

GROUNDTRUTH COVID-19 BAROMETER

Week Ending

08/MAY

Issue 6

At Shujaaz Inc, we're continuing to harness our SMS, USSD and social media channels to track and share the stories and experiences of our network of 7.5m young people. This week, our new video project lets you hear their voices and insights directly – reminding us all what living through this unprecedented time looks and feels like. Insights from our network this week chart a significant shift in attitudes towards lockdown measures – as the need to get back to work overrides fear of COVID-19. And young people begin to share their views on how this crisis should be handled.

“EITHER THE GOVERNMENT SENDS US MONEY – OR THEY LET US GO FIND IT FOR IT OURSELVES”

This week, as attitudes towards COVID19 and lock-down measures have started to shift, we've activated our network of 3,000+ 'SuperFans' to capture real-time insights on the mood in their neighbourhoods.



“I’VE NOT SEEN REPRESENTATION OF YOUNG PEOPLE; IT WOULD BE GOOD IF OUR VOICES WERE HEARD.”

The videos we received tracked with the trends we've been seeing across the last two months. Young people recognise the threats of COVID-19, but they are 'really suffering' from the impacts of the lock down; from incomes collapsing, to access to contraception slowing. And this week, they're directly asking to have a voice 'at every level' in decision making process; and articulating the need for a new approach from government.

FAN INTERVIEWS

“Unfortunately, as days have passed, people stop taking the issue of corona seriously, no one is observing curfew hours unless the police harass them.

“I see very few people wearing masks. In fact, most people wear them when they are going for errands only.

“It is a really big challenge to us in the community because the government has disappointed us, and we cannot just sit and die of hunger.

“My biggest fear is contracting the disease but also starvation. I hope they will do something urgently for us.”

FEMALE, 20, BUSIA

“At first, in my community people were careful and keen on following the government directives but as days go by, they are getting a bit relaxed especially on the social distancing bit since there is no any reported case of covid 19 in Uasin Gishu county.

“The one thing that they have respected is the curfew time because the police in our area are always on the look-out to get the law defaulters after 7pm.”

FEMALE, 19, UASIN GISHU

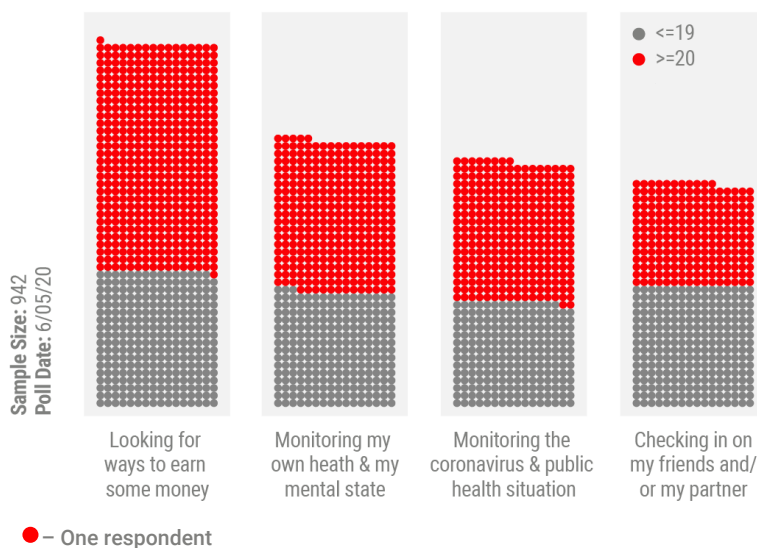
‘AS DAYS PASS, PEOPLE STOP TAKING THE ISSUE OF CORONA SERIOUSLY’

When partial lock-down measures in Kenya first came into force, we saw young people’s fear of COVID-19 spike: protecting themselves and their families from the pandemic was their primary concern. However, as the weeks progressed, and as their incomes collapsed and food prices hiked, the imminent threat of hunger rose sharply. In the last fortnight, we’ve seen a tipping point; in communities across Kenya, the reality of day-to-day hunger has overtaken the fear of coronavirus.

In WhatsApp Focus Groups and one-one interviews this week, young people in our network reported that, as hunger has risen, but cases of COVID-19 in their immediate communities haven’t emerged – compliance with partial lockdown measures in their neighborhoods has rapidly reduced. In fact, some participants said things were returning almost to ‘normal’; with businesses reopening and people returning to the streets. However, fear of police punishment (fines and enforced quarantine) mean that compliance with evening curfew orders have been more consistent.

