

Gender Audit on Women's
Representation and Participation in

Legislative, Oversight Bodies and Political Parties



AFRICAN
WOMEN'S
DEVELOPMENT
FUND



Foreword

At the Community Advocacy and Awareness Trust (CRAWN Trust), we recognise that the advancement of democracy, justice, and national development is inseparable from the equal participation of women in all spheres of public life. This Gender Audit Report on Women's Representation and Participation in Legislative, Oversight Bodies and Political Parties in Kenya presents a critical, evidence-based assessment of where we stand as a country in fulfilling the constitutional promise of gender equality.

The Constitution of Kenya 2010 lays a firm foundation for inclusion, non-discrimination, and the full realisation of women's rights as captured in Article 27. It calls for the meaningful representation of women in decision-making spaces, through mechanisms such as the not more than two-thirds gender principle. Yet, despite these clear provisions, the implementation of these commitments remains unfulfilled. Women continue to be underrepresented in elective and appointive positions, and structural, cultural, and institutional obstacles persist.

This report highlights the urgent need to bridge the gap between constitutional ideals and political reality. Political parties must embrace reforms that support women's leadership, not only as a legal obligation but as a democratic necessity. Legislative action to operationalise the gender principle is long overdue. Without it, the vision of an inclusive, representative Kenya remains incomplete.

The audit is both a reflection and a rallying call. It measures progress, exposes gaps, and offers practical recommendations to guide policy, inform advocacy, and inspire collective action. The task before us is clear: to dismantle the barriers that limit women's participation and to create a governance culture where all voices count.

We are deeply grateful to the African Women's Development Fund (AWDF), Consultant Ellyjoy Masila, and all partners and stakeholders who contributed to this report. Your collaboration strengthens our resolve.

At CRAWN Trust, we remain committed to amplifying women's voices, challenging exclusion, and championing the constitutional promise of equality. We invite all actors to join us in making this vision a lived reality.

Daisy Amdany
Executive Director, CRAWN Trust

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ACRONYMS

ACHPR	African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights
AWDF	African Women's Development Fund
CEDAW	Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
COK	Constitution of Kenya
EAC	East African Community
FGD	Focused Group Discussion
FGM	Female Genital Mutilation
JLAC	Justice and Legal Affairs Committee
KANU	Kenya African National Union
KIIs	Key Informant Interviews
QA	Quality Assurance
QC	Quality Control
MCA	Members of County Assembly
MPs	Members of Parliament
MSWG	Multi Sector Working Group
NADCO	National Dialogue Committee
ODM	Orange Democratic Movement
ORPP	Office of the Registrar of Political Parties
PWD	Persons With Disability
SIGs	Special Interest Groups
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
SRRWA	Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Women in Africa
UDA	United Democratic Alliance
UN	United Nation
UON	University of Nairobi
WEE	Women Economic Empowerment
WSC	Women's Steering Committee

CHAPTER 1:

BACKGROUND

Kenya promulgated its current Constitution in August 2010. Before 2010, women in the country were largely relegated to the periphery of public and political life and only considered as a powerful resource for mobilization and organizing government at the ballot during elections. Beyond the ballot, they had minimal or no place or pride in the governance set up. The Constitution of Kenya 2010 (COK 2010) is however deliberate in reversing systematic and historical marginalization and exclusion of women and marginalized groups and deepening their inclusion, representation and participation in public and political life. It amplifies the role of women in Kenya's post 2010 governance framework. In terms of governance, it designates the previously marginalized groups as integral drivers of change in the post 2010 Constitutional dispensation. Citizens' sovereignty and women's centrality is a dominant theme in the Constitution, which recognizes past challenges of governance largely attributable to raw power, passion and discretion of elected leaders at the expense of the governed. However, despite the expanded and strengthened frameworks and platforms for women participation in the nation's public and political life, the actual realization of this transformative promise is yet to be achieved more than a decade after the Constitution's promulgation.

Organization Brief

The Community Advocacy and Awareness Trust (CRAWN Trust) is a women led non-state actor established in 2010 and registered as a Trust Corporation (PS2000). The organization aims to promote citizen's awareness of their human rights and non-discrimination of women, in the political, social, economic and cultural spheres of development as enshrined in the Constitution of Kenya 2010. CRAWN Trust works as a change catalyst to impact lives and transform communities and envisions a society where gender equity thrives, guided by a strategic framework and works with different stakeholders to advance the women's rights agenda in Kenya.

CRAWN Trust is the host organization and permanent secretariat for the Women's Steering Committee (WSC), a coalition platform that brings together individuals, organizations and networks working for women's political and economic emancipation. The platform brings together women from the grassroots, county to the national level with the aim of uniting them to bring value, voice and strength in leadership and development.

CRAWN Trust through movement building efforts under the WSC aims to translate women's numerical strength into greater bargaining power for the socio-cultural, political, and economic transformative change within women's spheres of influence and is united on the irreducible minimums that bring women out of political and economic exclusion.

About Women Igniting Change Project

CRAWN Trust is implementing the 'Women Igniting Change' project funded by African Women's Development Fund (AWDF) that seeks to increase conscientization of women by promoting access to vital information regarding their rights, available resources, and best practices for advocacy. This knowledge will empower them to engage more effectively with policymakers and the community at large. Enhanced visibility and reach with messaging on social media- this is expected to result in positive change in narratives on women's leadership. Making the numbers count through the building of political capital- the interventions are expected to catalyze Kenyans into an active citizenry that can jointly defend their rights, negotiate for development and push for good leadership and accountability.

Project Purpose

The project aims to increase participation of women and girls in leadership and governance enhancing decision-making, promoting gender equality, inclusive policies that address diverse community needs, ultimately driving sustainable development and social progress.

METHODOLOGY AND APPROACH

GENDER ANALYSIS FRAMEWORK

The gender audit applied the Sarah Longwe women empowerment gender analysis framework to highlight women’s representation and participation in public leadership bodies in the legislature, oversight bodies and political parties. The status and unique needs of the women and girls were analysed at the national level and in the five project counties of Nairobi, Kisumu, Machakos, Nakuru and Kajiado. The assessment focused on legislators in parliament (National Assembly and Senate), parliamentary committees, cabinet secretaries and political parties.

Given the dimensions of gender issues and their obvious intersection within a patriarchal system, it becomes apparent that interventions on gender concerns cannot be dictated by ‘top-down’ planners. On the contrary, women’s advancement involves the process of empowerment, which we may give the preliminary definition of the process by which women achieve increased control over public decision making. Such empowerment is women’s route to changing the practices and laws that discriminate against them and achieving an equitable gender division of labour and allocation of resources.

The male domination of Government is preserved by men for the purpose of serving male interests, where women are given most of the work, and men collect most of the rewards. Experience already provides plenty of evidence that men do not ‘give’ power to women. It is axiomatic in gender politics, as in all politics, that power is never given; it must be taken. This gender audit seeks to unpack the root causes of gender inequality on women’s representation, participation in legislative, oversight bodies and political parties.

The five levels of the women’s empowerment framework that were applied in this gender audit include:

- 1. Welfare
- 2. Access
- 3. Conscientization
- 4. Mobilization/participation
- 5. Control



Welfare is described as the lowest level at which a development intervention may hope to close a gender gap. This is at the socio-economic status, where basic needs have to be provided in order to take care of gender practical needs like food, shelter, water, clothing, health. Interventions confined to this welfare level, means that women are being given these benefits, rather than producing or acquiring the benefits for themselves. This is therefore the zero level of empowerment, where women are the passive recipients of benefits that are ‘given’ from on high.

Access is described as the first level of empowerment, when women improve their status, relative to men, by their own work and organization arising from increased access to resources. For example, women who are aware of the financial resources available that support women in politics or business ventures that can enable them make money and finance their political campaigns. Key questions here include whether they are 'given' information considered appropriate by 'higher authorities'; or if they increase their own access. If the latter is true, then this suggests the beginning of a process of conscientization – of recognizing and analyzing their own problems and taking action to solve them.

Conscientization is described as the process by which women realize that their lack of status and welfare, relative to men, is not due to their lack of ability, organization or effort. It involves the realization that women's relative lack of access to resources and benefits arises from the discriminatory practices and rules that give priority access and control to men. As the Second level of empowerment, conscientization is therefore concerned with a collective urge to action to remove one or more of the discriminatory practices that impede women's access to resources. It is here that we see the potential for strategies of improved information and communication as a means for enabling the process of conscientization but driven by women's own need to understand the underlying causes of their problems, and to identify strategies for action. Where many women accept patriarchal norms, the leadership of more liberated and activist women is essential at this essential phase of *realizing dissatisfaction with the established patriarchal order*.

Mobilization/participation is therefore the action level which complements Conscientization. Firstly, it entails women coming together for the recognition and analysis of problems, the identification of strategies to overcome discriminatory practices, and collective action to remove these practices. In this third level of empowerment, communication may not be merely concerned with the mobilization of the group, but also connect with the larger women's movement, to learn from the successes of women's similar strategic action elsewhere, and to link up with the wider struggle. Here communication entails joining the community, county, national, regional and global sisterhood in the struggle for equal rights for women. It is in this area of conscientization and mobilization that the issue of leadership becomes crucial. Here leadership entails taking the lead in building the mobilization process, providing the organizational space, adapting and redirecting the existing women's organizations, and taking the lead in connecting with the wider sisterhood engaged in similar struggles.

Control is the level that is reached when women have acted so that there is gender equality in decisions making over access to resources, so that women achieve direct control over their access to resources. Being the highest level of empowerment, the women have taken what is rightly theirs and no longer wait indefinitely to be 'given' resources merely at the discretion of men, or by the whim of patriarchal authority. Here the role of information and communication is to spread the word on the development of successful strategies. For example, women may join politics and influence their political parties to nominate them for elective positions of their choice.

Therefore, these five levels are not really a linear progression, as detailed above, but rather a circular model: the achievement of women's increased control leads to better access to resources and therefore improved socio-economic and political status.

METHODOLOGY

The below steps provide a breakdown of the methodological approach employed to conduct the gender audit.

Phase One: Preparation and Inception Period

This is the design phase where inception meetings were conducted, and a desk review of key project documents and other secondary materials undertaken; data collection tools were developed and the sample frame derived for both the quantitative and qualitative data collection approaches; lastly the inception report was developed and approved.

Phase Two: Literature Review and Policy Analysis

The gender audit was informed by a comprehensive review of secondary data including laws, policies, institutional frameworks, reports from government and development partners. This involved collecting, organizing, and synthesizing existing information. A literature review was conducted to understand the prevailing practical and strategic gender needs of women at the national level and in the project counties of Nairobi, Kisumu, Machakos, Nakuru and Kajiado. The scope focused on legislators in parliament, parliamentary committees, cabinet members, members of political parties, county assemblies, aspiring women political leaders at national, county and other related stakeholders.

In addition to project documents, the following laws and policies were reviewed:

National Laws

1. The Constitution of Kenya (2010)
2. The Elections Act (2022)
3. The Political Parties Act (2022)
4. The Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission Act (2011)

National Reports

1. Multi Sectoral Working Group (MSWG) on implementation of the two thirds gender principle (2024)
2. The National Dialogue Committee (NADCO) - 2024

Phase Three: Primary Data Collection

Quantitative Data: data collected focused on legislators in parliament (national assembly, senate), parliamentary committees, cabinet, political parties and in the project counties of Nairobi, Kisumu, Machakos, Nakuru and Kajiado.

Qualitative Data: this was conducted through Respondents -Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) and Focused Group Discussions (FGDs) with women leaders (aspiring and elected) to gather narratives on how gender inequalities manifest in their daily lives. This helped identify the barriers and challenges faced by women in benefiting from elective and appointive positions of leadership. The sample size included elected / nominated / aspiring women members of parliament, senate and County assemblies from Nairobi, Kisumu, Machakos, Nakuru and Kajiado.

The data collection approach was aligned with the program's implementation strategy. Focused group discussions and key informant interviews (KIIs) with various stakeholders were held to understand the following:

1. The gendered responsibilities and roles in political activities and decision-making processes.
2. The barriers that women face in participating fully in politics, national and county leadership.
3. Opportunities for empowering women through the project, including potential interventions aimed at promoting gender equality in politics.

Phase Four: Data Analysis and Report Development

Data Analysis

The evaluation team relied on both quantitative and qualitative research techniques, the gender and intersectionality analysis tools to adequately analyze the gathered data.

a) Quantitative Analysis

Completed questionnaires were checked and cleaned up through quality control procedures. The questionnaires were coded to generate the quantitative aspects of this research. Data disaggregation was based on gender, geographical location and age among other demographics. The entire process entailed data coding, cleaning and generation of percentages, frequency tables, charts, and cross-tabulations that were used to develop descriptive statistics on the evaluation themes. This was then summarized in tabulation to generate descriptive statistics on the thematic questions.

Technique	Narrative
Quantitative Data Analysis	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) was utilized to analyze quantitative data through reliable data. Statistical analysis provided data in the form of trends as well as descriptive statistics.
Qualitative Data Analysis	NVIVO was used to conduct thematic gender and power analysis narratives and quotes.

b) Qualitative Analysis

The KIIs and FGD scripts were transcribed then protocols established for coding each transcript to topically categorize and organize the content. This was the first step in identifying themes.

Coded data was analyzed using content and themes that emerged from the qualitative study, drawing out data to interpret, triangulate and validate the findings from the quantitative analysis.

Data Quality Assurance (QA) and Quality Control (QC)

To enhance data quality, various strategies were employed. These include:

- All data was disaggregated beyond male and female status to include more descriptive data; level of education, disability, geographical location, rural / urban.
- Use of online data collection tools: The study questionnaire sampled populations were embedded on ONA or ODK so that the data can be collected safely using mobile platform.
- Use of official statistics from credible sources (country official and administrative data).
- Data security: The database files were accessible to authorized users only; access to such data was password protected.

