

THE
CARTER CENTER



YOUTH AND WOMEN'S CONSULTATIONS ON POLITICAL PARTICIPATION IN KENYA: FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This report provides the findings of consultative forums conducted from May through August 2018 with youth and women in eight counties of Kenya on the factors that hinder and promote their political participation.¹ The report offers recommendations to support their increased participation in the political sphere.²

In conducting the consultative forums, The Carter Center partnered with Kenyan organizations that work to promote the rights of these special-interest groups. For the youth forums, the partners were the Youth Agenda, Siasa Place, and the National Youth Bunge Association. Partners for the women's forums were Community Advocacy and Awareness Trust (CRAWN), the Center for Rights Education and Awareness (CREAW), and the Federation of Women Lawyers Kenya (FIDA).³

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Kenya's 2010 constitution introduced provisions to its constitutional and legal framework to support the increased participation of youth and women. Importantly, it mandated that "not more than two-thirds of the members of elective or appointive bodies should be of the same gender." The new constitution also dedicated seats for women at the county level and a youth seat in the senate. Despite these mechanisms, women represent only about nine percent of the officials elected in 2017. Though multiple mechanisms exist to support and strengthen youth and women's political participation, much still needs to be done to increase their engagement.

The Carter Center's research showed that youth and women face serious financial, societal, and cultural challenges to full participation, including intimidation,

¹ Consultations were facilitated, interactive sessions with up to eight participants. A common set of questions was explored during each session. One-on-one interviews were also held with community members in each locale.

² Following the consultations, key findings and recommendations were shared with various stakeholders, including the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (IEBC); National Gender and Equality Commission (NGEC); Ethics and Anti-Corruption Commission (EACC); the Kenya Women Parliamentary Association; Office of Registrar of Political Parties (ORPP); and Political Parties Liaison Committee (PPLC).

³ Partners provided input on county selection, scope of inquiry, participant recruitment, and analysis of findings.

harassment, and violence. Yet they remain eager to participate as candidates, voters, and informed citizens, and should be supported by all stakeholders.

The Center urges executive, parliamentary, and county government actors to take steps to protect and promote youth and women's participation. The government has not fully enacted or implemented legal measures to reflect the principles articulated in the 2010 Constitution. The Kenyan authorities should provide sufficient resources to constitutional commissions and other regulatory bodies, enabling them to fully enforce compliance with legal provisions and codes of conduct that advance youth and women's political participation.

The Center's studies also revealed that political parties often hinder youth and women's participation. As such, the Center encourages parties to reform and strengthen their internal structures to increase the number of youth and women party members and decision-makers. Political parties should develop affirmative-action measures to help level the playing field for youth and women aspirants.

Other key findings:

- Overall, participants had a narrow understanding of political participation, focused on voting or running for office rather than engaging in policy debates. Once they learned about additional opportunities for engagement, they expressed interest in exerting greater influence on public policy.
- More than 90 percent of participants said they voted, but less than 40 percent ran for office or participated in public forums.
- While most participants were able to register to vote, youth said that getting a national ID card – which involves a lengthy and cumbersome application process – is a barrier for some.
- All agreed that running for office is expensive, which particularly disadvantages youth and women, who suffer from high unemployment and often don't own property that could be used to secure loans.
- Most participants said vote buying and bribery are prevalent in Kenyan elections, significantly disadvantaging youth and women aspirants of limited means.
- Minimum education level requirements also hinder women (and some youth), who often don't have much formal education but are otherwise qualified to lead.
- About 60 percent of participants said women are afraid to express their opinion in mixed spaces; many youth also expressed discomfort about speaking in forums in which the majority are non-youth for fear of being viewed as disrespectful.

- Approximately 90 percent of women aspirants said they felt unsafe during the party primary period, with many sharing stories of intimidation, harassment, and character assassination.
- Youth participants said that because of high unemployment rates, their peers are willing to hire themselves out as protesters and are susceptible to politicians pushing an agenda.

Participants' recommendations for increasing political participation and improving the process can be found throughout the report. The Carter Center's complete list of recommendations can be found at the end.

METHODOLOGY AND APPROACH

The Carter Center assessed youth and women political participation as part of its 2017 Kenya election observation mission. The Center found that while youth and women made minimal gains in the election, they faced significant challenges to participation. Positively, for the first time, three women and one youth were elected governor, and three women were elected to the senate. A large number of youth and women served as IEBC staff, with the IEBC establishing a youth coordination committee. Civil society groups conducted civic and voter education targeting youth and women and promoted peace messaging targeting youth. However, the number of women elected fell far short of the two-thirds gender rule. Women were subjected to harassment and violence, and youth were vulnerable to engaging in violence. Youth and women faced financial constraints to participation; the latter faced patriarchal and cultural constraints. The Center found more effort was needed by political parties, the IEBC, and other state actors to support the political participation of youth and women.

The Center extended its program into 2018 to further explore the challenges to political participation faced by youth and women and to develop actionable recommendations that, if implemented early in the five-year electoral cycle, will advance significantly youth and women political participation.

In coordination with several Kenyan civil society organizations (CSOs), The Carter Center undertook a series of consultations in eight counties targeting youth and women voters and women aspirants for office.⁴ Sessions covered several topics, including participants' knowledge of opportunities for political engagement; participants' interests and motivation to engage as citizens, voters, candidates, political party members, and party supporters; expectations of leaders; ways to raise awareness of youth and women participation; and opportunities to increase their engagement in politics and civic affairs.

⁴ The Center and its partners took several factors into consideration when targeting locations for the discussions, including geographical coverage (covering the eight former provincial administrations); political affiliation (ensuring a mix of ruling and opposition party strongholds and swing counties); registration considerations (areas with a high and low number of registered youth and women); voting patterns/performance (areas that elected a high number of youth and women and those with few or no elected youth and women); rural and urban areas; and areas that had experienced incidences of violence during the 2017 polls. Eight counties were ultimately selected for the women and youth forums.

The Center and its partners held youth forums in Muranga, Kisumu, Bungoma, Nandi, Kitui, Garissa, Lamu, and Nairobi.⁵ The forums for women were held in Nyeri, Narok, Kisumu, Bungoma, Baringo, Kitui, Garissa, and Lamu.⁶

Participants for the youth forums were randomly selected. Target groups varied by employment status, voter registration status, and education levels. Each session included eight participants. Key informant interviews were also conducted in each county with four to six youth community leaders from faith-based organizations, community-based organizations, self-help groups, youth aspirants (candidates who vied in 2017 but were unsuccessful) and elected members of the County Assembly (MCAs).

The target groups for the women's forums were unsuccessful aspirants and randomly selected women from the marketplace and self-help groups (*chamas*). Sessions with women from the marketplace included eight participants. Sessions with aspirants ranged from three to eight participants. Key informant interviews were also conducted with four to six male community leaders in each county. These men represented self-help groups, faith-based organizations; community-based organizations, and the business community. Several elected and nominated women MCAs also were interviewed.⁷

Follow-up consultations were conducted with non-youth and men to gain a greater understanding of these community members' perspectives on youth and women's participation. Sessions with non-youth were held in Garissa, Kitui, and Muranga, while sessions with men were held in Garissa, Nyeri, and Narok.⁸

The following provides a summary of key findings and recommendations to support increased political participation of youth and women.

CONSULTATION FINDINGS

LEGAL FRAMEWORK PROTECTING YOUTH AND WOMEN'S POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

International and regional treaties protect the rights of all citizens to participate freely and equally in the public affairs of their country. Treaties protect the rights of all citizens to vote for their preferred candidate and to run for elected office. They further advance the rights of citizens to participate in policymaking and debates.⁹

⁵ For the youth consultations, 220 youth participants took part in the interactive sessions, and 43 key informant interviews were held with community members.

⁶ For the women's consultations, 114 women participants took part in the interactive sessions, and 46 key informant interviews were held with male community members.

⁷⁷

⁸ Twenty-four participants took part in the interactive sessions with non-youth on youth participation, and 23 participants took part in the interactive sessions with male community members on women's participation. Women and men ages 34 to 68 participated in the non-youth sessions. Men ages 18 to 68 took part in the male community member sessions.

⁹ U.N. ICCPR, Article 25 (a) and (b), AU, AfCHPR, Article 13(1).

Although Kenya has progressive constitutional obligations to protect and advance youth and women's participation, government bodies charged with ensuring full compliance, including the parliament and regulatory bodies, have failed to ensure that these obligations are fully achieved.

The Kenyan government has ratified major international treaties that protect youth and women's political participation. It has affirmed further its commitment to the 2010 Constitution that establishes state obligations to advance these special-interest groups' political participation and includes specific affirmative-action mechanisms that "not more than two-thirds of the members of elective or appointive bodies should be of the same gender," among others.¹⁰ The Political Parties Act, 2011, and the related amendments, Elections Act, 2011, Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission Act, 2011, National Gender and Equality Commission Act, 2011, and County Government Act, 2012, enumerate mechanisms and processes to ensure compliance with the constitutionally mandated participation requirements for youth and women.

