Factsheet on Youth Preparedness in Kenya’s Electoral Process

The Youth Agenda (YAA)
Woodlands Court, Kirichwa Lane, Off Ngong Road
P.O. Box 10174 – 00100
Nairobi

Tel: +254 20 2022026
Fax: +254 20 3559212

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Foreword

Despite the numerical power at the disposal of youth, this generation is still unable to harness its power due to colossal hurdles that exist in the Kenyan political environment. These include; hostility, instability, and unpredictability; limited political space; stereotypes and perception against the youth; political zoning of regions by top brass and ownership of political parties by individuals with limited internal democracy and room for new entrants. Consequently, the youth have also been charged guilty for the perpetration of political violence especially in the 2007/2008 Election Violence.

The Youth Agenda (YAA) works towards ensuring that the aspirations of young people to enjoy their social, economic and political rights are not stifled. It is against this background that YAA, which is a member of the Kenya Election Observation Group (ELOG) developed a mechanism to monitor young people’s electoral preparedness. More importantly YAA sought to establish the real facts affecting youth engagement with electoral processes and understand their perceptions towards the same. Through questionnaires and focus group discussions convened in 7 Regions- Nairobi, Central, Eastern, Western, Nyanza, Rift Valley and Coast and Kenya Polytechnic - YAA received feedback on three key thematic issues; National Identification Card System, Voting trends and Voter Registration and Youth and Political Participation including party politics. The youth had a lot to share!

This Fact Sheet on Youth Preparedness in Kenya’s Electoral Process provides an account of perceptions, behaviours, and threats affecting young people’s engagement with electoral processes. It also outlines recommended actions that will promote free fair and credible elections that promote young people’s enjoyment of political rights as provided for in article 38 of Kenya 2010 Constitution. Read on.

Susan K. Mwongera
Chief Executive Officer
Despite the numerical power at the disposal of youth, this generation is still unable to harness its power due to colossal hurdles that exist in the Kenyan political environment. These include; hostility, instability, and unpredictability; limited political space; stereotypes and perception against the youth; political zoning of regions by top brass and ownership of political parties by individuals with limited internal democracy and room for new entrants. Consequently, the youth have also been charged guilty for the perpetration of political violence especially in the 2007/2008 Election Violence.

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Listening to young people share their political achievements, challenges, threats and opportunities is not only interesting but very rewarding more so when they are articulating their vision for Kenya. During the months of September and October a team from Youth Agenda visited seven regions countrywide to collect data that has been summarised in this Fact Sheet on Youth Preparedness in Kenya’s Electoral Process.

We would like to convey our sincere and foremost gratitude to our lead consultant George Ojema who diligently compiled the information in this factsheet. His immense analysis is highly commended. George worked under the supervision of our Programme Assistant Ms Betty Okiri who coordinated all the field activities and ensured quality control.

To all the youth leaders drawn from Nairobi, Central, Eastern, Western, Nyanza, Rift Valley, Coast Regions and Kenya Polytechnic, we wish to extend our appreciation for sharing your thoughts as we all endeavour to see a Kenya that promotes good governance, accountability, inclusivity and public participation.

We also express our gratitude to the Finnish Embassy through the Election Observation Group (ELOG) for their financial support as the publication of this factsheet and our work of scaling up the youth participation in the electoral process would not have been a success without them. Youth Agenda as an organization remains grateful to ELOG steering committee members and the National Coordinator Mercy Njoroge for continuous guidance.

We hope that you will find the facts herein from the youth valuable.

Judy Nguru-Walla
Program Manager
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List of Abbreviations

ASAL  Arid and Semi Arid Land
BVR   Biometric Voter Registration
CSO   Civil Society Organisation
CBO   Community Based Organisation
DC    District Commissioner
DO    District Officer
CDF   Constituency Development Fund
GoK   Government of Kenya
IDs   National Identity Cards
IEBC  Independent Electoral and Boundary Commission
MIRP  Ministry of Immigration and Registration of Persons
NARC  National Rainbow Coalition
ODM   Orange Democratic Movement
KNC   Kenya National Congress
TNA   The National Alliance
UDF   United Democratic Front
URP   United Republican Party
YAA   The Youth Agenda
Executive Summary

Purpose of the Assignment

This survey was conducted primarily to gauge the status of youth preparedness in Kenya’s electoral process with a view of identifying major bottlenecks and provide actionable strategies and pragmatic interventions towards enhancing youth participation in political and electoral processes in the wake of forthcoming general elections.

Therefore, the purpose of the survey was aimed at opening avenues for understanding youth acquisition of identity cards, establishing the challenges facing the youth in acquiring voters cards and monitoring youth representation and participation in political parties in Kenya. Through this assignment, the Youth Agenda (YAA) seeks to explore ways of unlocking some of the impediments to youth participation in democratic and electoral processes in Kenya. This report carries the observations and findings on young people’s views on the above issues in the period of September to October 2012.

Key Highlights of Study Findings

The survey findings have been analyzed in line with the study pillars. In the first instance, the findings identify challenges, perceptions and remedial measures that the Government and other stakeholders should refocus in order to address the policy hiccups surrounding the issuance of National Identity Card (IDs), voter registration and youth participation in political environment in Kenya. These are briefly captured below:

Pillar I: National Identity Card System

The survey established that the new system (third generation of IDs) was a progressive step towards ensuring a free and fair election as it gives a clear personal image of an individual hence easier for identification than the old system. There was also a feeling that the issuance of IDs has been purely politicised and used as a political weapon to frustrate various opponents in the political cycle. This was in view that the process of registration and issuance of IDs would be easier and faster in Nyanza and Central Provinces.

