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# BASELINE SURVEY

## Youth Political Participation and Inter-Party Dialogue in Homa Bay County



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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Constitution of Kenya 2010 presents a shift towards participatory governance mechanisms. Additionally, the Political Parties Act of 2011 provides for the inclusion of Youth in political parties' structures through the Youth and Women's Leagues. Despite these provisions, the participation of youth and young women is still hindered by socio-cultural and institutional barriers, limiting their agency in decision-making. The top decision-making organs of political parties often exclude youth voices, leading to political apathy among this group. Despite the legal provisions for the establishment of Youth and Women Leagues, most of the parties lack properly institutionalized structures, and these structures are usually active only during elections period. This greatly hinders the leverage of the youth in influencing party policies.

This baseline survey, initiated by Siasa Place in partnership with The Alternative, seeks to assess the feasibility of establishing structured inter-party youth dialogue platforms in Homa Bay County, with a view to enhancing the political participation of the youth and young women.

Key findings show that while the youth are actively involved in political party processes, they do not have a strong influence over party policies. Additionally, the institutional, financial, and socio-cultural barriers greatly lower the leverage of the youth in influencing politics in the community. Youth are also faced with risks of political violence and intimidation. However, there is a strong willingness by the youth to participate in structured inter-party youth dialogue platforms, with the belief that it will enhance their civic skills, foster political tolerance, and amplify their voice.

Core Policy Recommendations

- Leverage the influence of community leaders to create attitudinal change regarding youth and young women's political participation.
- Create safe and inclusive meeting spaces.
- Linking participation in the dialogue platforms with tangible incentives like skills, to enhance participation while offsetting the opportunity cost of participation.
- Use dialogue platforms to foster political tolerance.
- Integrate popular culture with the dialogue platforms as a way of building cross-party relationships.
- Develop Monitoring and Evaluation Tools to track progress against the objectives.
- Institutionalize the dialogue platforms by having a quarterly or yearly calendar and having rotational sessions to cover the entire county.

# LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

**ALT** - The Alternative
**CBO** - Community-Based Organization
**CSO** - Civil Society Organization
**FGD** - Focus Group Discussion
**KII** - Key Informant Interview
**SP** - Siasa Place

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CHAPTER ONE:

# INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

## 1.1 Contextual Analysis

The Constitution of Kenya emphasizes stakeholder participation in decision-making, particularly that of youth and women. However, the realization of this has encountered both structural and systemic challenges, resulting in the exclusion of youth and women, who make up over 70% of the population. Despite constitutional guarantees under Article 10 (national values of inclusivity and participation), Article 55 (mandating youth participation and capacity building), and Article 174 (promoting inclusive governance through devolution), the involvement of youth and women is hindered by institutionalized barriers, limited youth and women's understanding of the importance of their participation in political processes, and the absence of responsive forums for meaningful engagement in politics and governance. Consequently, their priorities are often overlooked, leading to mismatched priority projects that result in poor service delivery and undignified living conditions.

By law, to be registered, a political party must maintain physical offices in at least 24 of the 47 counties to facilitate the devolution of political participation among its stakeholders. These offices are also intended to serve as spaces for engaging stakeholders. However, due to resource constraints and a lack of goodwill, most political parties operate only one national office, leaving the remaining 23 closed throughout the year. These offices are typically opened when parties seek clearance from the Registrar of Political Parties and are promptly closed once clearance is obtained, thereby limiting grassroots participants in political processes.

It is also a requirement for all political parties to establish youth and women's leagues at the lowest level of governance to facilitate political participation. Most parties have yet to meet this requirement due to the high costs involved in operationalizing these structures because majority lack the financial resources due to low membership while they do not benefit from the political parties funds for failing to meet sixteen (16) members of parliament required by the constitution while those that meet the requirements lack the good will to use the resource to facilitate stakeholders political engagements leading to poor youth and women engagements in political and governance processes. This results in the exclusion of youth and women from day-to-day governance processes. Additionally, limited awareness of the importance of youth participation leads to very few young people and women getting involved. Consequently, they remain underrepresented in political and governance decision-making, their development priorities are often overlooked, and service delivery becomes non-responsive, ultimately contributing to an undignified quality of life.

Local culture, lack of awareness, and unresponsive platforms hinder minority groups, especially youth and young women, from participating in governance, thereby negatively affecting the realization of the constitutional promise of improved service delivery as outlined in the service charter, which aims to promote dignified living. For example, before marriage, women are culturally expected not to speak on matters of governance; after marriage, they are often treated with suspicion and face additional unreasonable demands, such as being questioned on whether they have given birth, to participate, while in other circumstances, the gender of the children is also used to determine their level of participation. This occurs even though they are equal taxpayers and consumers of public services, which gives them every right to demand equitable service delivery and to hold leaders accountable.

Article 55 of the Constitution of Kenya mandates the government to facilitate youth participation; however, the government has not recognized intergenerational dynamics and continues to rely on traditional methods for public participation and civic awareness, which largely exclude youth and women from governance, leaving them disenfranchised. Youth and women have limited knowledge of the importance and avenues

through which they can participate in politics and day-to-day governance, including influencing youth- and women-centered development projects. They also lack the skills and strategies to hold leaders accountable, leaving them at the mercy of those in authority.

### 1.1.1: Organizational Context

Siasa Place is a youth-led, youth-focused civic-tech organization that builds the confidence, skills, competencies, and institutional structures necessary for the meaningful and dignified participation of young people in politics, governance, and civic life. Inspired by the Constitutional promise of the right to public participation, convinced of young people's interest, potential, and capacity to influence decisions that affect them, Siasa Place is leveraging technology to expand the reach and quality of young people's engagement in the social, economic, civic, and political life of their communities. Our three programme pillars cover themes such as Devolution and local accountability; Politics, tech and rights; Equality; and Youth Employability, skilling and mentorship.

## 1.2 Purpose and Objectives of the Study

### 1.2.1: Purpose of the Study

This study assessed the practical, political, and institutional feasibility of implementing a project that strengthens youth participation in politics in Kenya through county-level Youth Leagues and dialogue platforms.

### 1.2.2 Specific Objectives and Analytical Focus

Specifically, this study aimed to:

i. **Assess the political and institutional feasibility** of supporting youth political participation through county-level youth leagues and dialogue platforms.
ii. **Mapped key actors, networks, and stakeholders in Homa Bay**, including political parties with active youth and women's leagues, to identify potential partners, entry points, and enabling conditions for collaboration in Homa Bay;
iii. **Conducted a stakeholder and actor analysis** to assess the organizational capacity, leadership structures, internal democratic practices, and representation and participation of young women, marginalized youth, and persons with disabilities within the youth wings of political parties, and to map relevant civil society organizations, youth networks, and government institutions;
iv. **Identified needs, motivations, capacities, and constraints** among youth leagues and relevant youth-led organizations to guide realistic and context-sensitive project interventions
v. **Analyzed community perceptions of youth and women in politics** to inform the design of inclusive, trusted, and locally legitimate participation mechanisms
vi. **Analyzed gender-and inclusion-specific barriers to political participation,** including social norms, institutional practices, and accessibility constraints affecting young women, marginalized youth, and youth with disabilities, and identified implications for inclusive project design
vii. **Assess how Kenya's evolving political context ahead of the 2027 general elections,** including youth-led protests, shifting political alliances, and rising political tensions, creates both opportunities and risks for youth political engagement;
viii. **Provide input and baseline evidence and analytical input to** Siasa Place (SP) and The Alternative (ALT) to support the joint development of a shared Theory of Change, partnership framework, and risk mitigation strategy for a scalable 2-year project rooted in local realities and youth perspectives; and
ix. **Facilitate early engagement and trust-building** among youth league representatives and local civic actors to ensure local ownership of the future pilot project.

### 1.2.3 Intended Future Outcomes

i. Active collaboration of youth league representatives across party lines and their engagement in inter-party dialogue;
ii. Demonstration of increased awareness and application of democratic and participatory practices by Youth League leaders in Homa Bay within their organizations;
iii. Youth in Homa Bay voicing their political priorities and concerns in dialogue forums, and youth leagues responding by engaging with young people participating in the forums
iv. Siasa Place and The Alternative (ALT), together with local stakeholders, test and document approaches for youth participation and interparty dialogue, producing knowledge and recommendations for meaningful youth engagement at the county level and for scaling up to a long-term program.

## 1.3 Geographical Coverage for the Study

The study was conducted in Homa Bay County, with respondents coming from all sub-counties to ensure a representative sample of the population.

## 1.4 Scope of Work to be Undertaken

The scope of work undertaken included the following:

i. Conducting an extensive review of the relevant literature (secondary data) related to youth and women's political participation in political parties in Homa Bay and Kenya generally;
ii. Developing an Inception Report with a clear methodology and data collection tools;
iii. Proceeding to the field, in Homa Bay County, to collect the required primary data through interviews and consultations with all the sampled stakeholders in the youth governance and political participation space; and
iv. Analyzing the data, developing the baseline survey r eport addressing all the key data points, providing a commentary on the appropriateness (measurability) of the indicators in the outcome journal, and submitting the draft to SP for review.

## 1.5 Deliverables

i. An Inception Report that outlines the consultant's methodological approach to the assignment, and a proposed work plan.
ii. A set of comprehensive data collection tools that will be used to generate the baseline data, capturing both qualitative and quantitative data.
iii. Final baseline and feasibility study report, which shall follow a draft submitted for approval by the project team.

***Table 1.1 Roles and Responsibilities (Consultant & Organization)***

| S/No | Name | Role |
|---|---|---|
| 1. | Dr. Oscar M. Otele | Lead Consultant (Project Supervision, Monitoring and Evaluation) |
| 2. | Mr. Ignatius Odanga | Junior Consultant |

As a precursor to the assignment, an inception meeting was held between the consultant and Siasa Place programming team on Thursday, 12th March 2026, with the consultant committing to submit the Inception Report on Monday, 16th March 2026 and kick-start the assignment.