Research Ethics

All data collection and processing activities were executed in accordance with the following principles:

- Safeguarding respondent's personal data is crucial to protect the lives, integrity and dignity of beneficiaries and participants and is fundamental in the provision of support to beneficiaries.
- **People-centered and inclusive:** Gender and Intersectionality assessment activities respect the interests and well-being of the population, in all relevant phases of the gender audit activities were sensitive to age, gender, and other issues of diversity.
- **Do No Harm:** Gender analysis included a risk assessment and took the necessary steps to mitigate identified risks. The risk analysis looked at negative consequences that may result from data collection and subsequent actions.
- **Defined purpose and proportionality:** The purpose was clearly defined and explained to the participants in the data collection process.
- **Informed consent and confidentiality:** Personal information was only collected after informed consent had been provided by the respondent who was fully informed of the purpose of the data collection. Further, confidentiality was clearly explained to the individual before the information was collected. The responses were coded to avoid revealing identity of the respondent. Exceptions were made with respondents whose data and information regarding the subject matter was publicly available.

CHAPTER 2: LEGAL POLICY AND INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK

International Legislative and Policy frameworks

The increase in women representation stated above can be attributed to the various legislative and policy frameworks including, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW - 1979) which was adopted by the United Nations (UN) and ratified by African countries to promote gender equality through equal opportunities to political and public life; The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995) that promotes human dignity focusing on women quota policy aimed at reserving special seats for women at a minimum of 30% in public or political spaces.

Ensuring women and girls are equally represented within decision-making processes, promoting and enforcing laws that promote gender equality and non-discrimination, building a world free from violence against women and girls, are key targets under the SDG 5 that remain challenges for all of us.

Africa Legislative and Policy Framework

Africa's Agenda 2063, aspiration three and six, focuses on improving women's political participation and active involvement of all citizens in all aspects of decision-making processes and promoting gender equality. This is in line with the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 that seeks to promote the role of women in peace and security.

The African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR), through its Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Women in Africa (SRRWA), stands at a pivotal juncture in the global pursuit of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. This year's theme, "For ALL Women and Girls: Rights. Equality. Empowerment," resonates deeply as we commemorate the 30th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. This landmark framework has shaped the global agenda for women's rights and gender equality.

National Legislative and Policy frameworks

The Constitution of Kenya (2010)

Since the Constitution of Kenya 2010 was adopted, Kenya has enshrined gender equity in politics by mandating that no more than two-thirds of any elective or appointive body may be of one gender. This legal framework, along with quota systems (such as reserved seats for women at county level), has contributed to incremental increases in women's participation across both national and devolved governments. However, despite these efforts, the representation of women in key decision-making bodies like the National Assembly and the Senate remains below the Constitutional threshold, highlighting a gap between legal intent and political reality.

The Constitution of Kenya 2010, seeks to repudiate the historical exclusion of women from the mainstream society, thus creating freedom for women to maneuver their way both in the private and public spaces on an equal footing with men. Various Constitutional provisions highlight how issues of Affirmative Action have been acknowledged; for instance, Article 27 (8) provides for affirmative action where the State is obligated to take legislative and other measures to ensure that no more than two-thirds of the members of elective or appointive bodies are of the same gender. Further, Article 81 reiterates that the same rule should be applicable in elective public bodies. On the other hand, the Constitution provides for the principle of equality before the law and it provides that 'every person is equal before the law and has the right to equal protection and equal benefit of the law.' To avoid doubt, it further stresses that *"women and men have the right to equal treatment including the right to equal opportunities in political, economic, cultural and social spheres"*.

A notable issue in this regard is whether these Constitutional provisions especially the 2/3-gender rule is enough to make Kenyans vote for women. These issues arise from the fact that none of the state organs charged with the task of implementing the Constitution has a practical solution to the challenges faced, that is, neither the Political Parties Act nor the Elections Act has provisions on effective mechanisms for the implementation of Article 81 (b) of the Constitution.

Article 100 addresses Promotion of representation of marginalized groups. The article describes how Parliament shall enact legislation to promote the representation in Parliament of—(a) women; (b) persons with disabilities; (c) youth; (d) ethnic and other minorities; and (e) marginalized communities.

The Elections Act

The Elections Act is the primary Act of Parliament that governs the elections in Kenya. [Act No. 24 of 2011, Legal Notice 142 of 2011, Legal Notice 182 of 2011, Legal Notice 19 of 2012, Act No. 12 of 2012, Legal Notice 76 of 2012, Act No. 31 of 2012, Act No. 32 of 2012, Act No. 47 of 2012, Act No. 48 of 2012, Act No. 36 of 2016, Act No. 37 of 2016, Act No. 1 of 2017, Act No. 34 of 2017, Act No. 4 of 2019, Act No. 2 of 2022.]

The purpose of the Elections Act is to:

- Provide for the conduct of elections to the office of the President, the National Assembly, the Senate, County Governor and County Assembly;
- Provide for the conduct of referenda;
- Provide for election dispute resolution; and for connected purposes.

Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission Act

The Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission Act is an Act of Parliament that provides for the appointment and effective operation of the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission and connected purposes.

The Election Offences Act

The Election Offences Act is a Parliamentary Act that governs election offences and related matters.

Among these offences are offences relating to voting, the voter register, members and staff of the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (IEBC), and bribery.

Election Campaign Financing Act

The Election Campaign Financing Act is an Act of Parliament that shall provide for the regulation, management, expenditure and accountability of election campaign funds during election and referendum campaigns.

Subsidiary Legislation Governing Elections in Kenya

The list of subsidiary legislation governing elections in Kenya are:

- Elections (Registration of Voters) Regulations;
- Elections (General) Regulations;
- Rules of Procedure on Settlement of Disputes;
- Elections (Technology) Regulations;
- Elections (Party Primaries and Party Lists) Regulations;
- Elections (Voter Education) Regulations;
- Elections (Parliamentary and County Elections) Petitions Rules.

Political Parties Act

The Act is the primary legal reference for the management of political parties in accordance with Articles 91 and 92 of Kenya's Constitution 2010, which envisages well governed political parties that respect internal democracy and their Constitutional status in Kenya's political system.

Published in Kenya Gazette Vol. CXIII—No. 90 on 9 September 2011. Assented to on 27 August 2011, commenced on 1 November 2011 by Political Parties Act Commencement.

[Amended by Acts Published for the Implementation of the Constitution Corrigenda (Corrigendum 18 of 2012) on 23 March 2012].

[Amended by Revision of the Laws (Rectification) Order, 2012 (Legal Notice 19 of 2012) on 23 March 2012].

[Amended by Statute Law (Miscellaneous Amendments) Act, 2012 (Act No. 12 of 2012) on 12 July 2012].

[Amended by Statute Law (Miscellaneous Amendments) (No. 2) Act, 2012 (Act No. 47 of 2012) on 4 January 2013].

[Amended by Political Parties (Amendment) Act, 2012 (Act No. 50 of 2012) on 4 January 2013].

[Amended by Statute Law (Miscellaneous Amendments) Act, 2014 (Act No. 18 of 2014) on 8 December 2014].

[Amended by Political Parties (Amendment) Act, 2016 (Act No. 14 of 2016) on 3 June 2016].

[Amended by Political Parties (Amendment) (No. 2) Act, 2016 (Act No. 21 of 2016) on 21 July 2016].

[Amended by Election Laws (Amendment) Act (Act No. 36 of 2016) on 4 October 2016].

[Amended by Political Parties (Amendment) Act, 2022 (Act No. 2 of 2022) on 11 February 2022].

[Revised by 24th Annual Supplement (Legal Notice 221 of 2023) on 31 December 2022].

Part 1, section 2 of the Political Parties (Amendment) Act 2022 describes “special interest groups” as women, persons with disabilities, youth, ethnic minorities, and marginalized communities. Article 260 of the Constitution, of Kenya, 2010 defines a marginalized group as a group of people who, because of laws or practices before, on or after the effective date, were or are disadvantaged by discrimination on one or more of the grounds outlined in Article 27(4). These grounds include race, sex, pregnancy, marital status, health status, ethnic or social origin, color, age, disability, religion, conscience, belief, culture, dress, language or birth.

Special Interest Groups (SIG) in Kenya have not enjoyed and exercised their political rights equitably even though they constitute the majority of the population. Since the promulgation of the Constitution of Kenya in 2010, a lot of effort has been directed at putting in place a legislative mechanism to ensure not more than two-thirds of same-gender comprise Parliament and County Assemblies. To date, Parliament has failed to enact legislation to promote SIG representation, particularly the youth and Persons with Disability (PWD), in Parliament as envisaged in Article 100 of the Constitution of Kenya (2010).

CHAPTER 3:

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Current Political Context on the Two Thirds Gender Principle

Despite robust legislation through Kenya's Constitution 2010, and improved results in the 2022 general elections, the number of female politicians remains low. Kenya remains one of the lowest ranking countries in the region when it comes to women's participation in politics.

Kenya lags behind in the representation of women at the national assembly and senate with only 23% compared to Rwanda which has a representation of women 61%; Burundi at 38%; Tanzania at 37% with a female president and Uganda at 35%. The newest member to the East African Community (EAC), South Sudan performs better than Kenya with 28% women representation.

Since the promulgation of the Constitution of Kenya 2010, and the first elections of the 11th parliament, the number of elected women (governors, Senators and Members of the National Assembly) has steadily increased with 13th parliament representation of women increasing to 29 MPs. Despite this increase the two thirds gender threshold has not been achieved.

There are currently 290 members from 290 constituencies elected for dual gender seats by registered votes, 47 women representatives elected by registered voters from the 47 counties, 12 members nominated by parliamentary political parties to represent special interests of youth, persons with disabilities and workers at the national assembly. The Senate has 3 elected females out of 44 male senators drawn from a total of 47 counties.

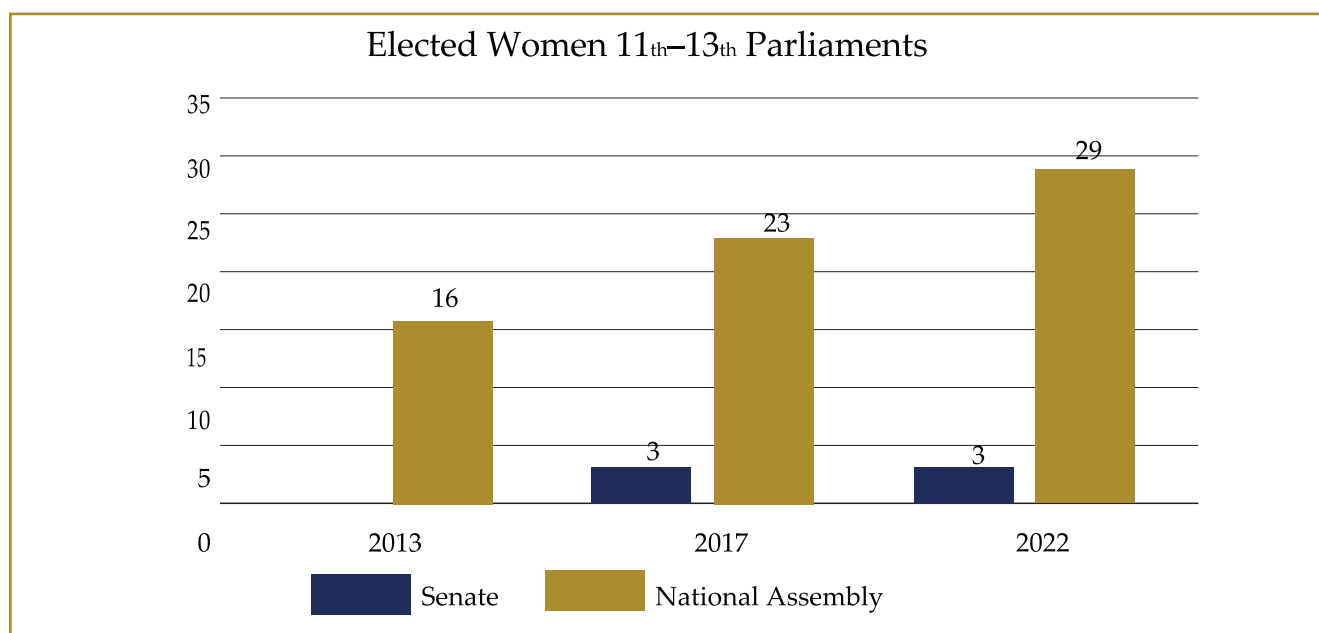


Figure 1: Elected women in Kenya (11th–13th) Parliaments–2013, 2017 & 2022

Kenya's Constitution 2010 mandates that no more than two-thirds of elective or appointive positions be held by one gender, yet women remain significantly underrepresented in elective positions at the county level. In the 2022 elections, only 115 out of 1,450 MCAs (7.9%) were women, with most securing seats through party nominations rather than direct elections (IEBC, 2022; IPU, 2023).

A key barrier to women's representation is the low number of women aspirants contesting MCA seats. In the 2022 elections, women made up only 11% of all candidates across various elective positions, indicating that many wards had no female aspirants at all (UN Women, 2023).

The Multi Sectoral Working Group on the two thirds gender principle recommended the top ups where the two-thirds gender principle is not met in the National Assembly and the Senate.

The task force, which was co-chaired by Gender and Affirmative Action Permanent Secretary (PS) Ann Wangombe and Daisy Amdany of CRAWN Trust proposed that 53 women be nominated to the National Assembly and two in the Senate.

The Justice and Legal Affairs Committee (JLAC) of the National Assembly and Senate directed that the two thirds gender recommendations by the MSWG be implemented in the upcoming 2027 general elections. The House teams, in a review of the NADCO report, said it would be overambitious to implement the top-ups now. It was suggested that within 30 days of enactment of the NADCO-related gender laws, the IEBC would ensure compliance by political parties by directing them to submit lists for filling the additional seats. The committee jointly chaired by Tharaka MP Hon. Gitonga Murugara and Bomet Senator Hon. Hillary Sigei said the proposal is not possible in the current circumstances. *"The committee noted that the suggestion is overly ambitious and would pose significant implementation challenges during the term of the current Parliament,"*

It was the committee's view that it would be neater to implement the proposals after the term of the current Parliament. However, positive outcomes of the parliament deliberations resolved that changes to effect the two-thirds principle needed no referendum *"The proposed amendments would not require a referendum,"* the committee said. The House team argued that the principle was already approved by Kenyans in the making of the Constitution 2010. In the dispensation, Parliament is required to enact a law to give effect to the principle, but the attempts flopped five times. Following the failures, the Supreme Court rendered the 12th Parliament as not properly constituted as required by law.

The 13th Parliament is noncompliant either, considering there are only 81 women in the National Assembly and 21 in the Senate.