Fans in our network highlight that people in their communities have been waiting for help – either from government or the development community – that would allow them to comply with social distancing and quarantine measures. But as help has been scarce and localized, they have had no choice but to defy recommended social distancing measures and return to work – in order to survive.

Q: IN THE PAST WEEK, WHERE DID MOST OF YOUR TIME AND EFFORT GO?



In a USSD poll (N=2,329) this week, when asked ‘where did most of your time and effort go?’ 33% said ‘looking for ways to earn money’ – monitoring the impact of COVID-19 was only the third priority.

FAN INTERVIEWS

“The lockdown in my area has made people in my community more cautious (following the government directives) now because it is a reality with them. Initially no one bothered to follow government directives like social distancing or wearing of masks, we used to take it lightly unless we see the police.”

“Right now, life is hard, most people live from hand to mouth. Our hope is that the government will provide food for us. My biggest worry is [...] hunger just as the rest of the community.”

MALE, EASTLEIGH, NAIROBI

SMS & SOCIAL MESSAGES

“What I am doing to protect myself and the community at large is following the government directives, washing my hands frequently and sanitizing.”

FEMALE, 19, UASIN GISHU

“I am preventing the spread of corona virus by washing my hands with soap and water.”

FEMALE, 20, BUSIA

“I do community work [...] taking care of street children, because I was once a street kid myself. [...] But ever since the outbreak, I don't get donations from people & currently since there is no movement, we can't take them to centers or trace their families. At least I took jerrycan of water and soap and educated them on how protect themselves from the virus by washing their hands regularly.”

MALE, 26, NAIROBI

LOCALISED SPIKE IN COVID19 CASES SPARK STRICTER LOCKDOWNS

On Wednesday, after a reported increase in confirmed COVID-19 cases, the Kenyan government enforced a strict 15-day lockdown in Eastleigh (a district of Nairobi) and the Old Town district of coastal city Mombasa. As reports emerged of heavy police presence, we conducted interviews with ‘SuperFans’ in the affected districts. Fans told us that, even in these ‘hot-spot’ areas, while fear of COVID-19 had increased since the spike in cases – the fear of hunger remained their primary concern.

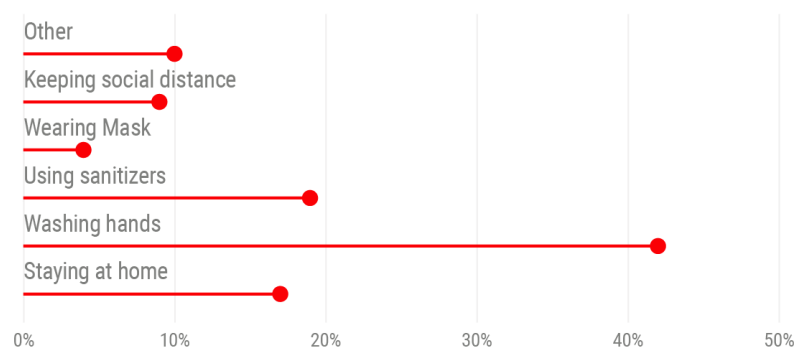
These early reports from Eastleigh and Mombasa suggest that, even when cases do spike locally – young people and their communities will still be forced to break lockdown measures in order to secure food and sustain their income. Put simply; no matter the severity of the public health crisis, the threat of starvation will always take precedence.

HANDWASHING PERSISTS AS MOST ADOPTED PUBLIC HEALTH MEASURE

In our SMS survey two weeks ago, only 1% of respondents (N=494) said they were able to adhere to all recommend public health measures; highlighting that government recommendations simply felt incompatible with the reality of their everyday lives. In particular, 67% of young people said that they found staying home and social distancing the most challenging recommendations to follow, because they need to travel to earn money and buy food. Similarly, they highlighted that the cost of masks and hand sanitizer were a critical barrier to adoption.

This week, as we began to speak to our fans about the future, in response to an SMS survey (N=943), 4 in 5 said that if and when partial lockdown is lifted, they'll abandon trying to stay at home.

Q: ONCE THE PARTIAL LOCKDOWN IS LIFTED, WHICH OF THE PUBLIC HEALTH MEASURE WILL YOU CONTINUE TO DO TO PROTECT YOUR FAMILY?



Sample Size: 942 | Poll Date: 6/05/20

SMS MESSAGES

"After the lockdown is lifted, I will spend the whole night walking around. I will also throw away this mask."

UNKNOWN

SMS & SOCIAL MESSAGES

"The government has disappointed us and we cannot just sit and die of hunger. I hope they will do something urgently for us."

