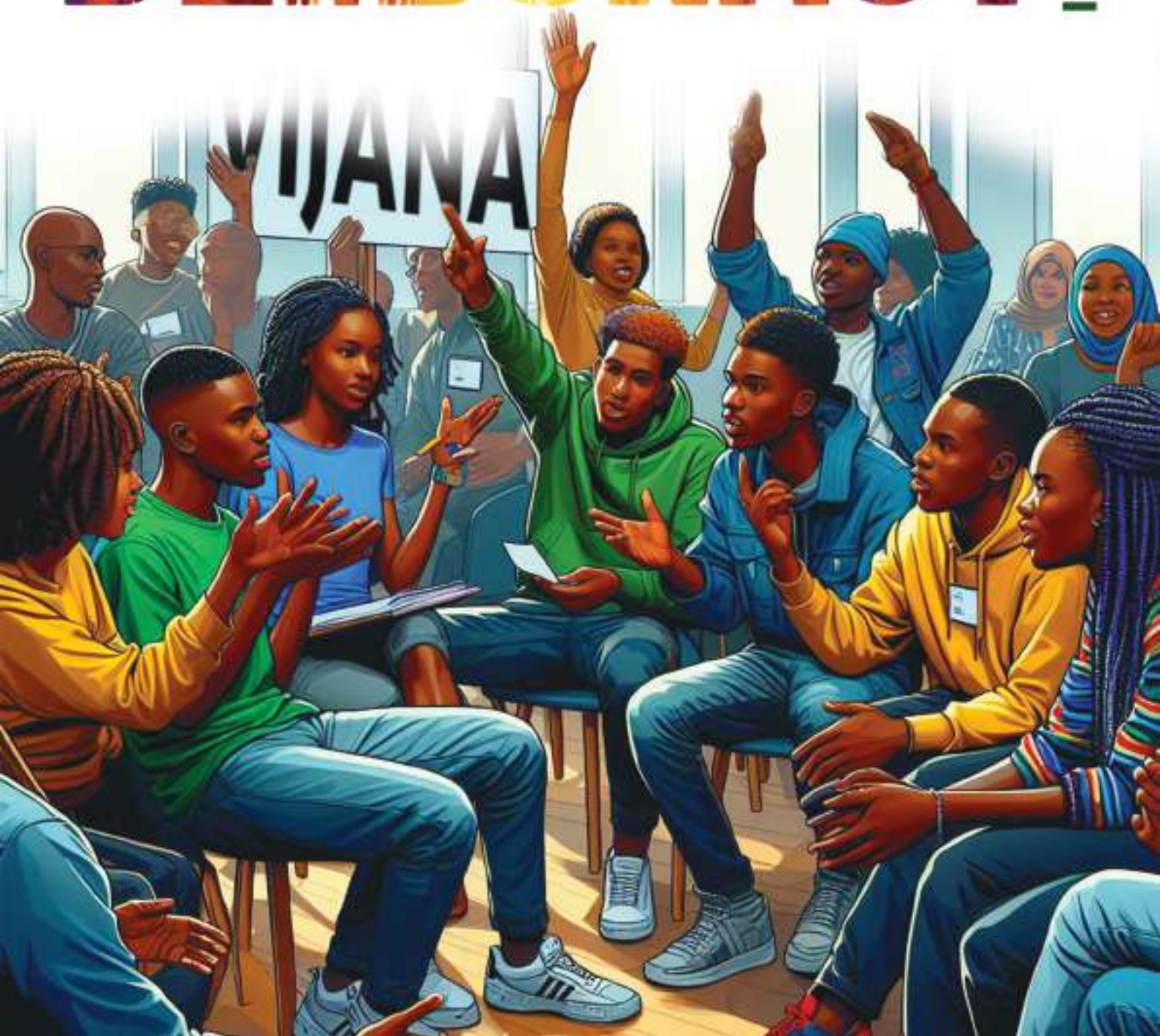




**STUDY ON YOUNG PEOPLE'S KNOWLEDGE,
ATTITUDES AND PRACTICES TOWARDS**

DEMOCRACY IN KENYA





STRENGTHENING THE POWER OF YOUTH VOICES

ACRONYMS

CIDP	County Integrated Development Plan
CMD-K	Centre for Multi-Party Democracy Kenya
COK	Constitution of Kenya
CSO	Civil Society Organization
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
IEBC	Independent Elections & Boundaries Commission
IRI	International Republican Institute
NGEC	National Gender & Equality Commission
NYC	National Youth Council
ORPP	Office of the Registrar of Political Parties
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SPYV	Strengthening the Power of Youth Voices Project

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acronyms	3	
Table of Contents	4	
Acknowledgement	5	
Executive Summary	6	
1.1	Background To The Study	11
1.2	Context of A Study on Young People’s Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices Towards Democracy in Kenya	11
1.3	Purpose & Objective of the Study	12
1.4	Geographical Coverage of the Study	13
1.5	Scope of the Study	13
2.1	Research Methodology	16
2.1.1	Data Collection Approaches	16
2.1.2	Data Collection Instruments	16
2.1.2.1	Desk Review	16
2.1.2.2	Key Informant Interviews	17
2.1.2.3	Focus Group Discussions	17
2.2	Data Quality Control	17
3.1	Literature Review	19
3.1.1	Overview	19
3.1.2	Social and Psychological Factors of Political Participation	19
3.1.3	Young People’s Knowledge and Understanding of Their Rights and Responsibilities as Citizens	20
3.1.4	Young People’s Motivation (or lack of) to participate in Political Processes	21
3.1.5	Presence and Suitability of Local and National Level Structures for Young People’s Meaningful Involvement/Engagement in Governance	21
3.2	Results & Findings	22
3.1.2	Primary Research Findings	22
3.1.2.1	Youth Knowledge of Democratic Culture, Processes & Institutions	22
3.1.2.2	Youth Practice of Democratic Culture, Processes & Institutions	23
3.1.2.3	Youth Motivation to Participate in Democratic Culture, Processes & Institutions	26
3.1.2.3	Innovatively Making Democratic & Political Participation Accessible To Young People	28
4.1	Discussions & Recommendations	30
4.1.1	Youth Knowledge of Democratic Culture, Processes & Institutions	30
4.1.2	Youth Practice of Democratic Culture, Processes & Institutions	31
4.1.3	Youth Motivation to Participate in Democratic Culture, Processes & Institutions	35
4.1.4	Innovatively Making Democratic & Political Participation Accessible To Young People	35
References	38	
FIGURES		
Figure 1	Triangulation of Data	16
Figure 2:	Youth Responses On Knowledge of Democratic Culture, Processes & Institutions	22
Figure 3:	Reasons Why Youth Do Not Participate in Politics (Percentages)	24
Figure 4:	Youth Motivation To Participate In Politics	27

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The publication of this report was made possible through the efforts of various persons and institutions. We are indebted to our partners, The Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in Kenya and Siasa Place for their collaboration and support in the implementation of the Strengthening the Power of Youth Voices Project (SPYV). Your support and contributions enabled the study and publication of this report.

Our special appreciation goes to youth serving organizations in the project Counties, County and National Government officials who took part in the study as key informants and also in the focus group discussions. Without your valuable input, this study could not have been realized.

We are grateful to the CMD-Kenya team led by Frankline Mukwanja, the Executive Director; Range Mwita, Nthenya Munyae and Muthengi Mbuvi for their dedication, patience and coordination of the SPYV Project and meticulous review of this publication. Without their input, we for sure would not have come this far.

Finally, we are indebted to the consultant, Ms. Mildred Nzau, for her professional input and research that made compilation of this report a success.

To you all, we say a big thank you!

Frankline Mukwanja

**Executive Director
CMD-Kenya**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The participation of young people in politics and democratic processes continues to be an integral cornerstone of any democracy. In recent years, there has been a decrease in interest in political participation of young people in Kenya manifested as high rates of apathy. Such was witnessed during the 2022 general election when the numbers of registered youth voters declined for the first time to 39.84% in 2022 from 50.7% in 2017. The Constitution of Kenya (COK) 2010 made specific provisions for youth participation in governance under chapter four (4) on Bill of Rights, article 55(b) and article 100. Further, policy interventions such as the Kenya Youth Development Policy 2019 elaborate the rights and responsibilities of young people in leadership, governance, and development. Despite these provisions within legal frameworks, youth participation still appears to be on a downward trend.

CMD-K commissioned this study to determine young people’s knowledge, perceptions, attitudes and practices towards the country’s democratic culture, processes and institutions. The study also sought to gauge the youth’s perceptions towards their influence in decision making at the county level, examine the presence and suitability of local and national level structures for young people’s meaningful involvement/engagement in governance and identify and propose innovative strategies towards positively influencing young people’s attitudes and practices towards democratic governance in Kenya.

This study is based on data collected using mixed and complementary methods, including reviewing relevant literature, interviews with key informants and FGDs in several counties. A total of 7 Key Informants were interviewed and 115 youth being 60 Male, 55 Female and 11 persons with disability were engaged through FGDs. The respondents were drawn from Lamu, Nairobi, Kitui, Kericho, Homabay and Busia Counties.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Youth Knowledge of Democratic Culture, Processes & Institutions

- 95% of young people have some understanding and knowledge of their political rights, freedoms and responsibilities. This was only largely demonstrated as an understanding of their rights as pertains to an electoral process- voting, running for election and being represented in legislative bodies. Of the 95% only 2% demonstrated understanding of the legal frameworks that guaranteed them their rights and freedoms.
- Only 8% of respondents demonstrated knowledge of key democratic and political institutions such as the county governments, county assembly, CSOs, the IEBC and political parties.