The current National Assembly has 268 men – which constitutes 76.8 per cent, while women slots account for 23.2 per cent.

To attain the two-thirds balance, the National Assembly should have 134 women, while the Senate should have 23.

Where no woman is elected at all, the taskforce projected that 104 more women would be nominated to the National Assembly and seven more to the Senate. This would see the National Assembly comprise of 453 members while the Senate would have 74. This borrows from the formula used in County Assemblies.

However, there are fears that the top ups through nominations would worsen the country's already unsustainable wage bill, considering MPs are among the highest paid state officers.

Elected Women Governors

Compared to 2017 when 3 women governors were elected, the 2022 results indicate a more than double increase in the number of women elected as governors. Seven (7) women were elected as Governors (in Kirinyaga, Nakuru, Machakos, Kwale, Meru, Homabay, and Embu Counties). This is the highest number of elected women governors since the advent of devolution. In addition, there are eight (8) elected women Deputy Governors (in Trans-Nzoia, Kiambu, Murang'a, Narok, Makueni, Kilifi, Taita Taveta and Bungoma Counties).

However, former Meru governor Hon. Kawira Mwangaza was impeached by the Senate on August 20, 2024, following a year of conflict with members of the County Assembly. Hon. Governor Mwangaza's ouster was based on charges of gross misconduct, abuse of office, and constitutional violations, with the Senate upholding all charges. She joined a list of impeached Kenyan governors, including Hon. Ferdinand Waititu and Hon. Mike Sonko, both ousted for similar charges. Justice Bahati Mwamuye, while delivering his judgment on Friday, March 14, upheld the Senate's decision, which affirmed her impeachment by the Meru County Assembly over gross misconduct, abuse of office, and gross violation of the Constitution. In the wake of her impeachment, Meru Deputy Governor Rev. Isaac Mutuma M'Ethingia has taken over as Meru Governor for the remainder of Hon. Mwangaza's term.

Elected Women Senators

Three (3) Women were elected Senators in Nakuru, Kajiado, and Machakos Counties. This figure is similar to the number of elected women senators elected in 2017, with Nakuru County maintaining consistency in electing a woman Senator.

Elected Women Members of Parliament

The 2022 elections resulted to 29 women being elected as members of parliament spread across 18 counties. This is a thirty per cent (30%) increase in the number of women elected from the single constituency Member of Parliament in 2017 where only 23 were elected. Nakuru County leads with four (4) elected women MPs, followed by Homabay, Murang'a, and Kitui Counties with three (3) Members each. Kiambu, Makueni, and Uasin Gishu Counties have each two (2) elected women MPs; while Nairobi, Kisumu, Lamu, Narok, Nandi, Kilifi, Laikipia, Mombasa, Samburu, Nyandarua, and Busia have each one (1) elected woman MP. However, Hon. Alice Wahome – Kandara MP was nominated as cabinet secretary resulting to 28 MPs.

Elected Young Persons

So far, the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (IEBC) has documented 17 elected young people in various positions. One (1) male youth governor (Elgeyo Marakwet), two (2) male youth senators (Nyandarua and Migori), three (3) male youth Members of Parliament (from Oljororok Constituency-Nyandarua; Mumias East Constituency in Kakamega; and Saboti Constituency in Trans Nzoia), one (1) female youth (Bomet County Woman Member to the National Assembly), and 10 male youth to the County Assemblies of Nyandarua, Makueni, Nairobi, Kajiado, Kiambu, and Kericho

Elected Persons with Disabilities

The IEBC has documented five (5) elected Persons with Disabilities; two (2) male Members of Parliament (Westlands constituency in Nairobi, and Webuye East Constituency in Bungoma County); one (1) female- the Makueni County Woman Member to the National Assembly; and two (2) male Members of County Assemblies of Kiambu and Siaya.

Elected Women Members of the County Assembly,

So far, 11 Counties have elected women members of the County Assembly (MCA) with Kisumu and Nakuru recording the highest (six (6) women MCA).

Women in Political Parties Leadership

Orange Democratic Movement, ODM, the United Democratic Alliance, UDA, Wiper, and Ford Kenya, have women in powerful and strategic positions.

1. Hon. Charity Ngilu - National Rainbow Coalition (Narc)
2. Hon. Martha Karua –National Rainbow Coalition (Narc Kenya)
3. Hon. Catherine Mumma- Orange Democratic Movement (ODM) party, chairperson National Elections Board.
4. Veronica Maina - Secretary general UDA. She was previously the Secretary-General of the Jubilee Party.
5. Shakilla Abdalla - Secretary-General Wiper
6. Millicent Anyango Obudho - Ford Kenya Deputy Party Leader
7. Homa Bay Governor Hon. Gladys Wanga. She is the new ODM chairperson.
8. Grace Akumu – Citizens Convention Party (CCP)
9. Millicent Obudho – Ford Kenya Deputy Party Leader

The table below shows representation of women in committees in Parliament (National Assembly and Senate) and list of Members of Parliament of the 13th Parliament by Parties as of the 24th of February 2025.

National Assembly

National Assembly, the members comprise 28 Single Member Constituency members, 47 County Women Members of National Assembly (Woman Representatives) and 6 Nominated MPs. 1 female Deputy speaker.

Table 1: National Assembly -Representation of Women

Name	Designation/ Departmental Committee	National Assembly	Political Party	Location
Hon. Chelule Liza Chepkorir	Member Administration and Internal Security Vice Chairperson National Integration and equal opportunity	NA	UDA Elected	Nakuru
Hon. Ngelechei Caroline Jeptoo	Member Administration and Internal Security Member of Selection Committee Member Decentralized Funds Account	NA	UDA elected	Elgeyo Marakwet
Hon. Korere Sarah Paulata	Member Administration and Internal Security	NA	Jubilee Elected	Laikipia North
Hon. Jehow Fatuma Abdi	Member Administration and Internal Security Member Public Investment Committee on Social Services administration & Agriculture Member Regional Integration	NA	Elected ODM	Wajir
Hon. Buyu Rozaah Akinyi	Member Administration and Internal Security Member Blue Economy and Irrigation Member Regional Integration	NA	Elected ODM	Kisumu West
Hon. Njeru Pamela Njoki	Member Agriculture and Livestock Member Member Disapora Affairs & migrant workers	NA	Elected UDA	Embu
Hon. Marubu Muthoni Monicah	Member Agriculture and Livestock Member National Integration and equal opportunity	NA	Elected IND	Lamu
Hon. Chege Sabina Njoki	Member Agriculture and Livestock	NA	Nominated Jubilee	None
Hon. Ikiara Dorothy Muthoni	Member Blue Economy and Irrigation	NA	Nominated UDA	None
Hon. Mnyazi Amina Laura	Member Blue Economy and Irrigation	NA	Elected ODM	Malindi
Hon. Sergon Jematiah Florence	Member Communication, Information and Innovation Member Budget and appropriation	NA	Elected UDA	Baringo
Hon. Mayaka Irene Nyakerario	Member Communication, Information and Innovation Chairperson National Integration and equal opportunity	NA	Nominated ODM	None
Hon. Osongo Joyce Atieno Bensuda	Member Communication, Information and Innovation Member Decentralized Funds Account	NA	Elected ODM	Homa Bay

Name	Designation/ Departmental Committee	National Assembly	Political Party	Location
Hon. Wanjira Martha Wangari	Member Defense Intelligence and Foreign Relations Member of Selection Committee	NA	Elected UDA	Gilgil
Hon. Odhiambo Millie Grace Akoth	Member Defense Intelligence and Foreign Relations Member Budget and appropriation	NA	Elected ODM	Suba North
Hon. Bartoo Phylis Jepkemoi	Member Education and Research	NA	Elected UDA	Moiben
Hon. Muratha Anne Wanjiku Mugo	Member Education and Research Member of Selection Committee	NA	Elected UDA	Kiambu
Hon. Momanyi Jerusha Mongina	Member Education and Research	NA	Elected UDA	Nyamira
Hon. Obara Eve Akinyi	Member Education and Research	NA	Elected ODM	Kabondo Kaspul
Hon. Ngikit Cecilia Asinyen	Member Energy Member Special Funds Accounts	NA	Elected UDA	Turkana
Hon. Fatuma Mohammed	Chairperson Special Funds Accounts committee	NA	ODM	Migori
Hon. Masito Fatuma Hamisi	Member Environment, Forestry and Mining Member Regional Integration	NA	Elected ODM	Kwale
Hon. Mbula Jessica Nduku Kiko	Member Environment, Forestry and Mining Member of Selection Committee Member Constitutional Implementation Oversight	NA	Elected WDM	Kibwezi
Hon. Mwanyanje Gertrude Mbeyu	Member Environment, Forestry and Mining Vice Chairperson Decentralized Funds Account	NA	Elected ODM	Kilifi
Hon. Nganga Alice Njeri	Chairperson Social Protection	NA	Elected UDA	Thika Town
Hon. Maina Betty Njeri	Member Social Protection	NA	Elected UDA	Muranga
Hon. Ndunyo Susan Ngugi	Member Social Protection Member National Government Constituencies Development	NA	Elected TPS	Tharaka Nithi
Hon. Gertrude Mbeyu	Vice Chairperson Decentralized Funds	NA	WIPER	Machakos
Hon. Chepkorir Linet	Member Social Protection Member Delegated Legislation	NA	Elected UDA	Bomet
Hon. Suleka Hulbale Harun	Member Social Protection Member Public Debt and Privatization	NA	Elected UDM	Mandera
Hon. Rose Museo	Vice Chairperson Implementation committee	NA	Elected Wiper	Makueni
Hon. Pareiyo Mantaine Agnes	Member Social Protection Member National Integration and equal opportunity	NA	Elected Jubilee	Narok North

Name	Designation/ Departmental Committee	National Assembly	Political Party	Location
Hon. Abdullahi Amina Dika	Member Social Protection Member Labour	NA	Elected KANU	Tana River
Hon. Gogo Lilian Achieng'	Member Social Protection	NA	Elected ODM	Rangwe
Hon. Nyenze Edith Vethi	Member Social Protection Member Public petition	NA	Elected WDM	Kitui West
Hon. Siyoi Lillian Chebet	Member Labour	NA	Elected UDA	Trans Nzoia
Hon. Udgoon Siyaad	Vice Chairperson Public Accounts Committee	NA	Elected ODM	Garissa
Hon. Sankaire Leah Sopiato	Member Labour Member of Selection Committee Member Diaspora Affairs & migrant workers	NA	Elected UDA	Kajiado
Hon. Maingi Mary	Member Health Member National Integration and equal opportunity	NA	Elected UDA	Mwea
Hon. Munge Cynthia Jepkosgei	Member Health	NA	Elected UDA	Nandi
Hon. Lenguris Pauline	Member Health	NA	Elected UDA	Samburu
Hon. Passaris Esther Muthoni	Member Lands Member Housing Urban Planning and Public works	NA	Elected ODM	Nairobi
Hon. Kihara Jayne N.W	Member Lands	NA	Elected, UDA	Naivasha
Hon. Nyamai Rachael Kaki	Member Lands	NA	Elected Jubilee	Kitui South
Hon. Kuno Amina Udgoon Siyad	Member Justice and legal Affairs committee Member Regional Development Member Public Accounts	NA	Elected, Jubilee	Garissa
Hon. Shollei Jepkosgei Boss	Vice Chairperson Committee on Appointment	NA	Elected, Jubilee	Uasin Gishu
Hon. Maina Jane Njeri	Member Justice and legal Affairs committee Member National Government Constituencies Development Member Constitutional Implementation Oversight	NA	Elected, UDA	Kirinyaga
Hon. Njoroge Mary Wamau Waithira	Vice Chairperson Regional Development Member Public Investment Committee on Social Services administration & Agriculture	NA	Elected, UDA	Maragwa
Hon. Waqo Naomi Jillo	Member Sports and Culture Member Regional Integration	NA	Elected, UDA	Marsabit
Hon. Sitienei Janet Jepkemboi	Member Sports and Culture Vice Chairperson Public petition	NA	Elected, UDA	Turbo

Name	Designation/ Departmental Committee	National Assembly	Political Party	Location
Hon. Otucho Mary Emaase	Member Sports and Culture Vice Chairperson Budget and appropriation	NA	Elected, UDA	Teso South
Hon. Omanyi Catherine Nakhabu	Member Sports and Culture Member Special Funds Accounts Member Constitutional Implementation Oversight	NA	Elected, ODM	Busia
Hon. Kamene Joyce	Member Trade, Industry and Cooperatives	NA	Elected, WDP	Machakos
Hon. Mrembo Irene Njoki	Member Housing Urban Planning and Public works Vice Chairperson Public debt and privatization	NA	Elected, Jubilee	Bahati
Hon. Adagala Beatrice Kahai	Member Selection Committee	NA	Elected, ANC	Vihiga
Hon. Mboko Mishi Juma Khamisi	Member Committee on Appointment	NA	Elected, ODM	Likoni
Hon. Wachira Rahab Mukami	Member Committee on Appointment Member Budget and appropriation	NA	Elected, Jubilee	Nyeri
Hon. Lesuuda Josephine Naisula	Member Committee on Appointment Vice Chairperson Public Investment on Governance & Education Member Budget and appropriation	NA	Elected, KANU	Samburu West
Hon. Gitau Faith Wairimu	Member Special Funds Accounts	NA	Elected, UDA	Nyandarua
Hon. Ombaka Odour Christine	Member Special Funds Accounts	NA	Elected, ODM	Siaya
Hon. Tonkei Rebecca Noonaishi	Member Public Investment on Governance & Education	NA	Elected, UDA	Narok
Hon. Busia Ruth Adhiambo Odinga	Member Budget and appropriation	NA	Elected, ODM	Kisumu
Hon. Kasalu Irene Muthoni	Member Public Debt and Privatization	NA	Elected, WDM	Kitui
Hon. Kiamba Suzanne Ndunge	Member Public Petition Member Parliamentary Broadcasting	NA	Elected, WDM	Makueni
Hon. Chepwony Charity Kathambi	Member Diaspora Affairs & migrant workers	NA	Elected, UDA	Njoro
Hon. Aburi Donya Dorice	Member Diaspora Affairs & migrant workers	NA	Elected, WDP	Kisii
Hon. Kailemi Elizabeth Karambu	Member Regional Integration	NA	Elected, UDA	Meru

Name	Designation/ Departmental Committee	National Assembly	Political Party	Location
Hon. Kemei Beatrice Chepngeno	Member Regional Integration	NA	Elected, UDA	Kericho
Hon. Mwangi Teresiah Wanjiru	Member National Integration and equal opportunity	NA	Nominated	
Hon. Kagiri Jane Wangechi	Member National Integration and equal opportunity	NA	Elected, UDA	Laikipia
Hon. Beatrice Elachi Kadeveresia	Member National Government Constituencies Development	NA	Elected, ODM	Dagoretti North
Hon. Wambilianga Catherine Nanjala	Member National Government Constituencies Development	NA	Elected, FORD K	Bungoma
Hon. Wamuchomba Gathoni	Chairperson Constitutional Implementation Oversight	NA	Elected, UDA	Githunguri

SENATE

From the Senate the members comprise 3 elected female Senators and 18 Nominated Senators (1 representing youth and 1 representing persons with disabilities).

