

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

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,

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

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.

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

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

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.

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

"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

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.

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:

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

- Strengthening youth and women-focused party wings/committees to

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.

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.