RECOMMENDATIONS

There is a need to expand the knowledge and understanding of political and democratic processes by young people.

The findings indicate that young people’s knowledge at present is general at best. To expand this, civic and voter education is needed to demystify the concepts of politics, democracy, and governance. The target, as informed by the study, should focus on the broader youth population with limited knowledge rather than the elite youth that have been engaging in the political process.

Engage familiar levers to expand young people’s knowledge of the political & democratic process.

The study found that the most common political institutions young people have knowledge about

included: political parties, youth-led and youth serving organizations, civil society organizations, the IEBC and the Media. To leverage this knowledge, CMD and its partners can create programs that use these institutions as conduits for knowledge, information, and political education for young people.

Nurturing civic duty & responsibility

Many young people between the age of 18-24 years are often unaware of their rights and responsibilities. This study recommends that interventions targeting a younger cohort of youth (15-17 years) be undertaken. This will provide an opportunity to young people to nurture a culture of civic responsibility, such that when they are 18 and are legally required to participate in democratic process, they are able to do so from an informed and knowledgeable point of view.

2. Youth Practice of Democratic Culture, Processes & Institutions

- 55% indicated that they did not actively exercise their political rights, primarily due to a nexus of resources, information, and power influence. The study reveals that money, cronyism, manipulation, intimidation and limited knowledge on political and democratic processes were primary factors leading to their non-participation.
- 31% are comfortable with in-person public participation, while a significant number (18%) leaned towards social media activism and engagement.
- 40% the respondents identified CSOs as key structures that they engage at the county and national level. Only a few respondents indicated having engaged with county machinery through county government and county assemblies.
- 25% of respondents indicate that their feedback is never considered and that is a meaningless practice for the government to seek their opinions.
- 20% of young people responding to this study indicated that the absence of change was a significant demotivator for them to participate in political and democratic processes.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Strengthen political parties to establish meaningful inclusion of youth.

As a primary vehicle for political participation, there is a need to strengthen political party structures to be more inclusive and supportive to young people. This includes ensuring that party leadership structures are inclusive of young people and that their voices are heard, their opinions considered, and proposals actioned.

Along with expanding young people's civic knowledge, civil society partners should encourage young people to hold their leaders accountable; more investments need to be made in educating and connecting the youth with locally established structures for democratic engagements and public participation such as county government structures, including ward committees, and public participation schedules.

Secure the gains of youth participation.

Civil society, political parties need to address exclusionary practices within politics and political parties this through targeted interventions to ensure that this section of young people not only maintain their participation but encourage their peers to do so as well.

Public Participation to be conducted via accessible channels and platforms.

Expand the scope of public participation to include a mix that addresses all the points of exclusion of young people from these processes. This could include adoption of virtual participation through policy or legal reform to national and county public participation laws and frameworks, localized public participation in areas where youth have already gathered such as schools, markets etc

Enhance the feedback loop during public participation.

National and County Governments and national and county legislatures to strengthen the feedback loop during public participation. Government should normalize holding validation fora with those who participated in the public participation to review the final submissions and endorse the proposed plans.

3. Youth Motivation to Participate in Democratic Culture, Processes & Institutions

- 69% of respondents indicated that their biggest motivation was the need for accountable leadership and change.
- 17% of the respondents were motivated by the power and influence associated with an active political life while, 12% of respondents were motivated by the money involved in political participation.
- 26% of respondents were disinterested in political participation due to the lack of support to youth to actively participate; this included ageism within political parties and society in general in relation to seeking political office, youth only used as election machinery and not valued or supported beyond election.
- 20% of the respondents were dissuaded due to the lack of change, despite many election promises, they have observed no change or implementation of election manifestos. 17% of the respondents indicated that limited finances and resources had kept them away from politics.
- 7% of the respondents indicated that they were disillusioned with the politics of the day and could not relate it to real life.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Harness youth desire for change.

Stakeholders such as government and civil society should leverage on the youth hope and desire to drive social impact, to empower them with skills that will enable them to participate in decision making and holding public officials accountable.

Tap into the youth dividend.

Political parties, government and civil society should further leverage on the youth's ability to create new and innovative engagement frameworks allowing them to tap into the youth dividend.

4. Innovatively Making Democratic & Political Participation Accessible To Young People

- 27% of respondents proposed the utilization of digital tools to enhance participation of youth in democratic processes, this includes using online platforms for civic education, public participation and even voting.
- 21% of respondents indicated that creative and targeted civic education was critical to hooking the youth interest in democratic processes.
- 7% underscored the importance of a disinformation campaign on political processes as many youths are manipulated due to disinformation.
- 13% of respondents proposed engagement of youth through youth-led initiatives as well as called for mentorship of young people to build a culture of democratic and political participation.
- 25% of respondents indicated that the inclusion of youth at various decision-making table would make more young people interested in politics.
- 25% of the respondents indicated that increased civic education coupled with targeted

messaging towards youth would spark an interest in youth to engage in democratic culture.

- 10% of respondents called for increased intergenerational and multi-disciplinary dialogue at the grassroots level to foster democratic interest and participation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Embrace and Deploy Digital Tools for political participation.

The study found that Social Media tools such as YouTube, Tiktok, X and WhatsApp are popular amongst the youth and can be used to engage in political discourse. Government and civil society can further adapt the use of Artificial Intelligence to triangulate data to increase the efficiency of how we engage young people in the political and democratic process.

Creative Civic Education

Civic education needs to move beyond an academic exercise to an engaging lifestyle activity. This will allow young people to connect with the content, relate it to everyday life and apply it in their political interactions.

Countering Misinformation and Disinformation

Counter misinformation and disinformation that serve as hindrances to young people's political participation through regulation of online spaces to ensure that information can be trusted and that youth can use this information to make informed decisions.



Centre for  Democracy Kenya

STRENGTHENING
THE PARTICIPATION
OF YOUNG PEOPLE
IN
POLITICAL DECISION-MAKING

SECTION ONE

1.1 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

CMD-Kenya is a political parties membership-based organization established in March 2004 with the mandate to enhance multiparty democracy and to strengthen the institutional capacity of political parties in Kenya through policy influence and capacity building. The organization provides a platform for political parties, political actors and policy makers to engage in dialogue and collaborate in strengthening multiparty democracy. CMD-Kenya works closely with political parties, political actors, strategic partners and key stakeholders in promoting social justice, political governance best practices, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms.

The study was conducted under the auspices of CMD-Kenya's **Strengthening the Power of Youth Voices project (SPYV)** implemented with the funding support of The Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in Kenya through Siasa Place. The initiative aims at providing expanded spaces for intra and intergenerational dialogues as well as strengthening community centered accountability mechanisms that enhance young people's involvement in decision-making.

This is part of the Kingdom of Netherlands' priorities to put young people at the center of development policies through the 'Youth at Heart' principles. This initiative heavily focuses on 'Principle 2 of the Youth at Heart Principles' which is to involve young people at all levels in decision making processes that will affect their lives. The 'Youth at Heart Principles' are a call to action for governments, civil society and other stakeholders to invest in youth prospects and to work in partnership with the young people. Further, the initiative is anchored on SDG 16 'achieving inclusive, participatory and representative decision - making at every level' as well as SDG 5 on 'Gender Equality'.

This study also builds on the previously conducted study on youth engagement **"Let's talk about you(th),"** (Kinsbergen,2023) which called for increased recognition and more explicitly addressing of root causes underlying the structural impediments for (increased) youth engagement and the importance of recognizing backlash effects in response to youth engagement interventions.

1.2 CONTEXT OF A STUDY ON YOUNG PEOPLE'S KNOWLEDGE, ATTITUDES AND PRACTICES TOWARDS DEMOCRACY IN KENYA

The youth population (18-35 years) constitute 29.0% of the population (KNBS,2019). It can be argued that young people continue to be more disillusioned and disconnected from political life more than ever. Recent indicators of the rising levels of apathy include the youth boycott of the 2022 general election where numbers of youth registered to vote were dismally low. Whereas the electoral commission targeted to register 4.5 million young people, only 1,031,645 came out and registered, translating to 77% perceived youth voter apathy in Kenya. In contrast to the 2017 general election where youth constituted 50.7% of the total number of voters, this figure dropped significantly to 39.84% in 2022 .

While there have been interventions that have made robust attempts to establish policy frameworks and institutions have been put in place to strengthen youth participation in decision making and governance procedures, the implementation remains dismal and inconsistent.

CMD-Kenya therefore sought to address these concerns and to identify prospect points through which mainstream engagement of the youth in the development of democracy may be initiated.

The overall focus of the interventions was to:



As such, it was critical for CMD-Kenya to gauge the understanding by youth of civic and democratic participation, to understand their motivations to engage in civic life/ or not and to understand their perceptions and trust of democratic and governance institutions.

1.3 PURPOSE & OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The objective of this study was to gather factual data on young people’s attitudes towards democracy in Lamu, Kitui, Homabay, Kericho, Busia, Nairobi with the purpose of developing sustainable advocacy strategies and for follow up on issues affecting youth participation in Kenya’s democratic and decision-making processes.

Specific Objectives



1.4 GEOGRAPHICAL COVERAGE OF THE STUDY

The study encompassed data collection and analysis to examine youth's outlook towards democracy, with a thorough focus and analysis of youth views from Lamu, Nairobi, Kitui, Kericho, Homabay and Busia counties. For the overall project and the study in particular, the counties were selected based on a number of factors: counties with a high youth population, high or low budget allocation, rural or urban. In some of the counties, both Siasa Place and CMD-Kenya have existing structures, relations and networks.