Table 2: SENATE- Representation of Women

Name	Designation/ Departmental Committee	Senate	Political Party	Location
Sen. Betty Batuli Montet	Vice Chairperson Trade, Industrialization and Tourism	Senate	Nominated ODM	
Sen. Dullo Fatuma Adan	Vice Chairperson National Security, Defense and Foreign Relations	Senate	Elected Jubilee	Isiolo
Sen Beth Kalunda Syego	Member Agriculture, livestock and fisheries	Senate	Nominated ODM	
Sen. Pesi Peris Tobiko	Vice Chairperson Education Vice Chairperson Roads, Transport and Housing	Senate	Nominated UDA	
Sen. Prof Margaret Jepkoech Kamar	Member Education	Senate	Nominated Jubilee party	
Sen. Agnes Kavindu Muthama	Member Education Member Lands, Environment and Natural Resources	Senate	Elected Wiper	Machakos Elected
Sen. Nyamu Karen Njeri	Member Information, Communication and Technology Member Justice, Legal affairs and Human Rights Vice Chairperson National Security, Defense and Foreign Relations	Senate	Nominated UDA	
Sen. Esther Anyieni Okenyuri	Member Health Vice Chairperson Trade, Industrialization and Tourism	Senate	Nominated UDA	

Name	Designation/ Departmental Committee	Senate	Political Party	Location
Sen. Beatrice Akinyi Ogolla	Member Information, Communication and Technology Member Lands, Environment and Natural Resources	Senate	Nominated ODM	
Sen. Hezema M. Lemaletian	Member Devolution and Intergovernmental relations Member Trade, Industrialization and Tourism	Senate	Nominated ODM	
Sen. Mutinda Maureen Tabitha	Vice Chairperson Finance and Budget Member Public Investment and Special Funds	Senate	Nominated UDA	
Sen. Joyce Chepkoech Korir	Member Finance and Budget Vice Chairperson National Cohesion, Equal Opportunity and Regional Integration	Senate	Nominated UDA	
Sen. Tabitha Karanja	Member Finance and Budget	Senate	Elected UDA	Nakuru
Sen. Hamida Kibwana	Member Health Member Justice, Legal affairs and Human Rights Member Public Investment and Special Funds	Senate	Nominated ODM	
Sen. Veronicah Waheti Nduati	Member Justice, Legal affairs and Human Rights	Senate	Nominated UDA	
Sen. Catherine Muyeka Mumma	Member Justice, Legal affairs and Human Rights Vice chairperson Devolution and Intergovernmental relations	Senate	Nominated ODM	
Sen. Gloria Orwoba	Member Labour and Social Welfare Member National Cohesion, Equal Opportunity and Regional Integration	Senate	Nominated UDA	
Sen. Crystal Asige	Member Labour and Social Welfare Member Trade, Industrialization and Tourism Member Lands, Environment and Natural Resources	Senate	Nominated ODM	

Kenya's Female Cabinet Secretaries

Below is a table listing the current Female Cabinet Secretaries. The Constitution in Article 152 (1) (a) (b)(c)(d) lists Cabinet as comprising of the President; the Deputy President; the Attorney-General; and not fewer than fourteen and not more than twenty-two Cabinet Secretaries. There are currently 18 men out of 25 in Cabinet which is 72% and 7 women out of 25, which is 28% meaning the Cabinet is not compliant with the constitutional [66.66%] not more than two-thirds gender principle. The Secretary to the Cabinet which is an office in Public Service as per Article 154(1), is also female. Table 3: Kenya's Female Cabinet Secretaries and their Roles

Name	Cabinet Secretary Ministry of:
1) Alice Wahome	Lands, Public Works, Housing and Urban Development
2) Rebecca Miano	Tourism and Wildlife
3) Roselinda Soipan Tuya	Defense
4) Dr. Deborah Mulongo Barasa	Environment, Climate Change and Forestry
5) Ms. Beatrice Asukul Moe	East Africa Community and Regional Affairs
6) Hanna Wendot Cheptumo	Gender, Culture, The Arts & Heritage pending parliamentary approval
7) Ms. Dorcas Agik Oduor	Hon. Attorney-General

Mercy Kiiru Wanjau	is the Secretary to the Cabinet
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Gender Roles, Responsibilities and Social Norms

Women's ability to participate in politics is also shaped by societal norms and gender expectations. According to Wanjiku Kabira (2016), gender roles, responsibilities, social norms and the gender division of labour are anchored within the African customary practice. Therefore, management of families is done by men. Cultural influences in many societies are associated with prejudiced beliefs about women's ability; therefore, the cultural factors are perceived to reverse the critical role of women in leadership and politics. Customs confine women to private homes and to reproductive roles in the public spaces. Because of this male-dominated character of communities, men tend to be favored while women are pushed to accept subordinate tasks.

According to the University of Nairobi –Women Economic Empowerment Hub cluster four report, the quest for women's liberation from the oppressive, patriarchal cultural systems in Kenya dates back several decades. The constitution-making process in Kenya was an integral and critical part of championing Kenya's democratic state-building. The process was also a significant breakthrough in the country's political growth.

Most Kenyans have accepted socially that political positions are appropriate for men as opposed to women, and this is reflected in the election results patterns. Hence, they are unwilling to support women candidates in elections due to this regressive ideology. As gender stereotypes are developed over many generations and are perceived as true by those in the society who absorb them, women are still mainly seen and recognized as caregivers, and this continues to hinder their contest in politics. If the society is patriarchal, then positive qualities are attached to men while the negatives are assigned to women. Yolande Bouka et al. (2019) note that when women choose to participate in politics, they must struggle and compete with the traditional beliefs that perceive the political sphere as men's territory only.

Although Kenyans approve women's inclusion in politics (Bouka et al., 2019), the dismissive language used towards women candidates reveals how the patriarchal attitude towards women's leadership is entrenched in the community. Further, cultural beliefs tend to be cruel towards women. For example, women are expected to demonstrate that they are good spouses and home makers before they can be selected for elective seats, a standard that is not applicable to the male candidates. Additionally, communities with traditional institutions such as clans and the council of elders are usually unwilling to back women and discourage them to vie for elected positions as they consider them to be the weaker gender, hence, barring prospective women who may offer better administration (Tripp et al., 2014, p. 19). *"The women in office, whether nominated or elected have a responsibility to create a good image to allow more women to get support. We have seen issues in Machakos and Nakuru counties where we have female governors, and the community is saying that they are not good administrators. The cruelty and over expectation towards women leaders is real and people's mindsets need to be changed positively. Same thing affects the youth so, it's quite a prevalent issue."* Nakuru female respondent - political aspirant

Similarly, despite women being the majority of voters, they tend to vote for men and sometimes against women candidates. This reflects their socialization, as they view men as leaders and themselves as helpers. Therefore, the level of scrutiny women face in the political arena is high and tends to affect their representation levels throughout the political process as many of them decide not to take part

in politics. African societal norms have defined separate roles for men and women. Men's roles are perceived to be empowering and women's disempowering, hence hindering women's participation in politics. Congruently, in modern societies, gender tasks have propelled men and downgraded women from control, portraying women as weak and lacking standing as compared to men. Further, Yolande Bouka et al. (2019) notes that women are depicted as weak and peaceful while men are seen as strong and aggressive, qualities seen as beneficial to take part in politics. This points to the ladder of women exclusion, also referred to by scholars as patriarchy.

"The patriarchy notion that women are their own enemies has been used to make women fight each other rather than support each other. We need to address the root causes/ barriers to women political participation since women are not enemies of their fellow women." Kisumu female respondent political aspirant.

In Kajiado county, according to a female political aspirant (respondent), who is a person with disability- the biggest obstacle to women's leadership in Kajiado County is failure by the local community to embrace female leadership.

"Women are more in number than men but they do not vote for fellow women and prefer electing male leaders. In Kajiado, women culturally feel more inferior than men and a female aspirant has to work harder than a male aspirant and endure insults to prove herself a capable leader."

The respondent was running on a Jubilee party ticket during the 2022 elections, but the party refused to nominate her citing her gender and physical disability. The party leadership promised that she would secure a nomination for persons with disability that never materialized.

"There is a cultural perception that a woman should only vie for a woman representative position and not a higher elective seat like a governor, senator, constituency member of parliament. Leadership is even harder for a woman with a disability because disability is seen as a curse. We have to raise awareness in the community against discrimination of people with disability to alleviate stigma."

A young female political aspirant from Ooloolua ward in Kajiado county was inspired by her passion for leadership to vie twice for a political elective seat as Ooloolua ward member of county assembly on a KANU party ticket in the year 2017 and 2022.

"I first vied for a member of county assembly at twenty-eight years. People would either say I am too young or question why I am not married. Kajiado county is highly patriarchal and since devolution, there has not been a single elected woman member of the county assembly."

A young female political aspirant cited tribal bias and stereotypes based on factors like marital status and education, especially among the older generation as a barrier to young women seeking elective positions.

As most Kenyan communities are patriarchal and societal norms still support men, it becomes tough for women candidates to compete at par with men. Therefore, there is a need for Kenya to tackle extreme societal and gender stereotypes that alienate women from political participation.

Challenges Experienced by women in Political Leadership

Challenges Currently being experienced by the elected women governors

Former Meru County Governor, Hon. Kawira Mwangaza was impeached by the Senate on August 20, 2024, following a year of conflict with the County Assembly Members. Hon. Mwangaza's ouster was based on charges of gross misconduct, abuse of office, and constitutional violations, with the Senate upholding all charges. She joins a list of impeached Kenyan governors, including Hon. Ferdinand Waititu and Hon. Mike Sonko, both ousted for similar charges. Justice Bahati Mwamuye, while delivering his judgment on Friday, March 14, upheld the Senate's decision, which affirmed her impeachment by the Meru County Assembly over gross misconduct, abuse of office, and gross violation of the Constitution. In the wake of her impeachment, Meru Deputy Governor Rev. Isaac Mutuma M'Ethingia has taken over as Meru Governor for the remainder of Hon. Mwangaza's term.

As per the Constitution of Kenya 2010, this provision is critical in ensuring there is no vacuum in such an important position as governor, thereby maintaining stability in county leadership. The judgement came after Mwamuye had issued conservatory orders in December 2024, extending Hon. Mwangaza's stay in office for 120 days.

Nakuru Governor Susan Kihika has once again captured national attention, but this time, not for her trailblazing political career. The seasoned politician recently announced that she is on maternity leave,

a revelation that has sparked spirited discussions across Kenya and beyond.

As the first female governor to give birth while in office, Hon. Susan Kihika is not only challenging societal norms but also defying age-related assumptions, being over 50 years old. While some have celebrated her milestone as a testament to women's ability to balance leadership and family, critics have raised questions about whether childbirth might interfere with her demanding gubernatorial responsibilities.

Time Use and Political Participation

Women have also been politically marginalized due to structural and institutional bias. Institutional constraints include barriers such as political systems that operate through rigid schedules that do not take into consideration women's domestic responsibilities, and the type of electoral quotas used. Scheduling of political meetings at night or at odd hours when women prefer to be with their families has tended to marginalize women out of politics. For instance, in traditional African set up, women are perceived as home makers, as a result, these socio-cultural expectations on women's roles affect their ability to run for office and participate in various political spaces.

"In my community every time a woman tries to vie for a political position, she is put down by men starting with family members who force her to step down for a man. The men always ask the woman if she is married, if married they keep insisting that she must go back home and exercise her gender roles – by cooking and taking care of her family." Female Political Aspirant- Respondent from Kajiado

Gender-Based Violence

Many women candidates face threats and actual violence—ranging from verbal abuse to physical intimidation—which curtails their campaigning and undermines their political participation.

Cultural biases and community resistance in Kenya reinforce perceptions that leadership is a male domain, making it difficult for women to secure voter confidence (Bridgewater State University, 2023). Additionally, gender-based violence and online harassment discourage women from actively participating in politics (UN Women, 2023).

Violence against women in politics (VAWP) has lasting, harmful impacts on the individuals concerned and broader society. It hampers political and electoral processes and institutions' credibility and legitimacy. The experience, threat, or fear of VAWP dissuades many women from pursuing or continuing political careers, electoral campaigns, and related activities, as well as other forms of public activism. Altogether, VAWP violates women's human rights and political rights. Unfortunately, the problem of VAWP remains under explored and the data to assess its magnitude is not captured. Women do not usually report violence for fear of retaliation, stigma or not being believed. In politics and elections, additional reputational risks exacerbate these fears. Members of women owned and led political parties, or even their families, may be the perpetrators. Within political parties, members may not speak about violence fearing their partisan loyalties and discipline will be questioned ("what happens in the party stays in the party"). Generally violent contexts, based on social norms, VAWP may be perceived as 'coming with the territory'. Lack of data and awareness of VAWP impedes efforts to design and implement effective policies and legislation for prevention and elimination of violence. Rarely are perpetrators held to account and survivors provided with access to timely and appropriate remedies and services.

Liz Njue, a Kenyan psychologist who wanted to vie for a County Assembly seat, had just arrived to vote in her party primary when opponents attacked her, pulling her hair and tearing her blouse. She fled without casting her ballot and lost the race.

Njue is one of the dozens of female candidates who have been physically assaulted while campaigning for presidential, legislative and local elections on August 9th, 2022, according to the Kenya Women Parliamentary Association (KEWOPA).

