



THE UNSEEN HEROES

Young Kenyans and Climate Change:
Hopes, Fears and Unseen Action

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

YOUTH, CLIMATE AND A NEW NATIONAL IDENTITY

Young Kenyans are feeling the pressure of a changing climate—through floods, droughts, job losses, rising prices, and disappearing opportunities. But they're not standing still. Across the country, young people are hustling to adapt, taking urgent, creative action to safeguard their futures.

Shujaaz Inc's latest research shows that 90% of Kenyan young people are already working to support their communities, many through climate-related efforts. From farming to clean transport, from smart tech to community resilience - young people are stepping up.

But here's the challenge: They don't feel seen. They don't feel heard. And despite being on the frontlines of climate change, they don't feel they have a right to sit at the table. Their actions are disconnected. Their energy is scattered. What they need now is a moment to see each other, to realise they're not alone. To come together and feel their collective power.

That's where Shujaaz comes in. We're launching a bold new initiative to make nature core to Gen Z's national identity. We'll spark a national conversation about climate among the 7 million young Kenyans in the Shujaaz network.

We'll shine a spotlight on the real stories of young climate heroes - unseen girls and boys already innovating, adapting, and thriving. We'll leverage our media platforms to focus on practical, scalable solutions: climate-smart farming, green jobs, mobility, circular economies and more. By enabling young people to learn from each other, connect and build a movement, we'll help seed a new generation of nature-positive leaders.

This is about more than awareness. It's about creating a cultural shift—where it's normal for young people to act—and lead—on climate. In doing so, we'll help shape a new social norm: an alliance between East Africa's young people and the nature they depend on. A movement rooted in pride, power, and possibility.

Please join us.

Bridget Deacon

Managing Director
Shujaaz Inc

ABOUT THIS REPORT

As part of the TED COUNTDOWN SUMMIT in Nairobi, Shujaaz Inc produced a short film 'THE UNSEEN HEROES' featuring the stories of young Kenyans about how climate change is affecting their lives and the actions they're taking to navigate these changes. This film was informed by data from our research study with over 1000 young people in 28 counties. This research was carried out by Shujaaz Inc's 'WaCurious' network of young community researchers. This report shares the data from this study.



OBJECTIVES:

- Understand how young people interpret climate change in their daily lives.
- Surface barriers to participation in climate action, especially social norms, roles, and perceptions.
- Identify the influence of media, community, and cultural narratives on young people's climate identity.
- Explore which stories, messages, and content shift mindsets or spark action.

METHODOLOGY

SAMPLE PERFORMANCE

Shujaaz Inc's youth research network 'WaCurious' conducted face to face interviews in 28 counties across Kenya, collecting data from youth aged 18–27 years. The study adopted a nationally representative sampling approach based on the 2019 Kenya National Bureau of Statistics Census.



Target sample

1079



Counties

28 of 47



Breakdown by Gender

51% Male, 49% Female

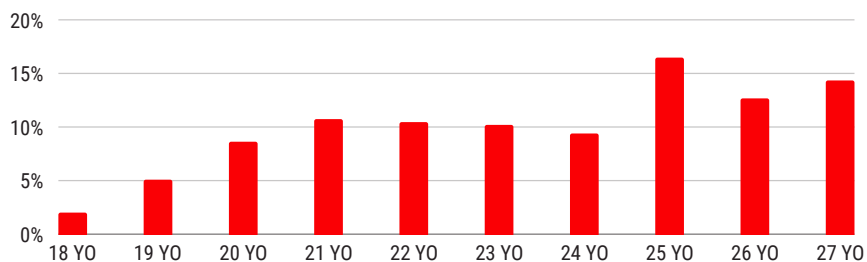


Rural vs Urban split

68% Rural, 32% Urban

DEMOGRAPHICS

Respondent age
N= 1079



CLIMATE AWARENESS



We as young people are the ones with energy, and we are educated enough to teach many others – even our elders

MALE, 21, KISII



There was a time in town (Nairobi) when I saw how heavy the rain was, and I felt really bad – people's belongings were badly damaged.

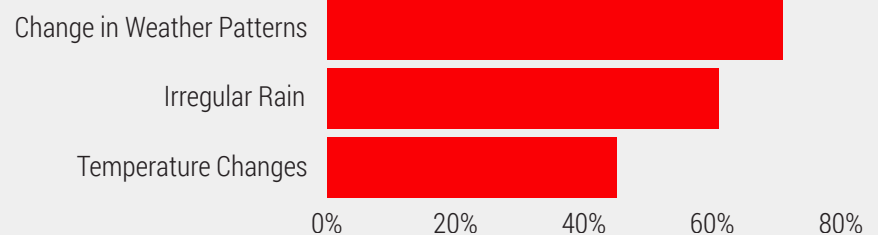
FEMALE, 22, KAJIADO

YOUNG PEOPLE IN KENYA KNOW CLIMATE CHANGE IS REAL

86%

Believe the climate is changing

CLIMATE CHANGE INDICATORS MENTIONED



CLIMATE CHANGE IS RESHAPING LIVES AND LIVELIHOODS

Climate change profoundly affects the daily lives and livelihoods of Kenyan young people, evoking a mix of hope and concern, and is a significant driver of displacement

71%

Report climate change affects their daily grind (44% "a lot", 27% "somewhat")

28%

Know someone who has moved due to extreme weather (droughts, floods).

DOMINANT SENTIMENTS ABOUT THE CHANGING CLIMATE



45%
Hopeful



27%
Worried



23%
Motivated

TRUSTED SOURCES OF INFORMATION

YOUNG KENYANS LACK TRUSTED INFORMATION, BUT MEDIA IS A GROWING INFLUENCE IN THEIR LIVES

While young Kenyans are actively engaged in grassroots climate action, their efforts are hampered by a lack of information, resources and role models. They trust scientists and media is increasingly influencing their perspectives about climate

22%

Said a person, song, video, or social media post has made them think differently about climate



I saw a social media post about how we humans are destroying our environment and killing the ozone layer.