The diverse selection of the counties in project implementation and the study in particular was to determine whether high budget allocation in the County equates to an increase of youth participation. And whether there is a stark difference between rural youth and urban youth when it comes to engagement and participation.

1.5 SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The Study sought to explore the research objectives through seven research questions.

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE	RESPONDENTS	STUDY QUESTIONS
Young people's knowledge, perceptions and attitudes towards the country's democratic culture, processes and institutions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Sampled youth in the target counties. 2. Youth Serving CSO's 3. Political Party officials-national and branch officials. 4. State Department for Youth 5. County Executive Committee Member for youth 	<p>Q1. To what extent do young people understand their civic roles and responsibilities?</p> <p>Q2. Do young people understand the functions of key democratic institutions?</p>
Young people's knowledge, perceptions and practices towards their influence and inclusion in decision-making in their respective Counties	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Sampled youth in the target counties. 2. Youth Serving CSO's 	<p>Q3. What are the key motivating factors that influence young people's political participation?</p> <p>Q4. What are the reasons that drive young people's apathy towards political participation?</p>
Presence and suitability of local and national level structures for young people's meaningful involvement/engagement in governance	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Sampled youth in the target counties. 2. Youth Serving CSO's 3. County Executives 4. Ward Administration units 5. Ministry of Youth 6. NYC 	<p>Q5. How are national and county level institutions optimized for young people's inclusive and meaningful participation?</p>

<p>Innovative strategies towards positively influencing young people’s attitudes and practices towards democratic governance in Kenya.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Sampled youth in the target counties. 2. Youth Serving CSO’s 	
---	--	--

Table 1: Research Criteria

The **first two questions** as outlined above addressed young people’s knowledge and understanding of their rights and responsibilities as citizens. The question also gauged their attitudes towards participation in democratic processes. The questions were aimed at the primary targets of this research- the youth in the target countries and the Youth Organizations that serve them. **Questions 3 and 4** of the study sought to assess young people’s motivation (or lack of) to participate in political processes and sought to understand what triggers young people to choose to remain apathetic towards politics and democratic processes. **Question 5** interrogated existing structures within national and county governments and evaluated how well these are set up to meaningfully include young people. Finally, **Questions 6 & 7** explored some of the ways we can innovatively embrace, and meaningfully include young people in democratic processes and reap the youth dividend.





SECTION TWO

2.1 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research methodology was guided by specific research questions founded upon the specific objectives as indicated in the table below.

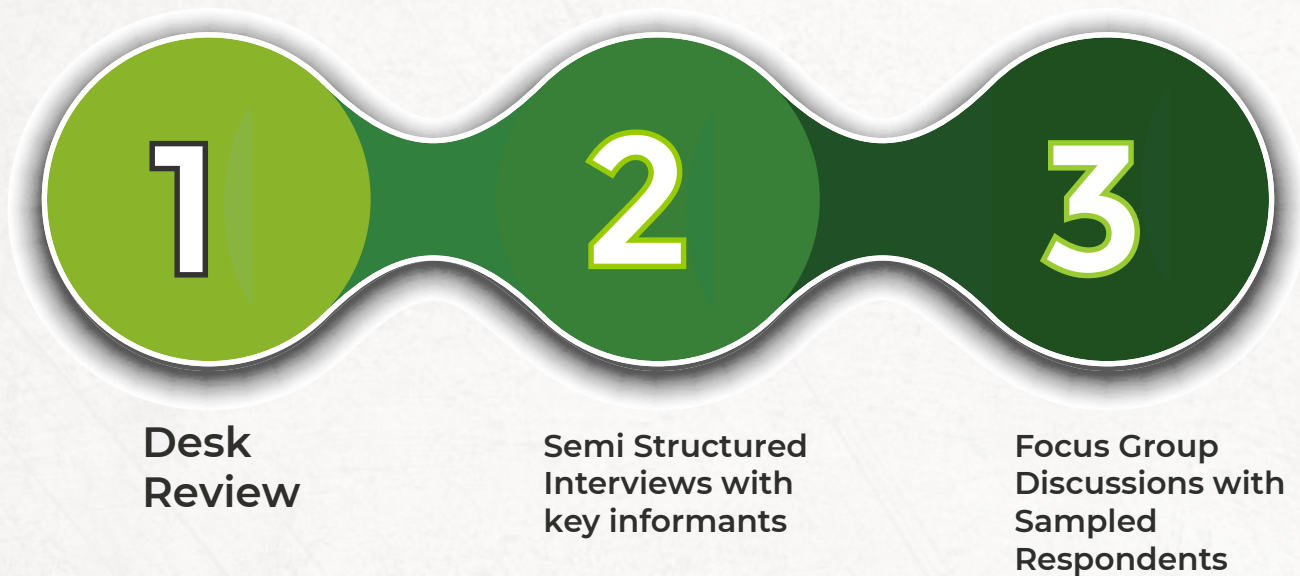


Figure 1 Triangulation of Data

2.1.1 DATA COLLECTION APPROACHES

Participatory methodologies were used to collect qualitative and quantitative primary and secondary data on agreed upon evaluation concerns and questions.

Primary data was collected by conducting interviews (structured and semi-structured) with young people, youth serving organizations as well as members of national/ county government, and key informants (other relevant stakeholders). Focus Group Discussions with sampled youth were also conducted to ascertain their participation, knowledge, attitudes, and perceptions of political & democratic processes.

Secondary data was collected by reviewing relevant literature on youth political participation. Figure 1 illustrates use of different data collection methods to triangulate collected data for objectivity and accuracy.

2.1.2 DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENTS

2.1.2.1 DESK REVIEW

To provide context and understanding of youth knowledge, perception and understanding of politics and democratic process in Kenya, the study conducted a desk review of literature on the subject matter. These included literature on youth participation in elections, social accountability processes as well as various studies that evaluated their perceptions and understanding.

2.1.2.2 KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS

Through in-depth interviews with young members of county assembly, youth serving organizations, and County Executive Members of county government, the study gathered information on youth's perceptions, understanding, knowledge and actual practices and participation in political and democratic processes. The interviews were administered through; in-person meetings, phone calls and online meetings. Seven Key Informant Interviews were conducted; six male and one female.

2.1.2.3 FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS

Through closed group discussions, the Study sought to gauge the knowledge, understanding, perceptions and practices of youth in the political and democratic process as guided by the research questions. The guide was composed of predominantly open-ended, deep-probing questions that allowed the respondents to do most of the talking. Each focus group comprised between 6-10 members.

In this regard 13 Focus Group Discussions were conducted targeting youth from the six target counties: Lamu, Kitui, Homabay, Kericho, Busia, Nairobi, and composed of intersectional groups including, young women, and persons living with disability. The FGDs engaged a total of 115 youth: 60 male, 55 Female and 11 persons with disability.

2.2 DATA QUALITY CONTROL

The study observed data quality protocols to ensure that the information and data collected was accurate and reliable. These protocols included: supervision of the study teams which ensured that fieldwork was conducted as stipulated in the project guideline and briefing of the interviewers on the general background on the project. The study through field supervisors and the lead consultant conducted some back checks and spot checks to verify the quality of the data which was collected. Data analysis involved categorizing, organizing, and cleaning of data before analysis and synthesis.





SECTION THREE

3.1 LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1.1 OVERVIEW

The advent of multiparty politics in Kenya was described as the defining moment for enhanced youth democratic engagement in the country due to increased democratic gains that have continually characterized the period.

The country has ratified most of the international treaties that protect youth's political participation. It is important to note that the ratification of the new Constitution of Kenya (COK, 2010) domesticated the treaties, conventions and also similar agreements to be part of Kenyan law. Article 2 (6) of the COK requires that any international treaty or Convention that Kenya has ratified, become part of Kenyan law, including those on youth and inclusion. Besides, the COK 2010 made specific provisions for youth participation in governance in chapter four (4) on Bill of Rights and article 55(b). Within the realm of political participation, the Carter Centre (2018) observes that political parties are also required to establish mechanisms to support youth party members as candidates and to serve as leaders within the party governance structure.

Available evidence demonstrates that scholars have adopted socio-psychological approaches to study participation in democracies. Attitudinal variables are important in explaining participation in general and engagement in democratic processes, more so with regards to non-electoral participation; they act as mobilization factors for participation (Odanga, 2022).

3.1.2 SOCIAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL FACTORS OF POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

Hafner-Fink (2012: 550) classifies three aspects (or levels) of political participation which may also define young people's participation in Kenya's democratic development:

- a. **Interest in politics:** According to Hafner-Fink (2012), interest in politics does not signify real participation in politics, but more a kind of motivational background for real political involvement.
- b. **Electoral participation:** This level signifies cyclical and "passive" involvement in politics. Hafner-Fink avers that it is nevertheless important for the functioning of a democratic system.
- c. **Active and continuous participation** in various forms of political activity. This is ideally the level at which optimal political participation should happen.

Whatever level of political participation various categories of (young) people are, it is influenced by among other factors:

- a. **Knowledge** – the extent to which people have facts, information, and skills acquired through experience or education about the need for political participation.
- b. **Attitudes** – the way of thinking or feeling they have settled on about politics and democratic development.
- c. **Perceptions** - the way in which they understand, interpret and regard politics in society.

