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FACT SHEET ON YOUNG WOMEN AND POLITICAL PARTIES

2012
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1.0. A Case For Young Women

Women make up the majority of the world’s population, yet they remain under-represented in politics and in leadership positions in virtually all sectors. In every region of the world women remain poorly represented as voters, political leaders and elected officials.¹

In spite of constituting 51% of the Kenyan population, women constituted only 8% of Members of the National Assembly during the 9th Parliament; 6% of Ministers; 13% of Assistant Ministers; 3% of District Commissioners; 20% of District Officers; 13% of Councillors and 21% of Deputy Secretaries.² The current 10th parliament has only 22 women members out of the 222 members. This is 9.9% of the entire membership, and it is a clear indication of the dismal representation of women in leadership and decision making institutions. The figures are way below the constitutional provision that not more than two-thirds of elective or appointive seats shall be of the same gender.

Kenyan youth also fall in the same category as women in terms of representation and participation in decision making positions. The 2009 census indicates that 78.31% of the total population is below the age of 34 years.³ Yet, only 5.9 million young people aged between 18-35 years actually vote⁴ and an even smaller fraction run for political office.

The minimal level and quality of political participation by youth has been a phenomenon observed in Kenya throughout the past two decades as the youth numerical strength has not necessarily translated to more representation and participation in national and local leadership. This has been especially evident in political parties whose membership has for a long time consisted of very few young people, and its leadership has had even fewer youth.

A Short Message Service (SMS) survey conducted by the Youth Agenda in December 2011 on whether young people in general belonged to political parties found that of the 55 out of the 90 respondents accounting for a whopping 61% did not belong to any political party. Only 28 out of 90, accounting for 31% stated that they belonged to a political party. This reflects on the poor representation of youth in general and young women in particular in political parties.

³ Katindi Sivi Njonjo (2010), Youth Fact Book: Infinite Possibility or Definite Disaster, Institute of Economic Affairs, pg 4
⁴ Ibid, pg 154
Young women fall into both the categories of the majority and marginalized; that is they fall in the youth category as well as the women category. Therefore the representation of youth in political parties reflects on the representation of young women in parties. Similarly, representation of women in political parties also reflects the representation of young women in the parties.

Another study conducted by Youth Agenda titled Baseline Assessment on the Status of Young Women in Political Parties in Kenya however revealed that parties were beginning to recruit young people and especially young women in adherence to the requirements of the Political Parties Act, 2011. This Act requires political parties to have a membership that reflects the representation of minority and marginalized groups and which has no gender constituting more than two thirds of the entire membership. Subsequently, twenty political parties surveyed in this study had a female membership of 45% and over. Of these, ten political parties had ratios of female youth that were more than 30% of the total female population which was an impressive performance. However, in absolute numbers, young women representation in political parties was still below par.

It is noteworthy that despite statistics depicting poor youth representation and participation in political parties, young people have been active in the greater political field through holding demonstrations and marches, signing petitions and utilizing cell-phones and the internet as forms of political expression. The task now lies in interesting the youth and more so young women to become active members of political parties which are key vehicles towards political participation and leadership.

2.0. Young Women’s Opportunities for Leadership

The Constitution offers young women entry points for engagement in the political and democratic process through providing elective, nominative and appointive positions. These positions are both in national and county governments. In addition to this, there are the elective affirmative action seats created for women in the National Assembly and nominative affirmative action seats for women, youth, persons with disabilities and other special interest groups.

Thus membership in political parties will be critical for young women to ensure that they get elected or nominated. Political parties through their nomination process select candidates that shall run for election using their party tickets and also field a list of qualified persons for nomination using their political party lists.

The leadership positions available in the Constitution for young women are as follows:

2.1. Elective Positions

- County Assembly/ Ward Representative
- Governor
- National Assembly Member of Parliament
- Senator
- Woman County Representative to the National Assembly
- President

2.2. Nominative Positions

- 16 women in the Senate
- 12 members of National Assembly to represent special interest groups
- 2 members-one man and one woman- representing the youth in the Senate
- 2 members-one man and one woman-representing persons with disabilities in the Senate
- Members necessary to ensure that not more than two-thirds of the membership of the County Assembly, National Assembly and the Senate is of the same gender
- 4 members representing the youth and 4 members representing persons with disabilities in the County Assembly
2.3 Appointive Positions

- Appointment of the members of County Executive Committee and Urban Boards by the Governor with the approval of the County Assembly
- Appointments by the President with the approval of the National Assembly
  - Judges and Magistrates
  - Cabinet Secretaries and Principal Secretaries
  - Ambassadors
  - Parastatal officials
  - members of various Constitutional Commissions and Independent Offices
  - Security officials

Note that in all the appointive positions, the principle that not more than two thirds of members of those positions shall be of the same gender will apply.
3.0. Young Women And Political Parties

Political parties are one of the key mechanisms through which women including young women can advance their political aspirations and meaningfully take on leadership roles. Therefore, the structures, policies, practices and values of political parties have a profound effect on the level of women’s participation in politics.