Similarly, the constitution requires that the state creates mechanisms to protect and advance the rights of youth and creates a limited number of dedicated affirmative-action seats for youth.¹¹ Political parties are also required to establish mechanisms to support youth and women party members as candidates and to serve as leaders within the party governance structure. The IEBC ensures that candidates from special-interest groups, including youth and women, meet the appropriate requirements for affirmative-action seats.

Although parliament, regulatory bodies, and political parties have the responsibility to ensure full compliance with these and other supportive constitutional provisions, they have failed to do so.

DEFINING POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

International and regional standards protect the rights of all citizens to express support and vote for her or his preferred candidate, to compete for office, and to be informed about and influence public policy.¹²

Overall, participants described a narrow understanding of political participation focused on voting and running for office rather than engaging in policy debates. This gap in understanding regarding how to engage in civic affairs may inhibit their full participation, as the majority of participants expressed a strong interest in being further

¹⁰ Kenya has ratified the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), the African Charter on Human and People's Rights (AfCHPR), the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the African Union Charter on the Principles Governing Democratic Elections in Africa (AU CPGDEA), the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (AfCHPR-PW). The 2010 Constitution includes multiple provisions protecting the rights of women and youth. Articles 27(8), 55, 81(b), 97, 98, 100, 175(c), 177(1)(b) and 197(1).

¹¹ The 2010 Constitution requires that the National Assembly have "...twelve members nominated by parliamentary political parties according to their proportion of members of the National Assembly in accordance with Article 90, to represent special interests including the youth, persons with disabilities and workers..." and for membership in the Senate "...two members, being one man and one woman, representing youth..."

¹² U.N. ICCPR, Article 25 (a) and (b), AU, AfCHPR, Article 13(1).

involved in the political process, despite significant challenges. Youth and women participants realize they have a numerical advantage and represent the majority of potential voters. Once participants learned about additional opportunities for engagement from the discussion, both groups expressed interest in exerting greater influence on public policy.

More than 70 percent of youth participants, especially those from the informal sector, had a limited understanding of the term “political participation.” They defined it as registering to vote, campaigning, and voting for a preferred candidate. College students and employed youth had a stronger knowledge, citing the role of citizens in informing policy and holding leaders accountable to their commitments. A significant number of women participants (both political aspirants and those in the marketplace) demonstrated understanding that meaningful political participation involves vying for elective positions, voting for leaders who will deliver services, being involved in campaigns, and participating actively in political parties.

More than 90 percent of youth and women who took part in our consultations vote, but less than 40 percent have engaged as candidates or taken part in public forums.

Motivation to Participate

Youth participants described multiple reasons for wanting to engage in political processes and governance. More than 90 percent said that they are motivated to engage because it is their right and civic duty to choose leaders. The youth participants cited the need for improvement, change, and the importance of electing good leaders with sound policy proposals as motivations for them to participate. Some participants said that political processes often provide an opportunity to earn money, especially during the campaign cycle. Some of the participants indicated their interest in garnering experience in aspects of the political process, including in the act of voting.

“I do not think that by voting [for] someone anything changes in my life. We are still looking for jobs, which are being given to the old people despite graduating many years ago. I only vote because someone has forced me.” – youth participant from Nairobi

Women participants posited that if women are empowered, the whole house is empowered, as is the entire community. Women understand fully the needs of the community and desire to affect positive change in the community by informing policy and running for office. They view women leaders as better placed to understand and address the needs of women and children.

Some youth and women participants were discouraged because they feel elected leaders have not fulfilled their promises, and they question how politics has improved their lives.

“When leaders make promises to the youth, they need to keep their promises.” – non-youth participant in Lamu on why youth are discouraged from politics

PARTICIPATION IN VOTER REGISTRATION

Universal suffrage commands that the broadest possible pool of citizens can participate in voting, inclusive of youth and women eligible voters.¹³ A voter registration process that is non-discriminatory and widely accessible is an essential step in ensuring youth and women's equal right to vote.

Youth and women consultation participants generally found registration accessible. Youth participants faced the greatest challenge in their efforts to obtain a national identity card, which is required to register.

More than 90 percent of the youth and women who participated in the discussions were registered voters.¹⁴ They registered, they said, because it was their right, because they wanted to vote for their preferred candidate, or, in some instances, because they were offered financial incentives. Some youth participants said that they registered because politicians paid them. Some reported that they did not register because of a lack of understanding of the importance or value of voting.

According to youth participants, the biggest challenge to register and vote is related to their ability to obtain a national identity card, which is required to register. The youth participants faulted the application process, which was termed "lengthy," "cumbersome," "hectic," and "fraught with corruption." The process in some instances, mainly in the border counties, includes the vetting of applicants by committee, over unregulated periods of time, which further prolongs the process. A youth in Lamu reported that the vetting process to acquire an ID does not happen on a monthly basis, with long delays between processes. Some participants reported that it took them up to three years to get an ID.¹⁵ Others said that some of the requisite documents, like the original ID cards of the applicant's parents, are often not easily available, especially for orphans or youth from single-parent homes. Youth participants in Bungoma and Lamu described how young married women from outside the county face challenges acquiring IDs because of the difficulty of traveling to and gathering required documentation from their counties of origin.

"I faced challenges in getting an ID Card because I am an orphan."
- youth participant from Nairobi

Apart from empowering an individual to influence decisions through the ballot box, the ID is a crucial document for citizenship in Kenya. It determines the extent to which an individual can enjoy their fundamental rights and freedoms within the country. The law provides that a person may be required to produce a national ID card when applying for a job, driving license, or higher education, opening a bank account, or purchasing property. An ID is required to apply for grants such as the Youth Enterprise Fund and

¹³ U.N., ICCPR, Article 25; AU, AfCHPR, Article 2.

¹⁴ Registered youth were one target group. However, rates of registration were high among employed and unemployed youth and college students.

¹⁵ While the law provides for issuance of an ID card within 30 days of registration, it does not provide a timeline for registration. The law also provides for the establishment of an identification committee or appointment of identification agents to assist in the authentication of information furnished by a parent or guardian.

Women Fund, which the government has provided to both groups as a job-creation venture. Failure to obtain this crucial document disproportionately affects the already-struggling youth population. These challenges greatly impact whether and how a youth can actively engage in political processes.

Participants reported that the timeframe and relative proximity of voter registration centers provided appropriate opportunities for voter registration. Many participants lauded the IEBC's efforts to deploy mobile registration clerks to the ward and village levels, which enabled many voters to register. According to most participants, information on voter registration was effectively and sufficiently communicated through various venues, including administrative structures, schools, churches, and market centers. While a majority (roughly 80 percent) of the participants were not aware that voter registration is conducted on a continuous basis, the few who were aware reported that the provision offers an adequate opportunity for registration. More than 90 percent noted that they had verified their registration status through the SMS (70000) platform and physically through the verification clerks, and that they were provided adequate opportunity to verify their registration details. A few participants, however, said that the IEBC had failed to correct their registration details despite their request to do so during the verification process, and thus were unable to vote.

Some youth participants said that they and many of their peers are motivated and influenced by politicians to register in return for free transportation and handouts. However, this did not necessarily translate into votes, as some did not show up to vote on polling day.

Participants said that they generally felt safe during registration.

PARTICIPATION IN VOTING

International and regional standards protect all citizens' right to vote and call on states to ensure freedom to express one's will at the ballot box, secrecy of the ballot, and personal security for all voters.¹⁶

More than 90 percent of participants freely exercised their right to vote. Some youth and women participants reported being influenced by their parents and husbands, respectively. Participants said that illiterate women are vulnerable to influence as assisted voters.

Participants who voted listed several reasons for doing so: some voted simply because it was their right, others because they wanted change or to vote for a particular candidate, or to bring development to their community. While approximately 80 percent of the men and non-youth participants reported their willingness to vote for women and youth, this is not reflected in the voting patterns. The few who reported that they had not voted were youth participants who said that either they did not have an ID or that

¹⁶ U.N., ICCPR, Articles 9, 19 and 25; AU, AfCHPR, Articles 6, 9(2) and 13(1); U.N. (CCPR), General Comment 25, para. 11.

they couldn't because of discrepancies in registration details (some of their names were not on the lists at the polling stations where they had registered, for example). Very few youth (less than 5 percent) reported that they and their peers did not vote despite being registered, primarily because they were working and unable to travel to their assigned polling stations or because of a general lack of interest and questions about the value of voting. Some elderly women reported challenges getting to and from the polling stations. Some youth (approximately 10 percent) reported that they did not vote because they were working as IEBC clerks and had been deployed to polling stations far from where they had registered. While they appreciated the opportunity to work as IEBC polling clerks, they suggested that the IEBC should make allowances in the future to allow polling staff to vote.

Participants said that parents and husbands influence youth and women voters in some areas; and in some cases, men dictate whom their wives and family should support. This can influence a woman to vote for a male candidate, even if a woman is her preferred candidate.

Participants said that the secrecy of the ballot is sometimes violated in areas where a significant number of women have never accessed formal education and are assisted in voting. Such cases were noted in Baringo, Lamu, Garissa, and Narok.

