



**CONSOLIDATED REPORT FOR ACTIVITY 4 OF THE YOUNG WOMEN IN
POLITICS PROJECT**

ROUND TWO DIALOGUE SESSIONS

PREPARED BY THE SOCIAL JUSTICE LEAGUE

OCTOBER TO NOVEMBER 2024



“Pathways to Women’s Participation in Leadership”

Through

The lens of sub-county structures

The Young Women in Politics: 50/50 Campaign

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FOREWORD

The Social Justice League (SJL) is proud to present the outcomes of the second round of dialogue sessions held in Homabay, Bomet, Kiambu, and Samburu Counties.

These sessions are part of our ongoing efforts to address barriers to young women's political participation and pave the way for equitable representation in leadership. These engagements reflect our collective commitment to achieving the goals of the Young Women in Politics: 50/50 Campaign, supported by our dedicated partners and stakeholders.

Inspired by the lens of women's leadership from the perspective of governance structures at the sub-county level, which then span all the way to the ward and village levels, these engagements reflect our collective commitment to achieving the goals of the Young Women in Politics: 50/50 Campaign. Together, we affirm the commitment that "women can lead anywhere." This work would not have been possible without the dedication of our partners and stakeholders, whose unwavering support has been instrumental in advancing this initiative.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Odoni

Chairperson, SJL

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We extend our deepest gratitude to the participants, including representatives from the National and County Governments, civil society organizations, religious leaders, cultural leaders, the police, the Judiciary, community members, and young women in politics. Special thanks to our funding partners and the local media for amplifying these critical discussions. The insights shared during these dialogues have been invaluable in shaping our strategies and future initiatives.

We appreciate the diverse perspectives shared, the candid discussions, and the commitment demonstrated by everyone involved. Your active involvement has not only enriched the dialogue but also strengthened our collective resolve to address the barriers to young women's participation in politics. The insights gathered from this session will serve as a crucial foundation for the next steps in this transformative journey.

We also extend our heartfelt gratitude to the Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen (IFA) through its Zivik Funding Program, supported by the Auswärtiges Amt (Federal Foreign Office) of Germany under the Zivik Democracy Building Aid Program. Your invaluable support has enabled us to take significant steps in organizing programs and activities under the Young Women in Politics: 50/50 Campaign (Kenya), aimed at achieving equal gender representation in Kenya's elective positions.

Additionally, we would like to acknowledge the dedicated support and collaboration of the Gender Departments in the counties of Homabay, Kiambu, Samburu, and Bomet, who worked closely with the Social Justice League (SJL) Mobilizers to identify and profile key stakeholders for the dialogue sessions. Your commitment to this cause has been integral in bringing together diverse voices and perspectives essential for the success of this initiative.

We look forward to continuing our collaboration and working together to ensure that the voices of young women in politics are amplified and heard at all levels.

Thank you for your dedication and commitment to this important cause.

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INTRODUCTION

The second round of dialogue sessions aimed to delve deeper into the barriers young women face in political spaces and explore actionable solutions.

Each county provided unique perspectives and highlighted context-specific challenges that require targeted interventions. Stakeholders were drawn from; sub-county and ward administrators, market associations' representatives, council of elders, youth groups, female aspirants, members of county assemblies, religious leaders among others.

This report summarizes the key outcomes of the dialogue sessions in Homabay, Bomet, Kiambu, and Samburu Counties and outlines recommendations to foster women's political engagement.