MALE, 23, NAIROBI



I saw a post on instagram, I can't remember who, but it talked about how our environment has been extensively affected by how much we cut down trees

FEMALE, 19, KAJIADO

TOP INFORMATION SOURCES



82%

TikTok and Facebook



56%

TV



50%

Radio

MOST TRUSTED AUTHORITIES



63%

Scientists



20%

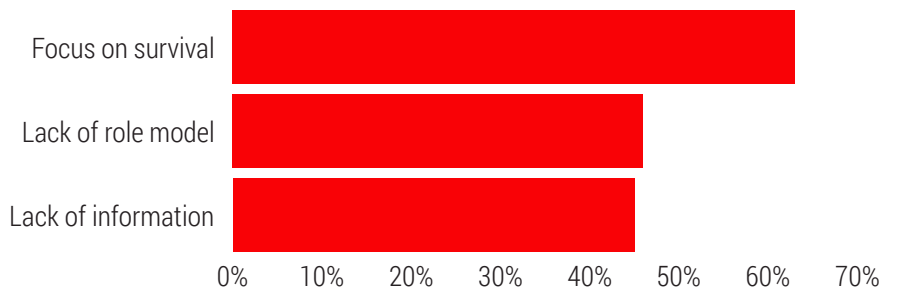
Farmers



5%

Politicians, religious leaders

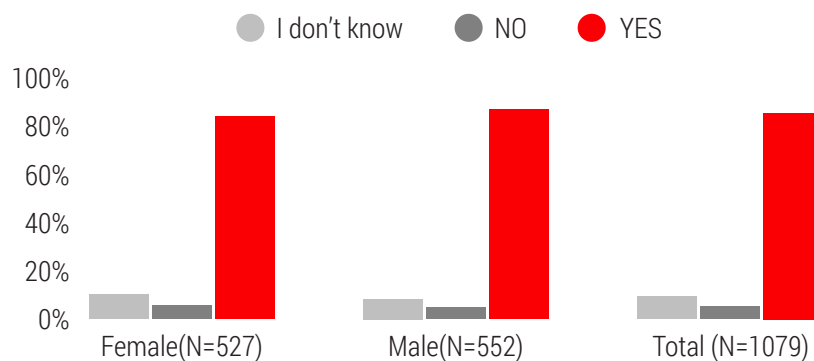
KEY BARRIERS TO ACTION



CLIMATE CHANGE AWARENESS

QUESTION ASKED:

FROM YOUR EXPERIENCE, DO YOU THINK THE CLIMATE IS CHANGING?



Shujaaz Inc Survey, May 2025 (N=1079)

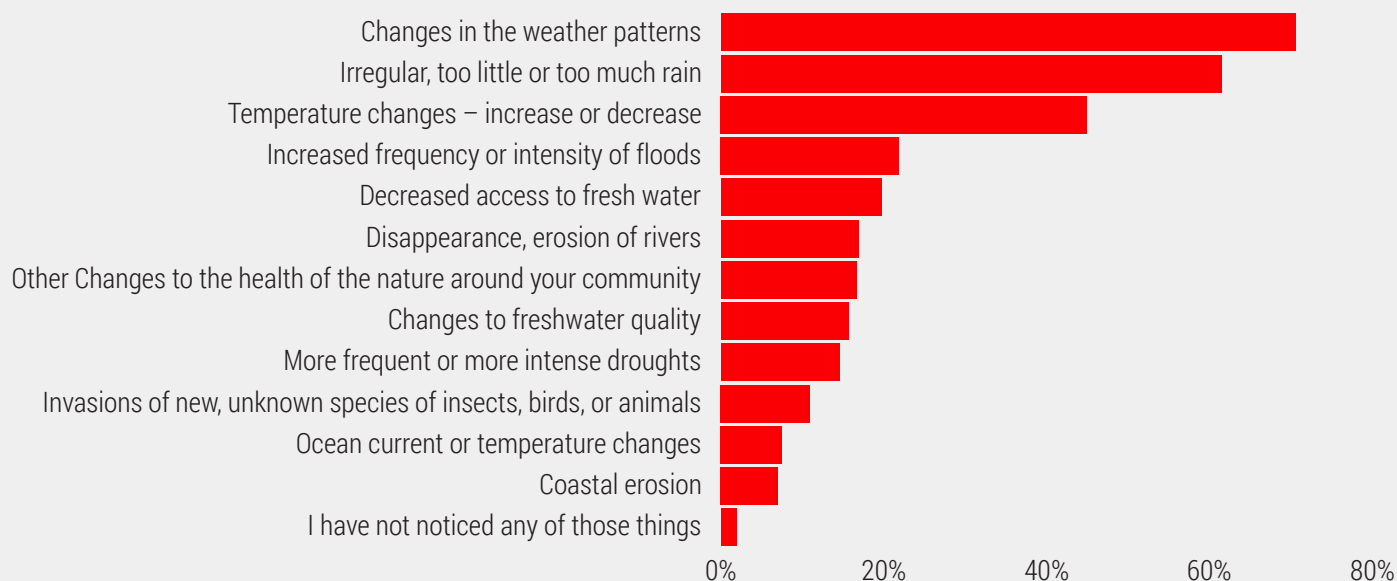
86% OF RESPONDENTS ARE AWARE OF CLIMATE CHANGE

A significant majority of respondents are aware of climate change, indicating strong awareness of environmental shifts among the target population.

9% are unsure about the issue, while 5% report no knowledge of climate change.

QUESTION ASKED:

HAVE YOU NOTICED ANY OF THE FOLLOWING CHANGES IN THE ENVIRONMENT? (MARK ALL THAT APPLY)



Shujaaz Inc Survey, May 2025 (N=1079)

IMPACT ON DAILY LIFE



During drought, we reduce how much we eat and cut down on water usage. When it's very hot, I really enjoy getting into the water and swimming

FEMALE, 21, KISII

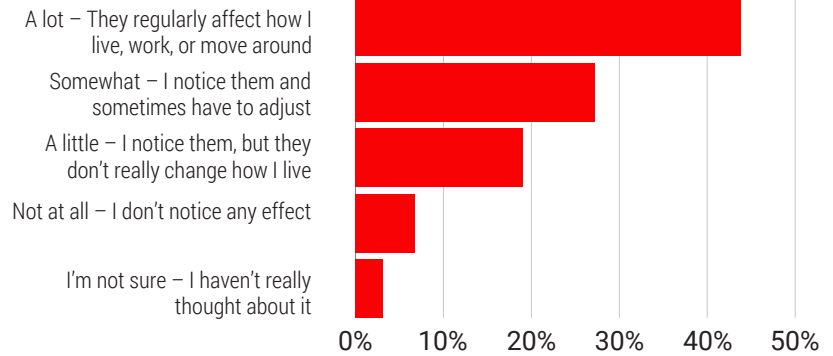


We usually move and go live in the church when it floods.

FEMALE, 26, KISUMU

QUESTION ASKED:

HOW MUCH DO CHANGES IN WEATHER MESS WITH YOUR DAILY GRIND?