The new face of political parties brought on by the Constitution of Kenya 2010 is grounded on democracy and inclusivity and one of the resultant legislation is the Political Parties Act of 2011 which ensures gender inclusivity and opens up space for all people including young women to engage with political parties. It is therefore important to equip young women with information necessary to help them seize the leadership and decision making opportunities outlined in the Constitution through political parties.\(^6\)

Consequently, young women need to be made aware of the benefits of joining political parties, their role in these parties and the various positions created by the Constitution which they can access through elections, party nominations or appointments.

3.1. Political Parties

Political parties are associations with structures and programmes that seek to shape public opinion, influence local and national policy directions, win elections and form the government. Political parties broaden the political space for plural democratic practice and are therefore important organizations in representative democracies like Kenya.

The role of political parties is to mobilize and socialize citizens into being active in politics, build and sustain democracy, train and nurture political leaders, recruit and nominate candidates for various leadership positions during elections, carry out political education among citizens and influence government policies.

Consequently, political parties remain the best vehicle for young women’s political engagement. Young women representation and participation in national and county leadership is enhanced by their membership in political parties since it is within these parties that they can access the necessary mentorship and support in leadership and policy discourse.

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Though the introduction of multi-partyism was intended to infuse democracy in Kenya’s political sphere, political parties have not embodied the democratic tenets and have largely been used by a select few as their vehicles to gain undue political mileage.

Both the Constitution of Kenya, 2010 and the Political Parties Act of 2011 seek to transform political parties into democratic institutions which promote national transformation, citizen welfare improvement and which are an avenue for the public to associate with their leaders and learn of their policies and vision for the country.

Article 4(2) of the Political Parties Act, 2011 provides that the Registrar shall not register an association of persons or an organization as a political party if such association or organization does not meet the requirements set out in Article 91 of the Constitution. These requirements are that a political party shall:

i. Have a national character -1000 members in a majority of counties i.e. at least 24 counties.
ii. Have a democratically elected governing council.
iii. Promote and uphold national unity.
iv. Abide by the democratic principles of good governance.
v. Promote and practice internal democracy through regular, free and fair elections.
vi. Respect rights of people to participate in the political process, including the right of minorities and marginalized groups.
vii. Respect and promote human rights and fundamental freedoms.
viii. Respect and promote gender equality and equity.
ix. Promote the objects and principles of the Constitution and the Rule of Law.
x. Subscribe to and abide by a code of conduct for political parties.

The above must-have qualities of political parties are set to make parties more inclusive and supportive of marginalized groups such as young women. Young women from all corners of the country have an opportunity to join political parties and to ascend to the highest level of leadership in those parties as well as become party candidates for various elective and nominative positions.

3.2 Why should a young woman join a political party?

There are many benefits that are associated with young women participation in political parties, especially in the promotion of democracy and the promotion of the
greater good. Firstly, young women are more likely to work across party lines even in highly partisan environments and are thus capable of mobilizing different parties towards a common goal. Secondly, young women are more likely to be perceived as more sensitive to community concerns and more responsive to constituency needs therefore making the various parties agendas to be more sensitive to the concerns of the citizenry. Thirdly, young women are likely to be deeply committed to peace building and post-conflict reconstruction since they bear the brunt of conflict as women. As such, they would advocate for parties to promote more strongly for stabilization, reconstruction and the prevention of further political conflict. Lastly, women and hence young women are viewed as less corrupt than their male counterparts and this promotes a more positive and less suspicious perception of political parties and politics in general among the people. This makes it easier to mobilize citizens for political engagement.

Other benefits are as follows:

**Benefits for young women**

- Participating in a political party can help young women to know their rights and to improve their lives and that of their families.
- Parties are an opportunity for young women to utilize their unique talents and perspective in political leadership.
- Political parties train young women in the art and activities of politics.
- Young women seeking leadership in elective and nominative positions can be nominated by political parties as their candidates for these positions and receive support from the parties.
- Political parties provide an avenue for young women to get their voice on issues concerning other young women heard and responded to.
- Through political parties, young women are able to represent the concerns of young women and other marginalized voters and help in improving the responsiveness of policy making and governance.