THE DIALOGUE SESSIONS

SAMBURU COUNTY

Samburu County's session shed light on unique and systemic barriers to women's participation in politics. With our background from the first round of the sessions, we were aware that the county only has one elected female Member of Parliament. The session highlighted challenges to women's participation in politics including:

- ❖ **Insecurity:** Decades of insecurity in Samburu have shaped leadership perceptions, favoring men who are seen as protectors and strategists during conflicts. This has entrenched biases against women's leadership and limited their opportunities to hold positions of power.
- ❖ **Gendered Assumptions:** There is a widespread belief that the County Woman Member of Parliament seat is the only suitable position for women, while other seats are reserved for men. The session sought to challenge this narrative and promote the idea that women can effectively vie for all elective positions.
- ❖ **Naming Practices:** In Samburu, many women obtain their National Identification cards after marriage, adopting their husband's names. Women who retain their father's names are perceived as "not ready" for leadership, reflecting deep-rooted biases linking marital status to political competence.
- ❖ **Clan Voting:** Voting patterns in Samburu are heavily influenced by clan affiliations. Candidates from less influential clans or impoverished backgrounds face significant disadvantages, as these factors overshadow merit or capability.



HOMABAY COUNTY

The dialogue in Mbita Sub-County brought together diverse stakeholders at the sub-county level to discuss barriers to women's political engagement.

Key takeaways included opportunities for women's participation in appointive posts at the sub-county level, seen as opportunities for women to propel themselves to active elective politics. Key challenges and opportunities highlighted included:

- ❖ **Cultural Barriers:** Deep-seated cultural norms continue to hinder women from running for political office. Many community members still believe that leadership roles are better suited for men, perceiving women as less capable, stable, or committed. These stereotypes discourage women from seeking political roles and reduce community support for their campaigns.
- ❖ **Education for Empowerment:** The session highlighted that education is a critical enabler for women's participation in politics. It equips them with the knowledge and skills needed to navigate the political landscape and articulate their visions effectively. Educational programs tailored for young women aspiring to political positions were identified as a vital step in overcoming barriers.
- ❖ **Addressing Gender-Based Violence:** Participants emphasized the need for robust mechanisms to tackle electoral violence against women. Gender desks at police stations should be empowered to investigate and prosecute cases of harassment and violence targeting women, especially during campaigns, to create a safer environment for female aspirants.



KIAMBU COUNTY

The dialogue in Kiambu took place amidst rising reports of femicide and abductions in Kenya, reflecting concern over governance in Kenya and the challenges that women face in politics in so far as gender-based violence is concerned. Key issues raised included:

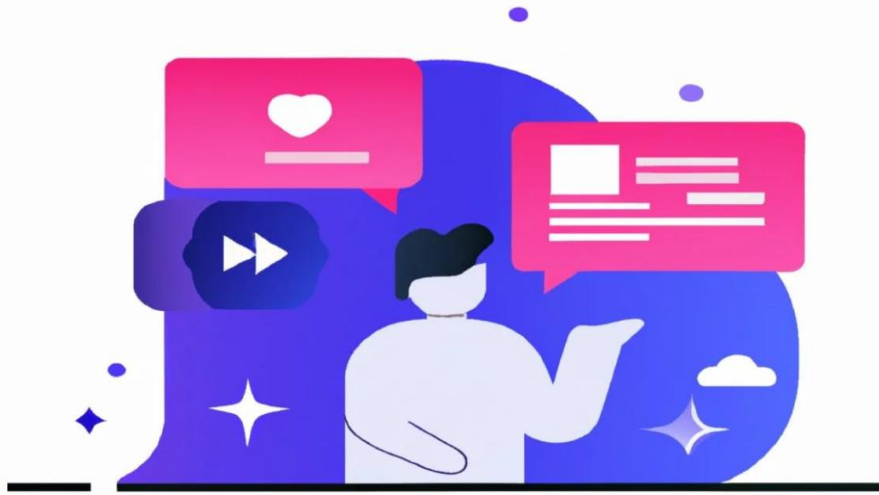
- ❖ **Disrespect and Marginalization:** In Kiambu County, women are often treated as symbolic candidates rather than serious contenders. Young women are often told to wait for their turn, drop their bids in favour of male or older candidates, or are labelled as “political flower girls.” This marginalization undermines their credibility and discourages them from pursuing political roles.
- ❖ **Gender-Based Violence:** Election-related violence disproportionately affects women, creating fear and discouraging participation. The psychological and physical toll on women and their families disrupts the community fabric, highlighting the need for strong policies and community-level interventions to address this issue.