Participants said that they generally felt safe on election day. However, female participants in Narok said that some voters, especially illiterate women, are intimidated by their husbands into supporting specific candidates. They reported that, in some instances, the husband decides who will assist them in the voting booth, thus ensuring they vote according to their husband's wishes.

Expectations of Elected Leaders

Numerous factors influenced participants' decisions to vote for a certain candidate. These include character, with high moral integrity being the most preferred; track record and accessibility of elected officials to community members; and the leadership skills, approachability, and accessibility of the candidate. Approachability and accessibility was a consistent theme across sessions. Participants gave high marks to officials that they viewed as accessible to community members. Participants with party affiliations said that they voted for candidates nominated by their political parties. Participants emphasized that voters also assess the ability of a candidate to offer financial incentives.

Youth participants believe that young candidates are better able to understand the issues affecting them. Women and male participants said that it is important for women aspirants and candidate manifestos to address the needs of the broader community.

The electorate's understanding, or lack thereof, of the roles of the various elected candidates seems to be a key determinant of community members' expectations. Those with a limited or unclear understanding of the role of elected and nominated leaders had high and sometimes personal expectations of these individuals. This included

expectations to help pay hospital and school bills, donate food supplies, and sometimes even provide handouts.

*“Grow Kenya, Eat Kenya, and Live Kenya”
– motto of women from Nyeri urging leaders to put money in Kenyan’s pockets*

Approximately 95 percent of youth and women participants said that elected leaders should be accessible to community members in order to keep abreast of the issues affecting their constituents, including community development. Participants said that this was also important for encouraging accountability in fulfilling elected leaders' manifestos and campaign pledges.

The youth participants pointed out that youth leaders are better placed to understand and respond to their own unique concerns. For youth participants, the creation of employment opportunities was the most consistent expectation they had from their leaders. Participants also indicated that they expect elected leaders to increase opportunities for bursaries for youth; ensure equal distribution of resources within the community, including to benefit youth; support consideration of youth for government tenders; build the capacity of youth on matters of civic engagement; and increase representation of youth within policy and decision-making organs in the county.

Over 90 percent of female participants underscored the importance of having the manifestos and campaign pledges of women candidates address the concerns of the broader community. However, participants highlighted that they should also speak to issues that concern women. Male participants supported this approach. Female participants expected their elected leaders to fulfill pledges made to the community; deliver services relating to improved roads; increase access to healthcare, education, and employment opportunities; be accountable to the electorate; involve more women in planning and decision-making; promote the interests of women, and design income-generating programs and activities for women and girls.

PARTICIPATION AS CANDIDATES

International and regional standards establish that an equal and level playing field for all candidates, inclusive of youth and women candidates, is essential for democratic elections.¹⁷ An open, safe campaign environment is especially important for women who are vulnerable to violence and intimidation; special provisions should be implemented to ensure the safety and level playing field for women.¹⁸

Youth and women aspirants described numerous challenges that exist when they vie for office, with many challenges underscored across consultation sessions and in interviews with male community members and elected officials. Barriers to participation include limited financial resources, inadequate support from political parties, gender-based violence, and cultural impediments.

¹⁷ U.N., ICCPR, Articles 3 and 25; AU, ACHPR, Articles 2; U.N., CEDAW, General Recommendation 23, para. 22.

¹⁸ U.N., ICCPR, Article 25(b); AU, ACHPR, Articles 2 and 13; U.N., CEDAW, Article 3.

Lack of sufficient financial resources

All participants indicated that access to funding is a critical factor influencing youth and women's ability to engage as candidates. Participants said that significant financial resources are needed to vie, and candidates with strong financial backing tend to be the most successful.

The capital-intensive nature of elections happens in a context where youth and women suffer from high unemployment and often lack the property ownership required to secure loans. Candidates without financial resources are often not viewed as formidable or serious contenders, discouraging interested and otherwise strong youth and women aspirants who have more limited financial means.

Participants described the many costs associated with vying for office. Candidates need funds to pay party membership fees, secure their party's nomination, and pay IEBC nomination fees. Additionally, participants said that contenders cannot run an effective campaign without adequate financial resources. Aspirants and candidates require resources for transportation, advertisements and outreach (billboards, leaflets, etc.), to organize and hold events, and to pay campaign staff and party agents during the political party primaries and the general elections. Funds are also required to lodge electoral disputes.

"You should have money, if you don't, do not attempt, no one will listen to you." – woman aspirant from Kitui

"An empty hand is not licked." – woman aspirant from Narok

Participants noted that candidates are sometimes judged by their ability to support community projects. Aspiring candidates are asked to attend burials, building or road construction projects, and youth and women association gatherings, and are often inundated with requests for financial support. Candidates who have greater financial resources are better able to support development projects, which in turn mobilizes greater voter support. Parties are also more likely to support aspirants whom they judge to have the necessary resources to be competitive.

Vote Buying and Vote Bribery – Most participants said vote bribery is prevalent in Kenyan elections and significantly disadvantages youth and women candidates who have limited economic means. Bribery takes place during party primaries, general election campaigns, on the eve of the election, and on election day. Vote bribery can take many different forms, including handouts of money and food supplies, voter transportation from one area to another to register and vote, and the distribution of campaign paraphernalia, such as clothing. Many participants said that voters expect the aspirants, candidates, and parties to provide handouts in exchange for their support.

Although participants cited concerns about corruption and vote-buying practices, they also said that voters often take bribes from multiple aspirants (during the party primaries) and candidates (during the general elections). Participants indicated that

giving out bribes to potential voters does not necessarily guarantee their support. As such, candidates are not confident of winning electoral contests, but, in most instances, the highest bidder gets elected.

Unemployed youth are the main target of vote bribery because of their financial insecurity and the incentive to make quick money. Participants acknowledged that voter bribery is an illegal offense, but they nonetheless engage in it because they need the money. Some participants also said that voters take handouts because they believe it is the only opportunity they will have to meet and interact with potential leaders, and benefit from the elections. In their experience, once an individual takes office, they are no longer approachable or accessible, and expectations that the legislator will respond to their concerns are low.

"She will vote the candidate who gives more bribes because she believes that after the election, she will never see the elected leader again."
– woman participant from Baringo

Lack of support by political parties/political party dynamics¹⁹

Over 80 percent of participants in all consultation sessions believe that political parties influence who runs for office and is elected. Institutional support is viewed as a critical factor for success. Often, parties have preferred candidates, for whom they provide support and backing. Generally, participants said that youth and women have very limited roles in political party leadership structures. The party nominations process lacks transparency and accountability.

Political Party Membership - Approximately one-third of the youth participants were registered members of political parties. They said that they joined political parties to be politically relevant, to enhance their popularity with the electorate, and to increase the possibility of securing a party nomination. Many of those that joined did so because they believe in the party leadership. Parties actively encourage youth to attend meetings, which provides them with an opportunity to interact with the party leaders. Some parties support youth aspirants as they conduct their campaigns and are nominated to run for office. However, youth participants said that they receive little financial support from parties.

The remaining two-thirds of the youth participants who were not party members said that they have not joined a political party because of their disinterest in politics and a lack of awareness about how to become a member, as well as because of perceptions that the party primaries are undemocratic, that youth are underrepresented in key party decision-making positions, and that parties lack youthful leaders.

¹⁹ Political parties in Kenya are governed by the 2011 Political Parties Act. The act establishes that political parties promote democracy, good governance, participation, and inclusivity. Parties are obliged to implement measures to progressively realize representation and participation of special interest groups as contemplated through affirmative-action provisions in the 2010 Constitution.

Women participants from the marketplace offered varied perspectives as to why they joined a political party, including a desire to be engaged in government, to support a particular candidate, or because they shared an ethnic affiliation with a particular party. In Baringo, 100 percent of the participants were political party members. They joined parties with which they had an ethnic affiliation in order to be part of the government. Likewise, in Nyeri, 100 percent of the participants were members of political parties; many said they joined to support a presidential candidate. In Kisumu, 80 percent of participants were lifelong party members, with a deep sense of party loyalty and support for party leadership. In Narok, 70 percent of women participants were political party members; they joined because they saw their party as “visionary and action-oriented,” or because they wanted “to follow the lead of community leaders,” or to be recognized within the community.

In Kitui, 50 percent of women participants were members of political parties. The participants said that they joined either to support certain candidates in the primaries or because the party was associated with their ethnic group. In Bungoma, a significant number of women participants were party members, noting that the party leader was essential to their support and that parties were a means to support their preferred candidates for office. The participants also noted that smaller parties sometimes provide women a greater opportunity to lead and be politically engaged than larger political parties.

Fewer women participants in Garissa – only slightly more than 10 percent – said that they were members of a political party. The few who were party members said that they were motivated to join to become loyal members of a party and expressed an interest in vying in 2022. In Lamu, none of the participants were members of political parties; however, the majority expressed an interest in joining a party once they became aware of this possibility.

Preferred party candidates – Participants affirmed that political party allegiance and monetary handouts often weigh more heavily on voters’ decisions than the policies that candidates espoused or strong leadership credentials.