3.1.3 YOUNG PEOPLE'S KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THEIR RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES AS CITIZENS

Section 3.7 of the Kenya Youth Development Policy (2019) on rights, responsibilities and obligations of stakeholders recognizes the importance of youth to enjoy their youthfulness. Irrespective of social status, ethnic origin, sex, the youth have a right to life. The rights include:

- i. Right to life
- ii. Quality education
- iii. Good health
- iv. Marriage at the legal age of consent
- v. Protection from abuse, sexual exploitation and trafficking
- vi. Seek decent and fulfilling employment
- vii. Adequate shelter, food, clothing and basic services
- viii. Protection from harmful conditions and cultural practices and exploitation
- ix. Freedom of speech, expression and association
- x. Participate in making decisions that affect their lives
- xi. Protection from social, economic and political manipulation
- xii. Ownership, secure tenure and protection of property
- xiii. Protection from harmful cultural practices and exploitation

With regards to responsibilities and obligations of the youth, the Policy seeks not only to safeguard the rights of the youth, but also to help them to understand and fulfill their responsibilities, for the development of society. Towards this goal the responsibilities and obligations of the youth have been identified as follows:

- i. Be patriotic and loyal to Kenya and promote the country's well-being
- ii. Contribute to social-economic development at all levels, including through volunteerism
- iii. Create and promote respect for humanity, sustain peaceful co-existence, national unity and stability
- iv. Protect the environment
- v. Help to support and protect those who are disadvantaged and vulnerable
- vi. Promote democracy and the rule of law
- vii. Create gainful employment
- viii. Take advantage of available education and training opportunities
- ix. Develop a positive attitude towards work and entrepreneurship
- x. Lead healthy lifestyles and shun harmful drug use and substance abuse
- xi. Avoid indulging in careless and irresponsible sex and risky sexual behavior; and
- xii. Take responsible charge of their lives.

Despite the elaborate policy provisions around rights and responsibilities of youth, a study by Consolata Moraa Makori on Youth perception of and Participation in electoral Democracy (2015) in Kenya, established that while Kenyan youth value their freedoms especially in relation to electing their leader and on issues of empowerment and accountability, and that they have a positive perception of the concept of democracy, they were more concerned with individual freedoms that come with democracy as opposed to freedom seen in the light of collective rights. According to Makori, the youth seem to be more concerned with their rights as provided for by the principles of democracy but seldom saw their responsibilities that come along with enjoying such rights.

3.1.4 YOUNG PEOPLE’S MOTIVATION (OR LACK OF) TO PARTICIPATE IN POLITICAL PROCESSES

An audit of the 2022 General Elections from an inclusion perspective by Centre for Multiparty Democracy (CMD-Kenya, 2022) revealed that the run-up to the 2022 general election was characterized by low registration of new voters, who were essentially the youth. According to CMD-Kenya, at the closure of the exercise in February 2022, IEBC had targeted 4.5 million voters but realized only 1.03 million voters representing a paltry 22.9%. In a 2016 report, the National Gender and Equality Commission (NGEC) observed that there was a low uptake of national identity cards among the youth which hindered their participation in the 2017 general election. It is however imperative to note that in Kenya the youth would normally apply for Identity Cards (IDs) in order to register for mobile money services and higher education. That means the low voter registration was essentially due to voter apathy.

According to Makori (2015), one of the common justifications given by youth for not voting was a conviction that none of the aspirants was worth casting a vote for. Another reason given for failure to vote was the negativity that surrounds Kenyan politics, particularly the campaigns and the elections. Makori states that those who fell into this category considered people in general and mostly politicians as cynical hence no motivation for voting for any of the candidates. The third reason cited for not voting is the conviction that the promises given by politicians during campaigns are unrealistic. Such youths looked at the politicians and political activities as political gimmicks to get them into or help them stay in power. Some of those who had voted in 2013 vowed never to vote again majorly because of the reasons shared by those who did not vote. There is also a prominent perception among youth in Kenya that democracy in Kenya is a privilege enjoyed only by the upper social classes some of whom are also the political elites and a myth among economically poor youth. Finally, the youth noted that their failure to vote for the other candidates was because they had gained little from the other candidates taking the discussion back to voter bribery.

By and large, from the above literature and as per Hafner-Fink (2012) classification above, it can be argued that young people in Kenya are passive in their involvement in democratic development processes who mostly participate in the electoral process during elections. This is partly because of Kenya’s political culture (around handouts) where aspirants give money and other rewards to persuade the youths and the electorate at large to vote for a specific party. It is important to note that as part of this culture, most young people benefit more from politics during the election period after which politicians embark on their selfish gains.

3.1.5 PRESENCE AND SUITABILITY OF LOCAL AND NATIONAL LEVEL STRUCTURES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE’S MEANINGFUL INVOLVEMENT/ENGAGEMENT IN GOVERNANCE

Odanga (2022) observes that the expansion of the political spaces following the reintroduction of multiparty politics in the country led to inflation in the avenues of participation for the youth in both the country’s political leadership and politics in general. Political parties, elective seats, civil society and community organizations are some of the structures that young people utilize to engage themselves in governance at the national and local levels.

Political parties remain the most important political institutions through which the youth can not only harness their political power and influence the country’s political trajectory, but also the avenues through which they can acquire leadership positions within the framework of electoral politics

(Odanga 2022). This is because parties are important for democracy in terms of offering policy alternatives for citizens as well as their role in representing the voices of the citizens in legislative bodies. Since political parties act as vehicles for entry into elective positions, it is believed that the youth utilize this opportunity during nominations as means of increasing their representation.

Besides political parties, the elective seats provide opportunity for young people’s involvement in governance. The Constitution of Kenya 2010 made provisions for nomination of young people to Parliament (Senate and the National Assembly) under Articles 98(1)(c) and 97(1)(c).

Civil society organizations and community-based organizations provide structures for young people to mobilize and organize themselves to engage in certain courses of democratic governance.

Despite the presence of these structures, the question remains how suitable they have been in promoting youth involvement in leadership.

3.2 RESULTS & FINDINGS

This section presents findings from data collected on the Study on Young People’s Knowledge, Attitudes And Practices Towards Democracy in Kenya. The findings are thematically presented in line with the objectives of the study.

3.1.2 PRIMARY RESEARCH FINDINGS

3.1.2.1 YOUTH KNOWLEDGE OF DEMOCRATIC CULTURE, PROCESSES & INSTITUTIONS

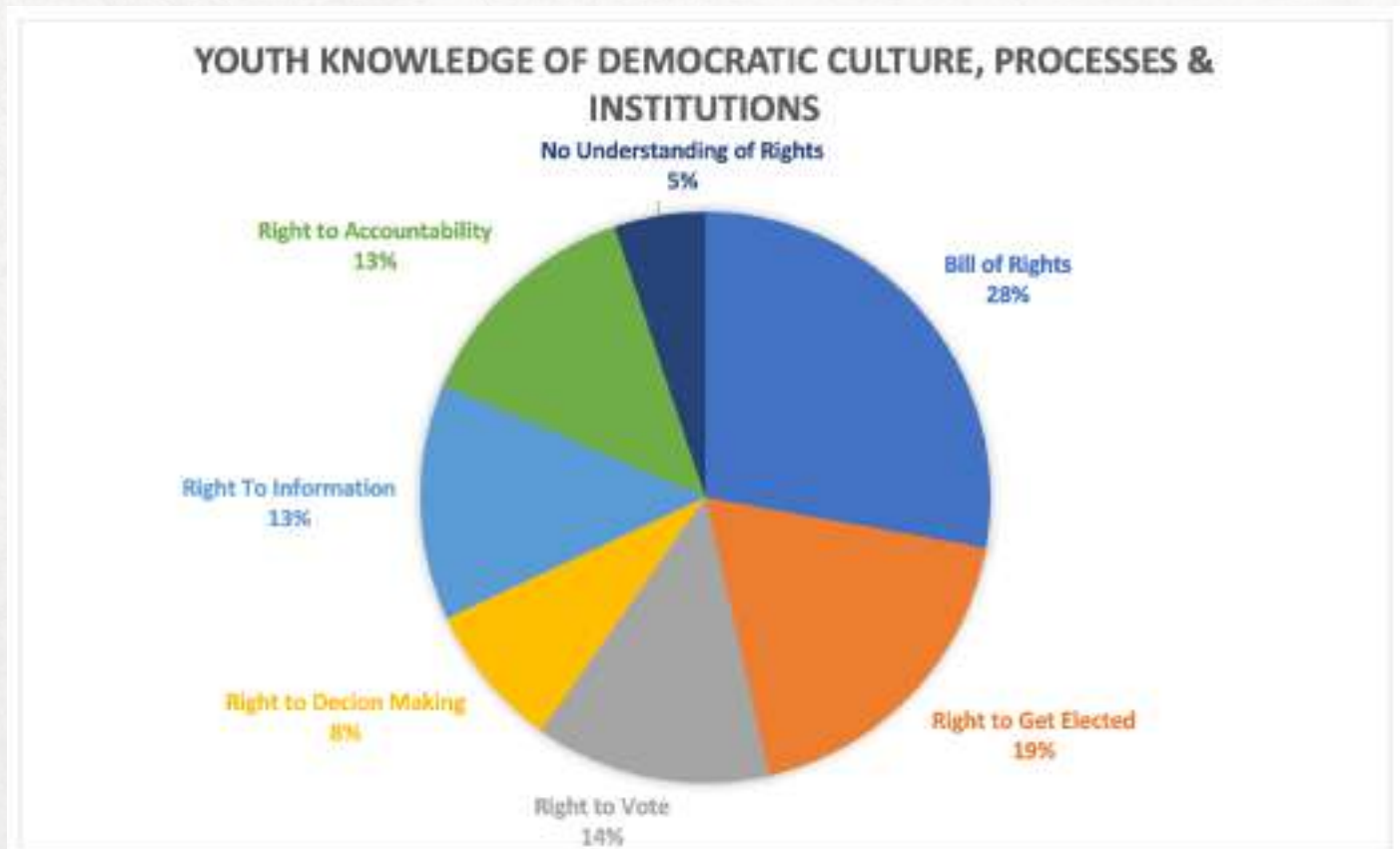


Figure 2: Youth Responses On Knowledge of Democratic Culture, Processes & Institutions