"People are saying, 'We want women in politics, we want more women to get these political seats.' But how are they going to get them if they are humiliated?" pondered the 39-year-old Njue.

She reported the attack to the police but said there had been no arrests. Police spokesman Bruno

Isohi Shioso said Njue’s case remains open and active. It is unclear who organizes most attacks, but candidates suspect their competitors.

Technology Facilitated Violence Against Women in Elections

In Kenya’s increasingly digital world, online gendered disinformation operations have become even more insidious, with far-reaching impacts on those targeted. The spread of gender disinformation online has been shown to have serious consequences for women’s mental health and their ability to fully participate in democratic processes (Marwick & Lewis, 2017). Women politicians in Kenya have been particularly vulnerable to image-based disinformation campaigns that manipulate media to sexualize them, create false narratives, and divert attention away from substantive political discourse (Agunwa & Alalade, 2022). The fallout from these campaigns has left women in politics with an unenviable choice between running for political office and facing the public scrutiny and private attacks that come with it.

Online violence continues to be a major threat. OVAW-P may take many other forms, including sexist stereotypes and images portrayed in the media, which, particularly in the digital age, focus on women’s bodies, sexuality, and traditional social roles, rather than their competence, capacity, and contributions as leaders. The aim of OVAW-P is to discourage women from political participation and thus deny them their political rights (Laganas, Caroline; McLeod, Kendall; and Lowe, Elizabeth, 2017).

Networked harassment, where online boards and social media sites have been created for people to gather and organize harassment campaigns against individuals or specific groups of people, was prevalent in the 2022 general elections in Kenya. During the campaign period, there were concerted efforts to bully and harass women candidates online (Krippahl, 2022). Even the highest contenders, like Martha Karua, the NARC Kenya party leader, were not spared. Online bullies used her marital status to discredit her candidature, and she was profiled as a grandmother who should be at home taking care of her grandchildren (Elfverson and Höglund, 2022).

According to a report on ‘Online Violence Against Women in the 2022 Kenya General Election’, NDI (2023) the percentage of women candidates on Twitter experiencing a specific form of online violence grouped by their age is described below:

Sexual violence

under 40	23.1%
40 - 55	25%
above 55	25%

Insult or hate speech

under 40	23.1%
40 - 55	33%
above 55	25%

Trolling

under 40	30.8%
40 - 55	35%
above 55	25%

Disinformation

under 40	23.1%
40 - 55	30%
above 55	25%

The report further revealed that there was no visible association between online violence and the election outcome of the candidates on Twitter as observed on Facebook.

There was violence against women as they campaigned for positions or showed support for candidates during the recent 2022 general elections. Women suffered harassment, intimidation, backlash, and

violence both offline and online. When Hon. Martha Karua was chosen as the running mate for one of the main presidential contenders, Raila Odinga, she experienced backlash and insulting statements from other political groups. Similarly, Hon. Wavinya Ndeti, a candidate for governor of Machakos against three male contenders, suffered an inflammatory campaign painting her as an outsider for marrying a man of different ethnicity, with supporters encouraged not to vote for her as a result. While vying for the county assembly membership, Mary Mugure received threatening phone calls and SMS messages. Mugure was also accosted by two men on a motorcycle while walking down the street in order to scare her and get her to step down. Following her divorce in 2018, Hon. Susan Kihika, one of Kenya's first elected women senators, was bullied for having chosen politics over monogamy. Some Kenyans on Twitter asked that Hon. Kihika release her nude photos to prove that she was not a man. These cases are far from isolated and illustrate how women politicians have faced unprecedented levels of violence, harassment, intimidation, and backlash both online and offline apparently designed to discourage them from vying for political positions (NDI,2023).

Access to Resources, Opportunities and Benefits

Finances are crucial for political campaigns. Financing these campaigns in Kenya is a hurdle for anyone seeking political office. Women seem to be more affected in accessing leadership roles due to the gendered nature of electoral financing (Kayuni & Muriaas, 2014). Further, Aili Tripp et al. (2014) notes that women generally have less funds and are unlikely to be political office holders.

Women in Kenya face significant bias in the ownership and control of land owing to the deeply ingrained patriarchal system prevalent in many communities. Despite some progress in recent years, statistics show a decline in women's land ownership. In 2014, 61.3% of women aged 15-49 did not own any land. This number rose to 75.0% for agricultural land and 93.3% for non-agricultural land in 2022, indicating decline in land ownership among women over the years.

Access to finance, food, and water for women is directly tied to their access to land. Ownership and control of land among women surpasses access and encompasses the ability to decide whether to sell, use it for financing, and cultivating it. As of 2021, 12.4% of females were still excluded from financial services, demonstrating the far-reaching consequences of women's land ownership disparity. Given that women make up 50.3% of Kenya's population, excluding them from land ownership impacts the country's economic performance and capacity to participate in political leadership.

"Women need money, disposable assets and land for collateral when you gain interest in politics. Truth be told, post-secondary education is of importance. I had to look for money by disposing a few assets in order to campaign and pay up all the 'levies' at political party level and for me to be nominated by the dominant party. I won and now I am a happy siting MCA." Female respondent elected MCA- Nakuru County.

Ownership of such resources results in women economic empowerment, which is also strengthened by education that enhances their full participation in politics. With resources, they can run successful campaigns as one is able to pay costs related to electoral processes. Money has been an important factor in defining the Kenyan elections. It is therefore a necessary evil that determines the winner. Further, due to the competitive nature of politics in Kenya, the cost of the electoral process is expensive as huge amounts of resources are required to fund the campaigns, advertisements, logistics and rallies. Susanne Mueller (2011, p. 105) affirmed by study respondents' claims that political power and wealth are interlinked, and therefore those who have money are the ones who control politics in Kenya. Subsequently, without finances, women are economically incapacitated and cannot run successful campaigns. This drawback is perceived to contribute significantly to their low participation in politics.

Access to Income

Using desktop research and reviewing existing literature on factors associated with women political participation. Income Analysis established that income had a statistically significant influence on women political participation. This result agrees with extant literature on the interplay between the income of the female political candidates and their participation in political processes. For instance, The East African Weekly Newspaper reported in 2022 that the level of income for female prospective candidates was largely intertwined with their political participation. The study revealed that the major barrier for female participation in political processes stemmed from lack of adequate resources to carry out campaigns. This is particularly true for women politicians in major cities, such as Nairobi where large sums of financial and human resources are needed to conduct campaigns. Borrowing from the

global perspective, revealed that political parties favor female candidates who have better financial capabilities over those with meagre incomes. Similarly, stated that women face the challenge of financial difficulties, which affects their participation in politics.

"My party chose to nominate a county women representative who was deemed to have more money than myself. Due to the party nomination, she secured the seat. I then discovered that I must secure my slot by ensuring that am financially able to contribute to the party and individual campaigns." female respondent political Aspirant-Nairobi

Women could either be candidates or campaigners; however, due to low income, they decide to focus on their day-to-day activities, thus avoiding politics.

The connection between income and women political participation stems from the perceptive of political economy, where many women do not consider politics as a noble career. Thus, they take up other jobs.

As a result, they are under-represented in political offices. This often disenfranchises them from future participation. Bouka, Y., Berry, M. E., & Kamuru, M. M. (2019) found that gatekeepers in major political parties discourages female candidates from vying for such political parties. Consequently, many women are left out of mainstream politics as they cannot meaningfully control political parties. Because of the statutory fees demanded by political parties, most women are historically locked out of political contests. This often snowballs into affirmative action seats, where women are treated differently from men. Sometimes they are asked for kickbacks so that they can be nominated under gender/political quotas. To that end women have traditionally suffered the brunt of income disparities, which ultimately affects their political participation.

According to the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (KNBS, 2020), 29% of women in Kenya are emancipated and can engage successfully in the social, economic, and political spheres, while 40% of these women are in the urban areas in contrast with 22% in the rural areas. This is also supported by the Kenya National Population and Housing Census (2019), which shows a wide economic variation between communities in the countryside and the cities in Kenya. The country is predominantly rural, with a percentage of 68.9% making up the rural population, while the urban population is 31.1% (KNBS, 2019). Further, the bulk of the women stay in the countryside and obtaining finances is restricted in contrast to their fellows in the urban setting.

At the grassroots level, women-led economic initiatives remain underfunded, weakening their ability to support women's political engagement. Strengthening ward-level women collectives can enhance financial independence and create a strong voter base for women leaders.

In **Kajiado county**, the Executive director for FODDAJ Nancy Sitima cited sensitization of women is important because currently there is no equitable representation of women in leadership positions from the grassroots level because of lack of empowerment.

"Women are not well represented at all levels of governance from the ward to the county. Women have not been adequately empowered in education and in decision-making and are exposed to female genital mutilation (FGM) because of the patriarchy order that dominates Kajiado county," she said.

Access to Education Opportunities and Benefits

The place of education in political participation cannot be over-emphasized. Education ensures that political players understand and apply the rules and procedures of running for political office. It is a statutory requirement for political aspirants to have some form of education level before they are cleared to run for office. The process of moving from aspirants to candidates for political office often presents a stumbling block for many political prospects. Women candidates are often faced with this reality when it comes to running for office. Owing to historical and non-historical disadvantages on access to education, most women are often left out political competition. For instance, one must have a university degree before contesting for a gubernatorial position. Unfortunately, women who have the financial capability and political affinity are sometimes frustrated due to low levels of education. This assertion agrees with a study conducted by UNWOMEN (2022) who stated that many societies did not allow women to attain education, which continues to derail their level of political participation.

Access to private resources for general election campaigning by women

"When you have resources, you have power" a Key Informant cited. Access to money is also important for most general election campaigns. The main task in party strongholds is to win the primary election,

after which election to parliament is more or less assured. However, political parties will often rely on their parliamentary candidates to engage in active campaigning in their strongholds, as it is important to mobilize party supporters to vote in elections with larger electoral areas, such as the Senate, Governorship, and particularly the presidency.

The need for resources is a key challenge for many women. According to an economic survey report by KNBS (2023), the number of women earning over Ksh.100,000 monthly has risen significantly, showcasing notable strides in gender parity within Kenya's workforce. Data from the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (KNBS) indicates a 92% surge in female high earners, increasing from 125,579 in 2022 to 139,847 in 2023.

In comparison, male workers in the same bracket experienced a marginal increase, rising from 246,315 in 2022 to 247,571 in 2023. Despite men still dominating this income group, the sharp growth in female participation reflects a positive trend towards inclusivity and empowerment in traditionally male-dominated sectors like construction, agriculture, and education. However, the gap exists for all levels of education but is highest, at 34.8 per cent, for individuals with a primary-level education and lowest, at 1.6 per cent, for individuals with a tertiary-level education. The gap is larger for married individuals (18.8 per cent) and almost negligible for single individuals. The unadjusted gender pay gap also varies by sector and occupation. Women are generally paid less in more feminized sectors, i.e. sectors where they constitute a large or the majority share of employment. For example, women are paid 13.5% less than men in the trade sector, 29.2% less in the accommodation sector and 37.6% less in education. Women are paid more than men in very few sectors, and these include electricity production, construction, transport, real estate, human health and social services.

The gender pay gap among men and women in Kenya has a significant impact on women's ability to finance their campaigns. Anecdotal evidence from discussions with sitting member of parliament indicates that women often need to spend more to convince the electorate *'What male candidates do, women must do twice or thrice'* (Female MP respondent). Most of the respondents asserted that women aspirants and candidates often have to spend more than their male counterparts to win a party ticket and election due to the need to overcome prejudices among the electorate, including the view that a woman's place is in the home, and that they are not suitable political leaders. The interviews indicated that this factor may be more important in some areas (e.g. conservative rural areas) than in others.

This audit reveals that additional resources are needed for female candidates to meet voters and persuade them to vote for a woman running for office. Men have dominated every Kenyan parliament since independence, and being an incumbent often entails significant advantages such as access to resources and name recognition. It often costs more to unseat an incumbent, and *'The added costs associated with unseating an incumbent can dissuade women from participating in a political race'* (A male, Women Political Alliance -WPA- Representative). However, the number of elected MPs who lose their seat (known as 'incumbency turnover'), especially during the candidate-nomination phase, tends to be higher among women than men. Discussions with female members of parliament reveal that MPs are generally unable to deliver the expected level of material development to their constituencies. The reflections of the respondents clearly indicate that women often need to spend significantly more money than their male counterparts to be successful in primary and general election campaigns.

Vote buying exacerbates gender inequality since it is likely to further disadvantage women candidates. Unfortunately, vote buying is a frequent occurrence in electoral processes around the world, and it can have a very negative impact on the quality and fairness of elections. This form of illegal campaign spending can sometimes become a major part of the necessary outlays for candidates and other actors. There has been little research concerning the connection between vote buying and gender equality among candidates. While vote buying is not limited to only one gender, this practice can indirectly disadvantage women by heightening the impact of the existing financial inequalities between women and men (Ballington and Kahane 2014: 314).

Access to funding is essential in electoral processes in which vote buying is rife, and it is more difficult for candidates with less financial access (including women) to compensate for this by campaigning via other means. According to various election observation bodies, vote buying is a major part of Kenyan elections. The EU EOM noted that 'significant amounts' were handed out in the 2022 election and that no candidates were immune: "even candidates who disapproved of this practice felt pressured to hand out money". The issue of vote buying goes beyond strict transactions between candidates and voters

regarding how ballots are cast. It concerns the entire relationship between political parties, politicians and the electorate, and the emphasis that is placed on the distribution of resources damages the political prospects of those with limited access to funding. It was noted by all respondents that 'rather than support the parties, the public expect the parties to give them handouts if politicians want their support. Women candidates in the 2013, 2017 and 2022 Kenyan elections complained that vote-buying efforts hindered their chances of being elected. In addition to the respondents, Evelyn, an unsuccessful candidate, complained that: incidents of vote buying influenced the voting patterns and election results, as well as the electorate's choice of leaders. It compromised the electorate's democratic right to choose leaders based on policies and ability to deliver on the political positions they were seeking. Hand-outs played a major role in the campaigns and the electorate expected to receive cash hand-outs and thus ignored candidates if they failed to hint that they will part with something after addressing them. There is no reason to believe that women are inherently less willing to engage in corrupt behaviour than men. Some respondents openly talked about buying party membership cards for their supporters, which can be seen as a way of buying their favour in an election. However, apart from their lower access to funds for vote-buying initiatives, women wishing to run for office may also lose out since those interested in exchanging votes for money may be less likely to turn to women candidates if they perceive them to be less willing (or able) to provide gifts. *"The political parties Act and the Elections Act needs to be adhered to. I don't like the way the election campaigns financing law was put to shelf because it is women who are hard hit by low finances."* Female respondent political aspirant - Machakos.