The survey also revealed that young people still face a myriad of challenges when acquiring their National Identity Cards, which calls for immediate sustainable policy interventions. These challenges include: lack of information on registration/application requirements; delays in processing and Issuance of IDs; rampant corruption; high registration fee; discrimination by some officers; tedious vetting regulations; transport hitches; few registration centres; poor attitudes and communication skills by staff; influence of drugs; abuse by politicians; and religious barriers.
The following viable policy options address the above challenges for effective implementation: ensure adequate staffing and training; need to computerize the registration processes; rationalize number of registration document needed; awareness creation on the national identity card registration process; initiate mobile technology in the registration process; scrap registration fee; minimize waiting period: reduce days of acquiring IDs to may be ten days; use other GOK offices/departments to reach out citizens e.g. Local Government and Education so that the registration process is either done at schools or market places; and lastly it is important for the Government to allow youth get IDs from whichever part of the country they reside not necessarily their home districts.

**Pillar II: Voting Trends and Voter Registration**

The study observed that a significant proportion of the youth are still swayed by money and will only vote in the next elections for politicians who give them monetary support. It was also noted that the youth are their own enemies, hence they never make it to elective positions of leadership due to jealousy and inexperience among them.

It was further revealed that that the primary motivational barriers facing the youth in the voting process were lack of political interest and knowledge; a belief that all political parties were the same just like their leaders who are selfish; and that no party articulates issues relevant to youth. Other stated barriers to voting were identified as: lack of knowledge about the electoral process and operations of the political parties; insecurity; difficulty providing identification and voter registration card; and lack of knowledge on the Biometric Voter Registration that could also deter the youth from voting; lack of Identity Cards; non-resettlement of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs); barring ICC suspects and establishing mechanisms for local trials; poor leadership and retrogressive politics; insecurity and the emergence of militia groups; and fear of vote rigging.

With regards to the general feeling about Biometric Voter Registration (BVR), it was established that the system will add credibility to the IEBC as well as the whole electoral process. This is because the process is expected to be faster, more efficient and that it will curb against election fraud through double registration, double voting and all forms of vote rigging.

Finally the youth believed that 30 days will not be sufficiently enough for the voter registration process, citing challenges of poor road infrastructure during rainy seasons and deployment of military operations is some parts of the country, which might discourage people from the taking part in the process.

**Pillar III: Youth and Political Participation**

The survey revealed that 81% of the youth are either actively involved or interested in politics while only 19% do not want any political engagement. Further analysis revealed that there were fundamental factors that enticed them into political participation. These include the following: getting involved in community leadership; participation in political contests at all levels; participation in forums to vet the aspiring leaders; and through civic education, among others.
However, various factors were cited as impediments to active participation of the youth in politics, namely; lack of finance, low levels of literacy, lack of political awareness; negative; cultural barriers especially for women candidates.

In terms of political party attachment, the study found that support to political parties among the youth tends to take a tribal cue and patronage politics still take centre stage among the youth. This was demonstrated by the pattern/degree under which the respondents aligned themselves to the mainstream political parties of choice. In overall terms, ODM appears to be the most popular party across all regions followed by TNA, URP, Wiper and UDF respectively.

Furthermore, it was noted that the most preferred positions by the youth were County/Ward Representative and Members of Parliament due to minimal nomination fee and campaign management in comparison to other positions like Senators, Governors, and Presidency which need huge capital to sustain a meaningful campaign.

In order to address the challenges for youth participation in politics, the following are the key recommended interventions: strengthen intra-party democracy and deepen affirmative action in the party structures and manifesto; restructure decision-making process through engaging youth; address tribalism and nepotism in political parties; ensure equal representation at the party highest organ; reduce nomination fee for the youth; and promote political literacy and awareness.
Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 Background

The maturity of a political culture is measured by the degree of public participation, especially the engagement of the youth in political process. In Kenya, the youth fraternity comprises of about 80% of the total population and form a great number of registered voters which is currently being estimated at 5.9 million. In spite of this fact, the youth are still plagued with a myriad of socio-economic and political challenges whose redress and interventions require a holistic and integrated approach. This will ensure that the concerns of the young people are comprehensively mainstreamed in our policies, strategies and budgeting processes in line with the Vision 2030 objectives.1

It is invariably clear that youth challenges emanate from unresponsive leadership, weak institutional, policy and regulatory frameworks that need actionable strategies to enable youth participate in governance and other national development agenda. It is noted that the key decision-making organs are made by few old cartels (security and economy) while young people continue to be sidelined in such critical national undertakings, yet these decisions directly impact on them.

However, the passage and subsequent promulgation of the new Constitution provides an opportunity for young people to be supported in all forums of development through Affirmative Action. This is also underpinned in the Political Pillar2 of the Vision 2030 which aims to strengthen legal and regulatory frameworks on non-discrimination to promote the inclusion of women and youth into meaningful electoral and political processes. By addressing youth concerns, the country can be assured of commitment by its citizenry to promote patriotism, national values and norms while upholding the ethos of good governance and national cohesion at all levels.

Moreover the devolution of resources and political structures offer great opportunity for the youth to get involved in the management of their counties by being members of the County  

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1. Kenya’s long term development blueprint which aims at economic transformation of the country into a modern, globally competitive, middle income country, offering high quality of life for all its citizens by 2030.
2. The political pillar envisions a democratic political system that is issue-based, people centred, result-oriented and accountable to the public. It aims to ensure that electoral and political processes form a core element of the new constitutional dispensation.
Executive and County Assembly. Thus young people must - as a matter of fact- endeavour to capture and populate these governance structures and take a proactive role in managing the affairs of this Great Nation.

