

MTAANI YOUTH TOUR

“WE ARE READY TO SERVE. WE JUST NEED THE OPPORTUNITY.”

The Mtaani Tour was a grassroots listening journey that travelled across Kenya, visiting Nyeri, Meru, Mombasa, Nairobi, Kakamega, and Homa Bay to gather voices of young people and spotlighting their lived realities, frustrations, ideas, and dreams. At its core, it was about recognising efforts in community development, and bringing insights directly to decision-makers. The tour created space for bold youth expression—on TikTok, in town halls, and in local groups—and revealed a powerful truth: young Kenyans are already leading change, but they need support, visibility, and trust from their leaders.

Grassroots youth leadership is happening but lacks formal recognition. In **Nyeri**, youth described a shift from being labelled as “criminals” and “idlers” to respected community leaders. “We used to be ignored completely,” one participant said, “but now we are part of Nyumba Kumi and what we call village governing committees.” Through civic education and integrated leadership training, youth are increasingly participating in decision-making processes from the village level up to the county. “Leadership is not about age,” one youth leader emphasized. “It’s about having the best interests of the community, including their mental wellbeing.” Youth asked governors to open more spaces for youth representation in local governance. Listen to lead.





In **Meru**, young people called on counties to move beyond short-term handouts and instead prioritize sustainable projects, especially in value addition and production. “Think long-term,” one speaker urged. “Let’s move from token projects to things that can grow jobs over time.” They also called for the acceleration of youth policy frameworks across counties, noting that while some counties have made progress, others have lagged behind.

Mombasa provided a powerful example of youth-led innovation. A group of young people formed Tuko Insightful, a Community-Based Organization that now runs multiple businesses. In Likoni, they launched a water reselling business and hired teen mothers to help run it. “They now earn steady income and support their families,” said Dorine, one of the founders. “Instead of waiting for politicians to act, we came together, got training, saved money through the SACCO, and started businesses.” Another standout initiative was a barter trade arrangement with youth in Homa Bay, where omena is exchanged for clothing like vitenge and ankara. These examples show that youth are already taking charge—but could scale significantly with more support. Mombasa youth also raised the issue of gender inequality in leadership. “There are still very few young women in leadership,” Dorine said. “Many haven’t come forward—or haven’t been given the chance.” She credited SHOFCO for helping her step into leadership and emphasized the importance of encouraging other women to do the same.

In **Nairobi**, youth expressed frustration at development projects being rolled out without involving them. “You can’t build for us without us,” one youth leader said. “We are the ones who understand what’s going on at the grassroots. We must be part of the planning and implementation.” The call for inclusion was not symbolic; youth want real seats at the table, with decision-making power and budget influence.

In **Kakamega**, the conversation focused on economic justice and the struggles of youth-led businesses. Youth called for simplified business permits, lower taxes, and reforms to the procurement system that currently disadvantages them. “Review the tendering process,” one participant urged. “Give county road construction tenders to youth-led enterprises. We have the skills—just not the access.” They also requested a fairer distribution of Affordable Housing projects, more equitable healthcare infrastructure (including Level 4 hospitals in every sub-county), and subsidies for farm inputs. These are not abstract policy asks—they are clear, actionable demands tied to young people’s everyday lives.

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Online feedback collected via TikTok also surfaced deep frustration over access to government programs like Kazi Mtaani. Many youth said they missed out on job opportunities because of favouritism or lack of visibility with local chiefs and administrators. “We deserve equal opportunities,” one young person wrote. “We’re tired of being lied to and being given pesa ndogo ndogo.” Others called for a mindset shift within youth circles. “We must stop being misused by politicians and start standing for something ourselves,” one comment read. Another said, “Youth can turn the tables—but right now we’re just being turned into chaos agents.”

Kenya’s young people are not sitting idle. They are forming SACCOs, employing peers, launching businesses, joining community security groups, and pushing for policy reform. As one youth from Nyeri put it, “We’re not short of ideas. We’re short of opportunities.” The Mtaani Tour didn’t discover potential, it witnessed it in action. Now, the ask is simple: match that energy with meaningful support, inclusion, and investment.

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IDEAS. WE’RE SHORT OF
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MTAANI TOUR LEADERS

Central

**Hassan Ndungu
Eunice Nduta
Elija Mutani**

Eastern and Rift Valley

**Amos Kailemia
Evans Murithi
Godifury Mutabaki
Hyreen Kanana
Ruth Kagendo
Belinda Gakii**

Coast and Northeastern

**Abdul Hamad
Dorine Anyango
Domnic Omollo
Wycliff Ombetsa
Sharonne Barasa
Jackline Akuku
Fredrick Mujenyi
Domnic Opiyo**

Western

**Jane Atieno
Peter Bushuru
Sharon Awino
Edith Okumu
Dennis Wasonga**

Nyanza

**Erick Mboya
Paulforce Apedha
Hillary Odumba
Jared Omondi**

Nairobi

**David Ojiem
Nicholas Ogutu
Syvia Anduko
Elizabeth Kevali
Melvin Ayessa
Esther Samantha
Eubrian Libese**