Political parties often have preferred candidates whom they support during party primaries. Even strong candidates with significant financial resources have little chances of success if they are not nominated by the strongest political party in the area.

Women in the marketplace in Kisumu opined that political parties do not support their participation; otherwise, more women would have been elected. Youth in Kitui reported that political party “owners” inhibit their involvement, with youth in Muranga calling on political parties to provide mentorship to young candidates to guide them in the political process.

“Start a woman’s political party because most political parties are owned and controlled by men.” – woman participant from Narok

Role in party leadership and decision-making – While participants believed that youth and women should play important roles in campaigning and mobilizing support for parties and candidates, most indicated that they have been largely unsuccessful in shaping or setting the agenda, as most parties remain male and non-youth dominated structures. Participants said that a lack of internal democracy has limited the ascendency of youth and women into leadership and decision-making roles. This limits their exposure and visibility within the broader party membership, and in communities where the party is recognized and wields influence. This undermines their ability to compete on a level playing field with fellow non-youth and male contenders in the party primaries. Importantly, this denies strong but lesser-known aspirants the necessary strategic political leverage to campaign for a spot on the party nominations list.

“Women are not engaged in decision-making in political parties because politics is about ‘who brings what to the table.’” – woman aspirant from Nyeri

Affirmative Action within Parties - Women aspirants said that they rarely benefit from political party financial resources to conduct their campaigns. When parties did provide support, most participants reported that it was usually only after the party primaries. For the general elections, some parties provided women candidates a platform to speak to the electorate during the campaign period. Some political parties waived nomination fees for women and youth candidates.²⁰ Others provided campaign materials such as t-shirts, hats, and posters. Nonetheless, aspirants said that political parties are primarily focused on increasing party support and funding through aspirant nomination fees during the nominations process.

The nominations process - Issues of transparency and accountability plague the nominations process. Women aspirants and women from the marketplace opined that only those women with connections to party leaders are nominated, including, reportedly, friends and family members. They reported that, often, nominated women are not real lawmakers and instead cater to party interests as opposed to the interests of their fellow citizens. They noted that many voters only recognize elected leaders, leaving nominated women with limited power to influence policy decisions. This raised some questions: “Why do we have nominated women?” “Who are the nominated women accountable to?” “Who cares whether they perform or not?” They further noted that nominated leaders do not have access to development funds nor personal assistants to help with interacting with the public. This undermines their effectiveness in office. Nominated and elected women interviewed described similar challenges and limitations for the nominated positions.

“Being in the wrong party is a setback for the women candidates, but even being in the right party is never easy.” – woman participant from Kisumu

Participants argued that nominating women just to meet the gender balance quota is not the intent of the law, nor a good use of resources. The intent is to bring women into

²⁰ The IEBC also lowered fees for youth and women candidates by half.

office, to create avenues for women to provide input into public policymaking and to establish high-quality women as leaders and representatives. Participants suggested that political parties should nominate women who have demonstrated support from the community and a shared policy agenda, in addition to active support within the party. They suggested that parties consider nominating women who performed well but were ultimately unsuccessful in the political party primaries.

“Nominations become a tool to create ‘flower girls for the men and drum beaters for the kings.” – woman participant from Narok

Despite the challenges they face in political parties, women aspirants expressed their willingness to launch bids in the next election. Generally, aspirants suggested the best strategy is to align oneself with a larger, known political party. Women in Kitui, Narok, and Garissa said that party membership increased the likelihood that a woman would secure a place on a party’s nomination list.

Perceptions related to (lack of) experience

Youth participants indicated that lack of experience discourages them from seeking office.²¹ In discussions, they described a belief that the older generation perceives youth as lacking the experience and wisdom to lead in higher government offices, whether it be as governor, senator, MP, or women representative. It emerged that some youth are encouraged to contest as members of the County Assembly (MCAs), which can serve as a path to higher office. Non-youth participants challenged the assertion that inexperience is a deterrent, noting that youth learn and grow through their daily experiences just as others do and that many of them have been leaders in schools and youth organizations. They said that they would support youth aspirants who have energy, vision, and are development-oriented with ideas to improve the situation for community members. They stressed that the perceived lack of experience among youth is not a key factor that would make them not vote for a youthful leader.

Lack of formal education

The lack of a formal education and the criteria requiring a minimum education level is a factor that hinders women (and some youth) from running for office. Women participants, both in the marketplace and as aspirants to elected office, appreciate the importance of at least some formal education as a requirement for political officials, given that elected and nominated women play a critical role in policymaking and developing programs to address economic development, service delivery, and security. Participants said that a certain level of education is needed to contribute in an informed manner. However, participants also indicated that there are very capable current and potential women leaders who are active at the local level with vision, ideas, and energy to tackle the issues facing their communities.

²¹ For the purposes of these consultations, youth are defined as persons between the ages of 18 to 35, a wide age range for which to factor experience, education, and financial stability. Focused analysis targeting more narrow age cohorts would be useful to gauge how best to engage and support youth.

"We may be women who are not educated, but we have visions and we are very intelligent." – woman participant from Narok

"We want women who are going to make laws and policies."
– woman participant from Kitui

Women participants in Garissa said that the women who are interested in vying for elected office are mostly young women who meet the education criteria. Conversely, in Nyeri, participants said that capable older women are very qualified to lead but lack the education certificate required to run for office.²² Women in Kisumu expressed frustration that the education requirement locks out women who have leadership qualities but are not educated. In Narok, women participants asked if there was a way to progressively reach the education criteria, noting that technocrats in the assemblies could support building capacity on policymaking. In Kitui, women participants noted that an increasing number of women are completing their post-secondary education, which would help them fulfill the requirements to run for the MCA position if this requirement remains in place. Participants in Bungoma pointed to the impact of early or child marriage, which takes young girls out of school. These young girls are automatically excluded because of the education criteria. They noted further that most women (married and unmarried) are not economically empowered and that it is hard to persuade one's husband to support their returning to school, as many families try to balance competing priorities. Women in Baringo emphasized a point echoed across counties - the sad perception that uneducated women cannot lead the educated.

For the 2022 general election, per pending legislation, a university degree may be required to run for the MCA position, exacerbating an already significant obstacle to women (and youth) political participation, with the potential to stymie gains for women and youth aspirants to local government.

Impact of Culture, Clannism, Religion

Participants said that culture also impedes the effective participation of youth and women, asserting that many non-youth and men believe that youth and women are inferior and cannot lead effectively. However, participants also said that this attitude is slowly changing.

"Just because you are a woman, when you become aggressive, you attract negative perception from both men and women supporters; you become a threat to men; you are profiled and labeled 'prostitute', and a woman who has no responsibilities. But when you humble yourself, you cannot get votes." – woman participant from Narok

According to participants, a woman's role requires that she take care of the family. To vie for office, she must balance home life and her campaign. Participants said that women aspirants who have limited resources are unable to hire additional help to watch their children, assist at home, or support the campaign. The campaign season often

²² MCA candidates were required to have a post-secondary qualification, i.e. diploma. It is possible the requirement will change to a university degree from a recognized Kenyan university for the 2022 general election.

brings late-night meetings, which prove particularly challenging to women aspirants because they are viewed negatively if they attend or hold meetings in the evening. Participants also said that aspirants are accused of abandoning their roles as mothers and wives. Women in Narok explained that sometimes women are unable to vote for other women because of the influence of their husbands.

Approximately 60 percent of participants said that many women are afraid to express their opinion in a mixed space in which men are also participating. Similarly, youth expressed discomfort speaking in forums in which the majority are non-youth for fear of being viewed as disrespectful to their elders. Female participants reported that some husbands prohibit their wives from participating in politics, including preventing or limiting their ability to speak in public.

“Every clan has a king, and the king’s word is final. There is no questioning.” – woman participant from Garissa

*“What male candidates do, women must do twice or thrice.”
– woman participant from Baringo*

Youth participants reported that they and their peers are negatively impacted by the belief that one has to be married and own land to be trusted with leadership. This perception especially limits young, unmarried women who are interested in running for office. About 60 percent of the youth participants said that they were “locked out” of higher-level positions, such as governor and senator. In response, however, many youth vie for MCA positions, which was deemed more achievable.

“There is a misconception propagated by the leaders that one needs to be 45 years and over to vie for governor.” – youth participant from Lamu

Youth participants in Garissa pointed to the negative impact of clannism and negotiated democracy, whereby family heads negotiate the support of their family for candidates. This practice heavily favors the older generation, which leaves youth without the ability to garner support and undermines their ability to choose their leaders. Generally, youth are not considered in negotiated democracy deals.

Women aspirants in Garissa also described the negative impact of negotiated democracy on their ability to vie for office. In response, women seek out male allies whom they use to lobby men and elders on their behalf within the clans. They actively seek to work with male community members and, when possible, include them as advisors in their own campaign teams.

Women participants in Lamu spoke about the misunderstanding and misinterpretation of Islam as an obstacle to women and their participation. A participant noted that in Iran, where she previously worked, she was impressed to see that women are elected to parliament, even though the country is predominantly Muslim. She emphasized the need to change the belief in Kenya’s Muslim community that women come second to men. She further urged women to shun the perception that Islam impedes their ability to lead, which ultimately limits their participation.

