

EMPowerHer



2026

FROM THE MARGINS TO THE CENTRE

Chair's Remarks

As Kenya moves towards the 2027 General Election, the question before us is not simply whether women and young people will participate, but whether they will have the power, resources and space to shape the decisions that determine our country's future.

This was at the heart of the Women and Youth Political Leadership Convention, held under the theme "Enhancing Youth and Women Democratic Participation as We Gear Up for the 2027 Elections." The Convention brought together women and young people to examine the barriers that continue to limit their participation in political leadership, while creating space to discuss practical pathways towards greater representation and decision-making.

At KEWOPA, we recognise that meaningful political participation begins long before election day. It is strengthened when women have the economic independence to make choices, the civic knowledge to engage institutions, and the confidence and networks to claim their place in public leadership.

Through KEWOPA Mashinani, we are taking civic engagement, public participation and knowledge of gender-responsive budgeting directly to communities. Our women's economic empowerment initiatives complement this work by equipping women with skills to build and grow businesses, understand public resources and demand accountability. Economic empowerment is therefore not separate from political participation. A woman who has greater control over her economic circumstances is better positioned to participate in public decision-making and leadership.

As we prepare for 2027, we must also confront political violence, intimidation, campaign financing barriers, online harassment, disinformation and technology-facilitated gender-based violence that continue to make political spaces unsafe for women and young people.

Women and young people are already leading, organising, legislating, building businesses and shaping their communities. Our task is to ensure that this leadership translates into representation and decision-making power.

We are committed to moving women and young people from the margins to the centre of Kenya's political future.



Hon. Leah Sankaire, MP
Chairperson, KEWOPA

Bunge Highlights

Women Legislators Shaping Policy

Women parliamentarians continue to advance legislation, motions and policy proposals addressing issues that affect communities across Kenya.



Hon. Naisula Lesuuda: Advancing safer and more inclusive roads

Hon. Naisula Lesuuda sponsored the Kenya Roads (Amendment) Bill, 2024, which was approved by the National Assembly in August 2026. The Bill seeks to strengthen infrastructure for non-motorised transport by requiring the design and construction of dedicated pedestrian walkways, cycling lanes and other facilities for pedestrians and cyclists on designated roads. It also provides for clearer definitions and enforcement measures to improve the safety of non-motorised transport users.



Sen. Catherine Mumma: Advancing reproductive health and inclusive public policy

Sen. Catherine Mumma is co-sponsoring the Assisted Reproductive Technology Bill, 2022 (National Assembly Bills No. 61 of 2022), which is at Second Reading in the Senate. The Bill seeks to establish a legal framework for assisted reproductive technology in Kenya, including the regulation of assisted reproductive services and surrogacy, while protecting the rights of parents, donors, surrogate mothers and children.

She has also moved a Motion on improving access to clean water and sanitation services in informal settlements and another on strengthening disability-inclusive education for learners with disabilities, including those with neurodevelopmental conditions and specific learning disabilities



Sen. Karen Nyamu: Sponsoring the Artificial Intelligence Bill, 2026

Sen. Karen Nyamu is sponsoring the Artificial Intelligence Bill, 2026, which is scheduled for Second Reading in the Senate. The Bill seeks to establish a legal and regulatory framework for the development, deployment and use of artificial intelligence in Kenya.

Bunge Highlights



Hon. Sabina Chege: Supporting breastfeeding mothers

Hon. Sabina Chege is sponsoring the Breastfeeding Mothers Bill, 2024, which is at the Committee of the Whole House stage. The Bill seeks to promote access to appropriate lactation facilities and strengthen support for breastfeeding mothers balancing work and family responsibilities.



Hon. Rahab Mukami: Advancing action against violence against women and girls

Hon. Rahab Mukami, President of the Pan-African Parliament Women's Caucus, is championing continental action to end violence against women and girls. In July 2026, she participated in the Pan-African Parliament's high-level dialogue on the African Union Convention on Ending Violence Against Women and Girls (AU-CEVAWG), calling for stronger commitment to the Convention's signature, ratification, domestication and implementation across Africa. She subsequently presented the dialogue's report to the Pan-African Parliament, highlighting the need for effective national laws, adequate financing, accountability and implementation mechanisms to translate the Convention into meaningful protection for women and girls.



Sen. Peris Tobiko: Strengthening electronic waste management

Sen. Peris Tobiko is sponsoring the Electronic Equipment Disposal, Recycling and Reuse Bill, 2025, which is at the Committee of the Whole stage. The Bill seeks to strengthen the management of electronic waste through responsible disposal, recycling and reuse.