Shujaaz Inc Survey, May 2025 (N=1079)

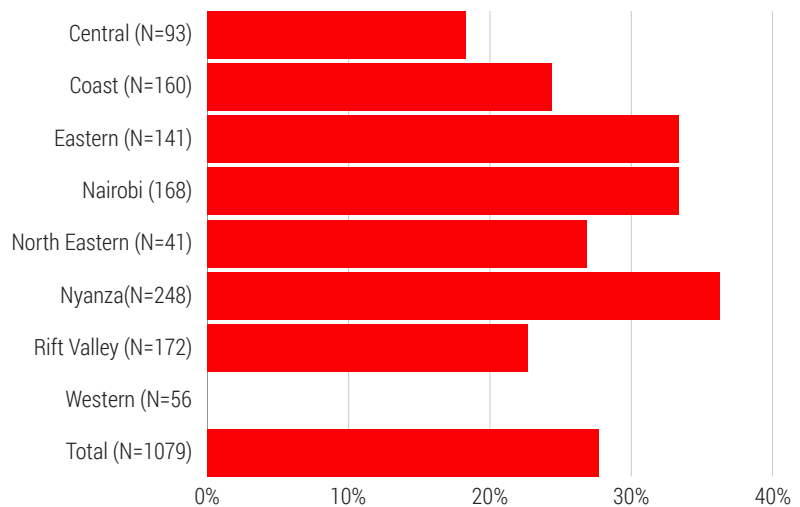
44% ARE AFFECTED "A LOT"

Majority of respondents acknowledge that climate change affects their daily lives to some degree, with 'A lot' (44%) and 'Somewhat' (27%)

QUESTION ASKED:

DO YOU KNOW ANYONE WHO HAS MOVED BECAUSE OF EXTREME WEATHER? THIS COULD INCLUDE MOVING TO TOWN TO LOOK FOR WORK, MOVING THEIR FAMILY TO ANOTHER AREA, RELOCATING THEIR BUSINESS?

Percentage of respondents who say "YES"



Shujaaz Inc Survey, May 2025 (N=1079)

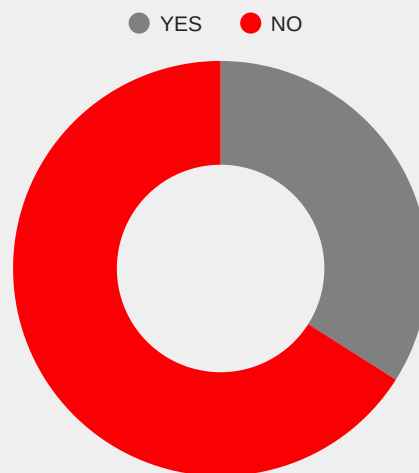
IMPACT ON DAILY LIFE

Nearly 1 in 3 respondents (28%) know someone who has been displaced due to extreme weather

- Results indicate that 28% know someone who has been displaced due to extreme weather, highlighting the tangible impact of climate change on mobility and settlement patterns across Kenya.
- Nyanza (36%), Eastern (33%), and Nairobi (33%) report the highest percentages of people relocating due to climate-related events, suggesting these regions are particularly vulnerable to floods, droughts, or other weather extremes.
- Western Kenya reports no climate-related displacement in the data, indicating either lower exposure to extreme events or more resilient local conditions, or possibly underreporting.
- Moderate levels of displacement are observed in North Eastern (27%), Coast (24%), and Rift Valley (23%), reflecting regional variability in climate stressors like drought, flooding, or coastal erosion.

QUESTION ASKED:

HAVE YOU OR SOMEONE YOU KNOW CHANGED HOW YOU OR THEY WORK, FARM, TRAVEL, OR HUSTLE BECAUSE OF WEATHER OR ENVIRONMENTAL PROBLEMS?



Shujaaz Inc Survey, May 2025 (N=1079)

- One in three young people (34%) report changing how they work, farm, travel, or hustle due to environmental or weather-related problems.
- This reflects a significant level of climate-driven adaptation in daily life, with many adjusting their livelihoods, schedules, or even relocating to cope with disruptions.

IMPACT ON DAILY LIFE

QUESTION ASKED:

YOU SAID YOU OR SOMEONE YOU KNOW HAS CHANGED HOW THEY WORK, FARM, TRAVEL OR HUSTLE BECAUSE OF CLIMATE, WEATHER AND ENVIRONMENT-RELATED PROBLEMS. CAN YOU TELL ME MORE?

- Moving away from traditional farming to business or livestock rearing
- "I quit farming and went into business."
- "Many people stopped crop farming and started goat rearing."
- Adopting drought- and heat-tolerant crops, greenhouses, and container gardening
- "They've started planting drought-resistant crops."
- "They began greenhouse and container gardening due to extreme heat."
- Relocating to farm or work in different regions; disrupted access to school and jobs due to floods
- "I moved from one county to another to farm."
- "During rains, you can't go to school; people have to cross flooded rivers."
- Adjusting working hours and shifts based on weather conditions
- "I changed my work hours and took the night shift."
- "I'm forced to close work early."
- Coping with water shortages and relocating due to droughts or flood damage
- "My aunt relocated after her well dried up."
- "Drought has made me hustle harder."

CLIMATE AND ENVIRONMENTAL ACTORS



I have a farm, and when the climate changes, diseases affect my crops.

MALE, 23, KAJIADO

QUESTION ASKED:

IN YOUR AREA/HOOD, WHO DO YOU SEE DOING SOMETHING TO CARE FOR THE ENVIRONMENT OR DEAL WITH ENVIRONMENTAL CHANGES?

Across various communities, young people were most frequently cited as the primary actors engaging in environmental care. Respondents reported that young people regularly lead clean-up activities, tree planting, and climate awareness campaigns, often voluntarily and without financial compensation.

*"It's the young people I see cleaning the streets and planting trees."
"We volunteer because no one else is doing it."*

Local leadership also plays an important role. Chiefs and elders were mentioned as key figures in mobilising community members to implement environmental solutions such as drainage construction and tree planting. In some areas, traditional leaders help enforce environmental norms, particularly around resource protection.

*"The Chief organised us to dig drainage after the floods."
"Elders warned us against cutting trees near the river."*

Shujaaz Inc Survey, May 2025 (N=1079)

YOUNG KENYANS ARE AT THE FRONTLINES OF LOCAL CLIMATE RESPONSE, ORGANISING CLEAN-UPS, PLANTING TREES, AND RAISING AWARENESS, OFTEN WITHOUT PAY.

Government actors, especially county-level administrations, were recognised for contributing through infrastructure support and formal initiatives.

Programmes like the "Green Army" were cited as examples of government-led tree-planting efforts.

"The county brought in the Green Army to plant trees."

Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) were also highlighted for their contributions, particularly in urban informal settlements.

Organisations such as Red Cross and SHOFCO were said to support environmental clean-ups, provide equipment, and mobilise communities for climate-related interventions.