Non-youth and male participants expressed their strong belief that both women and youth can lead and have the potential to contribute significantly and positively to the governance of their fellow citizens. This perspective stands in contrast to the situation described by women participants and underscores the need for these stakeholder groups to vocally, publicly, and consistently support youth and women community leaders and elected and nominated youth and women officials.

Lack of security and threat of violence

Despite the existence of electoral and political party codes of conduct, women aspirants said that they still face election-related gender-based violence. Participants said that the threat of organized violence against women aspirants discourages women from vying, especially during party primaries. Women face sexual harassment and assault, including rape, threats by male opponents, insults, slander, and propaganda.

Instances and threats of violence cause women supporters of candidates to shy away from participating. It also discourages women from vying for office. Approximately 90 percent of women aspirants reported that they felt unsafe during the party primary period. Women in the marketplace and male participants also described an insecure environment for women during the party primaries. Most women felt it was safer for them to engage in the general elections, as adequate security measures are in place, whereas in political party primaries, their safety is not assured.

Women aspirants and male participants reported that men think that because women have seats set aside for them (the women representative seat and nominated seats), they should not be supported for other positions. Some male opponents perpetuate this misunderstanding: “Don’t vote her, she will be nominated; Do not vote women, they have women rep position.”

Male contenders running against women have suggested that their female opponents will leave their families once elected. Some propaganda and slander is so embarrassing and inflammatory that, according to female aspirants, many women step down because of the fear of family shame, the possible impact on their children, or to save their marriages. Those with family support persevere, but it causes trauma to some female candidates. These experiences were also described by non-aspirants and male community members.

Personal accounts of the pains and struggles women go through during the electoral process lay bare the trauma many of the women have experienced. The experiences stay with the aspirants and are known within the community. This has a cascade effect of discouraging women from participating.

A woman MCA aspirant in Bungoma said that her votes were burned during the primaries, but she was told by her party leadership not to go to court. In Kisumu, a sitting woman MCA won the party primary, and after she received the certificate, “some men” were sent to intimidate her into returning it, which she did for fear of her life, until

the top party management intervened. During the primaries, a woman aspirant in Narok won the nomination, but a phone call came from “above” (top party management) instructing returning officers to hand over the certificate to the male aspirant.

“I won’t try to vie again; the experience I had was terrible.” – women aspirant from Kitui

“During the campaign...that is the time you will know the fathers of your children whom you have never known.” – women aspirants from Kitui, explaining that opponents spread lies about female candidates’ morality

“Even though political parties gave us leeway through reduced fees, they did not support us in any other way. It got to a point where I had to be a criminal to survive. I hired bodyguards and hooligans to disrupt other people’s campaigns as payback for having disrupted my campaigns. In politics, you must be abnormal to survive. No one wants a normal person. You need to tell them things that you can’t deliver because that is what they want to hear. Banners are removed after being posted. In retaliation, I also ordered the posters of my opponents who sponsored removal of my posters to be removed.” – woman aspirant from Garissa

There was also a strong belief among women participants that police are given money to ignore women’s concerns during political party primaries, campaigns, and general elections, which discourages women from seeking police assistance and lodging complaints when incidents of abuse occur.

Despite these barriers, a significant number of youth and women expressed interest in vying for office.

Youth Motivation to Run for Office

Approximately half of the youth participants expressed an interest in running for political office to advance the interests of, and development in, their local communities. They feel that they understand well the needs of their respective communities. Youth participants also said that they understand best the concerns of their peers. More than 70 percent of participants who had previously vied for office planned to try again, despite feeling “cheated” during the 2017 primaries. However, approximately half of the participants said that they were not willing to run for political office because of “the dirty nature of politics” and the financial requirements necessary to campaign. Some of the youth participants said that leadership required commitment and that the public rarely appreciates leaders’ efforts to bring about development.

“The leaders without the electorate are not leaders, and therefore it is important for the leaders to listen to us.” - youth participant from Kisumu

"Once you are a leader, the blame lies on you. Take up responsibility and take the blame, too." – youth participant from Garissa, quoting Somali saying

Women's Motivation to Run for Office

Women aspirants described many motivations to run for office. Approximately 90 percent expressed their desire to address the needs of their community by putting in place policies to tackle poverty, improve infrastructure, and increase access to water, education, and healthcare. They emphasized the significant impact these issues have on all groups, inclusive of women, children, youth, and men. Many felt that previous leaders – elected male leaders – have not been responsive to the needs of the community. More than 60 percent of female aspirants believe previous leaders are unavailable to their community and have not fulfilled their promises. Women aspirants said that they understand the challenges their communities face and want access to the forums where legislation is crafted to affect positive change.

More than 80 percent of the women aspirants also served as social workers or volunteers in their communities and were encouraged by community members to run for elected office. Others were inspired by the experience of the women officials who came before them. Some opined that women are forgotten and pointed to the few women in elected positions. These women aspirants stated that they want to be the voice of women and youth and seek to improve the lives of these underrepresented groups, all while supporting their participation in policymaking. They expressed a commitment to be more available to their constituency than previous elected male leaders had been.

Importantly, in counties that still see lower numbers of elected women, aspirant participants were not deterred and sought to change this inequity. An aspirant in Baringo noted that she decided to vie for elected office after observing that most elected members were men and that nominated women had only a limited role. In Lamu, an aspirant said that she was motivated to run to address the issue of low participation of women in the county. In Garissa, aspirants indicated that they were motivated to run for office in order to fight for the rights of women.²³ In Narok, one participant who was married at 13 wanted to empower girls to avoid early marriages, while another aspirant for office wanted to be elected so that others could benefit from her prior experience developing legislation and lobbying.

"I am motivated to run to demonstrate that women are capable of being good leaders." –marketplace woman in Lamu

A significantly smaller number of female participants who were recruited from the marketplace expressed an interest in running for office. The smallest percentage (one out of eight) interested in personally vying for elected office was in Lamu, and the largest percentage (three out of eight) was in Kisumu and Nyeri. Participants said that politics is "a dirty game in which women were treated harshly and unfairly." A majority

²³ There is no female elected MCA in the county (only three women vied for the MCA seat). There is one female MP from Ijara constituency.

were discouraged by the financial costs of running a campaign and the educational requirements. Some participants reported being discouraged by other women.

The small percentage who expressed interest were often already actively engaged in community projects and saw elected office as a means to expand their efforts to support and bring change to the community. Many also wanted to fight against discrimination and for the rights of women and youth, as well as to increase opportunities for women to engage politically. Women in Nyeri said they were motivated to empower women and increase the number of women in public participation. Women in Narok are motivated by the challenges facing the community – such as marginalization and illiteracy – and by the constitutional provisions that allow for women to run for elective office. Women in Garissa were motivated to “bring unity among community members.” Most of these participants viewed the MCA position as the most attainable first-order seat.

Sources of Support for Women Candidates

Women aspirants appear to enjoy support from a variety of sources, including women, youth, and men. While cultural and societal constraints appear to be slowly easing, they continue to influence support for women as elected leaders.

Aspirants in Kisumu, Garissa, Baringo, and Narok reported that most of their support comes from women and youth. Aspirants in Nyeri and Kitui said that most of their support comes from men, while aspirants in Bungoma reported that women are largely supported by youthful women and men who are more open to women leaders than their non-youth counterparts. Aspirants in Lamu reported that they received support from both men and women.

Women participants reported that the most effective strategy for women to gain support in the community is to engage in community projects, including those that support vulnerable members of the community. (Notably, participants in the youth participation sessions also emphasized community engagement as a key contributor to youth aspirant success.) Male participants affirmed the positive effects of this approach, pointing to the important leadership role women play within their families and the broader community as evidence for women being effective as elected leaders and the importance of continuing to elect women to public office. Participants spoke of the need to raise awareness of ones' manifesto among the electorate and mobilize supporters. They said that financial constraints often prevent aspirants and candidates from reaching the entire community. Participants said women's groups were important associations for female candidates to engage and garner support.

Women participants underscored the importance of affirmative-action measures, citing the many challenges women aspirants still face. According to participants, when a woman competes against a man, the man will usually emerge victorious. Women and male participants emphasized the need to raise awareness among community members of the importance of electing women and to document and share their success stories.

"In Nyeri there is no woman who has been left behind, because they are in groups that support them." – woman participant from Nyeri

"Men can support women's participation through public forums, being their advocates and allies in the public arena." – male participant from Bungoma

The overwhelming majority of male participants said that women make good leaders because of their roles as leaders in the family and demonstrated roles in the community. While several male participants emphasized that women leaders should be educated, only one participant said that women do not make good leaders because they should not be separated from their children. Participants in the women and male forums underscored the importance of having male champions to support female candidates. Women in Nyeri reported that it is also important to ally with men, as men have a higher chance of influencing women to vote for other women. Youth participants said that their voting choices are influenced by their mothers. Women in Kitui explained that women listen more to men – stressing that if men support a female candidate, they can influence women to support her, too. While some participants said that elected women would face some challenges, including increased ridicule and peer pressure, because of the culture and patriarchal nature of the society, they could make it easier for women to garner support from men in the community in the future.