CHAPTER TWO:

# METHODOLOGY

## 2.1: Introduction

The study adopted a mixed research approach to collect both qualitative and quantitative data. A three-step methodology was adopted to realize the study objectives. The first step involved a detailed literature review (secondary data) on youth and women's political participation in Homa Bay County and, more broadly, in Kenya. The second step focused on a socially oriented participatory methodology to map existing youth- and women-led organizing structures. The third step was the collection of primary data in Homa Bay County, focusing on Youth Leagues of the Political Parties, Leaders of the target CBOs, relevant county-level stakeholders, youth, and the general population.

The methodology used a consultative and participatory approach, engaging with the targeted respondents to ensure it is context-sensitive and attuned to the complexities of political participation at the county level.

## 2.2 Data collection approaches

### 2.2.1 Qualitative approaches

Qualitative data was collected using survey questionnaires, Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), and Key Informant Interviews (KIIs). This allowed for the collection of data on the strengths and weaknesses of these youth and women organizing structures in facilitating civic participation and providing actionable strategies to improve and enhance their participation in civic and governance processes. The data collected will also enable the creation of a feasibility matrix to strengthen inter-party dialogue and forums that enhance youth and young women's political participation.

### 2.2.1 Qualitative approaches

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### 2.2.2 Quantitative Approaches

Quantitative data was mainly collected using a survey questionnaire administered to target respondents from the sample database of Community-Based (CBO) partners and youth league members, as well as from the general population. This enabled the establishment of baseline measurements for the project, in line with the study objectives.

## 2.3 Data collection instruments and targeted respondents

The survey questionnaire was designed using the Survey Monkey data collection tool. This enabled real-time measurement of progress in data collection. It also made it easier to visualize the collected data with summary data and charts. The research assistant administered the survey while inputting the responses into the online tool.

## 2.4 Sampling design

### 2.4.1 Sampling frame and sample Size Determination

The sample was drawn from the Political Parties' Youth and Women's Leagues, Community-Based Organizations (CBOs), community members, and relevant county stakeholders. This was distributed as follows:

*Table 2.1: Sample Size and Sampling Frame*

| CBOs | KIIs | Surveys | Total |
|---|---|---|---|
| Roother to Dignity | 1 | 5 | |
| IAD | 1 | 5 | |
| Millennium CBO | 1 | 5 | |
| County Voice and Rights | 1 | 5 | |
| GENO CBO | 1 | 5 | |
| **Sub-Total** | | | **30** |
| **Political Parties (Youth & Women Leagues)** | | | |
| ODM | 2 | 5 | |
| UDA | 2 | 5 | |
| MDG | 2 | 5 | |
| UPA | 2 | 5 | |
| NLP | 2 | 5 | |
| Jubilee | 2 | 5 | |
| Wiper | 2 | 5 | |
| PDP | 2 | 5 | |
| **Sub-total** | | | **56** |
| FGD | | | 1 |
| Other Stakeholders | | | |
| Community members | --- | 50 | 50 |
| ORPP representative | 1 | --- | 1 |
| **TOTAL** | | | 138 |

### 2.4.2 Sampling Procedure

Purposive sampling was employed based on the list of CBOs and Political Parties that formed the basis for this study. Key leaders of these CBOs and Youth and Women Leagues provided the basis for the KIIs, and various stakeholders (Youth and Women League members, community leaders) were purposively sampled for the Focus Group Discussions, while randomly selected members of the CBOs and the Youth and Women Leagues completed the survey.

## 2.5 Fieldwork and Data Management

### 2.5.1. Data Quality Control

- Triangulation of data from multiple sources

### 2.5.2. Data Processing and Analysis

- Collected data will be edited and then transcribed
- Data entry
- Cross-checking of data entry

CHAPTER THREE:

# STUDY FINDINGS

## 3.1 Introduction

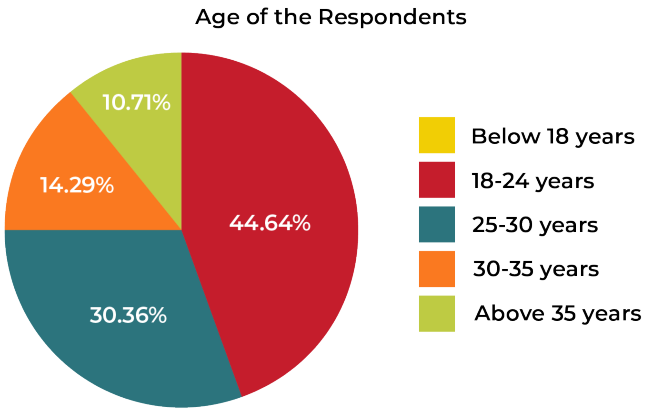
This section presents the analysis of the study findings. It is structured along six focus areas: (1) respondents' demographic characteristics, (2) the community's perceptions of youth and young women's political participation, (3) barriers to political participation, (4) participation risks and opportunities, (5) building inter-party trust and structured youth dialogue platforms, and (6) risk factors in structured inter-party youth dialogue platforms.

The survey had a response rate of 50%. The response rate was severely affected by the lack of respondents from the political parties, except for ODM. However, to mitigate the risks, the data (qualitative and quantitative) collected from diverse sources would help address the low response rate. Additionally, since the analysis is mostly qualitative and doesn't seek to make inferences about the study variables, the analysis would offer a basis to assess the feasibility of establishing the structured dialogue platforms in the county.

## 3.2 Respondents' Demographic Characteristics

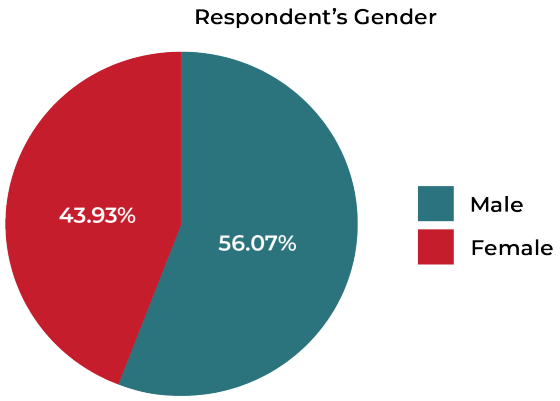
Based on the field research, most respondents (44.64%) were between the ages of 25-30, followed by those between 30-35 (30.36%), and 14.29% were between 18-24. Those aged 35 and above made up 10.71% of the respondents, and none were under 18 years. This is illustrated in Figure 3.1 below.

***Figure 3.1 Age of the respondents***



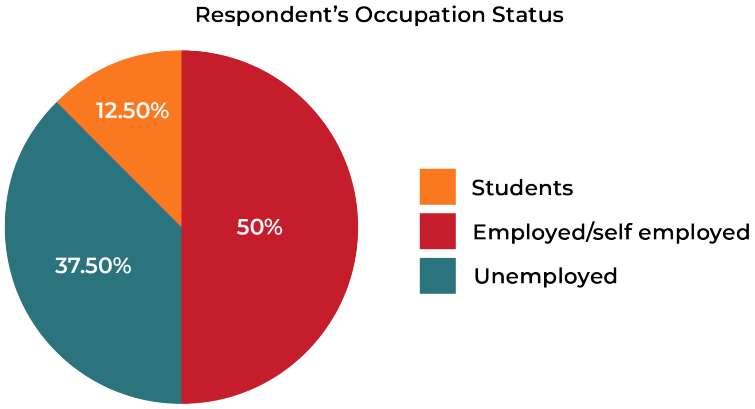

When it came to respondents' gender, a significant proportion were males (56.07%), while females made up 43.93% of the study population, as shown in Figure 3.2 below.

*Figure 3.2 Respondents' Gender*



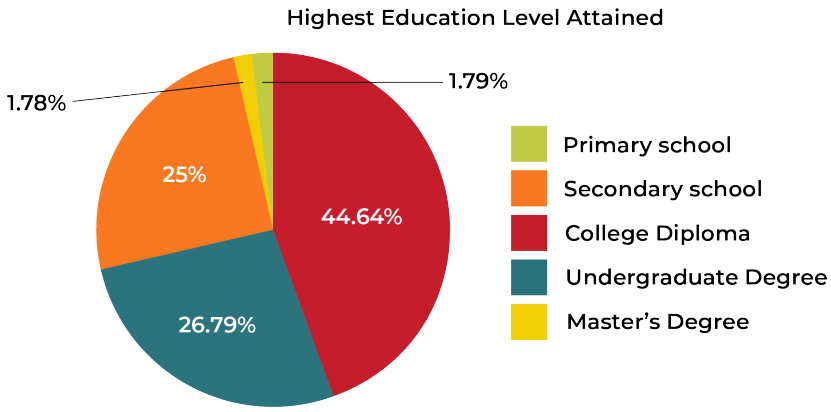

The study also sought to establish the respondents' occupation status. Based on the field results, 50% reported that they were either employed or self-employed, 37.5% were unemployed, and 12.5% were students, as illustrated in Figure 3.3 below.

*Figure 3.3 Respondents' Occupation Status*



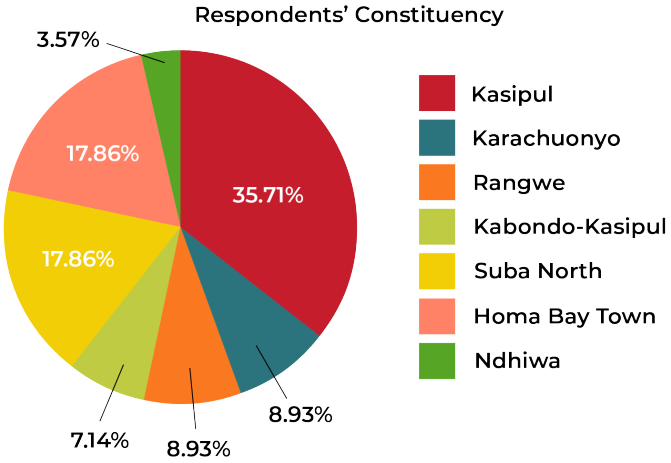

The study also aimed to establish the highest level of education attained by the respondents. From the field research, those who had a primary level education as the highest constituted 1.79% of the respondents, 25% had attained secondary school education, 44.64% had attained a college diploma, 26.79% had an undergraduate education, and 1.78% had a Master's degree as the highest level of education attained, as shown in Figure 3.4 below.