KEWOPA Mashinani

When Women Have Economic Power, They Can Influence Public Decisions.



When Women Have Economic Power, They Can Influence Public Decisions
Economic empowerment gives women greater capacity to participate in decisions that affect their lives and communities.

In Teso South Constituency, KEWOPA, in partnership with the Institute of Public Finance (IPF), convened a two-day training that equipped women with practical skills in business planning and marketing, alongside knowledge on public participation, gender-responsive budgeting and gender-based violence.

Led by Hon. Mary Otucho Emase, MP for Teso South Constituency, the training links economic empowerment with meaningful participation in public decision-making.

Participants explored key business skills including market opportunities, product pricing, financial records, cash flow and business growth. Hon. Emaase captured the importance of accountability and tracking progress: "That which you cannot measure cannot grow."

One participant shared how she had grown from selling second-hand clothes to selling new clothes in Nairobi, Kisumu and across the border in Uganda, with financial institutions supporting her business expansion.

Public participation and gender-responsive budgeting were also part of the discussions. When women understand how public resources are planned and allocated, they are better positioned to influence priorities, demand accountability and advocate for investments that respond to their needs. Economic empowerment is therefore not only about income. It can strengthen women's voice in public decision-making.

"That which you cannot measure cannot grow." - Hon. Mary Emaase.



Taking Civic Engagement to Communities: Ndhiwa Constituency, Homa Bay County



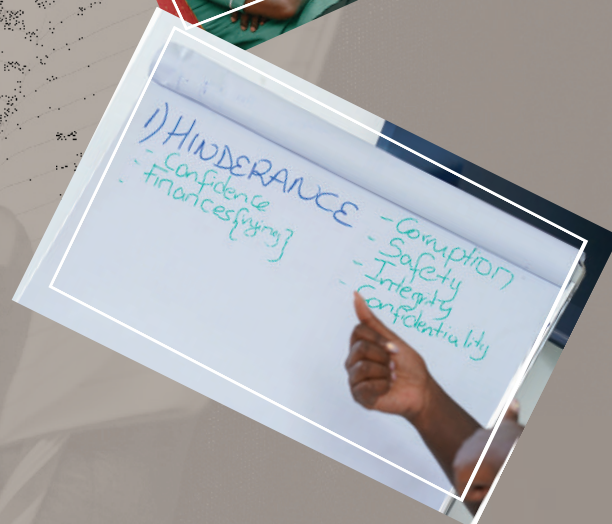
KEWOPA convened a civic engagement forum in Ndhiwa Constituency to discuss electoral preparedness, voter registration, public participation and the role of citizens in shaping democracy.

The discussions focused on constitutional governance, electoral violence and gender-based violence, highlighting the need for peaceful participation and safe electoral spaces before, during and after elections.

The forum also addressed the role of women and youth in democratic processes and inclusive leadership. Democracy is strongest when women and young people are informed, prepared and actively engaged in shaping the electoral process.

KEWOPA continues to strengthen inclusive electoral governance through civic engagement initiatives that equip women and young people with knowledge and tools to participate meaningfully in democratic processes. This activity was convened in partnership with Konrad Adenauer Stiftung (KAS).

“A society cannot thrive when women are excluded from decision making. We need more women at the table, shaping policies and influencing the decisions that define our future.”- Sen. Beatrice Ogolla



COMMUNITY ACTION FOR SEXUAL & REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH RIGHTS: SUBA NORTH CONSTITUENCY, HOMABAY COUNTY.



KEWOPA held a community dialogue on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) in Suba North Constituency, Homa Bay County, under the Strengthening Community Action and Legislative Reform for GBV Prevention, Including Femicide, Technology Facilitated Gender Based Violence and SRHR in Kenya project.

The dialogue focused on sexuality, sexual health, consent and the connection between SRHR and physical, emotional and mental wellbeing. Participants examined Kenya's legal framework on SRHR, the Sexual Offences Act, and myths and misconceptions that affect access to SRHR information and services.

Homa Bay County faces significant SRHR challenges. Modern contraceptive use stands at 23.4 percent, while child marriage prevalence is 47.4 percent. Participants also discussed the county's high HIV burden, teenage pregnancies and Gender Based Violence (GBV), and their impact on women, girls and young people.

The dialogue called for increased access to SRHR services and information, stronger GBV prevention measures and greater community involvement in addressing these challenges.