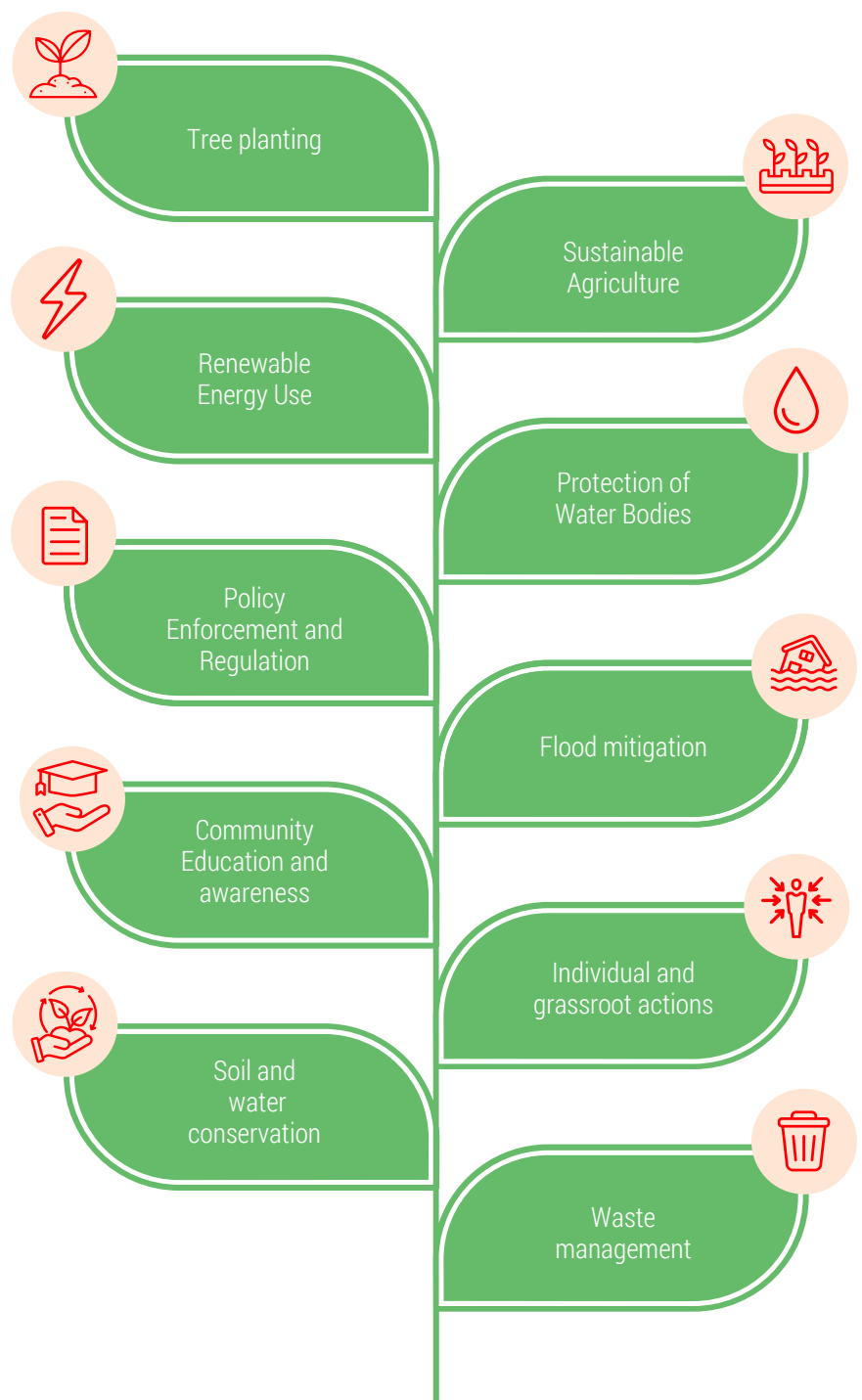
*"Red Cross helped us clean the area after the storm."
"SHOFCO gave us gloves and bags for the clean-up."*

CLIMATE AND ENVIRONMENTAL ACTIONS

QUESTION ASKED:

IN YOUR AREA, WHAT THINGS HAVE YOU SEEN PEOPLE DOING TO PREVENT DAMAGE TO THE ENVIRONMENT?

Survey results indicate that tree planting is the most common activity that people in communities engage in to prevent damage to the environment



CLIMATE AND ENVIRONMENTAL ACTIONS



Planting trees, clearing garbage, and unclogging drainages so that when it rains, it doesn't flood

MALE, 20, KIAMBU



Farmers have started using organic fertilizers and are also planting trees in large numbers

FEMALE, 26, ELGEYO MARAKWET

QUESTION ASKED:

IN YOUR AREA, WHAT THINGS HAVE YOU SEEN PEOPLE DOING TO PREVENT DAMAGE TO THE ENVIRONMENT?

Across communities, people are taking a range of proactive steps to protect their environment:

- **Tree Planting and Afforestation:** This was the most commonly reported effort, including reforestation near rivers, agroforestry, and mangrove planting, aimed at restoring ecosystems and preventing soil erosion.
- **Waste Management and Cleanliness:** Youth and counties lead clean-up drives, promote recycling, and enforce proper waste disposal, with bans on plastic bags and expanded use of litter bins.
- **Soil and Water Conservation:** Infrastructure like gabions and terraces helps reduce flood damage, while Napier grass and drainage maintenance protect against soil erosion.
- **Community Education and Awareness:** NGOs, chiefs, and schools organize workshops, clubs, and campaigns to build climate knowledge and promote sustainable practices.
- **Policy Enforcement and Regulation:** Environmental protection is supported by bans on illegal logging, controls on charcoal production, and enforcement by police and National Environment Management Authority (NEMA).
- **Sustainable Agriculture:** Farmers adopt organic fertilizers, drought-resistant crops, and soil testing, often with support from agencies like Kenya Agricultural and Livestock Research Organization (KALRO).
- **Renewable Energy Use:** Households are shifting to solar and gas to reduce charcoal use and deforestation.
- **Protection of Water Bodies:** Communities are restoring mangroves, managing sewage, and restricting farming near rivers and lakes to safeguard water sources.
- **Individual and Grassroots Action:** Residents take initiative—digging waste pits, composting, and planting trees—to care for their surroundings without external incentives.

CLIMATE AND ENVIRONMENTAL ACTIONS

QUESTION ASKED:

IN YOUR AREA, WHAT THINGS HAVE YOU SEEN PEOPLE DOING TO NAVIGATE THE CHANGING ENVIRONMENT?

Identified Strategies	Details / Examples
Relocation (Migration)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moving to safer, higher ground during floods • Temporarily relocating to neighbouring villages, schools, or IDP camps • Moving to areas with better water access during droughts • Shifting to urban areas for alternative livelihoods
Government and NGO Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reporting emergencies to disaster agencies (e.g., NEMA) • Seeking food, water, and shelter from government programs • Support from NGOs like the Red Cross • Asking local leaders (chiefs, Members of Parliament, Members of County Assembly) for help
Water Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Buying and storing water in advance • Digging boreholes and wells - Harvesting rainwater • Using irrigation to sustain crops during droughts - Selling water as a business
Agricultural Adjustments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planting drought-resistant crops like cassava, melons, pineapples • Practicing crop rotation and soil conservation • Using organic fertilizers • Switching to greenhouse farming - Storing food after harvest for future use
Economic Survival (Hustling)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Doing side jobs (construction, bodaboda, selling ice pops) • Selling livestock before they perish in drought • Starting small businesses (cold drinks, roasted maize, etc.) • Moving from farming to business

LOCAL INTERVENTIONS

QUESTION ASKED:

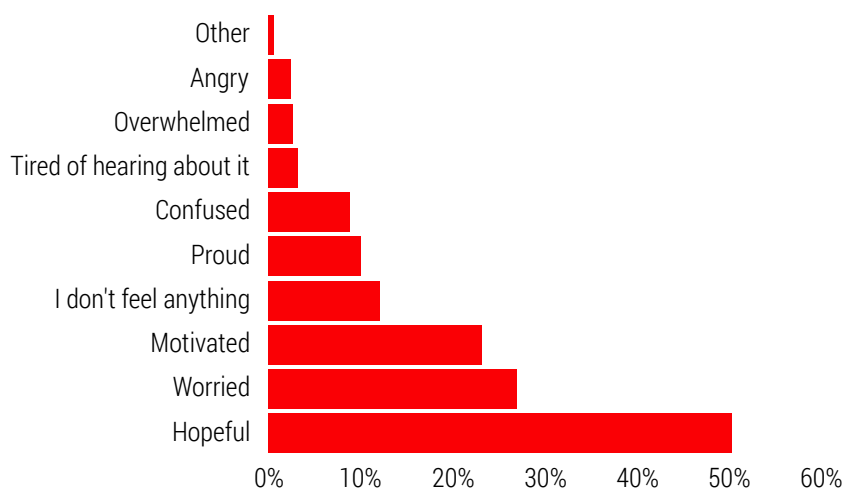
WHEN THINGS GET HARD BECAUSE OF DROUGHT, FLOODS, OR EXTREME HEAT, CAN YOU TELL ME WHAT ARE SOME WAYS YOU OR PEOPLE AROUND YOU TRY TO COPE OR SURVIVE?

Identified Strategies	Details / Examples
Community Cooperation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clearing blocked drainage systems together • Sharing food and resources with neighbors • Pooling funds to buy food in bulk • Organizing community clean-ups and tree planting initiatives
Personal Adaptation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wearing light clothing during heat and warm layers during cold • Using fans, ACs, or sleeping outside during hot nights • Staying indoors during extreme weather • Reducing water and food waste
Environmental Conservation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planting trees to reduce erosion and provide shade • Building gabions, terraces, and drainage systems • Avoiding deforestation • Switching to clean energy (solar, gas)
Spiritual and Emotional Coping	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Praying and attending religious gatherings for hope • Practicing patience (e.g., kuvumilia) • Supporting each other emotionally during tough times
Infrastructure Adjustments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Constructing temporary bridges in flood-prone areas • Digging and maintaining drainage systems • Repairing damaged roads and homes post-floods • Building raised housing structures to avoid flood damage

YOUNG PEOPLE'S SENTIMENTS

QUESTION ASKED:

WHEN YOU HEAR PEOPLE TALK ABOUT CLIMATE OR THE ENVIRONMENT, WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING COMES CLOSEST TO HOW YOU FEEL?



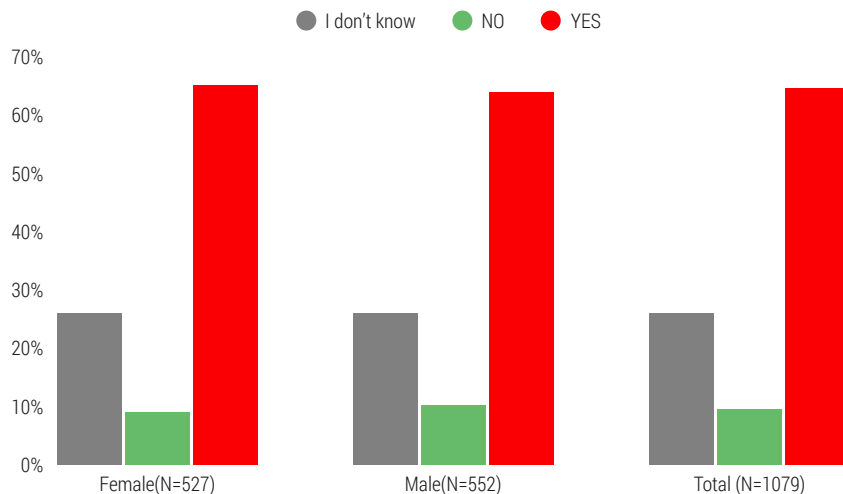
Shujaaz Inc Survey, May 2025 (N=1079)

- Many young people express positive emotions when they hear about climate and environmental issues—50% feel hopeful and 23% feel motivated, signaling optimism and a readiness to engage in solutions.
- A significant number feel concern or confusion, with 27% feeling worried, 9% confused, and 3% overwhelmed, highlighting emotional strain linked to climate uncertainty.
- A smaller number report disengagement or frustration—12% don't feel anything, 3% are tired of hearing about it, and 2% feel angry, pointing to possible fatigue or disillusionment.

YOUNG PEOPLE'S SENTIMENTS

QUESTION ASKED:

DO YOU THINK DISCUSSIONS ABOUT CLIMATE CHANGE OR ENVIRONMENTAL DAMAGE ARE FOR PEOPLE LIKE YOU?



Shujaaz Inc Survey, May 2025 (N=1079)

- Majority (65%) of respondents feel that climate change and environmental issues are relevant to them.
- Both women (65%) and men (64%) report similar levels of identification with climate and environmental conversations.
- Over one-quarter (26%) of respondents are uncertain about whether these issues relate to them.
- 10% of respondents feel climate change and environmental issues are not for them



I like to live in an environment that is healthy for me. I want to be able to make that happen.

FEMALE, 20, ISIOLO

YOUNG PEOPLE'S SENTIMENTS



When the environment is in a bad state, we suffer. But when it's in a good state, we benefit.

MALE, 20, HOMABAY

QUESTION ASKED:

YOU SAY DISCUSSIONS ABOUT CLIMATE CHANGE ARE FOR PEOPLE LIKE YOU. WHY DO YOU THINK THAT?

Respondents shared personal, experience-based insights. Their responses reflect a deep awareness of environmental issues, shaped by personal impact, community realities, and a strong sense of agency. The following themes capture the reasons young people identify with and actively participate in climate discourse:

Youth Agency and Responsibility

Young people view themselves as powerful agents of change. They recognise their numbers, energy, and innovation as vital assets for driving climate action.

Personal Impact and Vulnerability

Climate change directly affects young people's livelihoods, health, and daily routines. They experience the consequences through disrupted income, illness, and unstable environments. Farmers, fishers, motorcycle riders, and small business owners report income losses due to droughts, floods, and erratic weather. Health concerns arise from pollution, heat waves, and waterborne diseases.

Collective Responsibility

Young people believe everyone shares a duty to protect the environment. Youth stress universal participation. They acknowledge their role in both causing and resolving environmental harm.

Climate Justice and Equity

Youth are aware of environmental injustice. They say marginalised groups bear the greatest burden of climate change. Youth demand intergenerational justice, advocating for long-term sustainability.