***Figure 3.4 Respondents' Highest Level of Education***



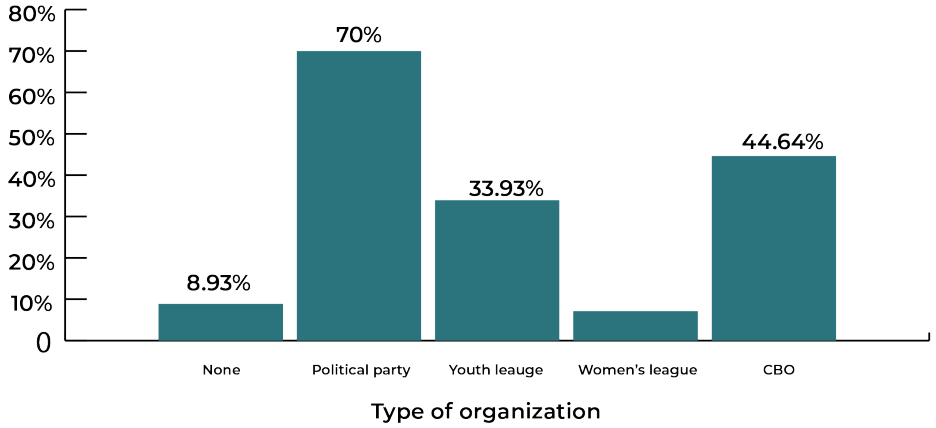

In terms of the constituencies of residence, 35.71% of the respondents were from Kasipul, 8.93% were from Karachuonyo, 8.93% were from Rangwe, 7.14% were from Kabondo-Kasipul, 17.86% were from Suba North, 17.86% from Homa-Bay Town, and 3.57% from Ndhiwa constituency, as shown in Figure 3.5 below.

***Figure 3.5 Respondents' Constituencies***



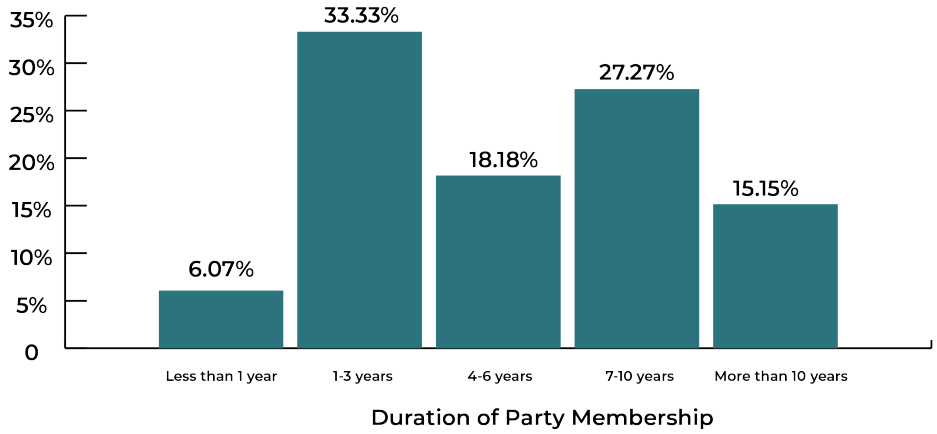

The study also aimed to establish the type of political organization that the respondents belonged to. The focus of the study was on the types of organization they mostly identified with. From the field, the majority reported that they belonged to a political party (70%), with 33.93% belonged to Party Youth Leagues, and 7.14% belonged to Party Women's Leagues. Those who belonged to a Community-Based Organization (CBO) were 44.64%, and 8.93% did not belong to any type of organization, as shown in Figure 3.6 below.

*Figure 3.6 Membership in Political Organizations*




The study further sought to establish the duration of membership for those who were members of a political party. It established that 33.33% had been members of a political party for 1-3 years, 18.18% for 4-6 years, 27.27% for 7-10 years, 15.15% for more than ten years, and 6.07% had been members for less than a year, as shown in Figure 3.7 below.

*Figure 3.7 Duration of Party Membership*




From the study, all respondents reported that they had no disability.

## 3.3 Community's Perceptions on Youth and Young Women's Political Participation

The study also aimed to assess the attitudes of community members on the participation of young women and youth in politics. This was based on the expressed perceptions on a few questions relating to the participation of youth and young women in politics.

The first question focused on their attitudes regarding the acceptability of youth and women's participation in politics. From the study, a significant majority (92.73%) of the respondents agreed that it was very acceptable. 5.45% thought it to be somewhat acceptable, and only 1.82% thought it to be very unacceptable. When it

came to the acceptability of young women's political participation, a significant majority (83.64%) thought that it was very acceptable, 12.73% thought it to be somewhat acceptable, 1.82% were neutral, and a further 1.82% thought it to be very unacceptable. The third question focused on measuring community members' perceptions of young women holding political leadership in the community. It was found that the majority (61.82%) thought it to be very acceptable, 16.36% thought it to be somewhat acceptable, 12.73% were neutral, 7.27% thought it to be somewhat acceptable, and 1.82% thought it was very unacceptable. The results are shown in Table 3.1 below.

***Table 3.1: Community Perceptions of Youth and Young Women's Political Participation***

| Measure | Very acceptable | Somewhat acceptable | Neutral | Somewhat Unacceptable | Very Unacceptable |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Youth and Women's Political Participation | 92.73% | 5.45% | --- | --- | 1.82% |
| Young women's political participation | 83.64% | 12.73% | 1.82% | --- | 1.82% |
| Young women holding political leadership positions | 61.82% | 16.36% | 12.73% | 7.27% | 1.82% |

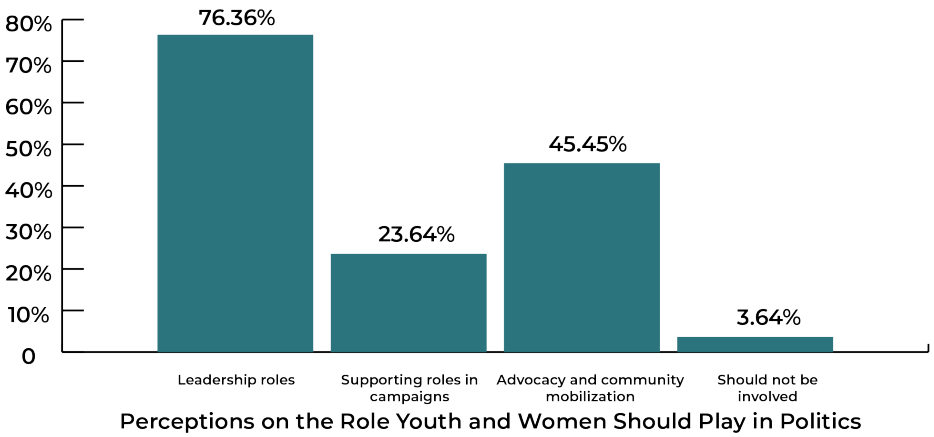
The second part focused on attitudes towards the contributions of youth and women in political matters, using five questions, each measured by the extent of (dis)agreement with that question. Regarding the ability of the youth to provide meaningful input to political discussions, a majority (63.64%) strongly agreed, 27.27% agreed, 3.64% were neutral, a further 3.64% disagreed, and 1.82% strongly disagreed with this. The second question was focused on the ability of young women to provide meaningful ideas to politics. The field research established that 61.82% strongly agreed with this statement, 23.64% agreed, 10.91% were neutral, and 3.64% disagreed with this. The third statement was on the idea that the youth and women can provide meaningful leadership. It was established that the majority (65.45%) strongly agreed with this, 25.45% agreed, 5.45% were neutral, and 3.64% strongly disagreed with this. The fourth statement sought to assess their perceptions of whether young women face discrimination in politics. It was established that 47.27% of respondents strongly agreed with this, 36.36% agreed, 10.91% were neutral, 3.64% disagreed, and 1.82% strongly disagreed. The last question focused on the perception that the youth and young women are taken seriously by political leaders. In this, 5.45% of the respondents strongly agreed, 23.64% agreed, 23.64% were neutral, 30.91% disagreed, and 16.36% strongly disagreed with this view, as illustrated in Table 3.2 below.

***Table 3.2 Attitudes Towards Contribution of Youth and Young Women in Politics***

| Statement | Strongly Agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Youth provide meaningful input to political discussions | 63.64% | 27.27% | 3.64% | 3.64% | 1.82% |
| Young women provide meaningful ideas to politics | 61.82% | 23.64% | 10.91% | 3.64% | --- |
| Women and youth can provide good leadership | 65.45% | 25.45% | 5.45% | 3.64% | --- |
| Women face discrimination in politics | 47.27% | 36.36% | 10.91% | 3.64% | 1.82% |
| Youth and women are taken seriously by political leaders | 5.45% | 23.64% | 23.64% | 30.91% | 16.36% |

The study further sought to establish community perceptions on the role that the youth and women should play in politics. In this, a significant majority (76.36%) were of the view that they should play leadership roles, followed by advocacy and community mobilization (45.45%), supporting roles in campaigns (23.64%), and 3.64% though that they should not play any role, as shown in Figure 3.8 below.