OPPORTUNITY FOR PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

International and regional treaties protect the rights of all citizens to participate in policymaking and debates.²⁴

Participants noted that although opportunities exist for them to participate publicly in governance, the majority of youth and women are not engaged effectively.

"They hear but do not listen." – youth participant from Kisumu describing political leaders

"The old man's body is all eyes." – reference to Somali proverb by youth in Garissa, describing belief that the older generation is viewed as experienced and always right

Participants cited several impediments to their participation in political activities, including poor communication about when and where consultations take place; cultural barriers whereby youth and women are perceived as lacking the ability to make meaningful contributions, considered inferior, or not allowed to speak in front of men; the lack of proactive efforts by leaders to bring supporters to the forums; and high transportation and facilitation costs. Some counties are large, with public forums

²⁴ U.N. ICCPR, Article 25 (a) and (b), AU, AfCHPR, Article 13(1).

conducted at the county level and in areas where the common *mwanainchi*, or ordinary citizens, find it costly to attend.

Women participants voiced concern that their contributions in these forums are not used to help shape priorities and decisions. Instead, they said, their mere participation is used to rubber stamp leaders' pre-determined plans. Women said that they are not given ample time to prepare, nor is the information at these forums provided in a manner that lends itself to effective feedback. For example, women participants in the marketplace found budget discussions very technical and difficult to follow.

Youth participants felt that most of the channels used by leaders to create awareness regarding public participation forums are not youth-friendly. Most are publicized through newspaper advertisements and chief *barazas*, to which they have little access. Youth participants also expressed a lack of awareness of their roles, responsibilities, and rights in the governance process. An example of this involved questions of how youth participants can contribute to development of County Integrated Development Plans (CIDP), and why this is important.

"The 'one youth, one cow program' is a good economic development initiative; however, many youth, especially those living in their parents' homes, cannot take up the offer. According to the Kikuyu tradition, a man can only be given land by the parents if he is married. Since some youth are unmarried and do not have land, they were unable to take advantage of the program." – youth participant from Muranga to highlight the importance of consulting youth in policymaking

According to participants, women occupy influential positions at the county level in such County Executive Committee (CEC) units as health, trade, finance, youth and sports, environment, and agriculture. Women are also represented in various committees, including, for example, bursary committees. Conversely, youth participants reported inadequate representation in key decision-making positions such as CECs.

Approximately 30 percent of participants said that youth and women are indeed consulted on issues. Youth participants from Kitui described an ongoing consultation with youth on the county youth policy. A team from the governor's office visited all wards to gather views from youth, including both employed and unemployed young people. The MCAs also communicated through the village administrators to reach other youth. They gathered feedback on issues impacting students, young business community, *bodaboda* riders, and other youth.

More than 90 percent of participants noted, however, that after consultations, their voices are not consistently reflected in the final document. This contributes to the failure of youth and women to attend public participation meetings, even if they are aware of them.

PARTICIPATION IN DEMONSTRATIONS AND PROTESTS

International and regional standards protect freedom of assembly, association, opinion, and expression.²⁵

Many youth and women participants reported that they engage in protests and demonstrations. Youth participants appear to participate in greater numbers than women participants, as the latter reported feeling vulnerable to gender-based violence during protests.

For many aggrieved and frustrated community members, demonstrations are a means of expression and are viewed as the only way to air grievances and garner the attention of leaders. Participants viewed protests as a right and a means to make sure one's voice is heard. Youth in Muranga reported that youth protest because of unfilled promises or failures by elected leaders. Youth from Kitui pointed to Article 109 of the constitution, which provides for the right to demonstrate.

"Demonstrations are the only language that the leaders understand and act upon." – youth participant from Kisumu

"When diplomacy fails, we go for demonstrations." – youth participant from Kisumu

Youth participants reported that they and their peers are highly vulnerable to being taken advantage of because of their idleness and unemployment. As unemployed youth, they are available to be hired for protests, and are particularly susceptible to politicians who want to push their agendas. As such, unemployed youth are often mobilized by politicians through financial incentives. Non-youth participants also described similar motivations. Some youth participants said that demonstrations are an opportunity to exert "revenge" against the police by engaging in running battles and throwing stones at them. Others described the significant influence of their peers as motivation to participate.

Women said that they participate in demonstrations related to issues that directly affect them, including the burning of marketplaces, job loss, and poor working conditions. Women reported that they feel especially vulnerable during demonstrations and protests that become violent, causing some to stay away, even if they support the issues being raised. Women participants reported that they feel vulnerable to physical and sexual assault, including rape, at these demonstrations. More than 80 percent said they had been affected by violent demonstrations and protests, even if they weren't in attendance, because they were the relatives of those who participated in these events, and who were, in some instances, injured or killed.

Women participants in Lamu noted that participating in protests can lead to a loss of respect in the community, as well as to conflicts within their marriages. Women in Bungoma and Kitui indicated that husbands and children of women candidates often

²⁵ U.N. ICCPR, Articles 19, 21, 22(1); AU, AfCHPR, Articles 9(2), 10(1), 11.

become targets in protests. Women participants in Nyeri highlighted their strong understanding of their legal rights and said that they take many grievances to the courts. Women participants in Kitui indicated that, generally, women's participation in protests is low.

RAISING AWARENESS ABOUT POLITICAL PARTICIPATION AMONG YOUTH AND WOMEN

International and regional standards establish that voter and civic education campaigns are essential to create an informed electorate that can effectively participate in the electoral and governance processes.²⁶

The need for sensitization programs on all aspects of political participation for women and youth emerged as pressing and urgent. More than 90 percent of participants said that a limited understanding of political participation negatively impacts their potential to engage. Sensitization forums to disseminate information on issues such as the rights of women and youth; the importance of voting; the various roles of elected leaders; and the importance of voting for women and youth leaders were all proposed as ways to address this limited political understanding. Youth are a diverse group, ranging from 18-35 years of age. Different strategies for outreach should be tailored to different ages and stakeholders. Further, youth and women participants underscored the need for sensitization programs targeting men and elders about the importance of youth and women's political participation. Male and non-youth participants strongly supported this approach, as well as deliberate and well-planned intergenerational sessions inclusive of women and men. Participants stressed the importance of considering cultural practices in implementation.

Thoughts about the most effective way to create awareness varied according to the respondent's age and geographic location. Youth participants indicated that civic and voter education should be communicated through numerous mediums, including social media, especially Facebook and WhatsApp; youth-friendly local radio stations, which differ among the various regions, with vernacular stations highly preferred in rural areas; continuous advertising; door-to-door campaigns; use of banners, posters, sporting events, tournaments, and road shows. Some youth participants said that churches, information desks at the ward level, youth centers, and chief *barazas*, especially in the rural areas, would be good platforms to share information on election matters. In some locations, participants proposed having a ward youth representative or village champion charged with the responsibility of disseminating information.

"Use art or innovative ways that appeal to young people." – youth participant from Bungoma

"Use spoken word, graffiti, and theatre to attract a huge youthful population." – youth participants from Bungoma

²⁶ U.N. (CCPR), General Comment, para. 11; AU, ACDEG, Article 12

Participants in the women forums proposed holding training workshops and seminars, community dialogues, offering messaging via vernacular radio stations, conducting road shows, asking courageous women to share information with other women, sharing successes of women and nominated leaders, and making use of women's groups, churches, and marketplaces as convenient ways to create awareness about electoral matters.

Youth and women are organized in groups at every level, including at the ward and village level, and through self-help, community development, community, and faith-based groups. Participants suggested that these groups could be an effective means to access youth and women, especially in rural and remote areas. Participants underscored a need to balance social media, online, radio, TV, and in-person outreach and awareness-raising efforts.

Participants urged the IEBC to hire permanent staff members at the county and ward level to implement continuous and effective awareness-raising campaigns on electoral matters.

"Through vernacular radio stations...the marketplace..faith-based groups." – women from Kisumu on the best ways to raise awareness among women in local communities

SUPPORTING INCREASED YOUTH PARTICIPATION

Youth participants highlighted the importance of education in supporting youth participation as candidates, citizens, and voters, as well as the impact of financial security.

Role of College in Supporting Youth Participation

All college student participants indicated that college helps to prepare youth for national responsibility and leadership. The diversity in colleges enhances understanding and a sense of community with others from different backgrounds. College students in Garissa emphasized that students interact with people from different communities and backgrounds and that they can learn a great deal from this experience. Exchange programs to international universities also help in this regard.

College students from Nairobi described how serving in various student leadership positions in colleges also helps strengthen leadership capacity, preparing one for running for public office. As student leaders in the college, some participants reported that they are learning about governing issues, including policymaking. They participate in debates and address pertinent campus-related issues before the student body. This experience in college helps to prepare students with applicable skills that will later prove beneficial to aspects of governance. Some participants asserted that colleges could do more to implement programs to support leadership-building skills for students and could better facilitate networking within the community and between colleges.