Therefore, youth should be viewed as useful resources that should be deeply involved in all facets of national development and other societal transformation processes.

1.2 Rationale and Objectives of the Study

The need to conduct a survey on Status of youth preparedness for election was occasioned by the following key background information/rationale:

- The youth in Kenya face serious challenges that elbow them away from active participation in both political and electoral processes. One such hindrance is the little effort and focus by the Government and other key stakeholders to push the youth agenda in regards to political participation at all levels.

- Secondly, the fact that even the mainstream political parties do not fully engage the youth in the management of party affairs is becoming a compelling policy concern among the youth. Thus, there is need to urge political parties and their leaders to promote greater youth participation in political activities, entrench the rights of young people in decision-making and introduce youth leadership programmes to integrate the youth in leadership positions.

It is against this background that the Youth Agenda commissioned this survey with the aim of monitoring the democratic participation of youth in electoral processes. Thus, this survey seeks to achieve the following objectives:

- To understand youth acquisition of national identity cards and implications in the next general elections;

- To review the successes and challenges (if any) of the third generation card system;
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1.3 Study Methodology

The overall survey approach and delivery processes drew heavily on goodwill data and information from various respondents (youth) who were randomly sampled. The questionnaires used were designed to capture qualitative and quantitative data on aspects of youth political attitude and perceptions. The tools were also meant to seek suggestions from a sample of 400 respondents to explore ways, means and avenues towards increasing participation of the youth in democratic process. It was however found that only 389 questionnaires were responded to.

Data was collected from young Kenyans from the following counties: Mombasa, Kericho, Taita/Taveta, Marsabit, Bungoma, Kisii, Meru, Muranga, Kakamega, Kilifi, Tana River, Nairobi, Kisumu, Nakuru, Kitui, Machakos, Kiambu, Nyeri, Eldoret and Turkana.

The process also employed a comprehensive document review from various sources including, policies, strategies, previous studies and reports on youth with regards to political and electoral processes.

Seven Focused Group Discussions were done with the youth in the following Counties/constituencies: Laisamis (Marsabit county), Dagoretti (Nairobi county), Machakos town (Machakos county), Meru town (Meru County), Ongata Rongai (Kajiado county) and an institution of higher learning – Kenya Polytechnic.
Chapter Two
Key Findings And Recommendations

2.1 Thematic Area One: National Identity Card System

This section shall gauge the perception of young people on the acquisition of National Identity Cards in the following fronts: level of awareness of the new system, general feeling about the new system, duration taken for issue IDs, challenges faced and remedial measures for interventions.

2.1.1 Key Observations/Issues

The third generation national identity card system was one of the critical issues that were discussed in terms of the challenges and youth perceptions on the same. The survey found that 371 out of 389 respondents confirmed of being aware of this new system while 17 respondents revealed that they were not aware of the new system.

They confirmed that the new generation of IDs was a noble idea and they felt that its features like the person’s image makes it easier for identification than the old system. However, it was felt that the outer cover appears fragile and puts into test the issue of their durability.

There was also a feeling that the issuance of IDs has been purely politicised and used as a weapon to floor other political rivals in the coming general elections. For example, it was indicated that the process of registration and issuance of IDs is easier and faster in Nyanza and Central Provinces. It was also felt that the IDs should also be used as voters card to avoid wasting of time in pursuit of voters’ cards. It was also proposed that the new generation of IDs should contain other critical information of an individual such as the mobile number and employer; this would assist the government to contain criminal activities that are widespread in various parts of the country.
The survey also revealed registration of National IDs is currently taking place in all constituencies. Registration is mostly taking place in the following strategic locations:

a) Office of the District Commissioner (DC);
b) Office of the District Officer (DO);
c) Chief’s camp; and
d) Office of the Registrar of persons (Ministry of Immigration).

The study further established that the registration process was mostly taking place at the Ministry of Immigration and Registration of Persons through Registrar’s Office which was confirmed by 138 respondents out the sampled 389 respondents and this accounted for 36%, while 113 respondents noted that registration exercise was taking place at the Chief’s camp/office which also accounted for 31%.

Other registration centres cited include Offices of the District Officer and District Commissioner which were confirmed by 62 and 66 respondents respectively thereby accounting for 16% and 17% as shown in the figure.

**Figure 1: IDs Registration Centres**
Further analysis revealed that the process of issuance of the National Identity Cards (IDs) has been faced with serious delays as it takes between three – six months (3–6 months on average) for one to be issued with IDs after registration. In some constituencies like Turkana South in Turkana County, the process drags and even takes 12 months (one full year). This is captured in the figure below:

![Figure 2: Time taken for Issuance of IDs after registration](image)

**Figure 2: Time taken for Issuance of IDs after registration**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Duration</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-3 months</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-6 months</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 months</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forever</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.1.2 Challenges

It was found that young people still face a myriad of challenges when acquiring their National Identity Cards and this has got a serious policy implication on politics and governance in this country. Therefore, the following challenges are still outstanding:

a) **Lack of information on registration/application requirements** - It was established that youth are less informed on the registration requirements, a factor that also contributes significantly to the delays. This is very rampant, especially in rural areas/counties such as Turkana and Marsabit where majority of the youth are illiterate. This calls for awareness creation and sensitization forums regarding application requirements and other requisite formalities needed during the application process.
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24%
67%
9%
0%