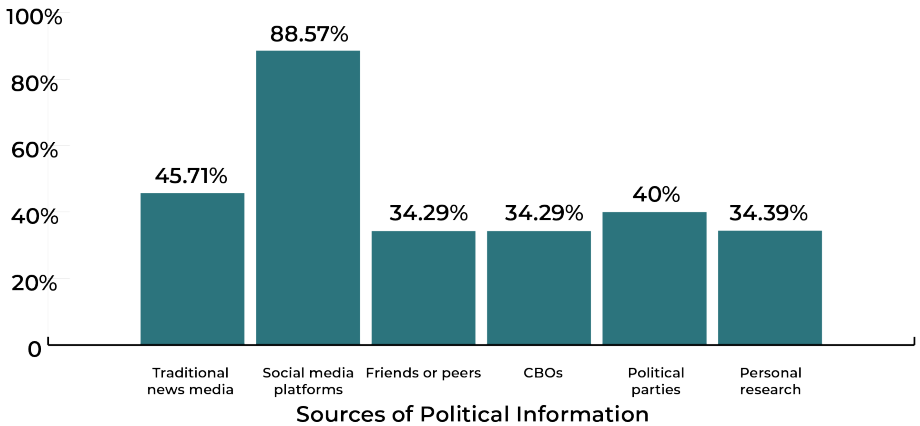
***Figure 3.8 Perceptions on the Role Youth and Women Should Play in Politics***




## 3.4 Barriers to Political Participation

Another study objective focused on identifying the barriers to the political participation of the youth and young women in the community/county. To begin with, the study aimed at identifying the sources used by community members to stay informed about political issues/developments in their community/county. It was established that social media platforms were the most widely used sources at 88.57%, followed by traditional news media at 45.71%, political parties at 40%, with CBOs, friends and peers, and personal research both relied upon by 34.39% of the respondents, as shown in Figure 3.9 below.

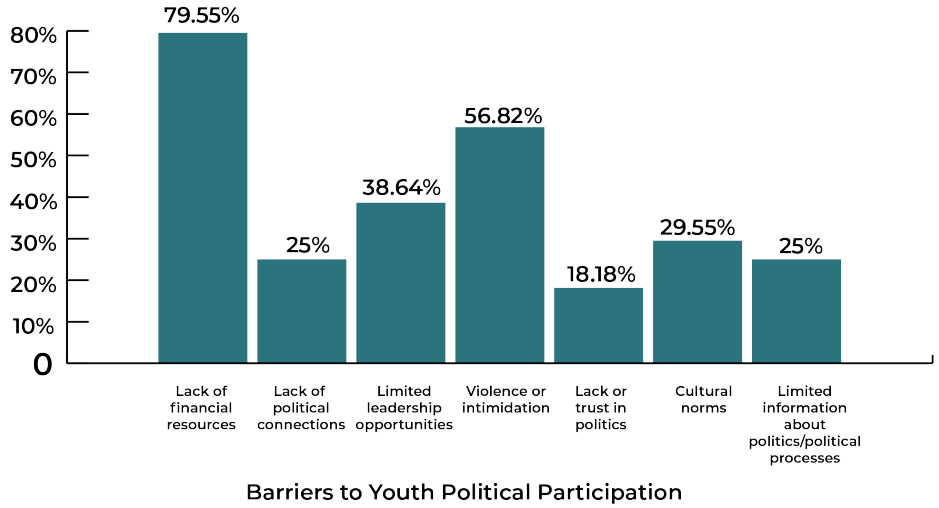
***Figure 3.9 Sources of Political Information***




The study further sought to establish the barriers that prevent the youth from participating in politics in the community/county. The lack of financial resources was identified as the biggest barrier, with 79.55% of the respondents selecting it, followed by violence or intimidation (56.82%), lack of political connections (40.91%),

cultural norms (29.55%), limited information about politics/political processes (25%), and lack of trust in politics (18.18%), as shown in Figure 3.10 below.

***Figure 3.10 Barriers to Youth Political Participation***




Some of the barriers that came out during the FGD was the practice of zoning by political parties during elections, thus limiting the number of young aspirants in the process. One of the FGD participants observed:

*"There's also the issue of zoning during elections. If you are not in the dominant party, your chances are very low. This discourages the young aspirants since they feel the system is already rigged."* [1]

Another barrier concerns the marginalization of young people, especially those living in the rural parts of the county, and Persons with Disabilities (PWDs). This is mainly due to broken communication channels that deprive them of information about how to be involved. This was evident during the FGD, with participants observing:

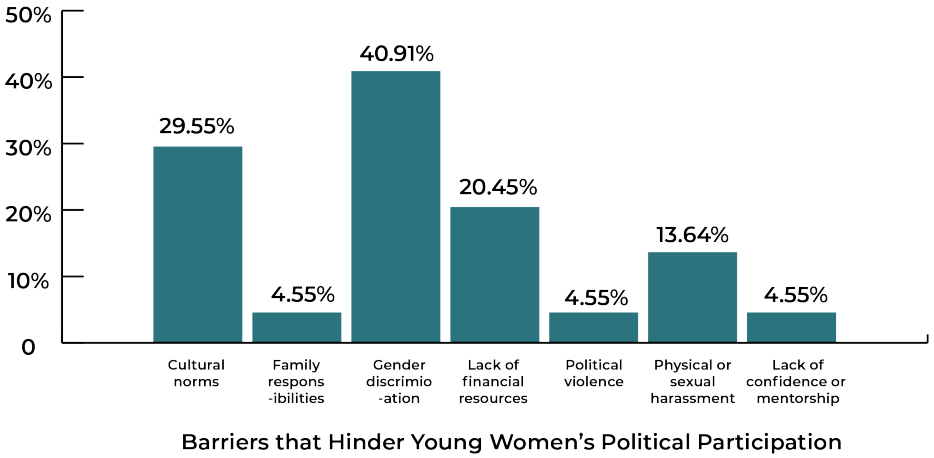
*"Inclusivity is still low. Persons with disabilities are rarely involved."* [2]

*"Youths from remote areas miss out because they don't get information."* [3]

The study also aimed to identify the significant barrier that hinders the ability of young women to participate in politics. The most cited barrier was gender discrimination (40.91%), followed by the lack of financial resources (20.45), physical or sexual harassment (13.64%), and cultural norms (11.36%), while family responsibilities, political violence, and limited part support came in last, with both cited by 4.55% of the respondents. None of the respondents thought the lack of confidence or mentorship was a barrier, as shown in Figure 3.11 below.

*1 Focus Group Discussion, 14th April 2026*
*2 Ibid*
*3 Ibid*

*Figure 3.11 Barriers that Hinder Political Participation of Young Women*



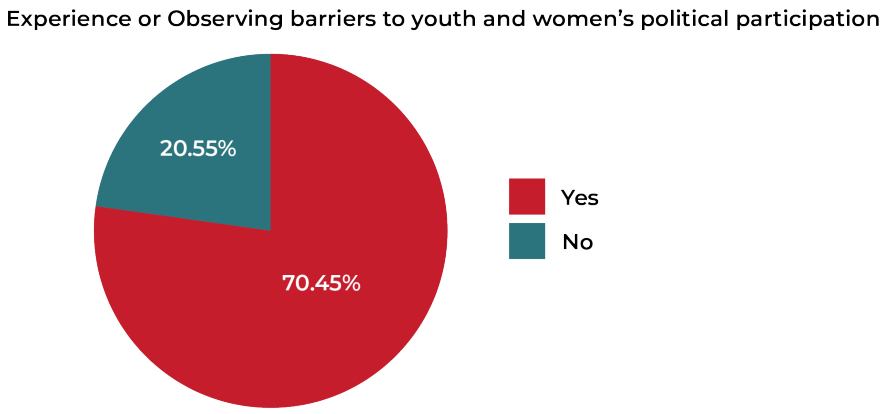

Additionally, the study aimed to assess the accessibility of political spaces in the community/county for the participation of the youth and young women, with respondents asked to rate the accessibility of the different spaces. When it came to meetings, 20.45% thought they were very accessible, 38.64% thought they were somewhat accessible, 25% were neutral, 11.36% thought they were somewhat inaccessible, and 4.55% thought they were somewhat inaccessible. The second space was political meetings, and 31.82% of the respondents thought they were very accessible, 40.91% that they were somewhat accessible, 18.18% were neutral, 6.82% that they were somewhat inaccessible, and 2.27% thought them to be very inaccessible. The third space was the decision-making space at the community/county level. In this, 11.36% thought they were very accessible, 31.82% that they were somewhat accessible, 15.91% were neutral, 27.27% thought they were somewhat inaccessible, and 13.64% that they were very inaccessible. The last political space was inter-party youth and women dialogue platforms. Concerning this, 18.18% of the respondents thought they were very accessible, 43.18% that they were somewhat accessible, 27.27% were neutral, 6.82% thought they were somewhat inaccessible, and 4.55% that they were very inaccessible, as shown in Table 3.3 below.

*Table 3.3 Accessibility of Political Spaces for Youth and Young Women's Participation*

| Type of political space | Very accessible | Somewhat accessible | Neutral | Somewhat inaccessible | Very inaccessible |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Meetings | 20.45% | 38.64% | 25% | 11.36% | 4.55% |
| Campaigns | 31.82% | 40.91% | 18.18% | 6.82% | 2.27% |
| Decision-making | 11.36% | 31.82% | 15.91% | 27.27% | 13.64% |
| Inter-Party Youth Dialogue Platforms | 18.18% | 43.18% | 27.27% | 6.82% | 4.55% |

The study also sought to assess whether respondents had experienced or observed any barrier to youth or women's political participation in the community/county. A significant majority (70.45%) reported that they had, and 29.55% reported that they had never experienced or observed any barriers, as shown in Figure 3.12 below.