Confirming the input from the respondents, interviews with women politicians in Kenya highlighted the financial challenges they have faced. When women county representatives were interviewed two successful WCR candidates after the 2022 elections, both stressed the issue of political finance. They all mentioned that *"My biggest challenge was financing my campaigns. The logistics of running for a political office are very costly. I couldn't afford to hire a campaign manager or security personnel; I was basically doing everything on my own"*. Female WCR respondents.

Political Party Dynamics

Political parties do offer limited support to their candidates for their political campaigns. Although these parties are eligible for public funding as per the Political Parties Act of 2011, this framework is structurally discriminatory as it tends to fund large and short-lived parties, while blocking mini and more long-lasting political parties. These mini parties are vital due to the role they undertake in championing women's participation and, as the preferred political vehicles for women who choose to run independently outside the party frames.

Emma Pair et al. (2021) and Aili Tripp et al. (2014) state that although political parties are expected to use at least 30% of their funds to promote women candidates, this has not been fulfilled. Further, lack of political party support to women candidates disadvantages them more than their men counterparts (Kabira & Kameri-Mbote, 2013, p. 196; Ohman & Lintari, 2016). Therefore, women who are financially empowered are in a better position to run successful political campaigns and fully participate in politics. Economic constraints and the ever-increasing costs linked to political campaigns will unfortunately continue to hinder their ability to vie for political offices.

Challenges experienced by female youth leaders in political parties

Young people who opted to run for political office to contest the positions of President, Governor, Senator, Women Representative, Member of Parliament and Member of County Assembly were faced with another difficult reality.

Over the years, young candidates have used various campaign strategies to build their names, but only a few make it through the challenging nomination process and are eventually elected to office.

"Young female politicians like me are usually rigged out when you start off without the support and mentorship of the political big wigs. However, I was forced to give up my position for a preferred candidate, in our region, you must be nominated by the dominant party, if not you automatically lose." Female youth respondent, political aspirant- Kisumu County. Established politicians and their hangers-on use their influence to squeeze out these young, energetic and focused candidates for different reasons. A good example is the respondent, a female youth from Kisumu County who contested for a position of Member of County Assembly in 2017 and 2022. However, she was coerced to give up her aspirations to someone who the political big boys thought was more deserving. Caroline said she felt angry, powerless, and helpless

when she realized efforts were being made to derail her political ambitions.

Challenges experienced by persons with disability in political parties

During a stakeholder consultation meeting, Halima, a life member of the Jubilee party stated that party politics took center-stage instead of focusing on brilliant politicians. Being an older and preferred candidate, she vied in 2017 and 2022, garnering a substantial number of votes as the 1st runners up, and allegedly had a greater chance of delivering victory for the Jubilee Party than her competitors, in stiff competition with UDA Party, which was the most popular party on the ground. She was rigged out at the last minute to give way to a competitor who had more money, which adversely affected her that she quit the party.

"Women with disability promising leaders are disadvantaged by boardroom politics that lock them out from the popular vote. The negotiated democracy adopted by the Jubilee Party was such a grave injustice to women with disability who were promised nominations instead of being given party tickets for elective positions." Female respondent political aspirant – Kajiado. Further discussions revealed that the political parties favored candidates with money, which influenced the outcomes of nominations even at the last minute.

Similarly, men and youth with disability shared their experiences of how they are continuously discriminated against by political parties and only engaged when the inclusion clause is mandatory. The male PWD respondents concurred with the female PWD political aspirants that they are equally discriminated against and their special seats traded in exchange with money to the highest bidder. *"I have been a member of ODM Party for years but when I decided to vie for an MCA position in Nairobi, the Nairobi party leaders requested that I drop my bid so that I can be nominated in the special seats. I felt offended but had to do it as I could have still been denied the party nomination. They kept their promise but when it came to IEBC, several officers called me asking for money in advance, amounting to Kshs. 2 million, which I mentioned that I could not afford but would definitely give them when granted the special seat position for persons with disability. On the last hour, I lost the seat because I could not afford to give the IEBC officers 2 million Kenya shillings. It can be very frustrating considering the effort of campaigning and mobilizing political support"* Male PWD Nairobi.

Political Parties' Structures

Political parties are the key vehicles for those vying for political seats. Therefore, they are key players in fronting women for election or appointment. Patriarchal political structures often confine women to reserved nomination positions, limiting their opportunities for advancement. Political party structures often favor male aspirants in nominations and campaign funding, limiting women's chances of competing effectively (LSE Africa, 2023). Financial barriers further disadvantage women, as they spend 35% less than men on campaigns, reducing their voter outreach capacity (UN Women, 2023).

Political parties frequently favor male candidates, perpetuating a cycle of exclusion that undermines women's potential in leadership. As major gatekeepers in political participation, they select and support women for inclusion in politics and representation in political parties are organized based on regional and ethnic distinctiveness rather than strong ideological basis, and this makes their organizational structures opaque (Kiplimo, G., & Amunga, H. (2021). This points to the influence political parties continue to wield within the party and their position as "kingmakers."

"The kingship approach of political parties continues to exclude women as much as Machakos is cosmopolitan especially in township areas, we only managed to elect one female MCA. The rest of 21 MCAs are nominated." Female respondent political aspirant – Machakos.

Political Affiliation

Affiliation with various political formations or parties continues to play a big role in determining electoral outcomes. Endorsing or belonging to a given political formation is traditionally tied with political processes in Kenya and elsewhere in Africa, such as Nigeria and South Africa. Rheault et al. (2019) argued that most political formations are often muddled with masculinities that do not provide opportunities for female candidates. Because such political parties have huge influence, most women do not get opportunities to pursue their political careers. This is particularly true in Kenya where major political formations are in the hands of men who sometimes frustrate female candidates. Most women who want to vie through major political formations are often denied party tickets on the pretext that they are weak candidates. Consequently, such women are denied their rightful chances of being elected

to political office. Rheault et al. (2019) contended that women are often left out of major political parties because of perceived masculine nature of politics.

Several women shared their experience on how they were shortchanged by the dominant political parties during the 2022 general elections. *"What Vex is saying is also true. I saw a woman shortchanged by ODM in Siaya during party nominations, they claimed that she is weak and can alternatively vie for the women representative seat. She went independent and clinched the seat."* Female respondent, political aspirant – Kisumu.

COUNTY ASSEMBLY FEMALE REPRESENTATION CONTEXT

RURAL CONTEXT

1. Kajiado County Assembly

Out of over fifteen women political aspirants for various elective seats including Senator, Member of Parliament and Member of County Assembly in Kajiado county in the year 2022 general election, no single female aspirant won against their male counterparts.

A report by the UN Women Africa indicates that Kajiado is one of the 6 Counties in Kenya where women were not elected to any other political seat besides women representative. At the county assembly, no female was elected in the 25 wards and five constituencies.

List of Kajiado County Government Ministers (CECs)

Kajiado county has 10 (3 female, 7 male) CECs.

Table 4: Kajiado County Female CECs

SN	Ministry	Minister (CEC)
1	Public Service, Administration, Social Services, Citizen Participation and Inspectorate Services	Judy Pere
2	Education, Vocational Training, Youth and Sports	Janet Sereu
3	Trade, Investments and Enterprise Development	Leah Marias

Table 5: Women Nominated MCAs -Kajiado County

Kajiado	Political Party	Designation (Member of committee/position in the political party)	Elected/ Nominated
Hon. Phoebe Makungu Ntanyi	ODM	Member Agriculture, livestock, Fisheries and Veterinaries Member Water, Irrigation, Environment and Natural resources Member Justice, Legal Affairs and County Delegated Legislation Vice Chairperson Youth women and Sports	Nominated
Hon. Tabitha Wambui Karanja	UDA	Member Finance, Economic Planning and ICT Member Trade Investments and cooperatives Vice Chairperson Water, Irrigation, Environment and Natural resources Member Justice, Legal Affairs and County Delegated Legislation	
Hon. Carolyne Karuki Nteti	Jubilee	Member Finance, Economic Planning and ICT Member Gender, Social Services, Tourism, Wildlife and Culture	
Hon. Betty Mula Taany	UDA	Member Trade Investments and cooperatives Member Gender, Social Services, Tourism, Wildlife and Culture Chairperson Disability Mainstreaming Member Roads, Transport, Public Works and Energy	
Hon. Penninah Teresi Nchari	UDA	Vice Chairperson Lands, Physical Planning, Housing and Urban Development Member Disability Mainstreaming	
Hon. Ann Ntatai Lemaron	UDA	Member Roads, Transport, Public Works and Energy	

Kajiado	Political Party	Designation (Member of committee/position in the political party)	Elected/ Nominated
Hon. Judy Komite Nkaabata	ODM	Member Lands, Physical Planning, Housing and Urban Development Member Public Service Administration and Public Participation	
Hon. Grace Parantai	Wiper	Vice Chairperson Roads, Transport, Public Works and Energy Member Education, youth and sports Member Disability Mainstreaming	
Hon. Jecinta Mamalai Lepaiton	ODM	Member Roads, Transport, Public Works and Energy Member Gender, Social Services, Tourism, Wildlife and Culture	
Hon. Rebecca Naisiae Karia	UDA	Chairperson Gender, Social Services, Tourism, Wildlife and Culture Member Medical Services and Public health Member Disability Mainstreaming	
Hon. Peninah Teresi Nchari	UDA	Vice Chairperson Gender, Social Services, Tourism, Wildlife and Culture Member Public Service Administration and Citizen Participation	
Hon. Evelyn Payiaton Milia	UDA	Member Gender, Social Services, Tourism, Wildlife and Culture	
Hon. Hamida Yare Haji	ODM	Member Gender, Social Services, Tourism, Wildlife and Culture Member Public Service Administration and Citizen Participation	
Hon. Mildred Milanoi Risancho	ODM	Member Medical Services and Public Health Member Sports, Culture, Gender and Youth Affairs Member Labour and social welfare Member Trade, Industry and Marketing Chairperson welfare and equal opportunity	
Hon. Joyce Yipaso Sunte	UDA	Vice Chairperson Education youth and sports Member Disability Mainstreaming	

According to a former nominated Member of the County Assembly for persons with disability, the biggest obstacle to women's leadership in Kajiado County is failure by the local community to embrace female leadership.

"Women are more in number than men but they do not vote for fellow women and prefer electing male leaders. In Kajiado, women culturally feel more inferior than men and a female aspirant has to work harder than a male aspirant and endure insults to prove herself a capable leader."

Female respondent political aspirant who was nominated as a member of the county assembly on a Jubilee party ticket in the year 2017 has had to overcome the challenge of discrimination because of her gender and physical disability.

"There is a cultural perception that a woman should only vie for a woman representative position and not a higher elective seat like a governor. Leadership is even harder for a woman with a disability because disability is seen as a curse. We are raising awareness in the community against discrimination of people with disability." Female respondent political aspirant, Kajiado.

As a member of the county assembly representing people with disabilities, the female respondent political aspirant successfully pushed for the waiver of charges required for the assessment of persons with disability at government hospitals in the county. She was also able to push for the employment of people with disabilities and the accessibility of buildings for people with disabilities.

Female genital mutilation and early marriage as a cultural factor leading girls' dropout out school
Contributing to Inability of Women to Participate in Political leadership in Kajiado

Most respondents pointed to female genital mutilation as a cultural factor causing a high rate of school dropout among girls. Among the Maasai in Kajiado county, female genital mutilation is connected to early marriage. When girls are taken through the rite of genital mutilation, they are considered to be mature and ready for marriage and therefore, they are forced into early marriage and end up dropping out of school. This is strongly expressed by a key informant who said, *"In addition, in our center most girls come from Maasai community and these are the girls who have been rescued after their parents threatened them to subject them to female genital mutilation (FGM) and others dropped out of school after they were rescued from early marriages. This adversely affects their education and advancement in life."*

Human Rights Watch (2022) posited that 40% of girls in Sub-Saharan Africa get married before they are 18 years. They continue to say that girls who are married "young are often denied a range of human rights" including discontinuation of their education, health risks, and domestic violence.

URBAN CONTEXT

This gender audit focused on the urban counties of Nairobi, Kisumu, Nakuru, Kajiado and Machakos. Political participation in rural setups is significantly distinct when compared to those in urban setups (Gimpelet al., 2020). Because of the cosmopolitan nature of cities and urban places, traditions and conventions of yester years have noticeably decreased; however, several factors inherently determine women's political participation in mainstream politics. For instance, Escandón (2018) found that most women in urban places and major cities have joined political and feminism movements that enhances their participation in politics. This evidence speaks to the extent to which feminist ideas have impinged on the political process in urban places.

Political affiliation and women political affiliation is a reality in Kenya. Major political formations, such as Azimio la Umoja and Kenya Kwanza, controlled the 2022 general elections. All political seats in Nairobi City County were won by the two leading political formations. Women who did not get opportunities to vie using these political outfits were regrettably voted out. To that end, it is note-worthy to state that political affiliation is directly associated with women political participation. For instance, women who did not belong to any of the two leading political alliances did not get opportunities to campaign in proper ways. This assertion agrees with a study done by Kantola and Lombardo (2019) who found that women who belonged or associated with certain political movements, such as feminist political movements, were twice likely to be elected to political seats. This is not surprising because political formation wields immense political power within the purview of political competition.

2. Nairobi County Assembly

Nairobi comprises of 85 wards with 5 elected and 37 nominated women members of the county assembly. The county has 10 (4 female, 6 male) CECs.

