriers they face.

There’s never been a more important time to put this pivotal generation first; and to listen to their experiences, ideas and solutions. That’s why this month, we’re launching the first in our ‘Compass’ series.

Based on new live data, in-depth conversations with our network, and insights and trends from four years of national Shujaaz Inc surveys, our Compass briefs are designed to help us all navigate the road ahead. By putting the priorities and ideas of young people across Kenya firmly as our ‘north star’.

In the first issue, we’re inviting you to spend some time with Kenya’s young micro-entrepreneurs; to hear about the incredible social and economic value they’re already creating – and how we can work with them to re-start Kenya’s economy.

I hope that our Barometer and Compass series act as valuable tools for you and your team in the coming months, as we all balance the pressing needs of the here-and-now and the need to chart a new course forward.

ROB BURNET



INCOME & HUNGER.

SMS AND SOCIAL MESSAGES

“Just getting food has been a challenge for me.”

MALE, 19, MIGORI

“I used to be a cleaner at a hotel and I lost my job. I don’t have any other source of income, it’s really hard.”

MALE, NAIROBI

“Though life has been hard I have learnt how to do my business during this time.”

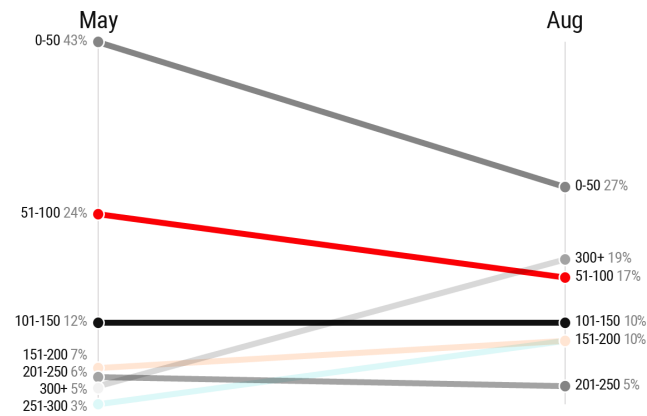
FEMALE, LAMU

“I have been surviving this pandemic by doing my boda boda hustle.”

MALE, 26, KILIFI

INCOMES BEGIN TO REVIVE BUT RATES OF HUNGER REMAIN HIGH

Throughout April and May, as both the formal and informal sector ground to a halt, we tracked a sharp decline in the financial security of young people across Kenya. However, the removal of lockdown measures in Kenya and the easing of the nationwide curfew (from 7pm to 9pm) in July has created room for the informal sector to begin its slow recovery. As a result, an SMS survey of 15-24 year-olds in our network (N=749) at the end of August showed that income levels are tentatively beginning to rise. At the end of May 79% of young people reported having to live on less than KES 150 (USD 1.40) a week, at the end of August that number had dropped to 56%.



Similarly, the number of young people earning over KES 300 (USD 2.80) a week increased from 8% at the end of May to 19%. However, the number of young people in our network reporting having gone to bed hungry in the last week has

held steady at 70% (from 74% in May). The slow revival of the informal sector is allowing young people to return to their hustles – it has stopped the bleeding, but the impacts and wounds of the pandemic will require time and investment to heal.

AWARENESS & ADOPTION.

SMS AND SOCIAL MESSAGES

“DJ B, I try create awareness in my community but it is really hard to convince people that corona is here since there hasn’t been any case around here and no one they know has died.”

MALE, UNKNOWN

“The government should educate people as some still believe that corona is a scam. This is what’s making people live carelessly.”

MALE, FACEBOOK

“Where I stay, Matatus are full of passengers in the evening. Conductors tell customers that Corona is over.”

UNKNOWN, FACEBOOK

“I TRY TO CREATE AWARENESS IN MY COMMUNITY, BUT IT’S REALLY HARD TO CONVINC PEOPLE CORONA IS HERE.”

While lockdown and curfew measures have eased, and numbers of cases remain relatively low, recommendations warning against non-essential travel and encouraging social distancing remain firmly in place across Kenya. Young people in our network continue to demonstrate strong awareness of the risks of the coronavirus pandemic, but an SMS survey at the end of August (N=962) highlighted that staying home and observing social distancing have become increasingly challenging; overtaking challenges with masks in April.