*Figure 3.12 Experiencing or Observing Barrier to Youth/Young Women's Participation*




The study further sought to get a description of the kind of barriers experienced or observed by the respondents. Several barriers, mainly linked to cultural norms, bias of decision-makers, and opaque political processes, were the most highlighted. Some of the observations were:

*"I was told that I cannot be a political leader because of my age. I also witnessed another young aspirant being campaigned against on the basis that he had not married and had not constructed a house at his home."* [4]

Another observed:

*"I wanted to vie for an MCA position in my Ward, but I was met with opposition since I am a woman and not yet married. This greatly discourages me from participating in politics."* [5]

Another respondent observed:

*"During the budget-making process, there are slots usually reserved for youth, women, and persons with disabilities (PWDs). However, organizers usually fill these slots in a secretive manner, and tend to call their relatives, or those whom they know have a limited understanding of the budgeting process, to avoid being asked questions."* [6]

In terms of opaque party processes, one observed:

*"I was elected as one of the youth leaders in the party's Youth League, but when the official results were out, my name had been omitted from the list of those elected, and this demoralized me from participating in party politics."* [7]

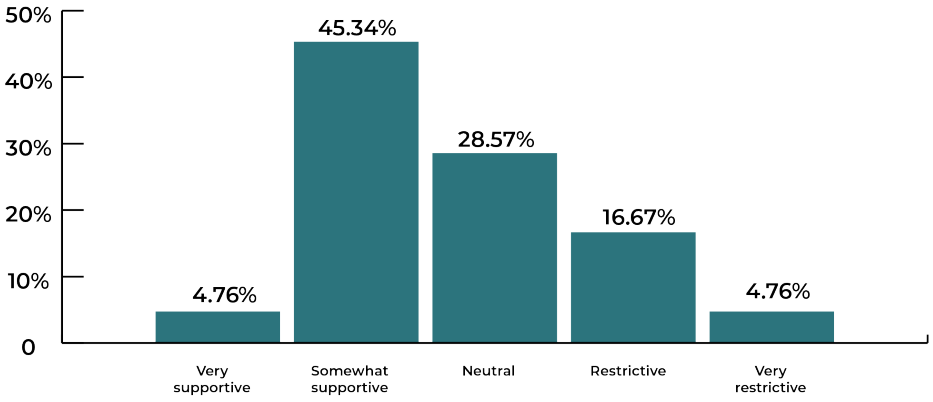
## 3.5 Participation Risks and Opportunities

Another dimension of the study was aimed at identifying the risks and opportunities associated with the participation of the youth in politics. To begin with, it focused on assessing the prevailing environment for youth political participation, based on respondents' evaluations. It was established that 4.76% thought it

*4 Respondent from Kasipul Constituency, 23rd March 2026*
*5 Respondent from Rangwe Constituency, 1st April 2026*
*6 Respondent from Homa Bay Town Constituency, 28th March 2026*
*7 Respondent from Suba North Constituency, March 28th 2026*

to be very supportive, 45.24% that it was somewhat supportive, 28.57% were neutral, 16.67% that it was somewhat restrictive, and 4.76% thought it was very restrictive, as shown in Figure 3.13 below.

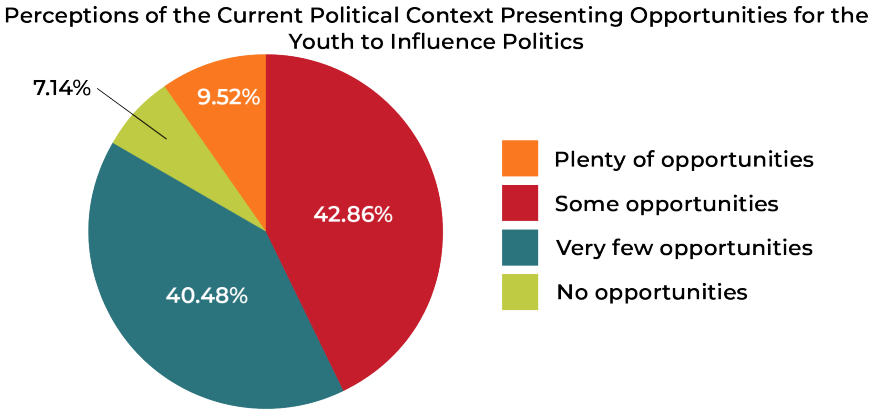
***Figure 3.13 Perceptions on Prevailing Political Environment for Youth Political Participation***




Perceptions of the Prevailing Political Environment for Youth Political Participation

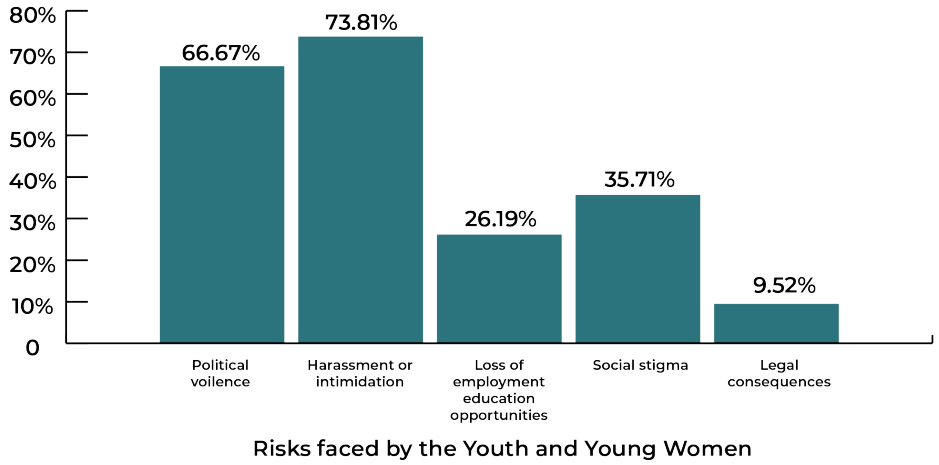
The study further assessed the respondents' perceptions of whether the current political context presents opportunities for the youth to influence politics. Those who thought it presented plenty of opportunities were 9.52%, 42.86% thought it presented some opportunities, 40.48% thought it presented very few opportunities, and 7.14% that it presented no opportunities, as shown in Figure 3.14 below.

***Figure 3.14 Perceptions of Current Political Context Presenting Opportunities for the Youth to Influence Politics***




To identify the risks faced by the youth and young women, respondents were asked to select from a list of potential risks that the youth and young women might face. A significant majority (73.81%) were of the view that harassment or intimidation was the most serious one, followed by political violence (66.67%), social stigma (35.71%), loss of employment or education opportunities (26.19%), and legal consequences (9.52%), as shown in Figure 3.15 below.

***Figure 3.15 Risks Faced by the Youth and Young Women***

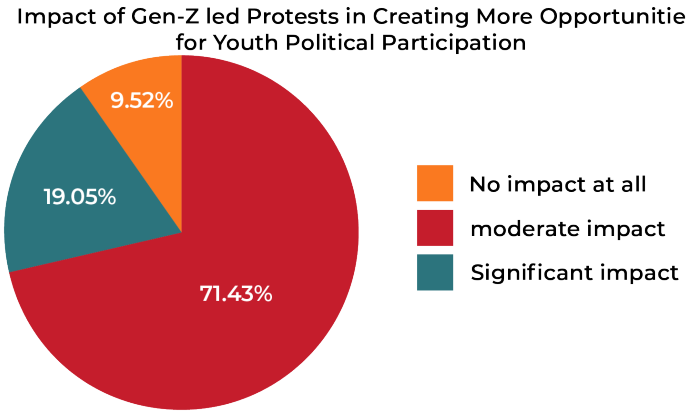



During the field research, one key informant observed:

*"The biggest risk is faced by youthful community leaders since politicians see them as a threat. This might discourage someone from actively participating in politics, especially if they don't have a good support system."* [8]

Considering recent political events in the country, the study aimed to examine whether they have created or are creating more opportunities for youth political participation. It first focused on the Gen-Z-led protests of 2024 and 2025 and found that a significant majority of respondents (71.43%) thought its impact was moderate, 19.05% thought it to be significant, and 9.52% thought it had no impact at all, as shown in Figure 3.16 below.

***Figure 3.16 Impact of Gen-Z-Led Protests in Creating More Opportunities for Youth Political Participation***




*8 Key Informant Interview, 23rd March 2026*

There were mixed reactions to the impact of the protests in creating more opportunities for the youth in politics. For those who had a positive view, some of the responses they gave included:

*"Some sense of acceptance has been seen by the political class that even the youth, even if in a small way, can influence the trajectory of political decisions."* [9]

*"At least the government these days formulates policies with the youth in mind. They are becoming mindful of the youth and have also begun initiating projects targeting the unemployed youth."* [10]

*"I think it made the young people realize their voice matters. The fact that the youth were able to mobilize themselves without the influence of political leaders was a sign that the young people can create a space for themselves, provided they are well organized."* [11]

*"It was a wake-up call for a more inclusive leadership. The youth have woken up from their comfort zones."* [12]

However, some held a skeptical view of the impact of these protests. One of the respondents observed:

*"The majority of the youth still lack political knowledge, especially the distinct functions of the National and County governments. Additionally, some don't know the functions of the different elected leaders, and this creates challenges in holding leaders accountable."* [13]

Another added that:
*"The youth are still divided along ethnic lines, which makes it easy for political leaders to manipulate them."* [14]

The study further went on to get respondents' views on the risks that the Gen-Z-led protests present for their political participation. Some of the responses included:

*"Some of the political leaders see the Gen-Zs as the most troublesome generation to deal with, and they thus tend to sideline them in many political functions."* [15]

Another respondent observed that:

*"The community views young people as troublemakers, and some blame them for the loss of lives and destruction of property witnessed during the protests."* [16]

Highlighting the use of divide and rule tactics employed by politicians, one respondent observed:

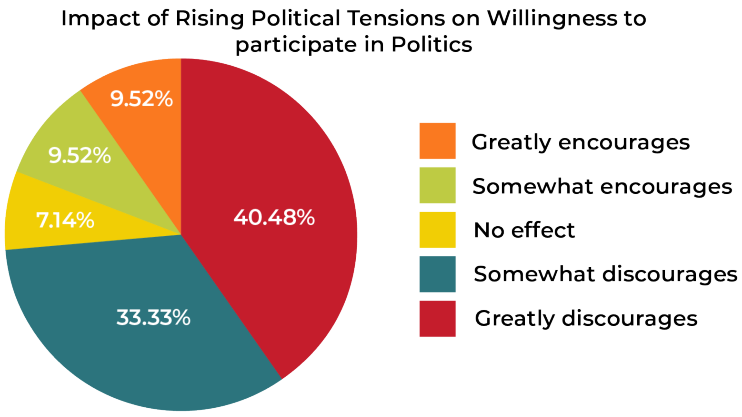
*"It can block opportunities for some other youth since most of the politicians would rather go for the ringleaders as opposed to dealing with the entire team of youth."* [17]

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*9 Respondent from Homa Bay Town Constituency, 27th March 2026*
*10 Respondent from Kabondo-Kasipul Constituency, 29th March 2026*
*11 Key Informant Interview, 24th March 2026*
*12 Respondent from Kasipul Constituency,1st April 2026*
*13 Respondent from Kasipul Constituency, 29th March 2026*
*14 Respondent from Suba North Constituency, 31st March 2026*
*15 Respondent from Kasipul Constituency, 23rd March 2026*
*16 Respondent from Kasipul Constituency, 1st April 2026*
*17 Respondent from Suba North Constituency, 24th March 2026*

The study further sought to assess how the rising political tensions in the country impact the community members' willingness to participate in politics. It was established that 40.48% of the respondents thought it greatly discourages their willingness to participate, 33.33% that it somehow discourages their willingness to participate, 9.52% that it somehow encourages their participation, a further 9.52% that it greatly encourages their participation, and 7.14% that it had no effect, as shown in Figure 3.17 below.