The study sought to establish the extent of young people’s knowledge of democratic culture and institutions. Of the 117 sampled respondents, 95% had some level of understanding of their rights and responsibilities as citizens as pertains to political and democratic participation. Of the 95%, 27% understood their constitutionally guaranteed rights, freedoms and responsibilities under the bill of rights ; respondents highlighted the freedom of association, and freedom of speech and equal protection under the law among others in the bill of rights. 18% of respondents specifically highlighted the right to seek elective office while 13% highlighted the right to vote. Further 8% of respondents understood that they had a right to participate in decision-making processes in the country’s leadership landscape, while 13% understood they had a right to accountability by their leaders. 13% of respondents pointed out that youth had a right to information pertaining democratic processes; these could be shared in the form of civic education, voter education, and mentorship to navigate the political and democratic space.

Only 2% of the respondents understood the legal framework that guarantees young people’s rights and freedoms while 5% of respondents had no understanding of their rights and responsibilities as citizens.

19% of respondents identified political parties as primary institutions through which they can exercise their political rights and freedoms such as engaging in political processes like voting, vying for office and freedom of association, another 19% identified youth organizations such as the National Youth Council, academic institutions and youth caucuses as primary vehicles for political participation. 17% of respondents identified county government and county assemblies as local institutions that youth can exercise their political rights. 14% identified civil society organizations including CMD-Kenya as institutions through which youth can channel their political participation while 13% of respondents highlighted Parliament as a key institution through which they can exercise their rights and freedoms.

8% of respondents highlighted the Independent Elections & Boundaries Commission (IEBC) as a key institution through which young people participate in the political process, specifically, their role as a convener of elections was deemed a significant aspect of political process and a cornerstone of democratic culture. 3% of respondents believed that the media played a significant role in driving and influencing political participation and perception. 2% of respondents believed that the judiciary was a key institution for political participation particularly as a recipient and determinant of election petitions, while another 2% identified the Office of the Registrar of Political Parties (ORPP) as a key institution as convener of political parties. A further 2% did not know which institutions were key for young people to exercise their political rights and freedoms.

3.1.2.2 YOUTH PRACTICE OF DEMOCRATIC CULTURE, PROCESSES & INSTITUTIONS

a) Level of Participation

Having determined the extent of young people’s knowledge of democratic culture and political participation, the study examined the extent to which young people exercise their rights and freedoms. 55% of respondents indicated that they do not exercise their political rights and freedoms due to a number of reasons; 18% of respondents indicated that their decision to not exercise their rights is largely influenced by money- the availability or lack of it. Some respondents indicated that it influenced their decision as well as those of other youth to run for office. The respondents indicated the financial muscle required to run for office was well out the reach of many young people. Further, respondents also indicated that their decision to demand for accountability was also influenced by the leader’s willingness to provide handouts, respondents indicated that political leaders with money had the ability to influence youth with money, therefore limiting their

capacity to exercise some political rights.

13% of respondents also indicated that they did not participate in political life due to the influence of political power over young people. Respondents cited that cronyism within political institutions such as political parties and county and national governments, as well as scenarios where young people were manipulated by those in power dissuaded their active participation, leaving them with no decisions of their own. Youth also cited intimidation when trying to hold leaders to account as a factor influencing their lack of political participation. 11% of respondents indicated that they did not participate in political & governance processes because they lacked the information on how to participate and engage. The youth intimated that they did not have civic education to empower them to actively participate in political processes. They were not aware of how they could participate during a public participation forum or how to get information on public participation processes. Further, respondents indicated that they did not know the process of submission of memoranda during public participation. 7% of respondents did not participate due to apathy, they did not think that their participation made any difference in the final decisions. Another 7% claimed that they faced ageism when participating in political processes and as such decided to take a back seat at engaging in democratic processes. 4% claimed that leaders' lack of accountability has put them off politics and hence choose not to participate, while 2% indicated that they did not participate because it was not convenient for them to leave their daily engagements to show up to public participation. They indicated that national and county governments are failing to embrace technology in public participation thus leaving out young people.

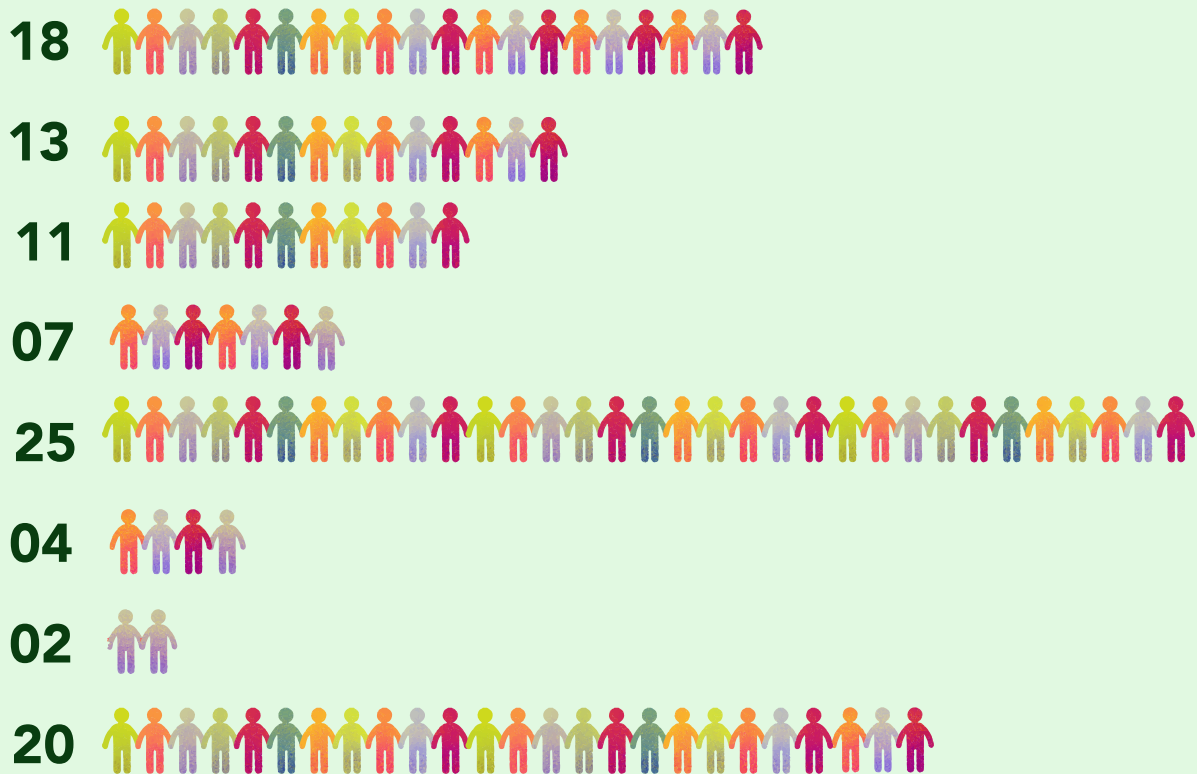
12% of respondents indicated that they exercised their rights and responsibilities by participating in public participation convened by county government, county assembly and national government and other mechanisms to hold political leaders to account. 10% of respondents participated in democratic practices through voting while a further 10% indicated that they had previously run for office. 3% indicated they participated in the electoral process during the campaign period while 2% of respondents exercised their rights by participating in picketing & petitioning political leadership. 1% of youth only participated in online political activism via social media- the social media channel preferred for this was identified as X (formerly Twitter), followed by WhatsApp and Facebook.

The study also sought to generally understand the current ways in which young people participate in politics, governance and decision making. 31% indicated that youth favored public participation and local barazas while 10% indicated that young people are involved in picketing & petitioning. A further 10% indicated youth participate actively in political parties. 18% indicated that social media activism was a popular and convenient way for youth to participate and voice their opinions. 14% indicated that youth participated through electoral activities such as campaigns, voting and vying for elective seats.

The Key Informant Interviews also localized youth participation based on two categories of youth: elite youth- who are well aware of their rights and responsibilities and seek to engage with governance and democratic processes from a point of information and civic obligation; and, other youth, who are only vaguely aware of their rights and responsibilities, who remain detached from political processes due to high apathy or engage based on economic incentivization. This second category also appeared to engage in democratic process on autopilot, only going through the motions and not attaching any real significance to their actions.

Figure 3: Reasons Why Youth Do Not Participate in Politics (Percentages)

REASONS WHY YOUTH DO NOT PARTICIPATE IN POLITICS



B) AVENUES OF PARTICIPATION

40% of respondents indicated that the primary institutions they engage with on matters of politics and democracy are civil society organizations. Engagement primarily included capacity building in various areas including leadership, social accountability, political navigation, and civic education among others. Institutions identified by the youth as an avenue for this engagement included CMD-Kenya, The Oslo Center, The National Democratic Institute (NDI), The International Republican Institute (IRI), Mzalendo Trust, and Uraia Trust among others.