Localised Climate Effects

Environmental change is visible and immediate to them. Youth notice deforestation, drying rivers, soil erosion and unpredictable weather patterns affecting their communities. Additionally, inadequate infrastructure and economic hardships heighten their exposure to climate risks, limiting their capacity to adapt or recover.

Empowerment Through Action

Youth find purpose and motivation in practical climate solutions. They actively participate in tree planting, waste management, and community awareness. They view climate advocacy and awareness campaigns as essential.

Emotional Connection to Environment

The environment holds personal and cultural meaning. Youth feel a deep connection to nature, viewing it as central to their identity and well-being.

YOUNG PEOPLE'S SENTIMENTS



These things (climate action) require someone to either have money, free time, or both. Should I go hustle or handle things and end up sleeping hungry?

FEMALE, 21, NAIROBI

QUESTION ASKED:

YOU SAY YOU DON'T THINK DISCUSSIONS ABOUT CLIMATE CHANGE ARE FOR PEOPLE LIKE YOU. WHY DO YOU THINK THAT?

Interviews revealed multiple reasons why many young people feel excluded or disengaged from climate conversations. These include structural, social, economic, and psychological barriers:

Livelihood and Immediate Survival Priorities: For many, the urgency of daily survival, such as finding food, income, or healthcare, overshadows abstract or long-term climate concerns. Environmental action is seen as secondary to immediate needs.

Perceived Inadequacy and Lack of Expertise: A common sentiment was, "I lack fame" / "I lack skills, reflecting a belief that only scientists, government officials, or celebrities are qualified to speak or act on climate issues.

Structural and Generational Disconnect: Many young people defer responsibility to institutions or older generations, citing limited access to resources or involvement opportunities. Some view climate action as the domain of "elders", government, or NGOs, not individuals.

Feeling Helpless or Like Nothing Can Be Done: Climate change was sometimes framed as "God's will", contributing to a sense of helplessness. Others felt individual actions, like planting trees, were insignificant without systemic support or large-scale change.

Apathy and Low Perceived Relevance: Some young people, especially in urban or non-agricultural settings, saw climate issues as irrelevant to their lives. Those not directly affected by drought or floods reported that "It doesn't concern me".

Education Without Empowerment: Although many had learned about environmental issues in school, they struggled to translate that awareness into practical action. One young person noted, "I know the importance of a clean environment," but lacked clear avenues to engage meaningfully.

Mistrust in Collective Action: There was skepticism about others' sincerity or long-term commitment to environmental work. Some believed current efforts relied too heavily on paid professionals or were undermined by corruption and generational neglect.

Resource and Accessibility Barriers: Physical and economic limitations, such as lack of space for tree planting, urban overcrowding, or financial constraints, were cited as reasons for non-participation in climate initiatives.

Cultural and Social Norms: Environmentalism was often perceived as a niche or reserved for certain demographics, especially elders or wealthier individuals. In many marginalised communities, economic stability was prioritized over environmental consciousness.

YOUNG PEOPLE'S SENTIMENTS

COLLECTIVE ROLE IN LOCAL GOVERNANCE

68%

of respondents believe young people (generally) have a role to play in local governance

INDIVIDUAL ROLE IN LOCAL GOVERNANCE

60%

of respondents believe they, individually, have a role to play in local governance

Source Shujaaz Inc Annual Survey 2024

PARTICIPATION IN LOCAL GOVERNANCE

37%

of respondents take part in activities related to engaging with local governance

PARTICIPATING ON COMMUNITY SOCIAL EVENTS

87%

of respondents are socially active, taking part in informal gatherings and events

Source Shujaaz Inc Annual Survey 2024

INDIVIDUAL ROLE IN LOCAL GOVERNANCE

27%

belong to a formal or informal young people group

POWER TO DRIVE POSITIVE COMMUNITY CHANGE

92%

of respondents believe they have the power to drive positive change in their community

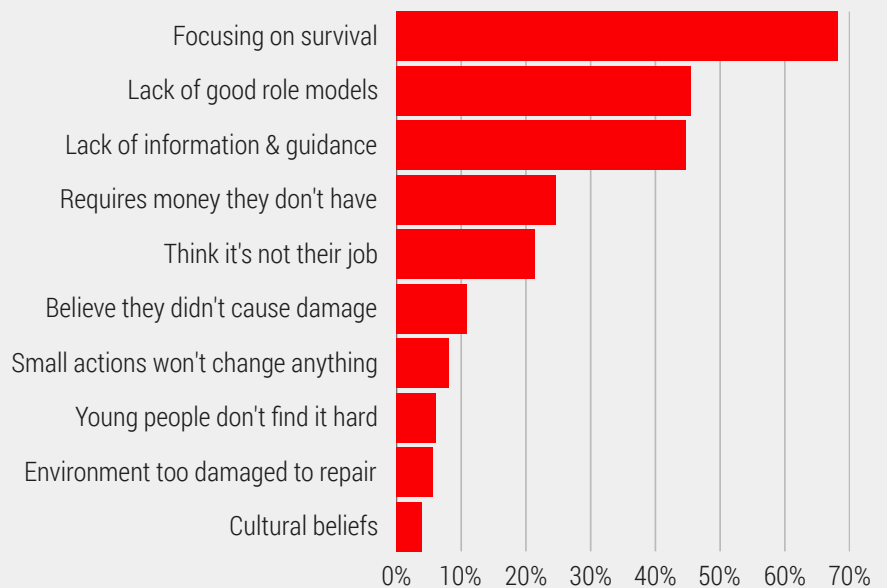
Source Shujaaz Inc Annual Survey 2024

BARRIERS TO CLIMATE ACTION

QUESTION ASKED:

WHAT FACTORS MAKE IT HARD FOR YOUNG PEOPLE IN YOUR AREA TO TAKE ENVIRONMENTAL ACTION?

Analysis shows that the most significant barrier to engaging in environmental action is the pressing need to focus on daily survival, with over two-thirds (68.2%) identifying this as a key barrier. Nearly half of the respondents (46%) also indicated that a lack of good role models and insufficient information or guidance (44.8%) severely limit their ability to act. Other notable challenges highlighted include financial constraints and a perception that environmental action is not their primary responsibility