***Figure 3.17 Impact of the Rising Political Tensions on Respondents' Willingness to Participate in Politics/ Political Activities***




Safety fears dominated perceptions of the youth when it came to the rising political temperatures on their willingness to participate in politics, with the youth fearing for their personal safety, and wary of the threat of death that is a reality when violence dominates politics. One of the respondents observed that:

*"Rising political tensions greatly discourage me from participating in political activities, for it creates fear, uncertainty, and concerns about my personal safety."* [18]

Another observed:
*"The violence within the county and country at large sends fear to the entire community. This makes the youth find it difficult to convince their families to support their political aspirations."* [19]

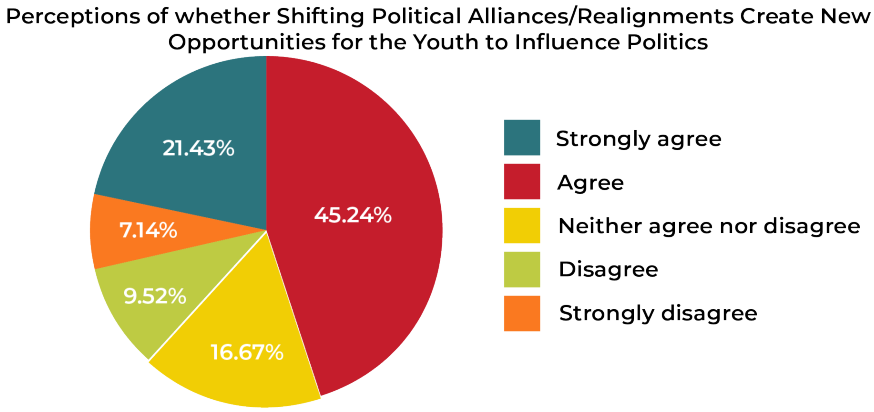
However, for some, the rising political tensions only fuel their desire to participate in politics and create meaningful change, as one respondent observed:

*"What I want is change. The political tensions only make me more excited about fighting for the change I believe in and want to see."* [20]

*18 Respondent from Karachuonyo Constituency, 29th March 2026*
*19 Respondent from Suba North Constituency, 24th March 2026*
*20 Respondent from Suba North Constituency, 30th March 2026*

The final aspect focused on in this section was the opportunities for participation presented by the shifting political alliances/realignments being experienced in the country, for the youth to influence politics. It was established that a majority (21.43% strongly agreeing and 45.24% agreeing) thought it allowed the youth to exercise influence on politics, 16.67% neither agreed nor disagreed, 9.52% disagreed, and 7.14% strongly disagreed on this, as shown in Figure 3.18 below.

***Figure 3.18 Perceptions of whether Shifting Political Alliances/Realignments Create New Opportunities for the Youth to Influence Politics***




The mixed reactions to the idea that these shifting alliances offer more opportunities were reflected in the responses collected during the field research. Some of those with a positive view observed that:

*"In the past, we had a few political parties that were occupied by specific politicians, and they did not consider the youth. The new alliances are creating room for the youth to pursue and demonstrate their leadership abilities."* [21]

*"I agree that the shifting political alliances we are witnessing in the country are creating new opportunities for young people to influence politics. With new alliances, new spaces open for fresh voices, giving the youth a chance to engage, organize, and shape political conversations in ways that were not accessible before."* [22]

However, there were some respondents with a skeptical view, and some had mixed opinions. Some of these responses were:

*"Shifting political alliances can create new opportunities for young people to influence politics, but only if they are organized, informed, and engaged beyond voting in elections."* [23]

*"They are the same selfish leaders regrouping and rebranding to fill in those positions, and they are not allowing the youth to serve."* [24]

*21 Respondent from Suba North Constituency, 24th March 2026*
*22 Respondent from Karachuonyo Constituency, 29th March 2026*
*23 Respondent from Kasipul Constituency, 1st April 2026*
*24 Respondent from Kabondo-Kasipul Constituency, 29th March 2026*

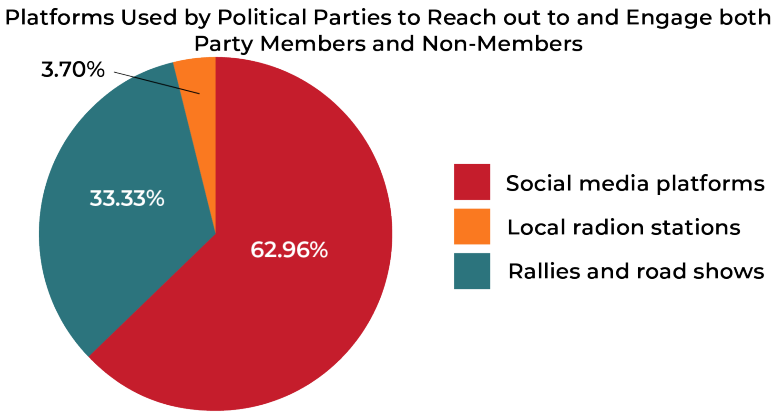
*"Simply because all these alliances and political parties are still led by old people, and they are bargaining for their positions, while using the youth and women as their scapegoats."* [25]

## 3.6 Building Inter-Party Trust and Structured Youth Dialogue Platforms

To assess the feasibility of establishing structured inter-party youth dialogue platforms in the county, the study focused on potential risks, trust-building, and finally, assessing the feasibility of these dialogue platforms.

To begin with, the study aimed at identifying platforms that are mostly used by political parties in the community/county to reach out to or engage with both party members and non-members. Social media was the most used platform (62.96%), followed by rallies and road shows (33.33%), and local radio (3.70%), as shown in Figure 3.19 below.

***Figure 3.19 Platforms Used by Political Parties to Reach out to and Engage both Party Members and Non-Members***




The second part of this sub-section focused on the engagement of the youth and women by political parties in the community/county, with a view to fostering their participation. This was measured by the extent to which respondents agreed with several statements. The first question was on the view that political parties encourage the participation of youth and women in politics. In this, 4.17% strongly agreed with this, 41.67% agreed, 41.67% were neutral, 8.33% disagreed, and 4.17% strongly disagreed that this was the case. The second aspect focused on the accessibility of political parties' structures to youth and women from diverse backgrounds. Here, 3.70% of the respondents agreed that this was the case, 29.63% agreed, 37.04% were neutral, 18.52% disagreed, and 11.11% strongly disagreed that this was the case. When it came to political parties offering the youth and young women meaningful opportunities to influence party policies, 7.41% strongly agreed, 14.81% agreed, 29.63% were neutral, 37.04% disagreed, and 11.11% strongly disagreed with the statement. The third statement focused on the idea that political parties offer training and mentorship programmes that are tailored for the youth and women. Considering this, 7.41% strongly agreed, 18.52% agreed, 25.93% were neutral, 37.04% disagreed, and 11.11% strongly disagreed that this was the case.

Additionally, the study sought to measure perceptions of political parties offering financial and logistical

*25 Respondent from Homa Bay Town Constituency, 28th March 2026*

support to enhance youth and women's political participation, and it established that 3.70% of the respondents strongly agreed, 11.11% agreed, a further 11.11% were neutral, 55.56% disagreed, and 18.52% strongly disagreed that this was the case. When it came to the increase of youth and women candidates in the last two general elections, 19.23% of the respondents strongly agreed that this was the case, 57.69% agreed, 15.38% were neutral, and 7.69% disagreed that this was the case. The study also aimed to assess whether political parties only engage with registered youth and women members, and it established that 14.81% of the respondents believed this was the case, 44.44% agreed, 22.22% were neutral, 14.81% disagreed, and 3.70% strongly disagreed that this was the case. Another dimension focused on respondents' perceptions of whether political parties create inclusive opportunities for non-youth and non-women members to engage in political processes. It was established that 11.11% of the respondents agreed that this was the case, 33.33% agreed, 29.63% were neutral. 18.52% disagreed, and 7.41% strongly disagreed that this was the case.

The last measure focused on respondents' perceptions of political parties seeking to foster inter-party youth dialogue in the community/county. It was established that 7.69% of the respondents thought that this was the case, 30.77% agreed, 19.23% were neutral, 34.62% disagreed, and 7.69% strongly disagreed that this was the case, as illustrated in Table 3.4 below.

