

A man in a workshop, wearing a green shirt and a dark jacket, is focused on repairing a hard drive. He is wearing gloves and using a tool. The workshop is filled with various electronic components and tools.

# Landscaping the Repair and Reuse Economy in Kenya

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

MARCH 2022



# Acknowledgments

This work was commissioned by the UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office's Research and Evidence Division and led by a Better Futures CoLab team, comprising Beth Munro, Kelley Rowe, Alex Losneanu and Ben Oldfrey. The landscaping of the repair and reuse economy in Kenya has been developed as part of a collaborative (CoLab) effort bringing together many stakeholders across Kenya to understand the full breadth of the opportunity and to imagine and co-design the future of repair and reuse in Kenya. It has been an incredible four months - there has been so much discussion and contributions from across the ecosystem.

This report synthesises the ideas and contributions of hundreds of individuals and deeply committed organisations to the future circular opportunity of repair and reuse in Kenya. To every single person and organisation that participated and contributed to this important piece of work, we are extremely thankful for generously contributing your time, energy and insights.

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**If you would like to quote the full research paper:**

Munro, B., Rowe, K., Losneanu, A., Oldfrey, B (2022). *Landscaping the repair and reuse economy in Kenya*, Better Futures CoLab.

**Disclaimer**

The findings in this report do not necessarily represent the views of the individuals and organisations interviewed for this research.

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# Executive Summary

Repair and reuse strategies are essential, but frequently overlooked aspects of the circular economy. These practices extend the lifespan of products and retain the value added by design and manufacturing raw materials into products. Repair and reuse benefit local economies as well, by building resilience and creating jobs. While recycling and material recovery are critical to sustainability, they are only part of the puzzle, and the world is starting to realise the significance of integrated repair and reuse strategies, such as the EU's Right to Repair. Many countries in the Global South, such as Kenya, have the advantage, as there is already an established market for repair and reuse in the informal sector.

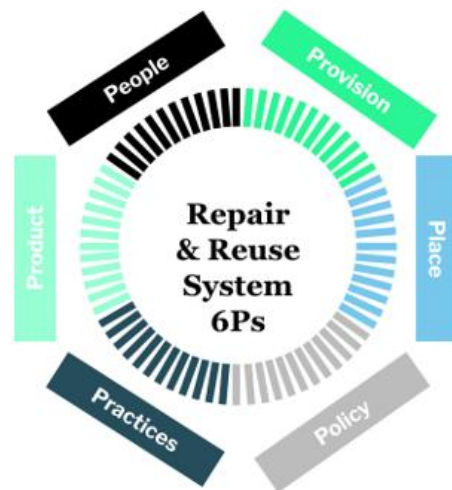
Kenya has a large and thriving entrepreneurial Jua Kali sector which accounts for approximately 83% of total employment in the country. But there is very little data on where the Jua Kali are most engaged in the 'invisible' spaces of repair and reuse. Notably, there is a lack of inclusion, policy support, appropriate incentives, frameworks and business models to allow better value retention within local ecosystems, and for repair and reuse to truly thrive.

The primary aims of this study were to:

- **seek the invisible within the invisible to better understand the full breadth of the opportunity, the landscape, and networks of repair and reuse within the Kenyan economy**, and to showcase its importance in the transition towards achieving a circular economy; and
- **trial a methodology for identifying and implementing collective systemic approaches** to inform the wider sector and allow holistic and locally led circular approaches.

## Taking a 'CoLab' approach to landscaping the repair and reuse market in Kenya

We worked closely with local partners including Shujaaz Inc., Busara Centre for Behavioural Economics, The Incubator Nest and many other key stakeholders to landscape the repair and reuse market. Collectively, we wanted to hear stories from repairers and customers and together build a vision for the repair and reuse economy in Kenya.