1-3 months 3-6 months 12 months Forever

2.1.2 Challenges

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b) **Lack of required registration documents** – The survey found that the youth lack registration documents such as birth certificates, baptism cards, school leaving certificates and parents’ Identification Cards. This often demoralizes the youth who sometimes give up on the whole process - hence they do not have requisite tools to vote. In some rural constituencies which are also marginalized such as Turkana South, Laisamis and Garsen, it was realized that lack of school leaving certificate makes it difficult for the youth to acquire Identification Cards since many of them suffer educational marginalization and hardly finish Kenya Certificate of Primary Education (KCPE).

c) **Delays in processing and issuance of IDs** - It was established that the period taken by the Ministry of Immigration and Registration of Persons to issue IDs is longer than expected. For example, in most cases, an individual is forced to wait for more than 3-6 months after registration, which makes them abandon and forget. The net effect here is a huge population cannot vote thereby negating the prospects of political democracy.

d) **Rampant corruption** - It was revealed that corruption is deeply entrenched and practiced by Registration officers as well as members of the Provincial Administration, especially Chiefs and Sub-Chiefs. This diminishes the morale of the youth to seek IDs since most of them are poor and can’t afford bribery. The situation is worsened, to some extents, by non-availability of Chiefs or their Assistants to sign and certify registration documents.

e) **High registration fees** - High registration fee has brought hindrances to the young people seeking IDs as they are poor. Indeed, the mandatory requirement of Ksh 300/- registration fee is a deterrent to active participation in meaningful voting process by the young people.

f) **Discrimination by some officers** – It was found that there is an inherent culture of discrimination based on gender, tribe and nepotism. In rural constituencies, discrimination was mainly due to nepotism and family ties/links whereas in urban counties such as Nairobi, discrimination was orchestrated by tribalism and gender.

g) **Tedious vetting regulations** - Some of the vetting procedures were found to be mind-numbing
and this affected the newly married young women who had to undergo vetting processes by their area Chief. Furthermore, it was noted that the need to have Chiefs and Sub-Chiefs to certify and verify information by applicants is a constraining factor to the young people, as it also fuels corruption in the process. In some instances Chiefs, often refuse to certify due to the grudges he/she has with the family of the applicant.

h) **Transport logistics** - It was established that travel expenses to the registration offices/centres\(^3\) is expensive for young people, especially from poor households. This is very rampant in expansive district/counties such as Tana Delta and Marsabit where young people tend to spend their hard earned money on other necessities at the expense of registration.

i) **Few registration centres**- Limited stations for registration were also cited to be a key challenge facing the youth in seeking IDs.

j) **Poor attitudes and communication skills by staff** - It was found that some staff were very rude and deficient of customer service and communication skills towards applicants. This calls for staff training on customer care.

k) **Single families** - The survey revealed that young people from single parents/families were facing a lot of difficulties to secure IDs given the formalities required such as IDs of both parents. In addition, changing names especially by young women once they are married is posing a bigger challenge.

l) **Uncollected cards and influence of drugs** - This was predominant in Central Province, Nyeri County where many young people fail to collect their IDs. In addition, majority of the youth abuse drugs thus are not interested in getting IDs-this was more evident in Mombasa County.

m) **Abuse by politicians** - It was found that politicians are taking advantage of the process and using it to suit their interests and they are not addressing the needs of the youth.

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3. Experienced in expansive districts/Counties such as Tana Delta, Marsabit, Turkana, where one has to travel more than 100km to reach DCs office or Registration offices. A distance of 100Km attracts fare of at least Ksh 500 depending on the availability of means of transport and this is not affordable to the poor young people.
n) Religious barriers - It was established that having an Islamic name is an issue since the youth have to go through vetting and numerous interviews by the provincial administration to authenticate their identities.

The above challenges and observations are vividly captured in the figure below:

From the figure above, it was found that the most serious challenge that young people face during registration and issuance of IDs is frequent delay in the process as demonstrated by 63 respondents from 389 sampled respondents thereby accounting for 15%. Second in line was corruption followed by lack of awareness about the process which were observed by 51 and 41 respondents respectively. Another interesting observation was that religious affiliation is also a challenging factor. For example, Muslim youth had difficulties in acquiring IDs since they had to undergo through vetting procedures as confirmed by 11 respondents who accounted for 3 %.
2.1.3 Recommendations

This section proposes possible remedial measures that can be pursued in order to unlock the bottlenecks and challenges in IDs acquisition towards improving the process by the Ministry of Immigration and Registration of Persons:

a) **Ensure adequate staffing and training:** The Ministry of Immigration should employ more staff to meet the huge demand and address the problem of understaffing, hence improving service delivery mechanism. The staff should also undergo comprehensive training, especially in the areas of customer care and communication skills.

b) **Need to computerize the registration processes:** There is need for the Ministry to employ electronic system in issuance of IDs to eliminate double counting and address the problems of delays and long queues at the registration stations.

c) **Rationalize number of registration documents needed:** Currently, the Ministry of Immigration and Registration of Persons (MIRP) seeks so many documents as a precondition for registration. It was noted that some of them are not necessary e.g parental Identification cards which has rendered many orphaned youth unable to participate in the process. Hence, it is recommended that MIRP scraps off such provisions.