**Benefits for political parties**

- Young women bring in unique skills, talents and perspectives that can help grow political parties by their continuous churning of ideas.
- Having young women on board will aid in recruiting more women into the parties hence increasing their membership.
- Young women can help parties in initiating and strengthening social relations within communities and hence, parties are acquire greater awareness of the

public voice and are able to respond accordingly.

- Young women in political parties also give parties access to new groups of voters.
- Parties with young women members and officials are perceived as more equitable and inclusive and are thus likely to attract support from citizens.
- As part of compliance, the political parties will need to have young women members as funding from the Political Parties Funds will be based on the representation of women and youth in their membership and leadership.
- Young women in political parties strengthen the inclusive and representative character of the party.
- Women in general are seen as effective money managers and so, having young women take part in the management of political party funds would inspire confidence on the party’s utilization of funds among citizens.

3.3. Role of young women in political parties

The role of young women in political parties is not very dissimilar to the role of youth and of women in the parties. As such, their roles in growing the party and advancing the party’s position and influence are varied and are as follows:

### Pre-election period

- Engage in party publicity through social networks.
- Mobilize and recruit members especially young women to political parties.
- Nominate and recruit electoral candidates.
- Mobilize young women to political rallies.
- Advocate for training of young women in skills to raise money, campaign and build name recognition.
- Advocate for capacity building of young women party members in leadership and mentoring first time candidates.
- Mobilize young women to register as voters and to vote.
• Compile and provide gender sensitive voter information to men and women.
• Manage campaigns.
• Organize a young women’s coalition to support the party.
• Train men party members on effective ways to speak to women in the community.

**Election period**

• Ensure young women are trained and included as party agents in polling stations.
• Advocate for more young women to be trained and included as election monitors.
• Ensure monitoring of elections is gender responsive and promote safety of women during elections.
• Ensure coordination among the party, CSOs and organizations to provide support to women candidates.
• Ensure women’s visibility in the electoral campaigns and access to the media.

**Post Election Period**

• Identify issues affecting young women and develop responsive policies.
• Seek support for the political parties.
• Young women can also act as strategists and planners, serve as public speakers, organize local meetings, recruit and organize volunteers and new party members, and research opposition, demographics, and issues.  
• Young women can serve as catalysts for change on behalf of other women. 

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• Form strategic partnerships with and gain support from men. Engage in party publicity through social networks.
• Represent their parties in matters involving young electorate.
• Advocate for youth and women recognition and participation within the parties.
• Create civic awareness among women and youth about the electoral process and their role in it.
4.0. Conclusion

Political parties are self-interested organizations focused on winning elections. For some party leaders, the gains from women's political participation may not be readily apparent. The suggestion to promote women into decision-making positions may seem risky at best, or at worst, an affront to the political party leadership. Therefore, it is essential that women party members are familiar with the social, political and economic arguments for increasing women's political party participation and are able to present the case for women's political participation with the interests and concerns of their party leaders in mind. Women's participation in politics helps advance gender equality and affects both the range of policy issues that get considered and the types of solutions that are proposed. There is strong evidence that as more women are elected to office, there is an increase in policy making that emphasizes quality of life and reflects the priorities of families, women, and ethnic and racial minorities.¹¹

Young women must therefore be clear on the benefits emanating from their membership and participation in political parties, and the value they add to those parties. They must understand the symbiotic relationship between themselves and political parties where they utilize their skills to develop the parties and the parties then become a launching pad for their leadership aspirations. Young women must ably demonstrate to political party leaders the importance of their representation and participation in the parties. This will go a long way in making political party leaders more cooperative and supportive towards increased participation of young women in party activities.

### Political Parties Compliance Status

**Registrar of Political Parties - 7th June 2012**

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<th>S/No.</th>
<th>Party</th>
<th>No. of Counties Complied</th>
<th>Total Membership</th>
<th>Gender Representation Male</th>
<th>Gender Representation Female</th>
<th>No. of members in Parliament</th>
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<td>National Party of Kenya (NPK)</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>28,731</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>49</td>
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Important Timelines For Upcoming General Elections

1 MONTH
Coalition after elections MOU submitted to Registrar of Political Parties.

2 MONTHS
IEBC clears candidates (45 days) Closes nomination of candidates.

3 MONTHS
Political Parties presents party members register to IEB
Political Party Candidates must be members of their parties.
Independent candidates must not be members of any political party.

4 MONTHS
Parties present nomination list to IEB.
Independent candidates submit symbols to IEBC.
Coalition before elections submit MOUs to Registrar of political parties.
Political parties submit register of members.

5 MONTHS
Potential aspirants must be members of their political parties.

6 MONTHS
Aspiring candidates in Public Service resign.

7 MONTHS
Aspirants/candidates not to participate in fundraising.

8 MONTHS
Acknowledgements