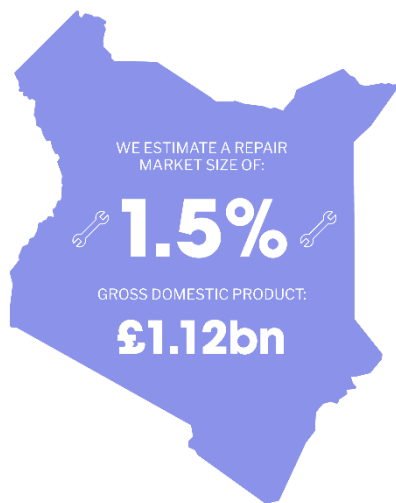


## Treating the system as the unit of experimentation using the 6P framework

Repair and reuse cannot be understood in isolation. We believe we need to look at repair and reuse as part of the wider circular value chain, and therefore treat the system as the unit of experimentation. A key part of our approach has been to understand the leverage points across the circular economy landscape and to map the linkages that ensure the retention of value. We captured the full breadth of system factors that will need to be considered when intervening in repair economies in a 6Ps model. For this phase, the **focus was on PRODUCT, PEOPLE and PRACTICE.**

## PRODUCT: What gets repaired and reused in Kenya and how big is the market?

- **We estimate that Kenya's repair market is worth a minimum of 1.5% of its economy, or £1.12 billion.** This conservative estimate was calculated by looking across three different levels of the economy:
  - **MACRO:** We compared repair markets globally against gross domestic product
  - **MESO:** We analysed product-specific import of spare parts to Kenya
  - **MICRO:** We surveyed Kenyan businesses to find out about repair expenditure versus revenues.



- **Five key product categories emerged as significant in the repair and reuse space: automotives, electronics and mobile phones, clothes and shoes, medical devices, and appliances.** The first three account for the most repair and reuse in Kenya, while medical devices and appliances show significant scope for increased repair and reuse.

## PEOPLE: The story of repairers and customers who need repair

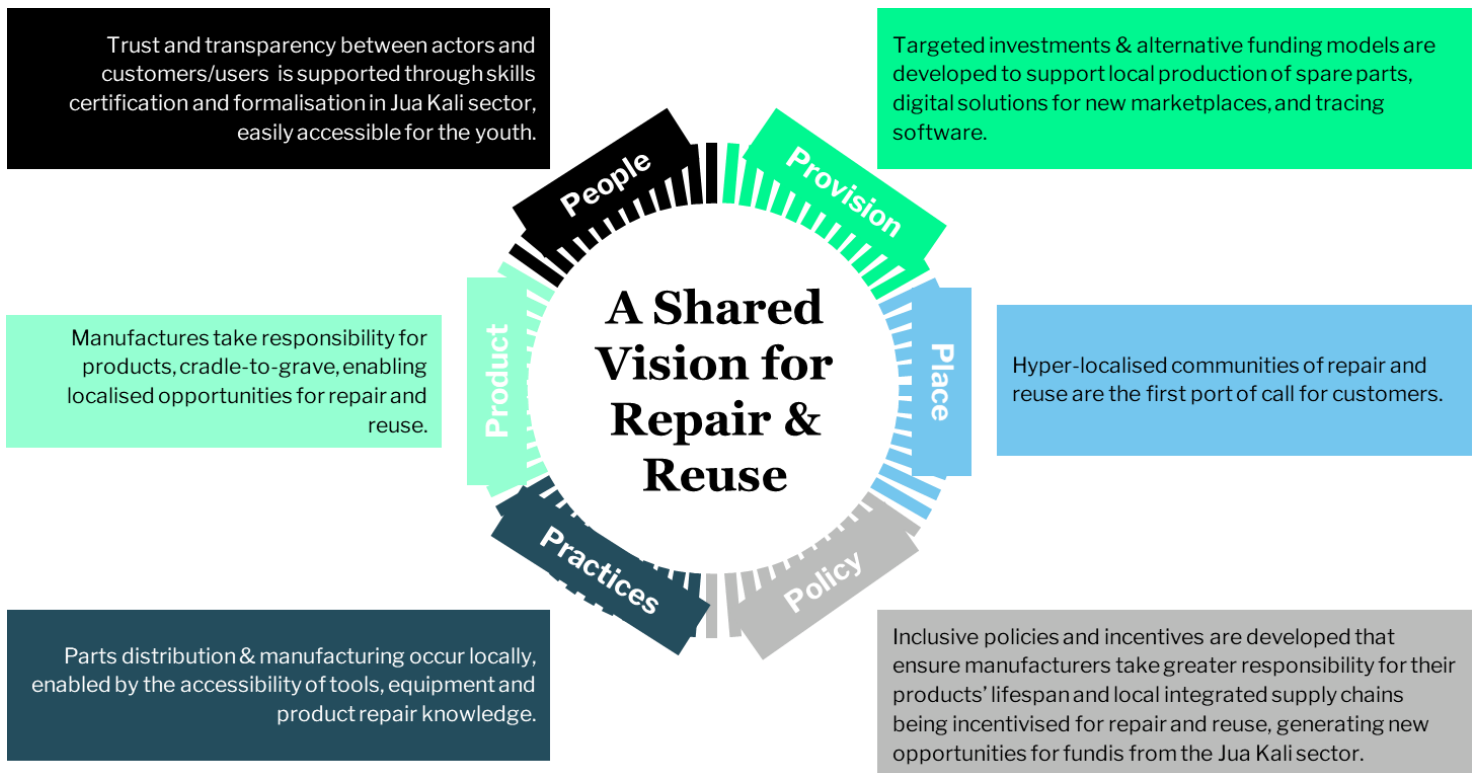
- **Trust and transparency emerged as large barriers** for repair customers, with concerns that a Fundi might sell their items or replace the parts with faulty ones.
- **Young people are the key players in repair and reuse**, but their lack of control over their roles, combined with low-income push them to the bottom of the value-chain and lock them in the cycle of hard work, humiliation, and chronic poverty.
- **There is not a single pathway to skills acquisition or training for would-be repairers**, with a lack of certification opportunities, despite the recognition among repairers that certificates can make a difference to building trust with customers.
- **There are generally fewer women in the industry.** Women not only have to deal with the negative societal norms and perceptions of the industry, they also must deal with discriminating customers who doubt their skills and capabilities to effectively repair items/products.
- **There were mixed attitudes to repair and reuse, depending on the demographics and specific part of the repair and reuse value chain probed.** Acquisition of spare parts and the negotiation process was viewed negatively by customers and those outside of the industry. These were seen as dirty and deceptive processes, which lack transparency. People with low-income levels repair their items more often while high income earners opt to buy new items instead.