Participants also discussed the sex-for-fish phenomenon in the Lake Region, where economic vulnerability can expose women and girls to sexual exploitation and increase their risk of HIV and GBV. The discussion called for interventions that address the economic and social factors driving the practice while protecting the rights and dignity of affected communities.

The dialogue placed community knowledge, access to services and legal awareness at the centre of efforts to improve SRHR outcomes and prevent GBV in Homa Bay County.



Taking Civic Engagement to Communities: Naivasha County



Hon. Jane Kihara led a civic engagement forum that brought together women and youth to examine election preparedness, the legal framework governing elections and the role of public participation in strengthening democratic governance.

The sessions focused on women's and youth leadership, community advocacy, civic responsibility, opportunities for political participation and actions that strengthen preparedness for the electoral process. Participants also discussed gender-based violence, electoral violence and technology-facilitated gender-based violence and the need to create safer spaces for women and young people to engage in political processes.

Through moderated discussions and group work, participants identified practical measures to enhance civic awareness, strengthen peaceful participation and promote inclusive leadership within their communities. This activity was convened in partnership with Konrad Adenauer Stiftung (KAS).



Highlights & Engagements

Mental Health Is a Public Wellbeing Issue

Mental health affects people across all walks of life. Addressing it requires reducing stigma and improving access to information, support and professional care.

Speaking during a mental health and safety training for KEWOPA members, Dagoretti North MP Hon. Beatrice Elachi CBS said stigma remains a major barrier to mental health care and called for greater awareness and education to address misconceptions and encourage people to seek professional support.

The training, organised by KEWOPA in partnership with NIVISHE Foundation and Solidarity Alliance, focused on mental health as part of overall wellbeing. Participants discussed how prolonged stress, difficult experiences, social pressures and trauma can affect how people think, feel and function.

Women in public life face added pressure from public scrutiny, social media criticism and demanding engagements. Participants also practised grounding and resilience exercises to manage pressure, regain focus and create space for recovery.

Mental health deserves attention before a crisis. Awareness, understanding and support benefits everyone.



Hon. Beatrice Elachi speaks during the mental health and safety training

Affordable Menstrual Health Products Are Not a Luxury

Affordable menstrual health products are essential to the dignity, health, education and participation of girls and women.

During the Parliamentary Dialogue on Fiscal and Regulatory Reforms for Affordable Menstrual Health Products, women parliamentarians called for stronger action to address the barriers that keep menstrual health products out of reach for many girls and women.

Sen. Catherine Mumma challenged policymakers to move beyond temporary interventions and make menstrual health a predictable budget priority.

“Why don’t we budget it as part of the yearly school capitation?”

Hon. Esther Passaris called for a broader approach that reaches girls and women who fall outside existing government programmes, while also strengthening local production to make products more affordable and create jobs.

The dialogue brought together NGAFF, NAYA Kenya, UNFPA Kenya and the Sanitation and Hygiene Fund to examine fiscal and regulatory barriers, including taxation, regulatory costs, procurement challenges and fragmented county levies.

The message was clear: menstrual health requires deliberate investment, inclusive policies and coordinated action across national and county governments.



Senator Catherine Mumma speaks on prioritisation of menstrual health in public budgets.

FROM THE MARGINS TO THE CENTRE: WOMEN AND YOUTH SHAPING KENYA'S POLITICAL FUTURE



Kenya's political landscape is changing, with women and young people playing a growing role in elections, public participation, advocacy and political leadership. Yet participation does not always translate into representation, influence or decision-making power.

For women, the barriers begin long before election day. Political party nominations, campaign financing, social expectations and political violence can determine who gets an opportunity to compete. The Two-Thirds Gender Rule remains central to discussions on women's representation, but its implementation continues to raise questions about how constitutional commitments can translate into actual representation.

Women in politics also face scrutiny that extends beyond their political record. Their appearance, families, personal lives and behaviour can become subjects of public and political attacks. Online spaces have added another layer, with harassment, disinformation, deep-fakes and technology-facilitated gender-based violence increasingly used to target women in public life.

At the Women and Youth Political Leadership Convention, founding member of KEWOPA, Hon. Martha Karua, urged women leaders to remain focused despite the challenges they face: "Ride on, ignore the naysayers and work with other leaders."

Her message speaks to the importance of resilience and solidarity among women in political leadership. Breaking barriers requires women to support one another, build networks and create pathways for others to enter and advance in politics.