The foregoing is further shown in the pie chart below:

**Figure. 4: Challenges facing youth in IDs acquisition by percentage (%)**

![Pie chart showing challenges facing youth in IDs acquisition by percentage.](chart.png)
d) **Curbing corruption**: need to set up an institution at the devolved levels with legislative powers to completely sack registration officers engaged in corruption, tribalism, nepotism and all forms of malpractices. Hence the process should be made more efficient and transparent. Lastly, reshuffling of employees after every six months due to excessive familiarity would help curb corruption.

e) **Awareness creation**: It was found that majority of the youth are still not aware of the new national identity card system. It is important that awareness creation and sensitization programmes be enhanced at all levels for general public knowledge. The Media fraternity should also play a leading role in this initiative.

f) **Devolve registration process**: It is important that the whole process including printing of Cards be done at the District/County levels rather than Nairobi. This will also minimise delays emanating from long waiting period. Hence, printing, processing and issuing to be done at the District level. In addition to this, it is important that the Ministry add more registration stations in each village to minimise time wastage resulting from travelling.

g) **Initiate mobile technology in the registration process**: It is recommended that the Ministry should embrace the usage of mobile phones in the registration process. This will also address the problems of delays and inefficiency.

h) **Need for paradigm shift in IDs issuance**: It is recommended that the approaches and processes be changed such that upon certification of documents, the Ministry should issue IDs immediately without further delay. It is important to reduce the long-minded processes such as visit to Chiefs and Sub - Chiefs for signature and certification-in fact these officers are hardly available.

i) **Scrap registration fee**: Since the registration fee (Ksh 300) is levied on poor youth, it is recommended that the issue be scrapped as it deters youth from seeking IDs.

j) **Minimize waiting period**: Reduce days of acquiring IDs to approximately ten days.
k) GOK Support: There is need to use other GOK offices/departments to reach out to citizens e.g Local Government and Education so that the registration process is either done at schools or market places.

l) Allow the youth to get IDs from whichever part of the country they reside not necessarily their home districts.

2.2 Thematic Area Two: Voting Trends and Voter Registration

This section shall look at the impact of specific barriers to voting. In addition, it gives a critical analysis of the general feeling /perceptions that the youth have towards the newly introduced Biometric Voter Registration (BVR) system.

2.2.1 Key Observations/Issues

The survey revealed that some youth, particularly those in Machakos will only vote in the next elections on the condition that they get money; the vote will go to the highest bidder regardless of the aspirants manifesto. It was also noted that the youth are their own enemies that is why youth never make it to elective positions of leadership due to jealousy and mistrust among themselves.

In other cosmopolitan counties such as Nairobi, Mombasa, Eldoret and Nakuru, it was found that some youth might not vote based on the 2007/2008 experience. In the same vein, it was observed that there could be voter apathy in the next election as demonstrated in the said regions (Nairobi, Mombasa, Eldoret and Nakuru) where some youth fear getting registered as voters because they think there might be a repeat of 2007/2008 thus they prefer to be registered in their native constituencies/counties.

It was noted that the youth fraternity has come to the reality to that the decision of having peaceful or violent elections lies squarely in their hands – majority of the youth in Nairobi are tired of waiting on their leaders and thus have decided to make the change they want through conducting peaceful rallies and forums to bring communities together.

It was also observed that politicians only give handouts to those with voters cards thus some
youth just register to get favours but do not really vote during Election Day. Some of the youth concurred that the positions\(^4\) are too many and confusing since their tacit mandate and functions have not been understood; this might lead to a lot of spoilt votes.

Bribery by politicians could work against them and lead to voter apathy in some counties, for example in Machakos County, a youth gave on astonishing confession that he will not vote because he took money from all the aspiring candidates “Nilikula pesa za wagombeaji wote na siwezi piga kura kwa mmoja wao pekee” (I took money from all of them so I cannot vote for just one of them).

2.2.2 Analysis of barriers to participation in the electoral process

It was found that barriers to youth participation in the voting process were considered in terms of motivation to vote (i.e attitudes, interest and political knowledge) and access to the electoral process (knowledge of the electoral process). This survey found that motivational and access barriers were equally important in terms of their impact on voting by the youth. It further revealed that the primary motivational barriers to voting process were lack of political interest and knowledge, a belief that all political parties were the same just like their leaders who are selfish and that no party articulates issues relevant to youth.

It was found that the key access barriers was lack of knowledge about the electoral process and operations of the political parties, including knowing how to vote, followed by difficulty in getting to the polling station in insecurity prone areas, difficulty providing identification and voter registration card. Lastly, lack of knowledge on the Biometric Voter Registration was also cited as one of the barriers that could deter the youth from voting.

2.2.3 Factors that could discourage the youth from voting

The survey found that whereas 76% of the youth will participate in the voting exercise in the coming election as confirmed by 296 respondents, a considerable number of them might not vote.

\(^4\) Constitution of Kenya 2010: Newly created elective positions under the current constitutional dispensation are: President, Deputy President, Governor, Deputy Governor, Senator, Member of Parliament, Women Representative, County Representative. The holders of these positions will be elected the same day and time.
a) National Identity Cards: Lack of Identity Cards as a pre-condition for voting still continues to be an impediment to voting process by the youth. They recommended that the Government should allow young voters with Waiting Cards to vote. This was confirmed by 27 respondents among the 93 youth who will not vote thereby reflecting 29%.

a) Non-resettlement of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) - The study found that 13% of the sampled respondents will not be ready to vote due to Government’s laxity to resettle IDPs and this accounted for 14%. These victims of post-election violence are still reeling in a morass of desperation and social exclusion; hence it is a policy imperative that the Government addresses the issue of IDPs.