49%

SAY STAYING HOME IS THE MOST DIFFICULT MEASURE TO ADOPT

17%

REPORT SOCIAL DISTANCING AS MOST CHALLENGING

Perhaps more worryingly however, young people in our network are reporting that distrust in official information about COVID-19 in their communities is growing. While cases remain low, or non-existent, in many communities, people are questioning whether the coronavirus is a ‘scam’. We are also tracking an uptick in references to fake news and conspiracy theories, with reoccurring questions surrounding the origin of the virus, its treatment and the vaccine.

GOVERNANCE.

SMS AND SOCIAL MESSAGES

"Our country has no corona, the government just wants to get money that will help during the 2022 campaigns."

UNKNOWN, SMS

"The government should do us justice and send 1k through mpesa to its people."

MALE, FACEBOOK

"The president is right but the people around him mislead him all the time. Bar and restaurant owners depend on them for a living. Closing them means they will have nothing to eat. Kenya is a country for the rich. The poor have no say or right."

MALE, FACEBOOK

"They should lift the curfew as we have no jobs."

FEMALE, FACEBOOK

83% OF YOUNG PEOPLE DON'T FEEL HEARD IN RESPONSE TO COVID-19

In the last few months, the Kenyan government has eased lockdown measures and launched programmes like 'Kazi Mtaani' designed to create jobs for people living in informal settings. However, despite these new measures, disgruntlement with the response to Covid-19 remains high. In an SMS survey (N=945) 83% of young people in our network said they felt their voices, struggles and hopes were 'not at all' or 'poorly' or 'barely' reflected in government response to the pandemic. While the number saying their interests were 'well' or 'very well' reflected held at 17% (from 19% in April).



Despite these results, conversations in our network do suggest a relatively high level of understanding and empathy for the President, but concern about broader corruption within the government appears high. Fundamentally, while hunger levels remain high, schools remain closed and employment nearly impossible to find, young people continue to feel that the government should be doing more to support them.

MOOD & RESILIENCE.

SMS AND SOCIAL MESSAGES

"Stress triggered by several factors [like being], unable to cater for families, especially if you're the breadwinner. Due to stress some endangering their life, wanting to indulge in crime."

MALE, 21, ISIOLO

"When am disturbed by my things I don't even like my mum to know because I will end up stressing her too."

FEMALE, 18, MOMBASA

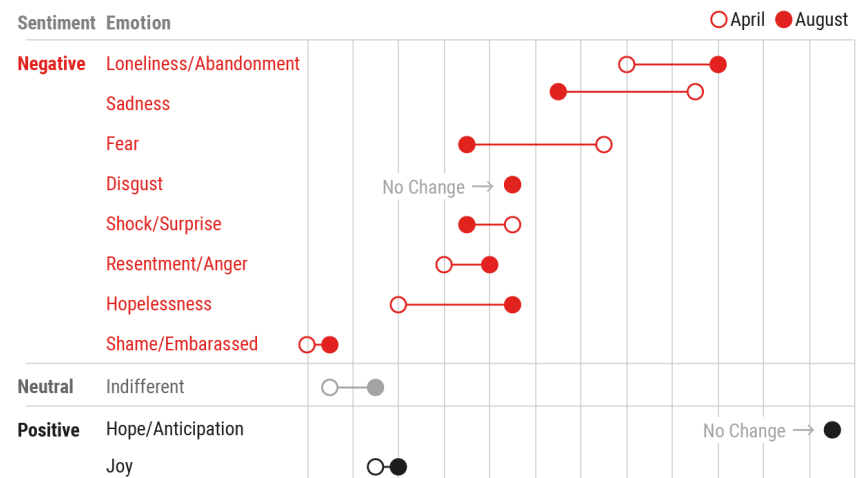
"I was always depressed, stressed. Imagine, when I go back to the house and I don't have money? I don't have food, the children are looking at me. When I come, the children are like, mum what have you brought us?"

FEMALE, 20, NAIROBI

'IT'S TOO MUCH FOR SOMEONE TO TRY AND DEAL WITH THESE THOUGHTS' – COVID-19 HAS LASTING IMPACT ON WELLBEING

Despite the early signs of recovery, young people's overall mood hasn't rebounded. In May, 76% reported feeling an overall negative emotion since the start of coronavirus measures. At the end of August the proportion remains high at 70%.

HOW DO YOU FEEL MOST OF THE TIME?



Notably, 'fear' and 'shock' have decreased, along with an overall reduction in concern around the risk of Covid-19. While, as the economic impacts persist, long-term emotions like 'loneliness' and 'anger' increase. In WhatsApp group discussions, young people have shared their concerns about increases in self-harm and drug abuse, and a feeling of abandonment by parents and government.

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.