## PRACTICES: Visible and invisible business models for repair and reuse exist

- **Many businesses in Kenya do not define what they do as “reuse” or “repair”.** Many would simply say they provide the services that their customers demand, or that they make things work again, or that they are specialists or innovators, or simply makers.
- **Repair and reuse are rarely standalone businesses in Kenya and these practices are often found embedded in other businesses.** Repair and reuse might be a side hustle for a Fundi, a sole trader, a complementary service offering as part of the ethos of a small business, or standard practice for multinational companies in particular sectors (automotive, energy, appliances).

## Building a vision and thesis for the repair and reuse market

We see a future for repair and reuse in Kenya where...



## A. Links to partner final reports as part of this study

### i. Shujaaz Inc.

- [Link](#) to full research paper titled **'Youth and the Repair and Reuse in Kenya'**
- **Shujaaz Inc** is a network of social ventures based in Nairobi, Kenya. They believe the generation of young people can transform our global society for the better – that's why they work to break down barriers so that young people can take control of the future. Established in 2009, their 2x Emmy-award winning team run their three social ventures:
  - Shujaaz, our multimedia youth platform and East-Africa's biggest youth brand

### ii. Busara Centre for Behavioural Economics

- [Link](#) to full research paper titled **'Consumer Behavioural Research on Repair and Reuse Market in Kenya : An Initial insight into the customers journey'**
- The **Busara Centre for Behavioural Economics** (Busara) is a leading research and advisory firm with extensive experience in designing and testing behavioural interventions that contribute to poverty alleviation in the Global South. We utilise behavioural

- Hustla MBA, our innovative peer-to-peer training venture
- MESH, an online community for entrepreneurs, launched in 2021

Their social ventures inspire, entertain and mobilise 9.5m young people across East Africa, and in 2021 were used by 71% of 15-24-year-olds in Kenya. Their network connects young people with the information, skills and opportunities they need to take control; embedding them in a digital and real world community that gives them the self-belief they need to succeed, in their context and on their terms. Through all the work done, grounded in research, Shujaaz have proved that when young people take control of their lives, they create transformational change.

science to help clients understand behaviours, and design and test solutions to scale their products, programs and policies. Our work prioritises rigour, relevance, creativity, excellence and teamwork, and relies on deep collaboration with clients, as well as strategic partnerships with governments, NGOs, private companies and academics across the Global South. We are unique in our approach and the tools that we employ, offering significant advantages over other firms in helping clients to achieve their goals.

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