Young people face a different set of barriers. They are central to Kenya's political process, forming a significant part of the electorate and driving political conversations online and in communities. Yet their visibility often peaks during election campaigns, where they are mobilised as voters, campaigners and crowds without gaining meaningful access to decision-making structures.

Moving from campaign crowds to decision makers requires greater opportunities for young people within political parties, public institutions and community leadership structures. Civic education, public participation and digital engagement can create pathways for young people to influence policy and hold institutions accountable.

These challenges point to a broader issue: political participation cannot be meaningful when people fear violence, intimidation or abuse.

Women and young people can face threats both offline and online. Electoral violence, gender-based violence, online harassment and technology-facilitated gender-based violence can discourage people from seeking leadership or expressing political views. Artificial intelligence has also created new risks, with manipulated content and deepfakes capable of spreading false information and damaging reputations.

KEWOPA Chairperson Hon. Leah Sankaire captured the importance of creating safer political spaces: “No woman should have to choose between her safety and her political aspirations.”

Creating safer political spaces requires action from political parties, government institutions, law enforcement agencies, technology platforms and communities. Political participation should not come at the cost of personal safety.



Hon. Leah Sankaire speaks during the Women and Youth Convention 2026



Hon. Martha Karua gives her remarks as the Chief Guest at the Women and Youth Convention 2026

As Kenya moves towards the 2027 elections, the focus must shift from participation alone to power, representation and influence. Women and young people are already contributing to Kenya’s democracy. They are legislating, organising communities, building businesses, engaging citizens and advocating for policy change.

The Women and Youth Political Leadership Convention provided a space to examine this question and consider what must change before 2027. Strengthening representation, improving access to political resources, creating safer political spaces, supporting civic engagement and opening political institutions to women and youth are necessary steps.

Moving from the margins to the centre means more than encouraging women and young people to participate. It means ensuring they have a seat at the table, a voice in decisions and the power to shape Kenya’s political future. This activity was done in partnership with Uraia Trust with support from the Royal Danish Embassy.

Democracy Must Have Room for Everyone



Building an Inclusive Road to 2027

An election can be technically successful and still leave people behind. Ballot papers may arrive on time. Polling stations may open. Votes may be counted, and results declared. But the true measure of a democratic election is deeper: could every Kenyan participate meaningfully, safely, independently and with dignity?

As Kenya moves towards the 2027 General Election, this question must sit at the heart of electoral preparedness because preparing for an election is a process, not an event. The question is not simply whether the IEBC is ready today, but whether we are meeting the milestones necessary to deliver a credible and inclusive election. On that measure, the Commission is on course. The Strategic Plan and Election Operations Plan for 2027 have been launched and published; proposed legal reforms have been submitted to Parliament; the Election Campaign Financing Regulations, 2026 have been gazetted; critical procurement is underway; and recruitment for key personnel is progressing. But operational readiness must also mean inclusive readiness.

The Ballot Must Reach Everyone

For persons with disabilities, the ability to vote cannot depend on chance. Beyond assistance mechanisms already provided in law, the Commission is working towards braille and tactile voting materials, accessible polling rooms, and the use of disability data captured during registration to deploy appropriate support including interpretation services.

"Inclusion is not about opening doors; it is about ensuring that those who walk, wheel or sign through them can fully participate on the other side."

The secrecy and dignity of the ballot should not diminish because a voter has a disability. A ballot cast with assistance is not the same as a ballot cast with autonomy and Kenyans with disabilities deserve the latter.

Women and Youth: Access Is Not Enough

For women and young people, inclusion must extend beyond access to the ballot. Women continue to encounter financial barriers, intimidation and political violence. Young people face structural barriers to meaningful participation. The Electoral Code of Conduct provides an important enforcement mechanism but a mechanism without timely enforcement is a promise without weight.

"Justice delivered after an election may come too late for a candidate whose democratic opportunity has already been lost."

Electoral integrity requires collective responsibility: the Commission, political parties, security agencies, investigative and prosecutorial institutions, civil society and citizens. A woman intimidated into withdrawing from a race cannot be made whole by a post-election ruling. A young person whose nomination is blocked by violence cannot recover a stolen democratic moment. The political rights stipulated in Article 38 read together with Article 27, Article 10 and the Bill of Rights must be operationalized by all duty bearers to ensure an inclusive electoral environment. The barriers to inclusion must be addressed purposively and intentionally not only by IEBC but by political parties, security agencies, judiciary and all people participating in the 2027 General Elections.

