

YOUTH VOICES



Youth Sentiments

Navigating A New Reality

15 June – 6 July 2020



As we enter almost 4 months of staged lockdown in South Africa, we have noticed tangible shifts in online youth sentiments.

Initially, online engagement with all forms of content was high as people sought credible information, guidance and instruction on what was happening, how to stay safe physically and mentally and wanted information on new ways of income generation within tight movement restrictions. The Youth Voices team worked closely with the Content Management Team to create responsive and reactive suitable material tailored to young peoples needs.

Over time however we have noticed not only a steep decline in our online engagement figures (- 38% post engagement). We have also noticed changes in sentiment and feeling in our online communities. While this is not a blanket statement on all youth sentiment we can say what we are seeing online seems to resonate in many contexts we as a team engage with. Feelings of frustration, despair, exhaustion and a robust desire to “just get on with life” are strong and repetitive.

The toll of lockdown on employment, income, provision and survival has been acutely felt by everyone but has been expressed so intensely by youth in our online engagements. Recognising that imminent threat of infection remains high, young people seem to want to take calculated risks and resume life with varying degrees of normality.

Acknowledging that we cannot remain in a state of lockdown indefinitely, we asked our online communities to describe *how they were feeling* about “returning to the world” and engaging in changed realities of employment, searching for work and starting or re-opening businesses. This report captures their responses.



“I’m trying to survive out of all that is happening, its cold, there's Corona and unemployment at the same time and how can I forget having no money?”

- MALE, Western Cape

As an organization with an online presence we are increasingly experiencing our young people taking out their frustrations with unemployment on us especially during our live streamed events. Harambee has been accused of making “false promises” and “keeping us waiting” and even “not really caring about us”.

We understand this as being part of our position and role as an engaged organization. People often take out their frustrations on what is right in front of them despite if they are misdirected or not.

In trying to communicate the scope of Harambee’s mandate and changing service offerings, while at the same time, wanting to listen for how and where we can help, we decided to phrase our question as such:

Harambee can only do so much, but we still want to help as best we can!

For us to do this, we need you to tell us about how you are feeling about:

- Searching for work again
- Going back to your job
- Surviving in the world with COVID
- Going for interviews
- Starting or re-opening your business

We are recognizing peoples frustrations as illustrated above but in asking this question we wanted to gain a wider understanding of youth sentiment in relation to navigating a new reality.

This is what we found both online and in our 6 listening groups:

TELL US

HARAMBEE CAN ONLY DO SO MUCH, BUT WE STILL WANT TO HELP AS BEST WE CAN!

For us to do this, we need you to tell us how you are feeling about:

- Surviving in the world with COVID
- Going back to your job
- Searching for work again
- Starting or re-opening your business
- Going for interviews

Comment to tell us

BE SMART • BE SAFE • BE KIND

BE SMART • BE SAFE • BE KIND
SUPPORT SOUTH AFRICA

1 Finding a job is TOP priority for most of our respondents

*“Searching for a job is currently **a strain** as most businesses are struggling to find ways to employ more people while others are retrenching employees. And the other companies need more than 5 years of experience while some of us know for a fact we can provide services in certain roles more than those people who they are looking for...even housekeeping jobs require so many years experience, **what then about those of us who want office jobs?**”*

*“Finding a job is **not easy** but I am keeping the faith”*

*“I am desperately searching for a job but **I'm finding it so hard!**”*

*“I am job hunting with emails as **I want to stay safe**”*

2 For a small group, starting a business has provided some relief but the search for work continues

I have already started a small business but I am searching for more work

I am selling chips and sweets, I just wanted to have something for myself and not have to always ask from people because everyone gets irritated by a person that asks.



Dineo Dire
Searching for work again
5d Like Reply



Gugu Nxumalo
2. searching for a job again.
5d Like Reply



Sibongiseni Tokwe
Searching for job again
5d Like Reply



Richard Steenkamp
Searching for work again
5d Like Reply



Monicca Masego
Searching for a job again
5d Like Reply



Mj Jack
Searching for work again
5d Like Reply



Njabulo Dlamuka
Searching for work
5d Like Reply

3 A fortunate few had interviews lined up or were recently able to return to work but this was indeed a minority

"I am so happy today guys as I am back at work!"

"I am so excited and so nervous...I am going for an interview today"

Our question trying to gauge and ascertain feeling was not as comprehensively answered as we had hoped, however the above do provide insight into where the youth are identifying key areas of need – **finding income generating opportunities and employment.**

Sentiment is that **it is so challenging out there to navigate this new reality** and now more than ever we as Harambee need to be working on dynamic and creative solutions to pathway our young people into meaningful work.



Stories From The Front Lines

Youth Story 1 : 2020 is a difficult year, my main worry is school. I have a debt that is worth about R11 000 and under normal circumstances if you owe, they prohibit you from writing exams. I lost NSFAS because I failed 3 subjects, I failed because I was working part time as a Taxify driver. I could not sleep, and I didn't even get time to study, at times I would be late for school because I had to make sure that I make R2500 every week for the owner of the vehicle.

At the moment it is very difficult because restaurants that sell alcohol are not operating. Taxify used to get a lot of business from people that were consuming alcohol away from home because they used to travel at night, and they paid good money for transport. Now that these businesses are not operating it is very difficult, we are even struggling to put food on the table. The worst part is the fact that I applied for the R350 grant and I was rejected.

Now I don't know what I'm going to do with my situation, however I'm suggesting that businesses must open because we are dying of hunger. I really don't know what to do because I am not planning to drop out of college.

The college has also contributed to this hardship, because if they had accommodation within the college I would not have been in this mess. There is nothing we can do because they are treating us like dogs.

I would love to get a job that would give me the flexibility I need. I have to pay rent, buy groceries and also provide for my child. There is no greater pain than not knowing if your child has eaten or not because of the hardships that you are faced with.

Navigating A New Reality

Youth Story 2: In terms of Corona yes it has affected lot of people especially here in Cape Town and most people are dying but that doesn't mean that our lives are over. One of my family members has died but that doesn't mean am finished. I haven't finished my journey I still have to do what I can while I still have time, am encouraged by the phrase "pusha, phanda, play" am playing my own game on my own court the ball is in my hands.