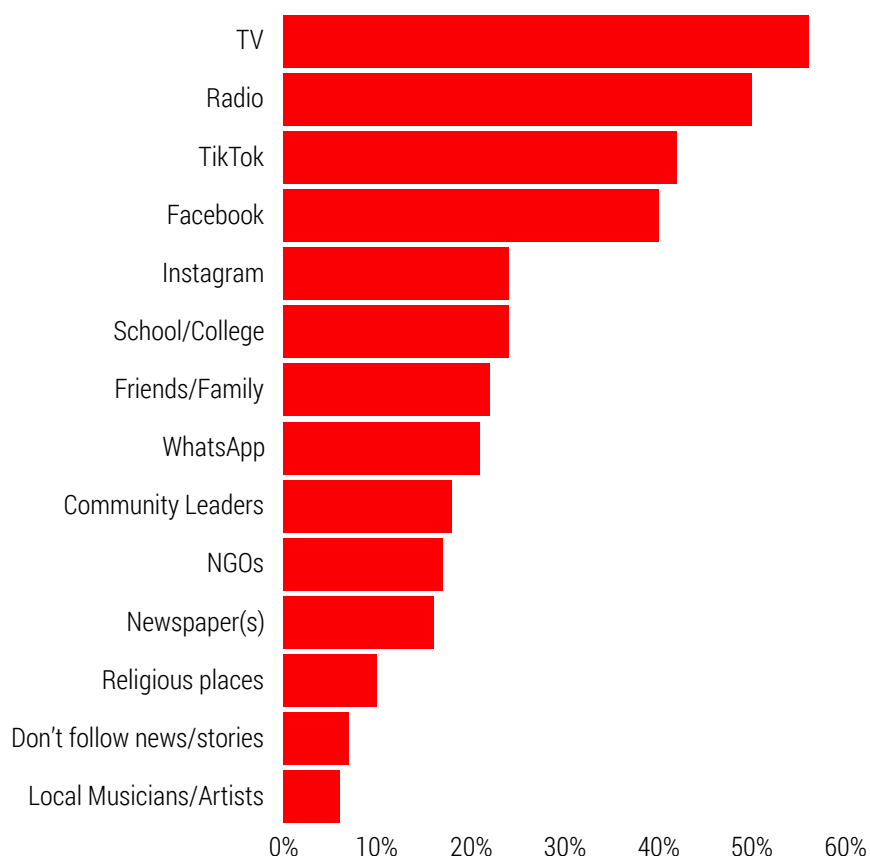


Shujaaz Inc Survey, May 2025 (N=1079)

SOURCES OF INFORMATION AND INFLUENCE

QUESTION ASKED:

WHERE DO YOU MOSTLY HEAR ABOUT OR GET INFORMATION ABOUT THE ENVIRONMENT, FARMING, CHANGES IN WEATHER, OR THE FUTURE OF OUR LAND?



Shujaaz Inc Survey, May 2025 (N=1079)

CLIMATE INFLUENCERS



There's an upcoming artist around here called Mageto – he's really passionate, and he's sang a song called *Linda Leo, Furahia Kesho* (Protect Today, Enjoy Tomorrow). It's all about the environment

MALE, 26, KIAMBU

QUESTION ASKED:

HAS A PERSON, SONG, VIDEO, OR SOCIAL MEDIA POST EVER MADE YOU THINK DIFFERENTLY ABOUT THE ENVIRONMENT OR CLIMATE?

● YES ● NO



22% of respondents said a person, song, video, or social media post has made them think differently about the environment or climate.

Shujaaz Inc Survey, May 2025 (N=1079)

QUESTION ASKED:

YOU SAID A PERSON, SONG, VIDEO, OR SOCIAL MEDIA POST MADE YOU THINK DIFFERENTLY ABOUT THE ENVIRONMENT OR CLIMATE. CAN YOU TELL ME MORE ABOUT THAT PERSON, VIDEO OR POST, AND WHY?

Youth identified people, media, events, and local experiences that opened their eyes to environmental issues. These influences were emotional, personal, and often delivered through accessible platforms like social media, music, or community action.

This includes:

- Art, music and storytelling
- Social media and digital content
- Influential figures and role models
- Local news stories about crisis
- Grassroots action and young people mobilisation
- Institutional efforts and policy advocacy

SOURCES OF INFORMATION AND INFLUENCERS

QUESTION ASKED:

YOU SAID A PERSON, SONG, VIDEO, OR SOCIAL MEDIA POST MADE YOU THINK DIFFERENTLY ABOUT THE ENVIRONMENT OR CLIMATE. CAN YOU TELL ME MORE ABOUT THAT PERSON, VIDEO OR POST AND WHY?

Influential Figures and Role Models

Well-known individuals, especially those with local or national impact inspired action and reflection. For example, Wangari Maathai was frequently cited for her leadership in tree-planting.

"I saw Wangari Maathai's story about environmental Community leaders, pastors, and influencers advocating for clean-ups and conservation also left a mark."

"There's a guy in our area who organizes monthly clean-ups. That changed my mindset."

Social Media and Digital Content

Short videos and posts made climate issues relatable and urgent. Some include: Electric vehicles (EVs) content sparked awareness about air pollution and innovation.

"A post about electric vehicles... they don't pollute the air."

"A TikTok post of a farmer crying... floods destroyed his crops."

Videos of droughts in Turkana or plastic choking sea animals triggered concern and empathy

Local Environmental Crises

Direct exposure or media coverage of disasters shaped how young people understood climate impacts.

Floods in Mai Mahiu and surrounding areas were mentioned as wake-up calls.

"When floods killed people... I realised the importance of the environment."

"People died from heat and waterborne illnesses. That made me think more seriously."

Art, Music, and Storytelling

Creative expressions helped communicate environmental issues in memorable ways. For example, Sauti Sol, Otile Brown, and other local musicians were cited for lyrics about nature, pollution, and change.

"A song explained how the air and weather have changed."

"Documentaries on BBC and local shows like Shamba Shape Up taught about climate-smart farming and conservation."

"I watched Shamba Shape Up—they were teaching about soil erosion."

SOURCES OF INFORMATION AND INFLUENCERS

Grassroots Action and Youth Mobilisation

Participation in local initiatives helped young people feel empowered to act. These include:

Tree-planting on Environmental Day was a key motivator for many.

"We went to plant trees... it motivated me."

Social media challenges promoting waste clean-up or recycling also inspired change."

"We tried that challenge of making things from plastic bottles."

Institutional Efforts and Policy Advocacy

Youth mentioned awareness from government and NGO campaigns focused on climate action. For example, Ruto's 15 billion tree pledge was referenced as a big push.

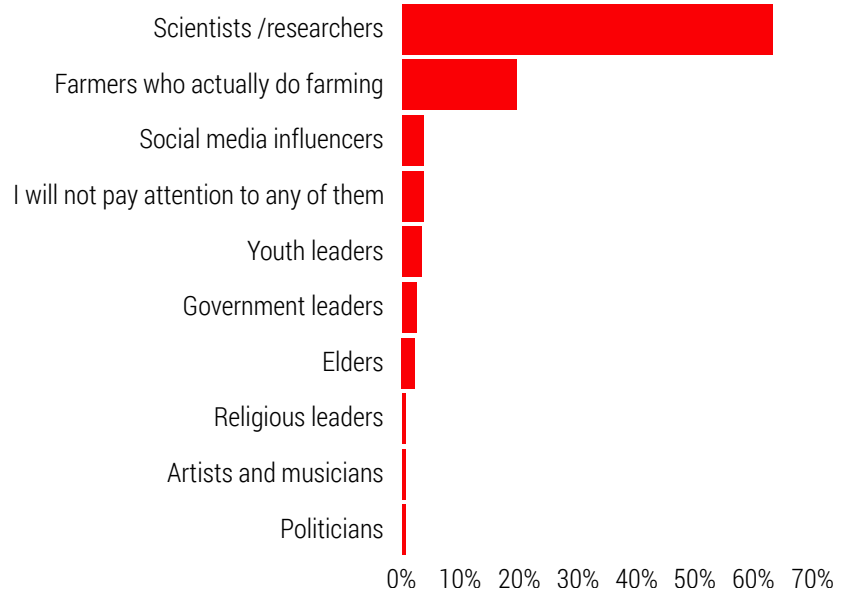
"I saw the tree planting initiative Ruto was talking about."