BOMET COUNTY

The session in Bomet County focused on engaging stakeholders to discuss and suggest ways of addressing societal perceptions and structural barriers to women’s participation. The discussion highlighted the following key issues:

- ❖ **Changing Perceptions:** The belief that women in politics are immoral remains a significant barrier. This perception often stems from societal stereotypes that politicized women are overly ambitious or neglectful of traditional roles. Stakeholders emphasized the importance of public awareness campaigns to challenge these biases and showcase the integrity and contributions of women in leadership.
- ❖ **Grassroots Debates:** Many political debates and campaign discussions occur in urban centers, excluding rural populations. Participants proposed decentralizing these activities to grassroots levels, allowing communities to engage directly with aspirants. This would ensure that voters make informed decisions and hold leaders accountable for their promises.
- ❖ **Encouraging Persistence:** Women face numerous challenges on the campaign trail, including financial barriers and societal resistance. The session underscored the importance of resilience and determination, urging women to continue pursuing their political ambitions despite setbacks.
- ❖ **Early Campaigning:** Unlike men, who often start campaigning well in advance, women tend to join the race later due to financial constraints or hesitation. This delay puts them at a disadvantage in building voter trust and recognition. Early campaign planning was recommended to level the playing field.
- ❖ **Support for Partners:** Women in politics often face strain in their personal relationships, with many experiencing increased divorce rates. Participants called for programs to support the spouses and families of female political aspirants, fostering understanding and shared commitment to their political journeys.



RECOMMENDATIONS

Cumulatively, the Homabay, Kiambu, Bomet and Samburu Dialogue Sessions recommended the following at the conclusion of the sessions:

- ❖ **Leverage appointive posts at the sub-county level:** In all the 4 counties, it emerged that women interested in politics lack the awareness of appointive posts at the sub-county level that they can leverage to launch a political career from. It was encouraged that women ought to consider this to make themselves known to the community at the wards and village levels before vying for political posts.
- ❖ **Cultural Sensitization:** The Samburu Dialogue Session recommended the launch of community-driven campaigns to challenge cultural norms that hinder women's political participation by partnering with local vernacular radio stations in the county to increase awareness and reach to village structures
- ❖ **Education and Capacity Building:** It was suggested in Samburu and Bomet Counties to expand access to education and training programs for young women aspirants who have demonstrated illiteracy as a challenge to their participation in politics.
- ❖ **Support Systems:** All 4 counties agreed that support systems through programs for the families and spouses of female political aspirants will ensure women (female aspirants) have a supportive environment, before, during and after elections
- ❖ **Security and Electoral Integrity:** The Session participants in the 4 counties urged the Police to address insecurity and electoral violence through targeted security measures and enforcement mechanisms during the electioneering period and to adopt their response mechanisms to emerging forms of violence that may go unreported
- ❖ **Inclusive Campaign Platforms:** Samburu Dialogue Session urged policy-makers and CSOs to ensure political debates and manifestos are accessible to grassroots communities.
- ❖ **Policy Advocacy:** SJL as a CSO was urged to advocate for the elimination of systemic barriers like clan-based voting and naming practices.



CONCLUSION AND WAY FORWARD

The second round of dialogue sessions highlighted critical barriers and opportunities for advancing young women's political participation across the four counties.

Moving forward, the Social Justice League is committed to integrating these findings into actionable strategies.

At the conclusion of the second round of dialogue sessions, this also marked a step forward towards finalizing the remaining steps to release of the Video Documentary on Young Women in Politics in the counties of Kiambu, Bomet, Samburu and Homabay.

A comprehensive policy brief will be shared with the counties upon the release of the Young Women in Politics documentary. Together, we will continue to advocate for a future where women's voices are equally represented in all spheres of leadership.

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