"The campus is a replica of what happens in society." – youth participant in Kisumu

Impact of Financial Stability for Youth

Youth participants across the board indicated that financial stability affects their political participation.

Candidates are judged by their ability to help the community. If they are not able to contribute towards fundraising, they cannot get elected. Aspirants are expected to spend substantial amounts of money during campaigns, which hinders youth participation. Youth in Bungoma reported that political parties support individuals they believe can sustain their campaigns to the end. Financial stability also determines one's ability to attend public participation forums, because there are costs involved.

"Money is everything." – youth participant from Nairobi

Employed youth participants noted that financial stability enables one to access information and earn respect in the community, something non-working youth don't enjoy. People are therefore willing to give you an opportunity to guide them, they said, because they believe you have the right information. One participant in Nandi noted that because she is employed, youthful candidates came to her seeking financial support and help managing their campaigns. Others indicated that a financially stable person cannot be easily swayed by politicians. Youth in Kisumu and Nandi explained that when one is financially stable, no amount of money will influence one's vote. Some employed youth participants reported that financial security can lead to a lack of political engagement, as more financially secure persons are more insulated from the negative impacts of a poor economy.

Participants' Suggestions for Supporting Youth Engagement

- *Address Identity Card Challenges:* The process for acquiring IDs to register to vote should be simplified. Campaigns to promote ID acquisition and civic education on this topic should be ongoing throughout the electoral cycle.
- *Civic Education:* Civic education programs should be conducted on the importance of voting and to encourage youth to run for elected positions. Topics should include political competition, how to garner financial support, how to grow support from non-youth (those community members 50 years and over), policy development, and campaign strategies.
- *Platforms:* Platforms for youth should be developed to promote their policy concerns and to ensure youth are informed about their rights and obligations. Many suggested a national level structure with reach to the county and ward level. Some noted a revitalized National Youth Council could serve this purpose.
- *Decision-making:* Youth should be involved in policy- and decision-making processes.
- *Reduced Nomination Fees:* Nomination fees for youth should be reduced, which likely would encourage more youth to come out and vie in larger numbers.
- *Advocacy and International Organizations:* International non-governmental organizations and community groups should target their funding in support of local youth groups and related initiatives. The participants argued this will help empower youth, especially in a political field dominated by older generations. It was also recommended that youth leadership programs be strengthened and implemented at all levels – national, county and ward.
- *Vote bribery:* The IEBC should hold accountable those guilty of providing financial handouts and take legal action when necessary.

EXISTING OPPORTUNITIES TO INCREASE YOUTH AND WOMEN'S ENGAGEMENT

Participants described multiple opportunities to build and foster youth and women's participation, with women aspirants offering key lessons-learned for peers interested in competing in future elections.

Youth participants in Nandi pointed to the high number of youth-elected leaders (governor, senator, and multiple MCAs) as evidence that youth are interested in leading and can garner support from the electorate. Participants suggested that sharing the successes of youth in office was a good strategy to support and increase the number of elected youth officials.

Youth said that they participate in groups, including economic development groups and community-based organizations. Participants viewed these groups as important avenues of engagement for leadership development, as well as ways to garner support for youth candidates. Elected youth supported this perspective describing their work in local communities as a key contributor to their success. Youth also account for a high number of IEBC poll workers, which helps to demonstrate their interest, engagement, and ability to contribute to the election process. Participants indicated that youth make up a large pool of potential members that could bring leadership, ideas, innovation, energy, and support to political parties.

More than 90 percent of participants, both men and women, demonstrated a strong understanding of the existing legislation that protects and promotes women's political participation, pointing to the women's representative seat and the two-thirds gender rule. The overwhelming majority of female and male participants were supportive of these provisions. The two-thirds gender rule is viewed as an important constitutional provision that seems to be motivating and facilitating women to engage politically in larger numbers. Several male participants in Narok voiced strong support for the two-thirds gender rule and women representative seat as critical to increasing the number of women political leaders. Male participants in Kitui and Kisumu said that parliament should implement the two-thirds gender rule.

Women participants were aware of the women elected to office in their counties, as well as the newly elected women governors and senators. Women and men participants pointed to several elected women they believed were performing admirably. The three elected women governors appear to be inspiring other women. The Kitui governor's choice of development projects is positively impacting the broader community and changing the mindset about women leaders among many, regardless of age or sex, in the county. Similarly, the female representative for Narok and the late MP from Baringo received high marks for their work to improve the community. Male participants pointed to the effective work of the late Baringo MP to address security concerns in the region, noting men had previously tended to doubt women could be effective leaders on an issue like security. In Nyeri, male participants pointed to the number of women in national-level cabinet posts as affirmation of the important role women can and should play in government.

Male participants in Narok spoke positively of the woman chief in the county. Male participants in Nyeri spoke positively of the increasing number of women assistant chiefs.

Women participants pointed out that the women's representative position provides a critical opportunity for women to prove their performance and show that they are not just "babysitters" and "cooks" at home. When occupied by strong, effective woman leaders, the position can catalyze great transformation in societal perceptions and beliefs. This position was supported by male participants, who gave high marks to the women representatives in Kisumu, Lamu, and Garissa. Likewise, women in the marketplace in Bungoma said that women have been supported because of the two-thirds gender rule.

"If we have three women elected leaders like the current women rep...things would be different." – woman participant in Narok

"If a woman is contesting the women rep seat on behalf of a party and the party supports her, this is good for the party." – male participant from Kitui

Over 70 percent of discussion participants referred positively to the representation of women in county executive committees. Both women and men were aware of women in leadership roles in Kisumu, Kitui, Baringo, Nyeri, and Narok. Women also serve as leaders on health, sports, finance, industrialization, devolution, tourism, education, and gender committees.

Female participants in Lamu lacked knowledge of the existing legal and policy framework that provides for the political participation of women in Kenya. However, they were aware of their rights as individuals to vote and to vie as a candidate.

Lessons Learned for Women Aspirants

More than 90 percent of aspirants said that they would run for office again, despite the physical and verbal assaults, intimidation, harassment, and other challenges they faced.

These women aspirants offered several examples of how they would act differently in the future. Approximately 80 percent of aspirants indicated they would work to increase their exposure by strengthening their relationship with community members, by, for example, starting or supporting community projects and conducting needs assessments among community members to inform development of their policies and manifestos. Many stressed the need to build relationships with larger political parties that are widely known among the electorate and to develop deliberate strategies to reach out to party officials at the local and national levels. They noted the importance of lining up loyal and reliable party agents. Several participants said they would pursue more strategic alliances with male supporters to shore up broader support among male community members.

“Educate and influence the men; let them know... ‘if you educate a girl, you have educated a village.’” – woman participant from Bungoma

Approximately 60 percent pointed to the need to shore up personal security, including hiring “goons” to ensure their protection. Women in Baringo noted that women in highly competitive areas have been hardened and have thus vowed to resort to unorthodox means to succeed.

“You cannot campaign as a woman. You must be rough.” – woman aspirant from Garissa

“Be fearless.” – woman aspirant from Narok

All aspirants emphasized the need to begin saving funds now in order to pay requisite fees and campaign effectively. Negatively, for many this also includes securing enough funds to provide handouts in order to compete more equitably with male competitors.

Aspirants’ Advice to Other Women Considering a Run for Office:

- Start early to position yourself to vie effectively.
- Be seen and known within the community, particularly as an honest person with integrity.
- Be confident and embrace the strengths, knowledge, and expertise you bring to the table.
- Know your strengths and weaknesses and bring advisors, members, and spokespersons onto your team that complement them.
- Secure adequate resources to support your candidacy, from the primaries through the dispute-resolution process, and plan well in terms of resources.
- Align yourself with a large, well-known political party.
- Develop a clear strategy for competing that incorporates youthful and male allies, as well as influential local leaders.
- Engage with all in the community without discriminating in terms of gender, age, clan or tribe.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO STRENGTHEN YOUTH AND WOMEN'S POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

TO THE EXECUTIVE BRANCH

- Support swift replacement of leadership in commissions and regulatory bodies when officials resign to foster continued and uninterrupted work.
- Continue and enhance engagement with youth to solicit their ideas and input on efforts to increase employment and job security for young people.
- Adopt a Public Participation Policy through a broadly participatory process that establishes standards for public participation and explicitly advances youth and women's participation and creates benchmarks against which progress can be measured.

TO PARLIAMENT

- Allocate sufficient resources to fully support staff and strengthen the capacity of institutions to protect and further women's and youth participation, including the:
 - Office of the Registrar of Political Parties (ORPP) to implement its mandate to monitor, regulate, and enforce compliance with the Political Parties Act provisions related to youth and women political participation.
 - Political Parties Liaison Committee to support and advise on youth and women participation within political parties.
 - Commissions charged with monitoring and ensuring compliance with the constitutionally mandated youth and women affirmative-action provisions, including, but not limited to, the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission, the National Gender and Equality Commission, and the Kenya National Commission on Human Rights.
- Allocate resources for sustained capacity-building programs for youth and women who serve as elected and nominated officials in parliament, including mentorship, coaching, and leadership programs.