c) Barring ICC suspects and establishing mechanisms for local trials - The Government’s commitment to establishing local process for ICC suspects were thwarted in parliament in 2009. This necessitated the move to have the suspects tried at the International Criminal Court in The Hague. Since then, there have been entrenched positions among key political leaders which have now been embraced by the youth. Thus, the survey found that 10% of the youth, as demonstrated by 9 respondents will not vote if ICC cases are not brought back for local redress. Further analysis revealed that the same youth will not vote if the ICC suspects are blocked from contesting for the presidency. The foregoing was more pronounced in Counties within Rift Valley and Central Provinces.
d) **Poor leadership and retrogressive politics** - Lack of coherent strategies and political goodwill towards youth empowerment in terms of job creation and poverty alleviation could discourage many youth from voting in the next elections. 15% of the sampled respondents confirmed that they will not participate in the election because they have not realized any meaningful change as voters. This calls for political leadership to avoid political rhetoric and move with speed towards scaling-up interventions for youth empowerment in all facets of development.

d) **Insecurity and the emergence of militia groups** - Insecurity towards the electioneering period has been a common phenomenon in the political landscape of this nation since 1992. It is believed that given the current skirmishes in various parts of the country, a repeat of the 2007 post-election violence is in the offing. This has brought fear and created despondency among the youth who can now not vote. The analysis reveals that 14% of the sampled respondents confirmed that they will not vote unless government addresses the issue of insecurity and emerging tribal militia groups.

d) **Fear of election violence and vote rigging** - As happened in 2007 where no clear winner was found leading to violence, 18% of the sampled respondents, as confirmed by 17 respondents, observed that they will not vote because of fear of vote rigging PEV and experience. However, they were happy with the introduction of electronic voting system which has restored public confidence on the integrity of the Independent Electoral and Boundary Commission (IEBC).

The foregoing is summarized and captured in the figure below:

**Figure 6: Motivational barriers to voting**
2.2.4 Youth perception about BVR

With regards to the general feeling about Biometric Voter Registration (BVR), it was established that the system will add credibility to the IEBC as well as the whole electoral process. This is because the process is expected to be faster, more efficient and curb against election fraud through double registration, double voting and all forms of vote rigging. However, it must be noted that young people have not been adequately sensitized to raise their levels of awareness about the operations of BVR system, hence a need to initiate sensitization forums in all constituencies.

In some instances however, it was revealed that the process has been messy in terms of procurement which puts into question whether there shall be free and fair elections. Further analysis reveals that even though BVR is a noble idea to ensuring transparency in our electoral process some also confirmed that there is no adequate time to test whether it can work in Kenya. It was further confirmed that the idea is a conduit for corruption as witnessed in the nearly protracted tendering process. This group of respondents recommended that the Government should have reoriented these resources to support IDPs who are wallowing in poverty and desperation, but others were in opinion that the idea has created unemployment.

Youth were also concerned about the manner in which the procurement was done in an environment of opaqueness and subterfuge. Concerns were also raised as to the slow pace of training of clerks by IEBC. They believe that 30 days will not be sufficiently enough for the process, citing challenges of poor road infrastructure during rainy seasons which might discourage people from the registration process.
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2.2.5 Conclusion

- The key barriers to voting were not receiving a voter’s card and general lack of interest in the election.
- In some instances, barriers to voting were found to be the ability to access a polling station especially in non-friendly zones and low awareness of the different ways to vote.
- For youth with disabilities, the key barriers to voting were low levels of political knowledge, and lack of interest in the election.
- Politicians were a significant influencer only for rural youth.

2.3 Thematic Area Three: Youth and Political Participation

This section reviews and analyzes the meaningful participation of the youth in both electoral and political process in Kenya. It gives a vivid analytical view of their strength in supporting

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5. Negative attitudes against particular tribe/communities in the region
various political parties, their party of choice as well as the kind of elective positions they are aspiring for.

2.3.1 Key Observations/Issues

It was confirmed that 81% of the youth are either actively involved or interested in politics as demonstrated by 316 respondents, while only 19% reflecting 73 respondents do not want any political engagement as shown in the pie chart below.

![Figure 8: Proportion of the youth involved in politics](image)

Further analysis revealed that there were fundamental factors which contributed to having young people interested in politics. These include:

- Through getting involved in community leadership;
- Through participation in political contests at all levels;
- Participation in forums to vet the aspiring leaders;
- Registration of national IDs and voters card;
- Through empowerment by the failure of the incumbents;
- Through civic education;
- Through linkages with the other stakeholders such as Constituency/County youth forums;
- By joining political parties whose leaders are young to motivate them;
2.3.1 Key Observations/Issues

Various political parties, their party of choice as well as the kind of elective positions they are aspiring for. It was confirmed that 81% of the youth are either actively involved or interested in politics as demonstrated by 316 respondents, while only 19% reflecting 73 respondents do not want any political engagement as shown in the pie chart below.

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- Through civic education;
- Through linkages with the other stakeholders such as Constituency/County youth forums;
- By joining political parties whose leaders are young to motivate them.