The True Measure of 2027

Ultimately, the success of 2027 will not be measured by technology and results transmission alone. It will be measured by whether a woman can campaign without intimidation; a young person can realistically contest; a voter with a disability can cast their ballot independently and with dignity; and whether citizens can participate without fear of violence. Inclusive elections cannot be delivered by IEBC alone. They require institutions that enforce the law, political actors who respect it, and citizens who refuse violence, bribery and intimidation.

"An inclusive election is not one in which everyone was simply allowed to participate. It is one in which everyone was genuinely able to."

Because democracy must have room for everyone or it has room for no one.

Dr Anne Nderitu, CBS is a Commissioner at the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (IEBC), Kenya.

Mary Emaase: A Voice for Teso South

Hon. Mary Emaase Otucho is the Member of Parliament for Teso South Constituency, Busia County, elected on a UDA ticket in 2022. She previously served as the constituency's Member of Parliament from 2013 to 2017, making her one of the first elected female leaders from the Iteso community.

Born on 21 October 1968, Hon. Emaase holds a Bachelor of Commerce degree from Jomo Kenyatta University. She began her career as an accountant at Joginder Auto Services before joining the Judiciary, where she served from 1993 to 2012 and rose to the position of Senior Accountant.

During her first term in Parliament, she served on the Finance Committee and as Deputy Chairperson of the Budget and Appropriations Committee. In the 13th Parliament, she serves on the Appointments, Education and Public Accounts Committees. She has sponsored and jointly sponsored the Cotton Industry Development Bill, 2023, which is at the Third Reading stage.

Her parliamentary and development priorities include education, infrastructure, electricity connectivity, economic opportunities and public accountability. She has supported education through bursaries and school infrastructure and has been associated with institutions and projects including Alupe University, Okame TVET, Amukura Teachers Training College and Asiriam Sports Academy.

Hon. Emaase has also supported women's economic empowerment through initiatives providing capital to women to establish and expand businesses.

Her political journey includes winning the Teso South parliamentary seat in 2013, losing it by 347 votes in 2017 and reclaiming it in 2022. Her leadership slogan is

KAZI KWANZA!



Hon. Mary Emaase,
MP, Teso South



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The goal is not to make women's and young people's leadership exceptional; it is to make it normal.

Hon. Martha Karua sc,
Co-founder, KEWOPA



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Respect is not to be given because of gender. It must be recognised as a right

Hon. Gladys Boss Shollei
County MP, Uasin Gishu



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Nearly half of our population is women. For more women to be elected, you have to come out in large numbers and offer yourself for leadership.

Hon. Millie Odhiambo
MP, Suba North



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No woman should have to choose between her safety and her political aspirations

Hon. Leah Sankaire
County MP, Kajiado



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That which you cannot measure cannot grow

Hon. Mary Emaase
MP, Teso South



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Women's economic empowerment is more than a gender issue. It is an economic imperative that drives inclusive growth and national prosperity.

Hon. Irene Mayaka
Nominated MP



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Let's support local production and manufacturers of these menstrual products. It will make them cheaper and create job opportunities

Hon. Esther Passaris
County MP, Nairobi

DID YOU KNOW?



Women make up **50.6%** of Kenya's population - but only **23%** of the National Assembly following the 2022 General Election.

Snapshots



We extend our sincere appreciation to our esteemed partners for their invaluable support, collaboration, and commitment.

United Nations Agencies

UN Women, UNFPA

Government Institutions and State Agencies

Parliament of Kenya, State Department of Gender, National Gender and Equality Commission (NGEC)

Development Partners and Bilateral Agencies

Global Affairs Canada, Royal Danish Embassy

Research and Policy Institutions

Institute of Public Finance (IPF), African Centre for Parliamentary Affairs (ACEPA), Centre for Parliamentary Studies (CPST)

Civil Society Organizations and Networks

Uraia, CREAM, ICJ, FIDA, Centre for Multiparty Democracy (CMD), CRAWN Trust, Health NGOs Network (HENNET), ELGIA Africa, ELOG.

Professional Associations / Parliamentary Caucuses

Kenya Young Parliamentarians Association (KYPA)

International NGOs and Implementing Partners

Oxfam, Dioraphte Foundation, Jhpiego, Konrad Adenauer Stiftung (KAS), Nivishe Foundation

We value each partnership and remain committed to strengthening these collaborations in advancing our shared goals.

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