TO COUNTY GOVERNMENT

The 2012 County Government Act provides for the principles of civic education and requires county governments to implement civic education programs and establish civic education units. It also provides for the principles of citizen participation, outlining modalities for participation and the requirement to put into place mechanisms to facilitate the public's access to information. As such, county governments should:

- Periodically review periodically county assembly laws and regulations that guide participation in development planning to ensure they address youth- and women-specific barriers to participation.
- Put into place public participation laws and regulations in instances where none exist.

- Ensure that standards for participation support the equal participation of youth and women.
- Implement continuous civic education programs that employ youth-friendly tactics and reach the ward and village levels, including in rural and remote locations. Topics should include:
 - Roles and responsibilities of elected and nominated officials, with a focus on the different government positions.
 - Opportunities for public participation and civic engagement, including on how to provide input into development of the county integrated development plan.
 - Constitutional provisions related to increased youth and women's participation.
- Allocate resources for sustained capacity-building programs for youth and women who serve as elected and nominated officials in assemblies, including mentorship, coaching, and leadership programs.
- Strengthen outreach to youth and women to increase public participation of these special-interest groups by:
 - Providing more information on how to provide input into public policy.
 - Creating mechanisms to provide feedback to community members on issues discussed during public forums.
- Advertise public forums in a timely manner and through multiple means, including through social media and vernacular radio stations.
- Foster an enabling environment for youth and women participation in public forums by:
 - Holding women-only sessions in some locales.
 - Designating specific time in agendas for youth and women participants to voice their opinions or concerns.
 - Having youth and women facilitators and conveners in the forums.
- Actively and aggressively recruit and hire youth and women for County Development Committee positions; fast-track youth and women personnel in these committees for promotions.

TO THE INDEPENDENT ELECTORAL AND BOUNDARIES COMMISSION

- Implement continuous civic education programs during the five-year electoral cycle. Topics should include:
 - Roles and responsibilities of elected and nominated officials, with a focus on the different government positions.
 - Opportunities for public participation and civic engagement.
 - Constitutional provisions related to increased youth and women's participation.
 - Provisions in the Election Campaign Financing Act.
- Replicate and enhance successful public outreach strategies utilized in the 2017 election throughout the five-year electoral cycle, especially those relating to youth (SMS, billboards, road shows).

- Implement an annual youth-friendly education campaign to raise awareness among youth that voter registration is continuous, with guidance on how and where to register during periods outside of mass voter registration activities.
- Implement IEBC interactive consultations with community members post-election to solicit feedback on accessibility and on administration of electoral processes.
- Enforce compliance with the Electoral Code of Conduct and hold violators accountable.
 - Include a specific reference to gender-based violence as a punishable offense in the code.
 - Support the creation of an enabling environment to lodge complaints when violations of the code occur, with a focus on complaints relating to violence against women and instances of vote bribery.
- With security forces and political parties, create an environment where women feel safe throughout the entire electoral cycle, especially during political party primaries and campaigns.
- Finalize the 2013 Election Campaign Financing Act regulations and enforce compliance with the act.
- Consider creation of an independent, transparent, and professional body to administer party primaries. This body would be administered by the IEBC, working in close coordination with the Office of the Registrar of Political Parties and the Political Parties Liaison Committee at the county level.²⁷
- Set standardized rules and guidelines for the nomination of candidates that are transparent and in place in sufficient time to inform parties and the electorate.
- Implement background checks to ensure that members included on political party lists meet the criteria for special-interest groups.
- Coordinate closely with the Office of the Registrar of Political Parties to enhance effective oversight and enforcement of party compliance with constitutional provisions related to youth and women political participation.
- Implement measures to ensure that all poll workers have an opportunity to vote on election day.
- Continue and enhance efforts to hire youth poll workers, incorporating opportunities for youth to advance in levels of responsibility as IEBC staff.
- Implement a feedback mechanism, both online and in person, after voter verification to inform registered voters when their registration details are corrected.

TO THE POLITICAL PARTIES

- Reform the culture and practices that perpetuate non-youth and male-dominated political party structures to better attract and mobilize more youth and women as active members, volunteers, and party aspirants, including by:
 - Increasing youth and women representation and active participation in the leadership and decision-making bodies within the party.

²⁷ The IEBC has a mandate to regulate the process by which parties nominate candidates for election.

- Strengthening youth and women-focused party wings/committees to enhance these structures' ability to deliberate issues impacting youth and women and advise on party policy and strategy to address issues affecting these stakeholder groups within the party and the public.
- Developing and enhancing sustained capacity-building programs for youth and women who are party members, elected and nominated officials in office, and party member aspirants, including mentorship, coaching, and leadership programs implemented at the ward/constituency level for national/regional level parties.
- Cultivating and supporting strong women leaders through the nomination process – nominating women with demonstrated and broad support from party and local community members; who have outlined a policy agenda during party primaries; and who have a track record of active community and party engagement.
- Fostering male party members to support women aspirants and candidates, including as members and staff in their campaigns and as vocal allies and supporters in their communities.
- Earmark specific party funds and resources to support youth and women membership drives and party candidates.
 - Maintain reduced nomination fees for youth and women aspirants and candidates.
 - Develop, implement, and create awareness of an online recruitment platform for party membership.
- Parties that receive 30 percent government funding: Allocate funds in a manner that supports youth and women participation.
- Put into place and enforce mechanisms to hold party members accountable for breaches of the Political Party Code of Conduct to address actual and perceived impunity for violations.
- Cultivate an environment for women party members, aspirants, and elected and nominated officials to lodge complaints of misconduct in which they do not fear retribution and trust that complaints will be handled appropriately and expeditiously.
- Implement continuous member recruitment activities targeting youth and women throughout the five-year electoral cycle, ones that utilize youth-friendly tactics and reach county, constituency, and ward levels.
- Implement continuous youth-friendly and gender-sensitive civic education programs for youth, women, and men party members that raise awareness of:
 - Benefits of active and increased youth and women's political participation.
 - How to register with and become an active member of the party.
 - The Political Party Code of Conduct and internal party mechanisms to enforce accountability.
- Strengthen party election management boards, bolstering their ability to plan and conduct well-administered party primaries.
- Review the conduct of party primaries and prioritize developing a strategic plan for the safe, transparent, and well-administered conduct of primaries for the 2022 and future elections, which utilize party member lists. Set dates and

locations in sufficient time to promote participation and factor in gender-sensitive concerns.

- Maintain accurate and up-to-date party lists for all members that members can check online through a party portal or by inquiring with the Office of the Register of Political Parties.
 - Maintain and make available disaggregated data for youth and women (and other special-interest groups) as required for party registration.
- Encourage and support college-based party members to develop party affiliates on college campuses and encourage cross-party/campus dialogue.

TO OFFICE OF THE REGISTRAR OF POLITICAL PARTIES

- Implement fully the mandate to monitor, regulate, and enforce compliance with the Political Parties Act, especially as it relates to parties' responsibilities and requirements to promote and ensure youth and women's participation. Parties that do not comply should be suspended or deregistered, as provided in the Election Act.
- Implement regular capacity-building and training programs for relevant personnel to enhance understanding of the relevant youth and women's participation Political Party Act provisions and Office of Register of Political Parties responsibility to monitor and enforce compliance with them.
- Implement regular audits of political parties to assess compliance with the Political Parties Act, including specifically provisions on youth and women's political participation.
- Implement public education programs to raise awareness about the role of political parties, how to register to vote, the PPA, and the process for lodging complaints of violations with the ORPP.
- Ensure that the 30 percent of government funding provided to eligible parties is allocated appropriately to enhance participation of youth and women within the political parties.
- Maintain updated party lists, providing the final party membership list to be used for party primaries and setting a date to close the party list to be used during primaries.
- Support an environment for party members to lodge complaints of violations of the Political Party Code of Conduct without fear of reprisal.
- Coordinate closely with the IEBC to enhance effective oversight and enforcement of party compliance with constitutional provisions related to youth and women political participation.

TO COMMISSIONS AND CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS

- Implement continuous civic education programs for youth and non-youth and for women and men about the benefits of increased youth and women's participation, respectively.
- Implement targeted and continuous civic education programs for youth and women on, among other issues; how to influence and inform policy; civic engagement; roles and responsibilities of elected and nominated officials, with a

focus on different government positions; inclusive and accountable leadership; how to engage political parties; opportunities available to access funds and form community/development groups.

- Convene intergenerational and mixed-gender forums to discuss and deliberate the benefits of increased youth and women political participation.
- Implement programs to increase awareness of the importance of male champions and allies for women aspirants and candidates and to elevate the voices of men already serving in this role.

TO THE NATIONAL REGISTRATION BUREAU

- Review and identify ways to simplify the process for acquiring identify cards, possibly including regularizing the process for youth to receive IDs in high school and enabling sub-chiefs and/or known community elders or faith-based leaders to speak on behalf of youth to receive IDs when a chief is unavailable or unfamiliar with a youth member of the community. Review and consider alternatives to the requirement that IDs for both parents must be presented to attain an ID card.