FEMALE, 20, BUSIA

"I do not think the curfew/lockdown is a good idea. Our hustles are going to the drain."

MALE, FACEBOOK

"The curfew is best on the one hand, and the other hand is bad in that it is a form of preventing corona but those who work at night/evenings have lost their jobs."

UNKNOWN, FACEBOOK

The curfew is not good. They could have just locked down the country and close all borders. Otherwise, the hustles are really suffering."

MALE, FACEBOOK

The Government has done its part by trying to come up with laws which help us reduce spread. We are not following these rules so we are our own enemies. That's why the cases have risen to 490. We should all wash our hands, wear masks, cover our mouths when sneezing/coughing and observe social distancing. That way, we'll beat coronavirus."

UNKNOWN, FACEBOOK

42%

However, 42% of respondents said that they'd continue to wash their hands frequently, even after the end of a lockdown period. In conversations with our network over the last few weeks, handwashing has emerged as the most consistently adopted behaviour, suggesting the emergence of a new norm around regular handwashing.

THE TWO APPROACHES TO MANAGING COVID-19 – ACCORDING TO OUR FANS

Managing COVID-19 in Kenya will be a long-term process, not a short-term emergency response. This week, we've begun to reflect and speak to our community of young people across Kenya about what we've learned from the last 6 weeks; and their perspectives on the road ahead.

Overall, young people's perspectives broadly align under two potential approaches to managing COVID-19. These map closely onto two of the key strategies the development community is currently considering:

1. ACCOMPANY PARTIAL LOCKDOWN MEASURES WITH SUSTAINED FINANCIAL OR FOOD AID

- In WhatsApp Focus Groups conducted this week, and in our survey last week, we've seen that a significant proportion (44%) of young people are in support of partial lockdown measures.
- However, many young people have expressed anger and disappointment at the lack of support provided by government. Many have highlighted that food and financial aid has been distributed in other East African nations.
- As we've seen this week; young people's willingness to comply with quarantine measures is always limited by the immediate threat of hunger. Young people have highlighted that, in order to continue lockdown measures, they require sustained financial aid. This demand aligns with new recommendations made by economists like Esther Duflo and Abhijit Banerjee.

2. RETURN TO A SENSE OF 'NORMALITY', WITH CONTINUED PROTECTION FOR FAMILIES

- Faced with falling incomes, and social isolation – many young people are calling for an easing of lockdown measures.
- However, young Kenyans do remain concerned about the threat of COVID-19. High engagement levels with our multiplatform #LindaFam (ProtectYourFamily) campaign has demonstrated that young people are happy to commit to take action to protect their families, and vulnerable people in their communities, from coronavirus.
- Young people's willingness to engage in these community-led activities (including handwashing) highlights the potential for high youth participation in 'sheltering' models, similar to those being proposed by researchers at the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine, that ease lock-down measures, but utilise targeted 'shielding' measures to protect the most vulnerable people in developing economies.

SMS AND SOCIAL MESSAGES

"I was a hawker of plastic items, but I stopped ever since corona happened, I will go back to it after it ends."

MALE, 17, KWALE

"This corona story has put us down, but I still hustle by making handwash and soaps. Life is currently hard, but I still try and deliver goods for my customers."

FOCUS GROUP MESSAGE

"Once the lockdown is lifted, I would go back to my job and continue my things normally."

FOCUS GROUP MESSAGE

"After the lockdown is lifted, I will feel really good, I will go back to hustling."

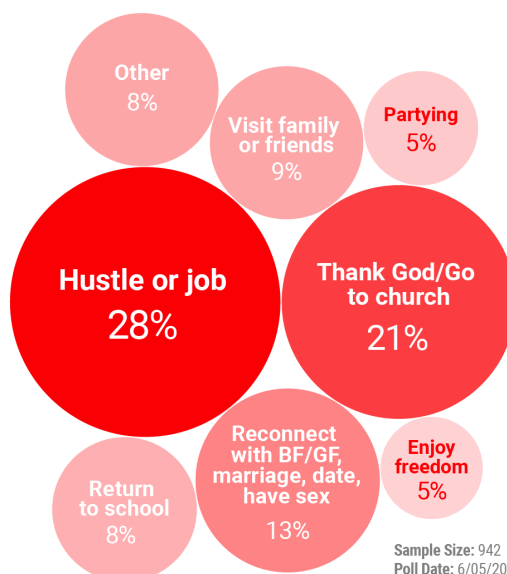
FOCUS GROUP MESSAGE

MICRO 'HUSTLES' AND THE INFORMAL ECONOMY CRUCIAL TO RECOVERY

28%

In an open SMS survey (N=942) this week, almost one third (28%) of young people said the first thing they would do after lockdown measures are lifted was to return to running their hustle (micro-business) or to look for work. As we've highlighted in previous Barometers, at Shujaaz Inc, we believe that ensuring young micro-entrepreneurs (33% of 15-24-year-olds) are supported is critical – not only to the immediate crisis, but as a key tenet of Kenya's longer-term recovery.