14% of respondents indicated that they engaged with Parliament. This engagement included submission of memoranda as requested by Parliament, engagement with members of parliament either through their offices at the constituency or through their association, the Kenya Young Parliamentarians (KYPA) and Kenya Women Parliamentarians (KEWOPA). 11% of respondents engaged with the county governments either through meetings convened by county government, social accountability initiatives, development projects, and county development planning.

10% of respondents indicated that they engaged with the IEBC. Their engagement included participating in voter education and sensitization, voting and as candidates for political office. A further 7% indicated that they had also engaged with political parties primarily as members of political parties, while another 4% indicated they had engaged with the Office of the Registrar of Political Parties (ORPP). 6% of respondents had engaged with the national government through government programming while 6% had engaged with the county assembly through the members of county assembly offices. 1% indicated that they had engaged with the media on governance issues.

C) INTEGRATION OF YOUTH FEEDBACK IN COUNTY DECISION MAKING

25% of the respondents indicated that youth feedback/ participation was reflected in the County Integrated Development Plans (CIDPs). 17% indicated that their feedback was adopted through the county assembly either through presentation of petitions, or introduction of bills/ motions addressing the issues raised. This was exemplified in Busia county where the youth submitted a petition to have a sewerage issue addressed; which was eventually resolved once the petition wound up in the Deputy Governor's office.

13% indicated that youth feedback was channeled to appropriate institutions through CSOs. For example, development of the Youth Manifesto that was supported by International Republican Institute (IRI) and the Youth Café. A further 13% indicated that their feedback was included in county government programming; for example, in Busia, the county government has provided platforms for youth to dialogue and collaborate with the county executive. 4% indicated that their feedback was reflected in the election results as they opted to withdraw support from politicians that did not deliver results in the previous office term. 25% of respondents however indicated that their feedback is never considered, those in this category indicated that public participation was often a way for the government to check a box as adequate notice is never given and neither is it made accessible for youth. Others indicated that they were not aware of any public participation and that decisions were often made and implemented with a top-down approach.

Key Informant Interviews corroborated that young people's feedback is integrated into decision making as drawn from public participation and submitted memoranda. Some counties such as Nairobi and Vihiga were also highlighted as having independently set up structures to ensure youth feedback is received and integrated; this is done through a Governors' Roundtable with youth and the Youth Advisory Board in Nairobi.

3.1.2.3 YOUTH MOTIVATION TO PARTICIPATE IN DEMOCRATIC CULTURE, PROCESSES & INSTITUTIONS

The study sought to uncover what motivates young people to actively participate in political and democratic processes. 69% of respondents indicated that their biggest motivation was the need for accountable leadership and change. Youth sought to change the circumstances around them such as access to services, representation and inclusion in decision making processes. 17% of the respondents were motivated by the power and influence associated with an active political life. 12% of respondents were motivated by the money involved in political participation. This was primarily directed at the culture of handouts by politicians or money paid to youth to be political disruptors.

On the flip side, many youths remain apathetic towards an active political life. 26% of respondents were disinterested in political participation due to the lack of support to youth to actively participate; this included ageism within political parties and society in general in relation to seeking political office, youth only used as election machinery and not valued or supported beyond election. Further, youth felt let down by political parties and the political class as they have not provided adequate support to nurture young people in politics.

20% of the respondents were dissuaded due to the lack of change despite many election promises; they observed no change or implementation of election manifestos. 17% of the respondents indicated that limited finances and resources had kept them away from politics. This was in the context of limited resources to run for office as well as limited opportunities for gainful employment

and hence they are too busy ‘hustling’.

7% of the respondents indicated that they were disillusioned with the politics of the day and could not relate it to real life. Respondents indicated:

“Some of the toughest challenges affecting the youth are unemployment, and environmental degradation, displacements to mention a few. Youths are frustrated, and when you talk of politics they don’t understand cos they are busy to engage as they are working hard to get daily bread instead of getting little handouts from politicians that will cost them for the next 5 years. Youth get busy with their work to avoid political issues. It will take time to convince youth to participate in the election process so that they can understand their rights and understand when they vote they need to vote in good leaders.”

FGD Respondent

A further 4% attributed their apathy to the disconnected leadership and the fact that their leaders could not relate with the situation at the grassroots and hence cannot create any change. 6% indicated that they did not engage in political activity due to fear of the violence associated with politics for example the physical clashes between protestors and police during demonstrations, campaign violence and the rise in gender-based violence during the electoral period. Finally, 3% of youth indicated they keep away from political processes due to the high levels of cronyism, nepotism and corruption involved. A further 3% indicated that youth did not receive adequate civic education and information to know how, and when to engage in the political process.

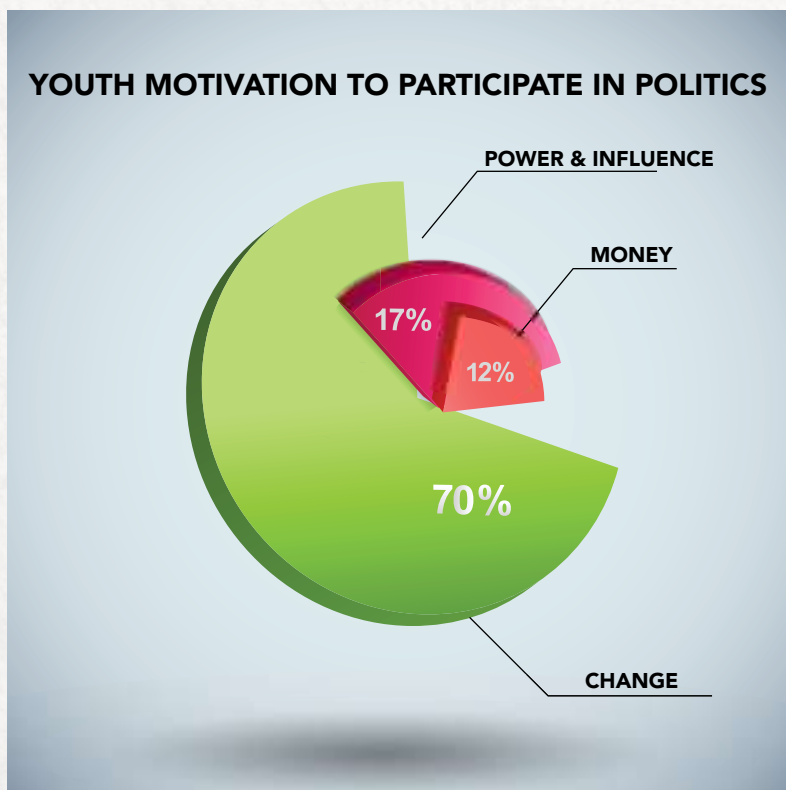


Figure 4: Youth Motivation To Participate In Politics

Key Informant Interviews also corroborated the high apathy amongst young people to participate in democratic processes, specifically the lack of trust in political institutions ranked highly in their lack of motivation to engage. For instance, the nullification of the 2017 General Election, created credibility challenges for the IEBC amongst young people, particularly those aged 18-24 years.

Further, perpetual complaints of a broken political and governance system by the older generation have served as a deterrent to the new generations’ participation. Further, the KIs brought out the aspect of modeling and how this has affected young peoples’ perceptions towards political participation. Some young people enter the political space as candidates “on a rent-seeking mission” because political participation has been modeled as a flashy, economic opportunity by political

leaders and not an opportunity to serve Kenyans. There is also a missed opportunity to secure the gains of young people’s political participation. Many young people who participate in democratic processes almost always only engage in one electoral cycle after which the disappointment of the results, whether with the leadership or failure to progress in political life for those interested in political service, serves as reason to disengage.

3.1.2.3 INNOVATIVELY MAKING DEMOCRATIC & POLITICAL PARTICIPATION ACCESSIBLE TO YOUNG PEOPLE

27% of respondents proposed the utilization of digital tools to enhance participation of youth in democratic processes, this includes using online platforms for civic education, public participation and even voting. 21% of respondents indicated that creative and targeted civic education was critical to hooking the youth interest in democratic processes. 9% of respondents indicated that heightened internal political party democracy would be enough to encourage political participation of youth while a further 9% called for an increase in grassroots engagement on political participation to encourage more youth. 7% highlighted the importance of increased capacity of youth to be able to participate effectively through seeking elective office, while another 7% underscored the importance of a disinformation campaign on political processes as many youths are manipulated due to disinformation. 13% of respondents proposed engagement of youth through youth-led initiatives as well as called for mentorship of young people to build a culture of democratic and political participation.

25% of respondents indicated that the inclusion of youth at various decision-making tables would make more young people interested in politics. Further, creation of youth friendly spaces where youth can learn, share and interact with their peers was endorsed by 19% of the respondents as critical in incubating a youth interest in political participation. 25% of the respondents indicated that increased civic education coupled with targeted messaging towards youth would spark an interest in youth to engage in democratic culture. 10% of respondents called for increased intergenerational and multi-disciplinary dialogue at the grassroots level to foster democratic interest and participation; specifically, participants called for a devolved version of the People Dialogue Festival(PDF) at the county level.

Findings from the Key Informant Interviews indicated that the following could be done to entice young people to participate in political process and democratic culture: investments by political parties to mentor potential youth candidates in the counties, develop youth friendly versions of key documentation needed for public participation, and formalizing online platforms where young people can engage.