"NGO campaigns like those by Red Cross or Green Settlement Schemes Foundation raised awareness on disaster preparedness."

"Red Cross came to our school to talk about floods."

QUESTION ASKED:

OF THE FOLLOWING PEOPLE, WHO WOULD YOU TRUST THE MOST IF THEY TALKED TO YOU ABOUT THE ENVIRONMENT?



Shujaaz Inc Survey, May 2025 (N=1079)

63% OF RESPONDENTS SAY THEY TRUST SCIENTISTS AND RESEARCHERS THE MOST ON ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

- Youth overwhelmingly trust scientists and researchers (63%) as the most credible voices on environmental issues, followed by farmers (20%) with hands-on experience.
- Trust in public figures, including influencers, young people leaders, government leaders, and religious figures, remains very low (each under 5%), indicating a credibility gap outside of expert and lived experience sources.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

WE ARE GRATEFUL TO SHUJAAZ INC'S NETWORK OF WACURIOUS YOUTH RESEARCHERS WHO CONTRIBUTED TO THIS REPORT.

Onyango C., Iten, Elgeyo Marakwet County
 Nguma A., wote, Makueni County
 Henry N., Gitaru, Kiambu County
 Hayes C., Meru, Meru County
 Gitonga S., Meru, Meru County
 adhiambo J., Kisumu , Kisumu County
 Otieno C., Nairobi, Kiambu County
 Mwende G., Mombasa, Mombasa County
 Kipngetich B., Garissa town , Garissa County
 Adhiambo L., Kisumu , Kisumu County
 Syombua V., Kambu, Makueni County
 Kennedy P., Kisumu, Kisumu County
 Ahmedkul M., Isiolo town , Isiolo County
 Muse F., Reuben , Nairobi County
 Nthambi D., Machakos, Machakos County
 Peter T., Matuu, Machakos County
 Munga B., Nairobi , Kajiado County
 Anyango F., Kasarani, Nairobi County
 Wafubwa E., Ukunda, Kwale County
 Karisa L., Mavueni, Kilifi County
 Muga D., Embu, Embu County
 Milly Q., Nairobi, Nairobi County
 Malelo F., Kibra, Nairobi County
 Mutua D., Kitui, Kitui County
 kalongo S., Kwale, Kwale County
 Adhiambo S., Bondo, Siaya County
 Hasumani K., Mutomo, Kitui County
 Mwalesi M., Kombani , Kwale County
 Maundu J., Likoni, Mombasa County
 Menza J., Kilifi , Kilifi County
 Mohamud A., Wajir, Wajir County
 Nthenya J., Mtito andei , Makueni County
 Muuo P., Narok, Narok County
 Mulinge K., Kibwezi , Makueni County
 Omondi G., Kisumu , Kisumu County
 Nasimiyu E., Kitale, Trans Nzoia County
 Ali S., Watamu, Kilifi County
 Kadii G., Machakos town, Machakos County
 Brill B., Kakamega, Kakamega County
 Macharia G., Narok, Narok County
 Kamita P., Suswa, Narok County
 Muturi E., Nairobi, Nairobi County
 Juma S., Kakamega , Kakamega County
 Achieng Q., Nairobi , Nairobi County
 Songoi S., Sigalagala, Kakamega County
 Langat E., Kipkelion, Kericho County
 Oyongo B., Tabaka, Kisii County
 Atieno D., Homa Bay, Homabay County
 Origa M., Homabay, Homabay County
 Joseph W., Homabay, Homabay County
 Omondi G., Kebirigo, Nyamira County
 Achieng V., Suna East, Migori County
 Atieno A., Migori, Migori County
 Okirigiti C., Kisii, Kisii County
 Vidzo J., Nakuru, Nakuru County
 Natasha M., Kisii, Kisii County
 Bagara E., Nairobi, Nairobi County
 Kirui G., Nairobi , Kericho County
 Otieno V., Nairobi , Nairobi County
 Simiyu B., Nairobi, Nairobi County
 Kibe W., Maai Mahiu town , Nakuru County
 Mungai S., Kayole Kona, Nairobi County
 Munyao S., Makueni , Makueni County
 Githinji F., Nairobi, Nairobi County
 Awuor P., Siaya , Siaya County
 Micheal J., Bondo, Siaya County
 Auma S., Maringo, Nairobi County
 Luthi C., Makadara, Nairobi County
 Doris M., Bamburi, Mombasa County
 Tsuma A., Kilifi Town, Kilifi County
 Muchai S., Lamu West, Lamu County
 Kitonga J., Mathare North, Nairobi County
 Mpenzwe S., Malanga, Kilifi County
 Caxton O., Juja, Kiambu County
 Odhiambo D., Eldoret, Uasin Gishu County
 Otieno E., Kisumu, Kisumu County
 Ogola D., Kisumu city , Kisumu County
 Okatch J., Bondo, Siaya County
 Wavinya M., Kisauni , Mombasa County
 Wambui R., Nairobi, Nairobi County
 Mutile J., Voi, Taita Taveta County
 Mwanja F., Masongaleni, Makueni County

SHUJAAZ INC

We are Shujaaz Inc, we make social impact brands and ventures for young people in East Africa. We believe this generation can transform our global society for the better, that's why we work to break down barriers – so young people can take control of their future.

Everything we do is grounded in world-leading research. Our expert research team, rigorous annual youth surveys and innovative participatory research methods, ensure that we understand what's really going on for young people; the barriers they face and the solutions with the potential to scale.

Shujaaz Inc is a B-Corp certified social impact business. Our ventures, including our International Emmy-Award winning youth media brand 'SHUJAAZ', are powered by donors, partners and investors who work with us to co-create scalable, sustainable solutions to some of the globe's most intractable challenges.

WACURIUS

WaCurious, Shujaaz Inc's national research community of more than 3000 young Kenyans, mobilises young people with deep local knowledge, trains them on basic research skills and equips them with the necessary tools to collect data and insights to inform positive community change.

Cite this document as:

The Unseen Heroes: Young Kenyans and Climate Change: Hopes, Fears and Unseen Actions.

This research report forms the foundation of a short film showcased at TED Countdown 2025 in Nairobi. The research aims to reveal how Kenyan young people perceive climate change, the social and cultural norms that influence their engagement with the subject (or lack of it), and how media and narratives shape their sense of agency. The insights directly inform the film content.