***Table 3.4 Community Members' Perception of the Link Between Political Parties and Youth and Women's Political Participation***

| Statement | Strongly Agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Political parties encourage the participation of youth and women in politics | 4.17% | 41.67% | 41.67% | 8.33% | 4.17% |
| The structures of political parties are accessible to youth and women from diverse backgrounds | 3.70% | 29.63% | 37.04% | 18.52% | 11.11% |
| The youth and women are offered meaningful opportunities to influence party policies | 7.41% | 14.81% | 29.63% | 37.04% | 11.11% |
| Political parties offer training and mentorship programmes tailored for the youth | 7.41% | 18.52% | 25.93% | 37.04% | 11.11% |
| The youth and women are offered adequate financial and logistical support to enhance their participation | 3.70% | 11.11% | 11.11% | 55.56% | 18.52% |
| There has been an increase in the number of youth and women candidates in the last two general elections | 19.23% | 57.69% | 15.38% | 7.69% | --- |
| Political parties only engage the youth and women who are registered party members | 14.81% | 44.44% | 22.22% | 14.81% | 3.70% |
| Political parties provide inclusive spaces for non-youth and non-women members to engage in political processes | 11.11% | 33.33% | 29.63% | 18.52% | 7.41% |
| Political parties seek to foster inter-party youth dialogue | 7.69% | 30.77% | 19.23% | 34.62% | 7.69% |

The research also focused on measuring community members' trust in various political institutions to represent youth interests in the community. When it came to political parties, 27.78% of the respondents expressed a high level of trust, 38.89% had some level of trust, 8.33% were neutral, 16.67% had some level of distrust, and 8.33% expressed great distrust in political parties representing youth interests. There was a relatively high trust in the youth and women's leagues of political parties (36.11% high level of trust, and 33.33% some level of trust) to represent youth interests, with 16.67% being neutral, and 13.89% registering some level of distrust. When it came to the CBOs, 58.33% of the respondents had a high level of trust in them, 25% had some level of trust,11.11% were neutral, 2.78% had some level of distrust in them, and a further 2.78% greatly distrusted them.

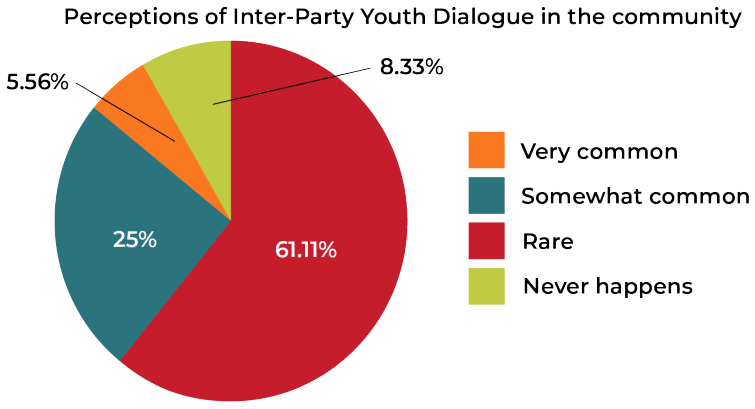
Another institution was the Civil Society Organizations (CSOs). Considering this, 44.44% of the respondents reported that they had high levels of trust in them, 30.56% had some level of trust in them, 22.22% were neutral, and 2.78% greatly distrusted them. Government institutions such as the County Assembly (CA) had the lowest trust levels, with 5.56% indicating they had very high trust in them, 38.89% had some level of trust, 27.78% were neutral, 13.89% had some level of distrust, and a further 13.89% indicated they greatly distrusted government institutions to represent Youth interests in the community, as shown in Table 3.5 below.

***Table 3.5 Community Members' Trust in Political Institutions to Represent Youth Interests in the Community***

| Institution | High level of trust | Some level of trust | Neutral | Some level of distrust | Great levels of distrust |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Political parties | 27.78% | 38.89% | 8.38% | 16.67% | 8.33% |
| Youth leagues of political parties | 36.11% | 33.33% | 16.67% | 13.89% | --- |
| Community-based Organizations | 58.33% | 25% | 11.11% | 2.78% | 2.78% |
| Civil Society Organizations | 44.44% | 30.56% | 22.22% | --- | 2.78% |
| Government institutions, e.g., County Assembly | 5.56% | 38.89% | 27.78% | 13.89% | 13.89% |

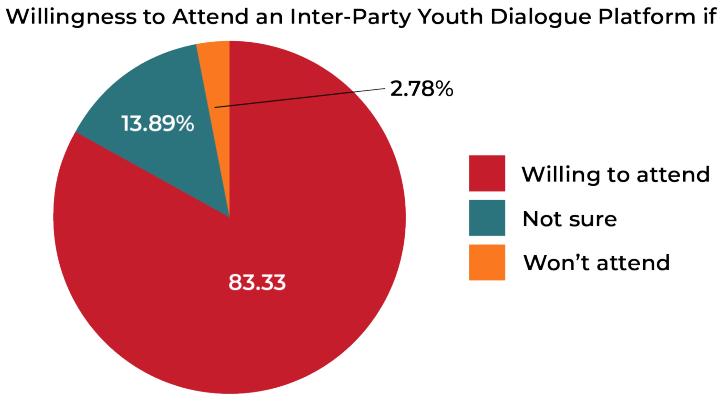
The study also aimed to assess community members' perceptions of whether inter-party youth dialogue was common. From the survey, 5.56% of the respondents thought it to be very common, 25% thought it was somewhat common, 61.11% thought it was rare, and 8.33% were of the view that it never happens, as shown in Figure 3.20 below.

***Figure 3.20 Perceptions of Inter-Party Youth Dialogue in the Community***



The study also aimed to establish the willingness of community members to attend an inter-party youth dialogue platform if invited and found that a significant majority (83.33%) of the respondents were willing to attend if invited, 13.89% were not certain, and only 2.78% were not willing to attend, as shown in Figure 3.21 below.

***Figure 3.21 Willingness to Attend an Inter-Party Youth Dialogue Platform if Invited***




From the field research, there were mixed responses on the willingness of the youth to attend the inter-party youth dialogue platforms if they were invited. Some of the positive ones included:

*"We need to build an all-inclusive community by giving leadership spaces and opportunities to both youth and young women in politics."* [26]

*"I would be willing to attend and actively participate in the inter-party youth dialogue platforms as it offers a valuable opportunity to engage, share ideas, and contribute to constructive political discussions."* [27]

*"It will be a great opportunity to share with other political parties our ideology and what our parties stand for. It will also be a great exchange programme where we can learn and unlearn several things."* [28]

*"I would love to know the structures of youth and women's leagues in those political parties."* [29]

*"My attendance will help me gain policy and critical skills that I can use to change my political career."* [30]

Additionally, there's the prospect that these platforms might be used as launchpads for young people's political careers, as observed by one of the Key Informants:

*26 Respondent from Kasipul Constituency, 1st April 2026*
*27 Respondent from Karachuonyo Constituency, 29th March 2026*
*28 Respondent from Suba North Constituency, 29th March 2026*
*29 Respondent from Kasipul Constituency, 1st April 2026*
*30 Respondent from Kasipul Constituency, 23rd March 2026*

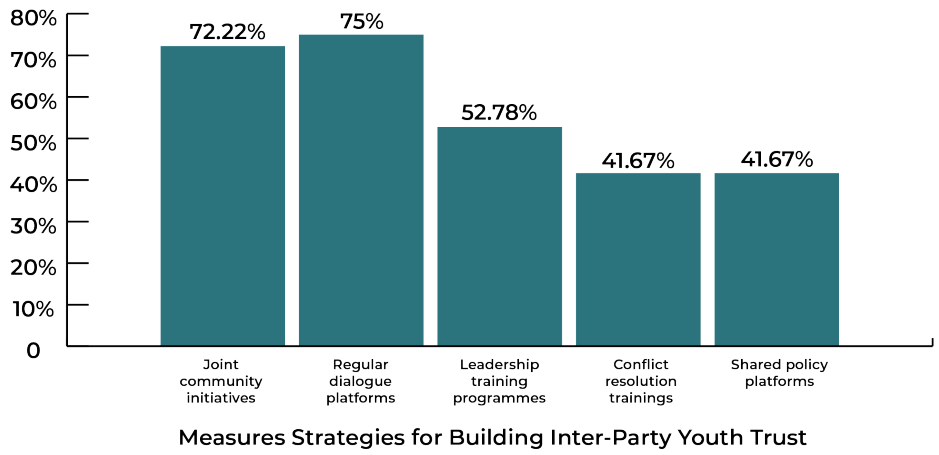
*"My motivation to participate in such platforms would be on the prospect of increasing my political connections, which might be useful since I might decide to run in the future. Most young people who are likely to be active in the dialogue platforms are those who might be eyeing political seats in future elections."* [31]

However, some had skeptical views, mainly due to the risk of violence occurring during these dialogue platforms, as observed by one of the respondents:

*"In as much as I would like to participate in these dialogue platforms, I fear political violence, which is common."* [32]

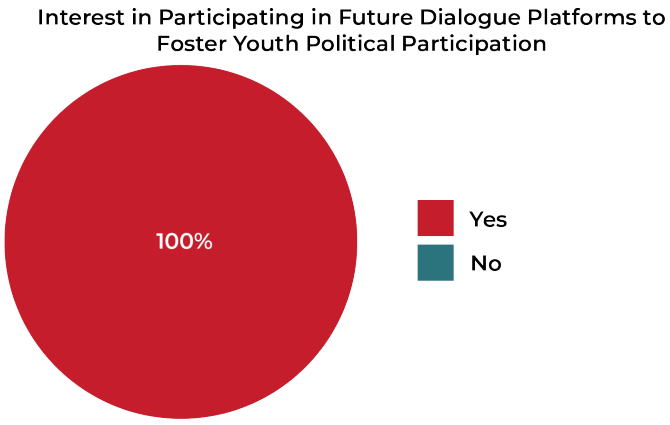
The study further aimed to identify measures/strategies that can be put in place to build inter-party trust among the youth. A significant majority of the respondents (75%) were of the view that regular dialogue platforms could help achieve this, and 72.22% thought that joint community initiatives would help realize it. These were followed by leadership training programmes (52.78%), conflict resolution training and shared policy platforms (both at 41.67%), as shown in Figure 3.22 below.

***Figure 3.22 Measures/Strategies for Building Inter-Party Trust Among the Youth***




The study further established that all respondents showed interest in participating in future dialogue on youth political participation in their community, as shown in Figure 3.23 below.