A dip-stick poll conducted as part of this study indicated that the most viable ways to reach young people with information on public participation was online and through community forums. Fewer respondents preferred announcements made on radio and even less preferred the announcement in at least two dailies as the primary mode of receiving information.





SECTION FOUR

4.1 DISCUSSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1.1 YOUTH KNOWLEDGE OF DEMOCRATIC CULTURE, PROCESSES & INSTITUTIONS

The findings tell us that a large number (95%) of young people have some understanding and knowledge of their political rights, freedoms and responsibilities. However, this was only largely demonstrated as an understanding of their rights as pertains to an electoral process- voting, running for office and being represented in legislative bodies. They also demonstrated broadly the knowledge of the bill of rights and highlighted specific rights such as their right to assemble, right to free speech and right to picket and petition. Of the 95% only 2% demonstrated understanding of the legal frameworks that guaranteed them their rights and freedoms. This indicates that the majority of the youth have only passive knowledge on their rights and responsibilities, which is not enough to spur youth active participation in political and democratic processes. Those with an understanding of the legal framework, demonstrated the ability to identify their roles in various democratic processes including running for political office.

Only 8% of respondents demonstrated knowledge of key democratic and political institutions such as the county governments, county assembly, CSOs, the IEBC and political parties. The findings reveal that the first entry point into politics for many young people based on their current knowledge is political parties, followed by youth-led and youth serving organizations. Civil Society also emerged as a major influencer on young people's political knowledge. Other institutions such as the IEBC, the judiciary and the media highlighted by the youth also served not only as reference points for knowledge of political institutions but also sources of political knowledge.

The findings reveal that young people's knowledge of political and democratic processes is general at best, revealing a rift between knowledge and understanding. For instance, the respondents' understanding of how they can participate beyond an election was limited. This could explain why in the cycle of political activities and processes, young people are most active during the electioneering period and primarily as supporters of various candidates. Further, this could contribute to the apathy seen amongst youth to engage politically, as where they lack knowledge and understanding, they will understand or see the value of their individual actions to the democratic culture and development of the nation.

RECOMMENDATION

The study makes the following recommendations with respect to young people's knowledge of political and democratic processes.

i. There is need to expand the knowledge and understanding of political and democratic processes by young people.

The findings indicate that young people's knowledge at present is general at best. To expand this, civic and voter education is needed to demystify the concepts of politics, democracy, and governance. The target, as informed by the study, should focus on the broader youth population with limited knowledge rather than the elite youth that have been engaging in the political process. Further, the study finds that current knowledge and understanding is focused on the electoral process, and new emphasis should be laid on the full electoral cycle. This will help young people understand their roles beyond participating in the elections through voting. Political education programs targeting young people should help them understand the national and county planning and budgeting process, how to participate in national and county plan implementation and

monitoring as well as knowledge on how to advocate for their rights. Youth capacity to engage and navigate political institutions such as political parties, national and county legislative arms as well as national and county executives should also be strengthened so as to increase their efficiency in applying political knowledge and education.

This will in turn serve as a stepping-stone to increased youth political participation as this knowledge and understanding will enable them to make the political-development connection necessary to inspire them to seek change through social accountability and civic duty during the electoral period.

ii. Engage familiar levers to expand young people's knowledge of the political & democratic process.

The study found that the most common political institutions that young people have knowledge about included: political parties, youth-led and youth serving organizations, civil society organizations, the IEBC and the Media. To leverage this knowledge, CMD-Kenya and its partners can create programs that use these institutions as conduits for knowledge, information, and political education for young people.

With many young people as either active or passive members of political parties, CMD-Kenya can through its members create programs that leverage on inducting youth members of political parties into political education through their youth leagues. This training can leverage on the existing political parties fund that calls for 30% of the fund to be used on activities that promote the participation of the special interest groups (youth, women and persons with disability).

Levers such as the media can be used to spread knowledge and information through creative and engaging content. This includes the use of mainstream media as well as digital and social media channels such as Tiktok, X (formerly Twitter), YouTube and WhatsApp.

Further, peer to peer learning has long proven effective as a means of capacity building and information sharing amongst the youth. This can be evidenced by the success of previous engagements such as IEBC's 2017 youth voter education campaign, 'YVote', through which they rallied the youth to register as voters. As a result, 50.1% of the voters were youth .

iii. Nurturing civic duty & responsibility

The constitutional definition of youth in Kenya is a person between the ages of 18-35 years. At 18 years, youth are expected to have a civic understanding of their roles and responsibilities, they are expected to fully participate in democratic and political processes. However, many young people between the age of 18-24 years are often unaware of their rights and responsibilities. This study recommends that interventions targeting a younger cohort of youth (15-17 years) be undertaken. This will provide an opportunity to young people to nurture a culture of civic responsibility such that when they are 18 and are legally required to participate in democratic process, they are able to do so from an informed and knowledgeable point of view.

4.1.2 YOUTH PRACTICE OF DEMOCRATIC CULTURE, PROCESSES & INSTITUTIONS

To assess the actual current practice of youth in democratic culture and processes, the study examined three broad areas: their level of participation, the avenues of their participation and the consideration of their feedback in the county decision making processes. Over half of the respondents (55%) indicated that they did not actively exercise their political rights, primarily due

to a nexus of resources, information, and power influence. The study reveals that money, or the lack of it, is an emerging factor that greatly influences youth political participation. Many youths indicated that cash handouts were one of the reasons they participated in political processes, especially elections, without which they did not see a need to participate.

Cronyism within political institutions such as political parties and county and national governments, discouraged their active participation. For instance, young people cited the fact that opportunities for learning, service and growth within the political parties are often awarded to allies of those that hold political leadership, with a recent example given of the party list nominations in the 2022 general elections, which was not assigned fairly. In scenarios where young people have limited social capital because of their age, political decisions are often made over their heads aligned with individual personal interests.

Youth also cited scenarios of manipulation and intimidation by those in power resulting in their having no choice but to comply with already predetermined decisions, for example, when internal decision making is done by those with a stake (mostly financial) in the party. Because youths are a critical component of any political party, many parties often seek to recruit young people to be the driving force of the party because of the sheer numbers of young people. As a result, youth are drawn into the party either with the promise of monetary resources, belonging or common ideology. As politics is a high-stakes game, many political leaders are not ready to fully relinquish power by co-leading with young people. As such, young people are represented in positions of key leadership but excluded from the actual decision-making. Respondents also cited intimidation by the political class, giving a recent example of the police crack-down on protestors opposing the government of the day. Further, young women seeking political office found that they often faced physical and psychological intimidation from male counterparts. This was also cited as the case by young women who sought to support their candidates during an election. This often came in the form of campaigns seeking to disparage the character and reputation of the women leaders, sexual harassment and sometimes physical abuse to women candidates and their supporters.

Additionally, respondents cited that some young people stay away from politics because of the heavy influence political heavyweights have over the political arena. Many youths already believe that cronyism and nepotism will carry the day and hence see no use in participating. The respondents indicated that youth were manipulated to align to political leadership by being offered something out of their reach such as financial resources or socio-economic or political opportunities.

The other factor influencing political participation in practice is lack of, or limited knowledge on political and democratic processes. Little civic education and/or misinformation has played a role towards the limited participation of youth. While several stakeholders have attempted to run far-reaching civic and voter education, many young people still indicate that they have limited knowledge of civic rights and responsibilities. One key factor that emerged from the study findings was that many young people who were in fact exposed to civic education, indicated that the civic education did not respond to the needs of young people, but rather an academic exercise and hence they remain unable to apply it for their benefit in the long run.

After considering the key factors that influence young people's participation, the study examined the actual ways that young people participated. This is a critical finding because it gives insights on the practical ways that young people can actively and meaningfully engage in the political and democratic process. It remains essential to create pathways to make political participation practical, meaningful, and accessible. For instance, while most respondents (31%) are comfortable with in-person public participation, a significant number (18%) leaned towards social media activism and engagement.

The study also noted a disconnect in the structures that young people interact with when engaging

in political processes. Almost half, (40%) the respondents identified CSOs as key structures that they engage at the county and national level. Only a few respondents indicated engagement with county machinery through county government and county assemblies. This could be attributed to the dynamic nature of CSO programming that adapts to young people's needs and meets them at the point of their exclusion. 14% of respondents indicated that they engaged with Parliament, this could be credited to the easy access to parliamentary proceedings as these are live streamed and the parliamentary website records are well maintained and up to date. Only 7% of respondents indicated that they interact with political parties; of these, the majority were members of political parties. This finding further reveals the disconnect between aspirations for broader youth participation, engagement and representation and the current practice. If there is limited participation at this level, then it will be difficult to grow the numbers of youth representation in elective offices.

In practice, of the young people participating and engaging in public participation and other ways of engaging government, one quarter (25%) indicated that their feedback is never considered and that is a meaningless practice for the government to seek their opinions. This is a key indicator of the inability to secure the current gains in youth political participation as those who are currently participating will ultimately be discouraged from engaging if their participation does not yield any fruit. It is also interesting to note that young people value the convening aspect of their civil society interactions as they believe this is a meaningful avenue to have their voices heard.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The study makes the following recommendations with respect to young people's practice in political and democratic processes.

i. Strengthen political parties to establish meaningful inclusion of youth.