Figure 8: Proportion of the youth involved in politics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Involved in politics</th>
<th>Not involved in politics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>81%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.3.2 Support to political parties

The study found that support to political parties among the youth tends to take a tribal bearing regardless of the explicit policies embodied in their party manifesto. Therefore, the issue of political euphoria is a challenge that must be addressed. It was further revealed that among

However, as mentioned earlier, 19% of the youth are not actively involved in politics due to various factors such as: lack of finance, lack of political awareness; negative attitude towards politics; cultural barriers especially for women candidates as shown below:

Figure 9: Factors discouraging youth from political participation

Factors discouraging youth political participation

Lack of finance: 35%
Lack of awareness: 20%
Cultural barriers: 15%
Negative attitude: 10%
the 316 respondents who are interested in politics, 23% of the youth (72 respondents) are very strong supporters of their respective political parties while 29% (93 respondents) confirmed that they are fairly strong supporters of a political party. It was further confirmed that 19% (59 respondents) of the youth are not very strong supporters of any political party while 16% do not support a particular party at all. This is shown in the figure below:

Figure 10: Demonstration of the extent of support for political parties

It was further disclosed that politics of ethnicity continues to be a monster in our political landscape.
This was demonstrated by the pattern in which the respondents were aligning themselves to the mainstream political parties of choice shown in the table below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>REGION / PROVINCE</th>
<th>POLITICAL PARTY OF CHOICE</th>
<th>REMARKS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nyanza</td>
<td>Orange Democratic Movement</td>
<td>The party has a national outlook and is ready to fully implement the new constitution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central</td>
<td>The National Alliance</td>
<td>The party is associated with youthful leaders who can cherish the modern aspiration of young people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower Eastern</td>
<td>Wiper Democratic Party</td>
<td>Has good manifesto and will be ready to tackle corruption</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rift Valley</td>
<td>United Republic Party</td>
<td>The party has energetic leader who will implement its policies (Kusema and Kutenda slogan)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In overall terms, ODM appears to be the most popular party across all regions as demonstrated by 128 sampled respondents out of 389 respondents and this is a reflection of 34% followed by TNA which was approved by 73 (19%) of the sampled respondents, while URP, Wiper and UDF had 39, 27 and 21 respectively. It was also observed that 48 of the respondents were not affiliated to any party thus undecided, as shown in the table above. In terms of percentage, it was established that the four mainstream parties (ODM, TNA, URP, Wiper and UDF) had a substantial proportion which in accounted for 75% in total.
In terms of percentages, ODM had 34%, TNA 19%, URP 10%, Wiper 7% and UDF 5% as shown in the pie chart below:

Figure 11: Most popular parties among the youth

![Pie chart showing party popularity among the youth](chart11.png)

Figure 12: Party strength (%) among the youth

![Bar chart showing party strength in political competition](chart12.png)
It was also established that majority of the youth are vying for various political offices in all levels of contents. This was confirmed by 302 respondents reflecting 78% who admitted that in their respective counties, young people are taking part in politics and are potential aspirants while 87 of the respondents confirmed that they did not know. This accounted for 22% of respondents as shown in the figure below:

Figure 13: Knowledge about youthful aspirants (%)

However, the most preferred position was County/Ward Representative and Members of Parliament as shown in the figure below. This was in the view that the said positions attracts considerably minimal nomination fee and campaign management in comparison to other positions like Senators, Governors, Presidency which need huge capital to sustain a meaningful campaign.

Figure 14: Preferred elective positions for the youth

The above figure can be viewed in terms of percentage in the pie next page:
2.3.3 Challenges

1. **Lack of internal party democracy:** Intra-party democracy was cited to be an impediment to youth participation in political parties. This mainly happens during the party nomination phase where rich politicians/party owners do not subscribe to the nomination rules and guidelines hence open windows for outright rigging. In some cases, they give direct party nominations to particular candidates in sheer disregard of party rules and ethos.

2. **Lack of involvement in decision-making and less recognition:** The youth are often relegated to peripheral positions when key decision-making are taking place. This is very rampant in cases of forming coalitions which has seen political leaders embark on boardroom negotiations and sell their parties to the highest bidder. Besides, there is generally a lack of commitment and attention to the youth by political leaders leading to discrimination, prejudice and marginalization by elderly people who are influential, well connected and rich.

3. **Tribalism and euphoria:** It was found that the monster of tribalism still reigns supreme in our political parties coupled with euphoria. Currently, youth tend to align themselves
with parties of their tribes and this has completely constrained their understanding of issue-based politics which proscribes ethno-cultural narrowness in our political scene.

4 Lack of awareness of party manifesto: There is little understanding of the constitution and manifesto governing the various parties. This is because the youth fraternity has not been actively involved even in the design and development of these constitutions/manifesto and this has further contributed to ignorance and tribal party affiliation in Kenya.

5 Dominance of the Secretariat and other key position by few: The fact that political parties are still dominated by few wealthy individuals is a matter that merits serious attention. This cabal of leaders have formed formidable barriers for youth participation in party affairs. Moreover, important positions such as Party Leader, Deputy Party Leader, National Chairperson, Secretary-General and Treasurer are often allocated to old guards who are rich. This compromises the capacity of young people to make meaningful contribution to party matters.

6 Lack of finance: Lack of finance has been a stumbling block and curtails the potential and capacity of young people to participate and emerge victorious in party election and/or nomination processes. This has also contributed significantly to non-involvement of the youth in decision making at party levels. Huge nomination fees levied on young aspirants was found to be a constraint to youth participation in electoral and political process.

7 Incitement by politicians: It was found that high poverty levels among the youth enable politicians to make inflammatory statements and incite the youth along their clan/tribal lines to cause mayhem to their rivals. Indeed, this is an area where a lot of civic education is needed to sensitize the youth against the perils and consequences of political violence.