***Figure 3.23 Interest in Participating in Future Dialogue Platforms to Foster Youth Political Participation***




*31 Key Informant Interview, 23rd March 2026*
*32 Respondent from Homa Bay Town Constituency, 30th March 2026*

## 3.7 Risk Factors in Inter-Party Youth Dialogue Platforms

To identify risk factors that might impact the success of structured inter-party youth dialogue platforms, the study focused on various types of risks that might impact the long-term success of these dialogue platforms, once established. These risk factors can be grouped into six broad categories, namely, contextual, programmatic, institutional, financial, Sexual Harassment Exploitation and Abuse (SHEA), and reputational risks.

The biggest risk was that of political violence when different parties come together, as captured by one participant in the FGD:

*"Security is the biggest risk. If people feel unsafe, they won't be willing to participate."* [33]

Additionally, there's the risk that these platforms might be viewed as spaces for recruitment by some parties, leading to inter-party tensions. One key informant observed that:

*"There's that risk that parties might view this as recruitment grounds for new members. This can lead to tensions, especially among the parties with fewer youth members, because they would see this as a platform for the more popular parties to fish their members. This also has the risk of turning the platforms into political forums and making them not realize their main objective."* [34]

One of the biggest institutional risks to the structured dialogue platform would be the result of weak party institutionalization, since most of these parties don't have the youth structures and are only active during election periods. One participant in the FGD observed that:

*"Political parties need to revive their grassroots structures. Only a few are visible right now."* [35]

Another one added:

*"Some of these political parties don't even have offices in the county. They only appear during elections."* [36]

*33 Focus Group Discussion, 14th April 2026*
*34 Key Informant Interview, 24th March 2026*
*35 Focus Group Discussion, 14th April 2026*
*36 Ibid*

CHAPTER FOUR:

# DISCUSSION OF STUDY FINDINGS

## 4.1 Introduction

This chapter offers a discussion of the study findings based on four thematic areas, in line with the study objectives. These are (1) the community's perception of youth and young women's political participation, (2) barriers to participation, (3) participation risks and opportunities, and (4) building inter-party trust and structured youth dialogue platforms.

## 4.2 Community's Perception of Youth and Young Women's Political Participation

Understanding the perceptions of community members is integral to the success of establishing structured inter-party youth dialogue platforms. Generally, the study demonstrated that the community appreciates the role and importance of youth and young women in politics, although there is some variation in perceptions of their participation.

Additionally, there is the belief that the youth can provide meaningful ideas to politics. However, it is worth noting that the youth's contribution might not be acceptable compared to those of older populations, as evidenced by the low number of respondents who believed that political leadership takes the youth and women seriously. This can be attributed to political culture and compounded by predominant beliefs in rural settings that tend to associate leadership with experience (age). The fact that the youth should play a leadership role is a positive indicator that they would be receptive to having structured dialogue platforms that seek to foster the political participation of the youth and young women.

With local communities at the core of these dialogue platforms, they will get the legitimacy required for their long-term success and influence participation outcomes. The fact that the community appreciates the importance of the youth in political matters would also make the community view these platforms as genuine and beneficial to the entire community, thus having a higher probability of success. Additionally, this will create a supportive social environment, which will go a long way to increase the levels of political participation at the community level.

Even though there are some variations on the acceptability of women's political participation, it would be important for the various stakeholders to try to influence a change in the gender norms associated with the political participation of young women, thus ensuring that these platforms are gender inclusive.

## 4.3 Barriers to Political Participation

From the field research, the lack of financial resources, cultural norms, and institutional factors were some of the common barriers hindering the participation of the youth and young women in politics. The lack of financial resources restricts their participation, for it impacts their ability to attend political meetings and access the digital platforms/devices that are vital for acquiring political information in the contemporary world. The status of young women is further compounded by the fact that they are restricted in terms of access to assets, partly due to cultural norms. Taken together, financial barriers lower the bargaining power of the youth and young women, making them susceptible to political manipulation by politicians. Additionally, they tend to prioritize the pursuit of means of catering to their basic needs and devote less time to participating in decision-making processes.

Additionally, socio-cultural norms and gender-assigned roles are barriers that greatly affect the participation of young women, especially in a rural county like Homa Bay. In these environments, the prevailing culture views women as caregivers and housewives, and this limits their participation in political leadership or engagement in public discourse.

In general, younger people are often viewed as inexperienced in political matters and lacking authority in political decision-making, leading to minimal participation or, in some cases, exclusion. However, there seems to be a positive change, evidenced by the increase in the number of youth and women candidates in the last two general elections, partly due to the progressive nature of the Constitution of Kenya 2010.

The institutional platforms envisaged by the constitution to foster civic participation may also be partly mismanaged by those in leadership, thus locking out deserving youth. The timings of meetings, poor communication, and technical language used in these decision-making platforms may exclude some of the youth, especially those with low literacy levels, from making meaningful contributions in these spaces. Tokenism and a lack of feedback mechanisms can also discourage the future participation of the youth.

## 4.4 Participation Risks and Opportunities

From the field research, it is evident that the youth are viewed as both an influential and 'destructive' force in politics. In the latter case, these dialogue platforms might be viewed by politicians as a threat to their interests, especially if they seek to challenge the established/prevailing political hierarchy in the community.

The research established that there are opportunities and risks that the youth come across when they participate in politics. Through regular engagement, their voice and agency in politics are amplified, thus, they can influence policies and programmes that directly affect them. For the young women, it can also serve to challenge prevailing gender norms, while at the same time, creating more spaces for their participation in politics, especially if they are seen as transformative leaders in the community.

Non-conventional political participation also helps expand the networks of the youth and young women. Those engaged in parties and CBOs' activities come into constant contact with both government and private stakeholders. If properly utilized and institutionalized, these networks can become avenues for training opportunities, mentorship, and, at times, financial support for youth-led initiatives in the community. The young women can use these networks to bridge gaps in access to information and opportunities that have hindered their political participation.

One of the greatest risks that the youth encounter when participating in politics is the threat of physical violence, or even death at the hands of hired goons when political competition intensifies. This can be used to instill fear and discourage them from participating in politics. Added to this, young women also face the risk of sexual harassment/violence, thus limiting their willingness to actively participate in politics.

Additionally, young women are faced with social backlash and stigma associated with their participation in politics, thus limiting them from realizing their full potential in political spaces within the community.

## 4.5 Building Inter-Party Trust and Structured Youth Dialogue Platforms

The success of establishing structured inter-party youth dialogue platforms rests on trust as a central pillar. The country's political environment is highly polarized, and there is always intense political party competition, especially when general elections are approaching. This tends to create suspicion among political parties. In their attempt to bridge this divide, the youth leagues of these parties might be viewed with suspicion, or their actions misconstrued as acts of disloyalty by top party officials. This risk, if not well managed, can lead to instances of political violence, thus discouraging the youth from participating in politics. It is thus paramount that top party officials at the County level endorse these platforms so that they are legitimized to create avenues for open political engagement.

Additionally, neutrality and fairness are equally important if these platforms are to experience long-term success. Since the County is predominantly dominated by the ODM party, there is always a hidden danger that others might perceive these platforms to be aligned with a particular political agenda or favouring one party at the expense of others. If this happens, these platforms will lose their credibility. There is a need to guard against external forces manipulating these platforms for selfish gain. This can be realized through establishing common grounds that all parties agree to abide by and ensuring they have an open funding model to enhance transparency and accountability in the design and implementation of these platforms. There is also a need to establish robust communication strategies to address concerns that might arise and allay fears of partisanship.

Finally, the success of these platforms in the community will be measured based on tangible outcomes produced within the community. These can be in terms of their effectiveness in reducing political tensions or incidences of political violence in the community, initiating joint initiatives to address community problems, or positively influencing county policies. This would make the community see these platforms as important channels that help to address common problems. Additionally, the spirit of mutual tolerance would motivate more youth to participate in politics, and consequently, maintain community support for these dialogue platforms.

CHAPTER FIVE:

# CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

## 5.1: Introduction

This chapter offers a summary of the conclusions made from the study findings and gives some of the key recommendations based on the study findings.

## 5.2: Conclusions

The study established that the community is generally receptive to the participation of the youth and young women in politics. However, the youth and young women are faced with socio-cultural, financial, and institutional barriers that limit their meaningful contribution to politics. Additionally, the prevailing political environment creates both risks and opportunities for the participation of the youth. The community is receptive to the establishment of inter-party youth dialogue, and the majority demonstrated willingness to attend if invited to these sessions. This provides a basis for the success of these structures, provided they establish trust among the actors and are properly designed to handle anticipated risks.

## 5.3: Recommendations

Based on the thematic arrangements of the data analysis, the study makes the following recommendations:

a. **Community Perceptions of Youth and Young Women's Political Participation**
   - Constantly engage community leaders to leverage their influence with a view to reducing negative perceptions of youth and young women's political participation.
   - Use local radio and public forums to demonstrate the transformative power of women's leadership.
   - Get community support by framing participation as a means of solving community problems.
   - Linking joint initiatives with tangible outcomes, e.g., local issue advocacy, environmental campaigns.

b. **Community Perceptions of Youth and Young Women's Political Participation**
   - Include civic education, leadership skills, and digital literacy skills in training.
   - Simplify access and communication channels to ensure wider reach, e.g., local radio stations.
   - Create inclusive and safe meeting spaces e.g., by incorporating gender quotas
   - Partnering with CSOs to offer training and mentorship, and advocate for youth inclusion in decision-making spaces.
   -

c. **Risks and Opportunities in Political Participation**
   - Transparent governance structures of the platforms.
   - Conflict resolution training.
   - Use the platforms to promote mutual tolerance in the community.
   - Link participation to tangible incentives, e.g., skills training to offset the opportunity costs of participation.
   -

d. **Building Inter-Party Trust and Structured Dialogue Platforms**
   - Integrate popular culture, like music and sports, to cultivate relationships before moving into political discussions.
   - Ensure facilitators are impartial and have training in conflict management and resolution.
   - Institutionalize the platforms by having a quarterly or yearly calendar, with a clear agenda.
   - Rotational venues to capture all the sub-counties.
   - Develop Monitoring and Evaluation tools to track progress against set targets.
   - Design accountability and reporting mechanisms to address the risk factors in inter-party dialogue.
   - Design channels for reporting and handling issues of intimidation or harassment.

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