Table 6:Nairobi County Female CECs

SN	Ministry	Minister (CEC)
1	Business and Hustler Opportunities	Rosemary Kariuki
2	Green Nairobi (Environment, Water, Food and Agriculture)	Maureen Njeri
3	Inclusivity, public participation and customer service	Suzanne Silantoi
4	Health, Wellness and Nutrition	Anastasia Mutethya Nyalita

Table 7: Women Elected and Nominated MCAs - Nairobi County

Nairobi	Party	Designation (Member of committee/position in the political party)	Elected/ Nominated
Hon. Perpetua Mponjiwa	ODM	Chairperson Children, Early Childhood Education and Vocational Training Member Justice and legal affairs	Elected
Hon. Agnes Wambua Njeri	ODM	Member Children, Early Childhood Education and Vocational Training Member Environment and Natural Resources	Nominated
Hon. Diana Mwangangi Katile	UDA	Member Children, Early Childhood Education and Vocational Training Member Justice and Legal Affairs Member Energy and Information Communications and Technology	Nominated
Hon. Esther Waithera Chege	UDA	Member Children, Early Childhood Education and Vocational Training Member Planning and Housing	Elected
Hon. Hannah Wanjiru Muriuki	ODM	Member Children, Early Childhood Education and Vocational Training Member Culture and community services Member Planning and housing	Nominated
Hon. Hellen Awuor Okello	ODM	Member Children, Early Childhood Education and Vocational Training Member Justice and Legal affairs Member health services	Nominated
Hon. Lily Akoth Kidenda	ODM	Member Children, Early Childhood Education and Vocational Training	Nominated
Hon. Naomi Kerubo Bosire	ODM	Member Planning and Housing Vice Chairperson Health Services Member Children, Early Childhood Education and Vocational Training Member Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries Member Health services	Nominated
Hon. Rachel Wanjiru Maina	UDA	Member Children, Early Childhood Education and Vocational Training Member Culture and community services	Nominated
Hon. Tricer Jeptoo Ayabei	UDA	Member Children, Early Childhood Education and Vocational Training Member Planning and Housing	Nominated
Hon. Mary Wanjiku Kariuki	Jubilee	Vice Chairperson Labour and social welfare	Nominated
Hon. Agnes Njeri Muthoni	ODM	Member Labour and social welfare Member Justice and Legal affairs	Nominated
Hon. Benter Juma Obiero	ODM	Member Labour and social welfare Member Health Services	Nominated
Hon. Joyce Jamosa Lugonzo	ODM	Member Labour and social welfare	Nominated
Hon. Catherine Apiyo Okoth	ODM	Member Labour and social welfare Member Water and Sanitation Member Environment and Natural Resources	Nominated

Nairobi	Party	Designation (Member of committee/position in the political party)	Elected/ Nominated
Hon. Jane Muasya	Wiper	Member Labour and social welfare Member Water and Sanitation	Nominated
Hon. Jane Musangi Muthembwa	Wiper	Member Labour and social welfare Member Culture and community services	Nominated
Hon. Joyce Muthoni Kamau	UDA	Member Labour and social welfare Member Energy and Information Communications and Technology Member Environment and Natural Resources	Nominated
Hon. Nancy Nyambura Mwaura	UDA	Member Labour and social welfare	Nominated
Hon. Njathi Ciciliah Wairimu	UDA	Member Labour and social welfare Member Trade Tourism and cooperatives	Nominated
Hon. Asli Muhamud Mohamed	Jubilee	Vice Chairperson Labour and Sanitation Member Justice and Legal affairs	Nominated
Hon. jane Waruguru Kanyi	UDA	Member Labour and Sanitation Member Culture and community services	Nominated
Hon. Susan Makungu Kavaya	UDA	Member Labour and Sanitation Member Environment and Natural Resources	Elected
Hon. Umuro Kame	UDA	Member Labour and Sanitation Member health services Member Labour and Sanitation	Nominated
Hon Ami Pere Auma Ambala	ODM	Member Justice and Legal Affairs Member Energy and Information Communications and Technology Member Health Services	Nominated
Hon. Dorine Mugambi	UDA	Member Justice and Legal Affairs Member Health Services	Nominated
Hon. Emmy Khatemesi Isalambo	ODM	Member Justice and Legal Affairs Vice Chairperson Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries Member Trade Tourism and cooperatives	Nominated
Hon. Fathiya Abdilahi Mohamed	ODM	Member Justice and Legal Affairs	Nominated
Hon. Virginia Waitherero	UDA	Member Justice and Legal Affairs Member Culture and community services	Nominated
Hon. Grace Kaheti Mungai	UDA	Member Energy and Information Communications and Technology	Nominated
Hon. Joy Muthoni Mwangi	UDA	Member Environment and Natural Resources	Nominated
Hon. Jane Wanjiru	Jubilee	Member Energy and Information Communications and Technology Member Planning and Housing Member Trade Tourism and cooperatives	Nominated
Hon. Joyce Jamosa Lugonzo	ODM	Member Energy and Information Communications and Technology Member Culture and community services Member Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries	Nominated
Hon. Scholastica Muthoni Mande	CCM	Member Transport and Public works Member Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries	Elected

Nairobi	Party	Designation (Member of committee/position in the political party)	Elected/ Nominated
Hon. Malyun Ali Abdi	ODM	Member Energy and Information Communications and Technology Member Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries	Nominated
Hon. Agnes Wambui Njeri	UDA	Member Environment and Natural Resources	Nominated
Hon. Fatuma Abdiwahid Abey	ODM	Member Environment and Natural Resources Member Health Services	Nominated
Hon. Nasra Nanda	ODM	Member Environment and Natural Resources Member Planning and Housing	Nominated
Hon. Beatrice Wandia Khungwa	UDA	Member Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries Member Transport and Public works	Nominated
Hon. Emily Ondeje Oduor	ODM	Member Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries Member Health Services	Nominated
Hon. Rosemary Masitsa Shitote	ODM	Member Transport and Public works	Elected
Hon. Lydia Akoth Otieno	UDA	Member Health services	Nominated

3. Machakos County Assembly

Machakos county is led by a female Governor Hon. Wavinya Ndeti. The county comprises 40 wards. It is one of the few counties with an elected speaker and one elected member of the county assembly, while the rest of the 21 women MCAs are nominated.

Machakos county is led by a female governor supported by 10 (4 female, 6 male) CECs.

Table 8: Machakos County Female CECs

Ministry	Minister (CEC)
Devolution	Consolata Mutisya
Water, Irrigation, Environment and Climate Change	Catherine Mutanu
Education	Joyce Mwikali Muindi
Trade, Industry, Tourism, and Innovation	Sharon Nthoki Mutua

Table 9: Women Elected and Nominated MCAs- Machakos County

Machakos	Political Party	Designation (Member of committee/position in the political party)	Elected/ Nominated
Ann Mwikali Kiusya-		3rd Speaker of Machakos County Assembly	Elected
Hon. Evelyn Kavila	MCCP	Member Culture and tourism	Elected
Hon. Grace Bahati (Zola) independent kyeleni ward Hon. Evelyn Ndunge nzeki - Maendeleo chapchap, Kangundo east	IND	Member Education and social services Vice Chairperson Labour, Public service and ICT	Elected

Machakos	Political Party	Designation (Member of committee/ position in the political party)	Elected/ Nominated
Hon. Peninah Kisangai	PTP	Member Youth women and Sports	Nominated
Hon. Mercy Njagi	MCCP	Member Labour, Public service and ICT Member Trade, Economic Planning and Industrialization Member water and irrigation	Nominated
Hon. Grace Bahati	INDPNT	Chairperson Education and social services Member finance and revenue collection Member Justice and legal services	Nominated
Hon. Catherine Kyee	MCCP	Member Agriculture Member Trade, Economic Planning and Industrialization Member Youth women and Sports	Nominated
Hon. Annastacia Mutevu	MCCP	Member Education and social services	Nominated
Hon. Constance Mbula		Member Labour, Public service and ICT Member Youth women and Sports	Nominated
Hon. Hellen Ndeti	Wiper	Member Justice and legal services Member land and energy Member water and irrigation	Nominated
Hon. Irene Mulu	Wiper	Member culture and tourism Member Finance and revenue collection Member water and irrigation	Nominated
Hon. Rosina Kanini	Wiper	Member culture and tourism Member Labour, Public service and ICT Member land and energy Member water and irrigation	Nominated
Hon. Mary Kituku	w	Member water and irrigation	Nominated
Hon. Peninah Kisangai	PTP	Member culture and tourism	Nominated
Hon. Phoebe Mawa	MCCP	Member Education and social services Member Environment and natural resources	Nominated
Hon. Catherine Mutio	MCCP	Member Environment and natural resources Member Education and social services	Nominated
Hon. Rose Wavinya	UDA	Member Youth women and Sports Member culture and tourism Member Labour, Public service and ICT Member Youth women and Sports	Nominated
Hon. Winfred Mutua		Member Environment and natural resources Member health and emergency services Vice Chairperson water and irrigation	Nominated
Hon. Margaret Ndalana	MCCP	Vice Chairperson Environment and natural resources Member health and emergency services Member water and irrigation Member Youth women and Sports	Nominated
Hon. Ruth Wanjiru	CCU	Member Agriculture Member Youth women and Sports	Nominated

Machakos	Political Party	Designation (Member of committee/ position in the political party)	Elected/ Nominated
Hon. Farhiyah Abdi	Wiper	Member culture and tourism Member Justice and legal services	Nominated
Hon. Anna Ndilo	UDA	Member Finance and revenue collection Member Transport Roads and public works	Nominated
Hon. Mary Nthenya	UDA	Member Environment and Natural Resources Member Trade, Economic Planning and Industrialization	Nominated
Hon. Carol Mutuku	MCCP	Member health and emergency services Member Justice and legal services Member water and irrigation	Nominated

4. Kisumu County Assembly

Kisumu has 35 wards which also has the highest number of elected women members of the county assembly (six (6) and 10 nominated women MCAs). Similarly having one female elected deputy speaker and deputy chief whip.

Kisumu County has 10(4 female, 6 male) CECs.

Table 10: Kisumu County Female CECs

SN	Ministry	Minister (CEC)
1	Water, Environment, Natural Resources & Climate Change	Maryline Yanzar Agwa
2	Trade, Tourism and Marketing	Farida Salim
3	Sports, Culture, Gender and Youth Affairs	Beatrice Odongo
4	Public Service, County Administration and Participatory Development	Judith Aluoch

Table 11: Women Elected and Nominated MCAs- Kisumu County

Kisumu	Party	Designation (Member of committee/ position in the political party)	Elected/ Nominated
Hon. Biko Mildred	ODM	Member Sports, Culture, Gender and Youth Affairs Member labour and social welfare Member Trade, Industry and Marketing	Elected
Hon. Caroline Lawino Opar	ODM	Member welfare and equal opportunity	Nominated
Hon. Henrietta Atieno Bodo	ODM	Chairperson welfare and equal opportunity	Nominated
Hon. Odhiambo Caren		Chairperson Finance and ICT	Elected
Hon. Mariam Atieno Abeid	ODM	Member welfare and equal opportunity	Nominated
Hon. Omuya Millicent	ODM	Member Administration of law, justice, constitutional affairs, good governance and security	Nominated
Hon. Eunice Atieno Alando	ODM	Chairperson agriculture Fisheries, livestock development and irrigation	Nominated

Kisumu	Party	Designation (Member of committee/ position in the political party	Elected/ Nominated
Hon. Regina Atieno Kizito	ODM	Member Labour and social welfare Member Trade, Industry and Marketing	Nominated
Hon. Mickey Awuor Ochieng	ODM	Member welfare and equal opportunity	Nominated
Hon. Oyoo Pamela	ODM	Member Budget and Appropriation Member agriculture Fisheries, livestock development and irrigation Member Water environment, Natural resources and climate change	Elected
Hon. Nancy Viviana Matara	ODM	Member Public accounts and investment Chairperson Sports, Culture, Gender and Youth Affairs	Nominated
Hon. Nerea Okoth Okombo	ODM	Member Budget and Appropriation Member Medical services, Public Health and Sanitation	Elected- Deputy Speaker
Hon. Obonyo Jennifer Okeyo	ODM	Member Budget and Appropriation Member agriculture Fisheries, livestock development and irrigation Member Infrastructure, Energy and public works	Deputy Chief Whip
Hon. Alice Wajewa Odek	ODM	Member Labour and social welfare Chairperson Trade, Industry and Marketing	Nominated
Hon. Ann Ochola	ODM	Vice Chairperson Infrastructure, Energy and public works Member Administration of law, justice, constitutional affairs, good governance and security Member welfare and equal opportunity	Nominated
Hon. Emily Anyango Oginga	ODM	Vice chairperson, Medical services, Public Health and Sanitation Member labour and social welfare Member Water environment, Natural resources and climate change Member welfare and equal opportunity	Elected

5. Nakuru County Assembly

Nakuru county has 55 wards, which is one of the leading counties with the highest number of women in parliament — four in the 11 constituencies, accounting for 36.4%. Governor, Senator and has the highest number of elected women members of the county assembly who are (six (6) and one nominated women MCA. Similarly having one female elected deputy leader of majority

Nakuru county is led by a female Governor supported by 10 (3 female, 7 male) CECs.

Table 12: Nakuru County Female CECs

	Ministry	Minister (CEC)
1	Education, Youth and ICT	Zipporah Wambui
2	Public Service Management	Roselyn Wanjiru Mungai
3	Sports, Gender, Culture and Social Services	Josephine Atieno Achieng

Nakuru	Political Party	Designation (Member of committee/ position in the political party)	Elected/ Nominated
Hon. Virginia Wamaitha	Jubilee	House business committee Health committee Trade committee Roads committee	Elected
Hon. Jane Wanjiru Gituku	UDA	Lands committee Labour committee Security and governance committee	Elected
Hon. Rose Gathoni Njoroge	UDA	House business committee Culture and sports committee Roads committee Agriculture committee Implementation committee	Elected Deputy leader of majority
Hon. Isabella Kerubo Makori	UDA	Implementation committee Agriculture-Chair Budget committee Health committee Lands committee Labour committee	Elected
Hon. Leah Wambui Nganga	Independent	JLAC-vice chairperson Budget committee Agriculture committee Education committee Environment committee	Elected
Hon. Grace Wambui Mwathi	UDA	Chairperson, Labour committee Budget committee Health committee House business committee Agriculture committee Implementation committee	Elected
Hon. Chepkirui Everlyne	UDA	JLAC-Vice chairperson Labour committee Welfare committee Lands committee Education committee	Nominated

CONCLUSION

Several factors are associated with participation of women in politics. Some of the most prevalent ones include education, income, political affiliation, age, ethnicity, family structure, ethics and values, language, social support, religion, attitudes, and community safety. Deducing from analyzed data, this audit concludes that income level, political affiliation, and level of education are key determinants of female participation in politics. However, this does not negate the contribution of other factors in influencing participation of women in politics. Notably, income, education, and political affiliation are thought to influence the way women participate as voters or candidates in political processes.