8 Lack of political support by peers: The youth themselves have little support to young aspirants who are considered champions of change. However, they support old people with money (greasing of hands culture) which cannot match the meagre resources of the young aspirants.
9 **Manipulation by rich people:** In most cases, it was found that, the popular young aspirants are often manipulated by the rich to step down in their favour. The net effect being an informed population with few new ideas to propel society into greater highest of development since some of these rich people are not development focused and hardly available for projects prioritization. There is also a challenge of negative perception of the youth among old people in regards to political experience which also contributes to youth being manipulated as they are treated as mere supporters without any influence.

10 **Political patronage:** It was found that status quo mentality is still at the apex of political parties. This has made the party owners/patrons to conceptualize that those who have been leaders in past are still leaders in recent years and will lead forever in future. The situation is also exacerbated by blatant exclusion of the youth by party owners.

11 **Corruption and poor management of parties:** Management of political parties often take a family or tribal cue and this has pushed young people to be cheer leaders. In some cases all the three signatories to the account (Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer) are either members of one family, similar tribe or have the same business links. This has led to corruption and accountability gaps in the parties.

12 **Non-registration by youth:** It was also found the some youth aren’t registering as members of political parties yet they want to hold key party positions. However, this has emanated from low levels of awareness by the various parties.

### 2.3.4 Key Recommendations

1. **Strengthen intra-party democracy and deepen affirmative action in the party structures and manifesto:** There is need for various parties to internalize intra-party democracy and strengthen affirmative action mechanisms towards empowering the youth to fully engage in party politics and affairs. This will address the challenges of skewed nominations while encouraging more young female candidates to vie and win elective positions. Therefore it recommended that various political parties should reach out to the youth and create opportunities for their active and useful participation in party activities.
2. **Restructure decision-making process through engaging youth:** It was observed that the youth fraternity is pushed to the obscurity of party key decision-making organs which has led to discrimination, prejudice and marginalization by elderly people who are influential, well connected and rich. It is recommended that key decision-making process is done in a holistic fashion through integration of young people into the mainstream party agenda formulation and decision making process. It is also recommended that campaigns for increasing youth membership in political parties should be a priority for every political party.

3. **Address tribalism and nepotism in political parties:** The study noted with concern the emerging trend of tribal politics and practice of nepotism by leaders of various political parties. It is therefore, recommended that Party nominations be done by IEBC and observed externally to bring confidence of the party among the youth. This will also address the problem of political patronage and sectarianism in political parties.

4. **Increase levels of political awareness for the youth:** There is need to deepen the understanding of the youth on the following critical areas: Party constitution, policies and strategies for winning an election. Moreover, sensitization against political euphoria, hate speech and violence needs to be intensified by the parties themselves.

5. **Ensure equal representation at the party highest organ/Secretariat:** It was invariably clear that Parties’ Secretariat are still dominated by few wealthy individuals who allocate themselves key positions such as Party Leader, Deputy Party Leader, National Chairperson, Secretary-General and Treasurer at the expense of young people. It is recommended that these positions should reflect gender, age and region in line with the provision of the Constitution.

6. **Reduce nomination fees for the youth:** Huge nomination fees is still a barrier for the youth in taking active part in the political contest. It is therefore recommended that political parties waive nomination fees to capture large new entrants into the political competition. It should be 10% of the entire amount levied on overall nomination fee.

7. **Curb incitement by politicians:** Heavy penalties should be surcharged on politicians whose intent is to subject the youth to violence since these battles end up claiming the lives of young people who could be future leaders.
8. **Address the challenge of political corruption:** This has led to manipulation of the popular youth popular who command grassroots support to step down in favour of the unpopular rich aspirants. Thus, the parties should come up with a coherent mechanism with clear punitive measures to deal with whoever gives or accepts bribery during party nomination/election phase.

9. **Restructure party management systems:** It was found that management of political parties has been on either family or tribal lines. This negates the spirit of constitutionalism and democracy thereby making young people to shy away from being active members of a particular party due to perceived mistrust. It is recommended that any particular party shall embrace ethnic diversity within the party’s management system.

10. **Encourage the youth to the register as members of political parties:** It was also found that some youth aren’t registering as members of political parties yet they want to hold key party positions. It is thus recommended that young people should be encouraged by their respective parties to register and vote as this will enhance their potential to fully engage and actively participate in electoral and political process.

11. **Address voter apathy:** It was noted that political parties alone are not responsible for lacklustre attitude of the youth in political participation, and there are other factors that contribute to the growing apathy to politics among Kenyan youth. Hence, there is need political parties to device a strategy to build confidence of young people in political institutions.

12. **Need for greater role by the youth in politics:** It is recommended that political think-tanks affiliated with political parties should give a greater role to young people in their programmes to enhance their visibility in political spectrum by providing them a platform.

13. **Promote political literacy:** The major political parties of Kenya should establish institutes to promote political literacy. Local offices of the political parties should conduct programmes and training on political education on regular basis to educate and motivate the youth of their area. In the same vein, special attention is also required to
target uneducated youth and young women. Political parties and civil society organizations should develop ways to educate the youth about the importance of voting to enhance their awareness on the constructive change it can bring. The electronic media should also devote more time for political education to the youth. Lastly, the political parties should encourage members of their youth wings to use the internet and provide the facility in their offices.

14. The Independent Boundary and Electoral Commission, in collaboration with MIRP should ensure that a maximum number of youth are registered as voters. Moreover, Ministry of Immigration and Registration of Persons and IEBC should make registration mandatory at the time of issuing National Identity Cards.
## APPENDIX I: List of Constituencies and Regions Visited

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<tr>
<th>Coast Region</th>
<th>Nyanza Region</th>
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