As a primary vehicle for political participation, there is a need to strengthen political party structures to be more inclusive and supportive to young people. This includes ensuring that party leadership structures are inclusive of young people and that their voices are heard, their opinions considered, and proposals actioned. Political parties should further review their nomination rules to be inclusive and friendly to young people seeking political leadership in the legislative assemblies. Further interventions within political parties should include induction and political education to youth members as well as designated activities to support enhanced youth participation within the political party. Finally, political parties need to identify and rally behind common party ideology that young people can identify with and support the party to advance; this will rally young people's loyalty to the party and contribute to its growth. This can be done through institutionalizing political party structures and functions ensuring they are sustainable beyond the party leaders and founders.

ii. Encourage youth to participate in social accountability.

20% of young people responding to this study indicated that the absence of change was a significant demotivator for them to participate in political and democratic processes. To address this, along with expanding young people's civic knowledge, civil society partners should encourage young people to hold their leaders accountable. More investments need to be made in educating and connecting the youth with locally established structures for democratic engagements and public participation such as county government structures, including ward committees, and public participation schedules. Furthermore, intentional efforts can be directed at creating platforms for youth engagement at county levels with a multi-sectoral approach that are regularly supported both technically and financially. Youth should also engage with the county budget planning and

monitoring to help youth track their participation and the outcomes of their participation; this will serve as encouragement for themselves and others to consistently engage in democratic processes. This will take youth participation well beyond the election to the actual implementation and monitoring of manifestoes and government development plans.

iii. Secure the gains of youth participation.

While we seek to expand youth participation in politics, there is a need to secure the gains of those already participating democratic and governance processes. The study respondents identified lack of change, exclusionary practices within political parties among others as key demotivators and causes of apathy among young people. This is evidenced by the declining number of youths registering to vote and the low numbers of youth in elective leadership. As such, civil society, political parties need to address this through targeted interventions to ensure that this section of young people not only maintain their participation but encourage their peers to do so as well. This can be implemented through appropriate utilization of the political parties' fund to expand party activities that encourage youth political participation. With the fund now supporting a record 48 political parties, the Registrar of Political Parties can provide oversight to ensure the funds achieve the objectives set out. Further, gains can be made by ensuring that affirmative action for young people is sustained as this grows the numbers of young people in the legislative assemblies thus building a critical mass of youth champions within the legislature; for instance, Hon. Martha Wangare and Hon. Naisula Lesuda were both nominated to the National Parliament as young women, who went on to be elected under single constituency seats for the last two terms; Hon. Gloria Orwoba has become a legislative champion for young women's reproductive health.

iv. Public Participation to be conducted via accessible channels and platforms.

Young people want to know that their voices are heard and that their opinions matter. Constitutionally, the government is required to ensure public participation is done before effecting any policy change or implementing any development plans. As such the law requires that any relevant government agency circulates information on a public participation exercise to as wide an audience as possible. The primary method used by the government primarily is the circulation of the notice in at least two national dailies. Further, the sessions are often held during the week and the information on the topic of discussion is hardly ever circulated in advance for the public to prepare questions or input. This interpretation of the law has proved to be exclusionary for young people as: i) they are not the primary audiences of national dailies ii) they often have competing priorities during the time slotted for public participation as they are often either in school or carrying out an economic activity. As such, it is essential to expand the scope of public participation to include a mix that addresses all the points of exclusion of young people from these processes. This could include adoption of virtual participation through policy or legal reform to national and county public participation laws and frameworks, localized public participation in areas where youth have already gathered such as schools, markets etc. And strengthening the capacities of young people to develop written memoranda that address their needs.

v. Enhance the feedback loop during public participation.

It will be essential for National and County Governments and national and county legislatures to strengthen the feedback loop during public participation. As respondents indicated many young people who participate in these forums do not receive any feedback of their engagements. Many times, they only find out that their views were included or left out once the public participation item has been finalized. Government should normalize holding validation forums with those who participated in the public participation to review the final submissions and endorse the proposed plans. This can be done through accountability structures within the counties and national government that are resourced by government, civil society and community members, this will

ensure localized checks and balances ensuring that plans advanced with hold the buy-in of the community.

4.1.3 YOUTH MOTIVATION TO PARTICIPATE IN DEMOCRATIC CULTURE, PROCESSES & INSTITUTIONS

The study found that youth had an overwhelming need to influence and see change in their communities. This was the one common motivation for them to engage and participate in democratic processes. While majority of the youth cited altruistic reasons motivating them to participate, there are those that sought to engage to acquire power and influence while others sought to navigate the harsh economic times by viewing politics as an income generating venture. The study also noted the significant loss of faith in the political process, system and leadership that serves as a deterrent for youth immersion in political life. The political disillusionment of young people keeps them in a state of limbo that renders them unable to connect the cause and effect of failing to engage politically.

Further, findings indicate that young people often encounter ageism as they engage in political processes. This is seen through society's perception of young people as well as within their own political parties.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The study makes the following recommendations with respect to young people's practice in political and democratic processes.

i. Harness youth desire for change.

Young people yearn for change, however, when no change is forthcoming, the findings of this study tell us that this demotivates and disillusions youth into apathy. Stakeholders such as government and civil society should leverage on the youth hope and desire to drive social impact, to empower them with skills that will enable them to participate in decision making and holding public officials accountable. Increased capacity and skill to participate and engage in decision-making and social accountability will create a motivated generation ready to immerse themselves in active political life.

ii. Tap into the youth dividend.

Young people should step out and demonstrate their value in the political arena by leveraging on their own lived experiences. Political parties, government and civil society should further leverage on the youth's ability to create new and innovative engagement frameworks allowing them to tap into the youth dividend. For instance, the Council of Governors recently launched an Application developed by a young person dubbed Badilico, set to provide an online platform for public participation. (Wanzala, 2023)

4.1.4 INNOVATIVELY MAKING DEMOCRATIC & POLITICAL PARTICIPATION ACCESSIBLE TO YOUNG PEOPLE

As time progresses, it is essential for government and civil society stakeholders to continuously adapt and reinvent the ways they engage with young people. This will ensure that youth are present and engaged and contributing fully to nation building. The study found that young people have embraced technology and are keen to engage in spaces they are most comfortable and

familiar with.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The study makes the following recommendations with respect to young people's practice in political and democratic processes.

i. Embrace and Deploy Digital Tools for political participation.

The study found that Social Media tools such as youtube, tiktok, X and whatsapp are popular amongst the youth and can be used to engage in political discourse. Government and civil society can further adapt the use of Artificial Intelligence to triangulate data to increase the efficiency of how we engage young people in the political and democratic process.

ii. Creative Civic Education

Civic education needs to move beyond an academic exercise to an engaging lifestyle activity. This will allow young people to connect with the content, relate it to everyday life and apply it in their political interactions. This could take formats such as graphic content, videos, influencer engagements, radio dramas, podcasts, graffiti, spoken word and more. Youth spaces can also be identified in every county and used as safe spaces for them to intentionally engage in politics.

iii. Countering Misinformation and Disinformation

Together with increasing young people's knowledge on political processes and civic rights and responsibilities; it is essential to counter misinformation and disinformation that serve as hindrances to young people's political participation. To do this, it is necessary to regulate online spaces to ensure that information can be trusted and that youth can use this information to make informed decisions. This can be done through legal reviews such as the one commissioned by the Cabinet Secretary, Information and Digital Economy in 2023; ensuring implementation of legal reforms; holding Digital Media Companies responsible for content moderation and fact-checking; and CSOs supporting local online and offline structures to counter mis/disinformation through structures such as the 'nyumba-kumi' and the local youth networks.



Centre for
Multiparty Dem



STRENGTHEN
THE
OF Y
WO

Centre for
Multiparty Democracy

REFERENCES

REFERENCES

Odanga, B. (2002). Youth Political Participation and Democratic Engagement in Kenya: The Case of Nairobi County. University of Nairobi.

The Youth Agenda (YAA, 2013). Youth Participation in 2012/2013 Political Parties

Nomination Process. Nairobi: Youth Agenda.

Kamau, S. C. (2016). Engaged Online: Social Media and Youth Civic Engagement in Kenya. In B. Mutsvauro (Ed.), *Digital Activism in the Social Media Era: Critical Reflections on Emerging Trends in Sub-Saharan Africa* (pp. 115-140). London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (2019). Kenya Population & Housing Census Results. Nairobi, Kenya

Kinsbergen, S. (2023). Let's Talk About You(th): A Study on Youth Engagement in Kenya. Nairobi, Kenya.

Mukhongo, L. L. (2014). Negotiating the New Media Platforms: Youth and Political Images in Kenya. *Communication, Capitalism & Critique*, 12(1), 328-341.

The Centre for Multiparty Democracy (CMD-Kenya, 2022). Audit of the 2022 General Elections from an Inclusion Perspective. Nairobi Kenya.

Hafner-Fink, D. (2012) Slovenia. *European Journal of Political Research*, 51: 288–296. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.2047-8852.2012.00031.x> Government of Kenya, Ministry of Public Service, Youth and Gender State Department for Youth (2019). Kenya Youth Development Policy 2019. Government Printer, Nairobi.

Wanzala, J. (2023) Governors bank on an online App to enhance public participation. Standard Digital. Nairobi. Kenya

STRENGTHENING THE POWER OF YOUTH VOICES

Call Us Now

+254 (20) 2215731

Email Us

info@cmd-kenya.org

Address

6th Floor International House
Mama Ngina Street, Nairobi.
P.O.Box 9903 - 00100 Nairobi.

Centre for
Multiparty Democracy Kenya



Kingdom of the Netherlands