Women at the lowest level of the empowerment ladder (welfare) may not be in a position to vie for a political office, as they are being “given” these benefits, rather than producing or acquiring the benefits for themselves. This audit reveals that those women who are at the access level, are not only able to earn income but have the ability to vie for political positions. However, for women to succeed in politics there must be reliable source of income as the starting point. With the starting point being, access to income. For women to engage in public life, they must have additional ability of self-expression, participation and mobilization. This is important in enabling their ability to play a public role in politics and to influence policymaking.

The role of women in politics in Kenya has evolved significantly over time, from facing historical barriers and discrimination to making significant contributions to policy formulation, governance, and equality advocacy. While there are still challenges to overcome, efforts to promote women's participation in politics have demonstrated tangible progress. With continued support, advocacy, and empowerment, women in Kenyan politics have the potential to shape a more inclusive and equitable future for all.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Enhance Political Parties Gender Equality and Inclusion Accountability

Political parties should strengthen their space for women as candidates and where possible, grant them preferential opportunities by subsidizing their political party registration, support in building their capacity to enable them run effective and successful campaigns.

Women interested in political seats should identify their parties of interest to enable timely support from the political parties and make timely decisions on whether to vie through political parties or as independent candidates.

“There is need to have political parties block a certain percent of their funds to support women candidates from the very beginning including capacity building to help them run an effective campaign.” Male Respondent -Political Aspirant Nairobi.

The Office of the Registrar of Political Parties (ORPP) should initiate a gender audit of political parties that have received public resources to monitor the implementation of gender requirements of party financing. Ensure that all political parties develop a gender equality and inclusion action plan that is reviewed on an annual basis. The political party that performs the best is awarded by agencies that support women political leadership.

The Office of the Registrar of Political Parties (ORPP) should offer psycho-social support to political leaders following the aftermath of the 2022 General Elections. The distress that comes with defeat has devastating effects on young aspiring politicians. The psycho-social support program initiated by ORPP should be sustained as it will go a long way in cushioning defeated candidates from further distress, adjusting to reality, and finding an entry point in serving the country in other leadership positions.

Resource mobilization for Special Interest Groups (SIGs) political Aspirants

A pool for resource mobilization should be established with the aim of financially supporting women political aspirants. This will financially empower women political aspirants to effectively and competitively campaign and participate in the party nominations as well as general elections.

“Women seeking for political seats should be financially empowerment before they proceed to get the seat. A system should be developed for resource mobilization as early as yesterday! Start a resource mobilization pool whose purpose is to help all women aspiring leaders. This can be hosted by CRAWN Trust. The mechanisms of access and accountability can be established and operationalized before the 2027 general elections” Female respondent, political aspirant- Kisumu, Nakuru.

The financial resource pool can be anchored at the Women Steering Committee convened by CRAWN Trust to ensure that women political aspirants are able to easily access funds and the comfort of having a support system that will advocate and rally behind the political aspirants.

Collaboration between public and private sectors should be fostered and where present, strengthened to create opportunities for women leaders. In addition, businesses and organizations should be encouraged to sponsor women-led initiatives and provide financial support.

Grant programs that specifically target women leaders should be introduced. These grants can be awarded based on merit, with a focus on supporting innovative projects and initiatives led by women.

Strengthening grassroots, county and national women's collectives

Strengthen political networks through WSC that will provide a platform for mentorship guidance in navigating the challenges of politics in Kenya. Mentors can offer advice, share experiences, and help women build the necessary skills and confidence to succeed in political leadership roles. Strengthening these networks can foster a supportive environment where women can thrive.

At the grassroots level, women-led economic initiatives remain underfunded, weakening their ability to support women's political engagement. Strengthening ward-level women collectives can enhance financial independence and create a strong voter base for women leaders.

"We have built strong homes using "chamas" (collectives/investment groups) which are well populated by women. Let's use chamas to campaign and fund our "Mashinani" (grassroots) leaders. My chama members played a critical role in my elections, as they not only rallied behind me but also gave me my savings and loaned me additional money which I used for campaigns. As we speak, I have already paid up all my chama loans. These has been an encouragement to my chama members as they are proud that I became one of the few elected members of the county assembly of Kisumu." Female respondent, member of county assembly -Kisumu.

Enhance gender-responsive governance structures that support women leadership

Promoting gender-responsive governance structures is vital to ensure that women's needs and perspectives are adequately represented and considered in policymaking processes. This entails conducting gender impact assessment of existing policies, ensuring gender balance in decision-making bodies, and fostering a culture of inclusivity and diversity in political institutions.

The office of the Registrar of Courts and the Chief Justice need to implement the recommendations of the Judiciary gender audit report. The Ministry of Gender, Culture, The Arts and Heritage needs to negotiate for inclusion of women in the executive appointments and facilitate training of women on executive and political leadership.

Strengthen Advocacy and Support for Women Political Aspirants

Continued advocacy and support for women's participation in politics in Kenya by civil society organizations is vital to sustaining the progress made thus far. It is crucial for CRAWN Trust through the women steering committee to maintain momentum and ensure that gender equality remains a priority. Ongoing efforts, such as awareness campaigns, mentorship programs, and targeted support for women candidates, will help create a more inclusive and equitable political landscape. There is need to tackle extreme societal and gender stereotypes that alienate women from political participation. These can be done through multiple channels to address negative gender stereotypes and promote positive attitude towards participation and women leadership.

In addition, there is need to develop and implement comprehensive advocacy campaigns to raise awareness about the importance of women in leadership roles. These campaigns should target diverse audiences, including men, and address stereotypes and biases. Educational programs and sensitization efforts should be initiated focusing on men to increase their understanding of the challenges faced by women in leadership; advocacy actions for this could include workshops, seminars and media awareness sessions.

Advocacy efforts should also be enhanced in favor of policies that promote gender equality, women's representation in leadership or better still fast-track the implementation of the existing ones like the 2/3 gender rule.

Work with stakeholders should also be sustained to lobby for the implementation of gender-responsive policies within the County Assemblies. Mechanisms for regular assessments should be established to evaluate the effectiveness of advocacy efforts, with key performance indicators being monitored and feedback solicited from stakeholders to inform adjustment of strategies where needed to ensure sustained impact.

Potential for increasing women's representation

Despite the prevailing challenges, there is immense potential for increasing women's representation in politics in Kenya. With the implementation of gender quotas and affirmative action policies, coupled with the growing recognition of the value women bring to decision-making processes, the number of women in political leadership roles is expected to continue to rise. This presents an opportunity for transformative change and greater gender equality in Kenya's political arena.

To increase representation, women need mentorship and possible programs that can be initiated by the women steering committee to support women in governance. Women need mentorship support in strengthening and diversifying their leadership skills in a male dominated political space; negotiating with patriarchal attitudes that define the style and manner of politics; mobilization strategies for political support; conflict resolution and mediation skills; self-protection against sexual harassment and self-exposure to situations of vulnerability; and support to family life and mental well-being. Largely women in Kenya have made tremendous efforts to support women in leadership, however there are still glaring gaps that need to be addressed to increase women agency in political space. Support to women political leadership should not be seen as a single task of women alone, but one that involves both men and women.

There is need to establish structured mentorship programs connecting experienced leaders (both male and female) with aspiring women leaders in the County, National Assembly and Senate. These programs should focus on skills development, networking, and providing guidance on navigating challenges.

There is also need to run visibility campaigns, by highlighting successful women leaders as role models through public awareness campaigns. Showcase their achievements and emphasize the positive impact of women in leadership roles to inspire others.

Economic Empowerment of women

Empowerment is women's route to changing the practices and laws that discriminate against them and achieving an equitable gender division of labour and allocation of resources. Through CRAWN Trust networks strengthen women economic initiative to enable women access income, financial services and benefits. These will propel women to access finances that enabling them to be in a better position to run successful political campaigns and fully participate in politics.

Engage men as Political Allies in Advocacy

Greater efforts should be placed on engaging religious leaders, community leaders and traditional leaders on the journey towards achieving gender parity. These leaders should be encouraged to work towards altering harmful norms and practices that undermine women. Additionally, empowerment of women should be promoted through massive media campaigns and advocacy rolled out to influence positive attitudes and behaviors towards women leadership.

Role of Male Political Allies as Mentors

Cross-gender mentorship should be encouraged to foster understanding and collaboration. Men can play a crucial role in mentoring women leaders, sharing experiences, and advocating for their success. Facilitate the creation of peer-to-peer support networks among women leaders. Building a strong community where women can share experiences, advice, and resources can enhance their overall leadership effectiveness.

Role of younger generations in shaping the future

Younger generations have a vital role to play in shaping the future of women in Kenyan politics. By challenging societal norms, advocating for equality, and actively engaging in political processes, young people can drive change and push for increased representation of women in leadership positions. Empowering and supporting young women in their political aspirations will create a more inclusive and dynamic political landscape for future generations.

Favorable legal and regulatory environment

The constitution protects women from acts of inequalities that tend to limit their participation in running for elective posts. The electoral system is required to comply with inter alia the principles that “no more than two-thirds of the members of elective public bodies shall be of the same gender.” The electoral system should also be based on free and fair elections which are “free from violence, intimidation, improper influence and corruption.” Respondents-Women political aspirants

The Constitution contemplates a framework in which women will be able to vie for elective posts without fear for their physical and psychological well-being. It thus calls for the setting up of structures that would ensure women's safety in electioneering time. Moreover, it will be possible to hold accountable those who choose to use violence against women as a political tool.

Gender Action Plan

	Recommendations	Actions	Timelines	Responsibility
1	Enhance Political Parties Gender Equality and Inclusion Accountability	Initiate a gender audit of political parties that have received public resources to monitor the implementation of gender requirements of political party financing. Initiate psycho-social support to political leaders before during and after elections. Ensure that all political parties develop a gender equality and inclusion action plan that is reviewed on an annual basis. The political party that performs the best is awarded by agencies that support women political leadership.	2025- 2026 2026-2027 2025 and annual reviews in 2026 and 2027 2027	Office of the Registrar of Political Parties (ORPP)
2	Strengthen grassroots, county and national women’s collectives	Strengthen political networks through WSC and mentorship programs for women. Strengthen ward-level women collectives that links with the county, national political movement. Enhance financial independence and create a strong voter base for women leaders.	2025-2027 2025-2027 2025-2027	CRAWN Trust-WSC
3	Enhance gender-responsive governance structures	Conduct gender impact assessment of existing policies, ensuring gender balance in decision-making bodies, and fostering a culture of inclusivity and diversity in political institutions. Monitor and report implementation judiciary gender audit report on laws that seek to advance women leadership. CRAWN Trust to work with the Ministry of Gender, Culture, The Arts and Heritage to negotiate for inclusion of women in the executive appointments and facilitate training of women on executive and political leadership.	2025 / 2026 2026 2026-2027	CRAWN Trust ORPP Judiciary The Ministry of Gender, Culture, The Arts and Heritage
4	Strengthen advocacy and support for women political aspirants	Develop and implement comprehensive advocacy campaigns to raise awareness about the importance of women in leadership roles. Initiate educational programs focusing on men to increase their understanding of the challenges faced by women in leadership Conduct visibility campaigns, by highlighting successful women leaders as role models. Engage men as mentors/ male champions and youth as political allies in advocacy. Support implementation of the G7 political strategy	2025-2027 2025-2027 2025-2027 2025-2027	CRAWN Trust-WSC
5	Promote economic empowerment of women	CRAWN Trust networks strengthen women economic initiative to enable women to access income, financial services and benefits.	2025-2027	CRAWN Trust

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Annex 2 Data collection

Literature Review Guide

Women Leadership in Political Parties, National and County Government

National Assembly/Senate

Political Party	Designation	National Assembly/ Senate	Elected/ Nominated	Location (Constituency/ County)

County Assembly

Nairobi	Political Party	Designation (Member of committee/ position in the political party)	Elected/Nominated

Kajiado	Political Party	Designation (Member of committee/ position in the political party)	Elected/Nominated

Nakuru	Political Party	Designation (Member of committee/ position in the political party)	Elected/Nominated

Kisumu	Political Party	Designation (Member of committee/ position in the political party)	Elected/Nominated

Machakos	Political Party	Designation (Member of committee/ position in the political party)	Elected/Nominated

Certificate of consent

Good morning / afternoon. My name is _____

I am working as a consultant with CRAWN Trust. I am conducting an assessment to understand women's representation and participation in legislative and oversight bodies and political parties.

We kindly request you to answer the questions based on what you really feel or do. There is no right or wrong answer! Do not hesitate to say that you do not understand a question, or do not know the answer.

Before we start, do you have any questions about the exercise?

We would appreciate your honest responses and opinion to the following questions. The interview will last about 1 hr.

Before we start, do you have any questions about the exercise?

Do you consent to participating in this interview?

YES

IF No – Discontinue the interview

Ask for permission to take notes or to record the interview

Date of Interview	
Name (Optional)	
Gender	
Designation	
Telephone	
County	
Sub-county	
What are striking motivational factors that made you join politics and a political party?	
Why did you choose your political party of choice?	
What Strategies do you use to campaign and be influential in a political party as a woman?	
Kindly share with us some of your success stories, good or bad experiences in your political journey?	
How are decisions made in your political party? Are you involved as a senior / middle level leadership / member?	
How much do you give as member contribution (monthly / annually /?	
Does that influence your position in the political party?	
Are there functional grievance redress mechanisms? Have you benefited from it if yes? How?	
What approach do you use? Formal/ informal to get elected and retain your position?	
What are your preferred sectors in the national / county assembly / senate	
How do you determine which committee to join?	
To what extent do your priorities align with the self-identified priorities and needs of the focus constituents?	
How can we best utilize technology to better foster the spirit of voting for women among Kenyans?	
What are the opportunities / available for women to participate in politics?	
Any recommendations?	

Thank you for your feedback.

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