Q: WHAT'S THE FIRST THING YOU WOULD DO IF THE PARTIAL LOCKDOWN IS LIFTED TODAY/ NOW?



SMS AND SOCIAL MESSAGES

"The lock down has really limited my freedom, the first thing I will do is travel to the village to meet my BF, I have really missed him. Then party after party."

FEMALE, 18, EMBU

"I am single, so I will have to marry, so that if this ever happens again, I will have a family, Its not good to die without a child"

UNKNOWN

As a youth, the first thing I will do is marry. I can't live this 'solo' life again. From (Nairobi, 20, Male)

MALE, 20, NAIROBI

YOUNG PEOPLE LOOK AHEAD TO PARTIES, SEX, MARRIAGE & FUN

For 15-24-year-olds in Kenya, quarantine measures have been hampering their social lives and their romantic and sexual relationships. When looking ahead to the end of lockdown measures, nearly a third said they would prioritise seeing their boyfriend or girlfriend, having sex, seeing friends and partying.

We are closely tracking a small segment of young people, who are saying that they want to get married – to ensure they're not lonely if there was another lockdown in the future.

We're also monitoring reports of young people struggling to access to contraception under lockdown. It's crucial that young people continue to receive sustained sexual and reproductive health services and support, to prevent an increase in teenage marriage or early pregnancy – both during lockdown, and if and when lockdown measures ease.

FAN STORIES

01

MESSAGE

“My greatest fear now is whether I will still do my national exams this year and to contract the coronavirus disease.”

WHO IS SHE?

She is a 19-year-old student and 'hustla' (micro-entrepreneur) living with her family in Uasin Gishu.

“

I am currently a form four student and partly I sell mandazi. Before this pandemic I used to live away from home near school where my parents paid my rent and school fees while all the money I made from my hustle was to sustain my daily needs. During weekdays I would focus on my studies then over the weekend I would focus on my hustle (i.e. morning and evenings). In a day I would make a profit of around 200kshs.

After the corona outbreak I had to go back home and I decided to continue with the hustle. Nowadays I sell mandazi in the mornings and usually get a profit of between 50-100kshs. It has not been easy since very few people buy plus given the fact that I changed location. People are cautious to what and where they are buying foodstuffs. I am grateful at least I am helping at home during this time. I still study in the afternoons till evening then I get to normal house chores.

At first, in my community people were careful and keen on following the government directives but as days go by, they are getting a bit relaxed especially on the social distancing bit since there is no any reported case of COVID-19 in Uasin Gishu county. The one thing that they have respected is the curfew time because the police in our area are always on the look out to get the law defaulters after 7pm. Generally, most businesses around here have been affected but we just must survive because this issue is beyond our control. I look up to DJ B and that's why I texted him asking for a hustle tip to keep me going despite everything.

My greatest fear now is whether I will still do my national exams this year and to contract the coronavirus disease. What I am doing to protect myself and the community at large is following the government directives, washing my hands frequently and sanitizing.

02

MESSAGE

“My biggest fear is contracting the disease but also starvation. I hope they will do something urgently for us.”

WHO IS SHE?

A 20-year-old college student, living with her mum.

“

I used to go to college at school nearby my area but ever since the corona happened, I had to take a break from school as the government ordered. Nowadays am just at home helping my mum with house chores. One of the major challenge we are facing at home is getting food to eat, few of the kiosks and shops which are still operating have hiked the prices making it difficult for us to get decent meals every day.

Ever since the government announced the first case of corona, most of my community members were keen and followed the directives hoping that the government would provide food and allowances during these difficult times when they are home. Unfortunately, as days have passed people stop taking the issue of corona seriously, no one is observing curfew hours unless the police harass them, I see very few people wearing masks. In fact, most people wear them when they are going for errands only.

It is a really big challenge to us in the community because the government has disappointed us and we cannot just sit and die of hunger. My biggest fear is contracting the disease but also starvation. I hope they will do something urgently for us.