

STRENGTHENING POLITICAL PARTY REGULATION IN KENYA

Advancing Women and Youth Inclusion



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BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

This country report provides a comprehensive analysis of Kenya's political party regulation framework, emphasizing the inclusion of women and youth in party structures and governance. Conducted as part of the WYDE Political Parties Project, a collaborative initiative the European Union, European Network of Political Foundations (ENoP) and the Christian Democratic International Centre (KIC), the study compares Kenya's experiences with those of Malawi and Sierra Leone to inform regional strategies, including the establishment of the Africa Association of Political Party Regulatory Authorities (AAPPRA). Employing a mixed-methods approach, including desk reviews of legal documents, key informant interviews (KIIs) with ORPP officials and party representatives from ODM and UDA, focus group discussions (FGDs) with women and youth members, and comparative legal mapping, the report addresses four objectives: examining legal and institutional frameworks, analyzing regulatory mechanisms, assessing inter-country collaboration opportunities, and proposing a framework for AAPPRA.

KEY FINDINGS

Kenya's multiparty democracy, reestablished in 1991 and bolstered by the 2010 Constitution and Political Parties Act (2011, revised 2022), features over 90 registered parties regulated by the independent Office of the Registrar of Political Parties (ORPP). Key provisions mandate gender balance (two-thirds rule, Article 81(b)) and youth participation (Article 55), enforced through registration requirements, compliance audits, and the sharing of the Political Parties Fund (PPF), which incentivizes diversity by allocating 30% to programs for women, youth, and persons with disabilities. Innovations like the Integrated Political Parties Management Information System (IPPMS), and partnerships with UN Women and CMD-Kenya have driven incremental progress, with women's parliamentary representation rising to 23% in 2022 and all political parties establishing women's and youth leagues.

Despite these advances, challenges remain. Substantive inclusion remains limited by patriarchal norms, gerontocracy, economic barriers such as relatively high nomination fees, electoral violence (83% of incidents reported in the 2022 General Elections targeted women), and informal power structures, resulting in women holding under 30% of top leadership roles and youth below 5% in Parliament. KIIs and FGDs highlight a gap between formal compliance and meaningful empowerment. Youth are particularly sidelined due to weaker quotas and cultural hierarchies. Kenya's fluid party landscape, largely dominated by ethnic alliances like Kenya Kwanza and Azimio la Umoja, exacerbates these issues through patronage and monetization.

Comparatively, Kenya's strengths in digital transformation, regulated public funding of political parties and incentive-based regulatory environment positions it as a model for other countries. This may offer opportunities for peer learning on audits, quotas, and funding. Challenges include institutional diversity, resource inequalities, and political sensitivities across Africa, yet existing platforms like the EAC and AU Agenda 2063 provide foundations for harmonized standards. The report proposes AAPPRO as a continental network for strengthening political parties in member states through knowledge exchange, policy alignment, and capacity building, with Kenya leading through a phased roadmap: regional consultations, charter drafting, pilot platforms, launch conferences, and a Nairobi-based secretariat.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The report recommendations include proposing legal reforms for actualizing the gender and youth quotas and reforming PPF allocations at the national level to incentivize inclusion. Other recommendations include enhancing ORPP tools like IPPMS for transparency and inter-agency coordination at institutional level; and fostering AAPPRO-led mentorship and benchmarks among member countries. It also proposes monitoring and evaluation (M&E) framework to track progress on representation and compliance metrics, with necessary risk mitigation strategies that address political resistance and funding gaps.

WAY FORWARD

Implementing these proposed reforms can help Kenya bridge inclusion disparities, strengthen democratic accountability, and catalyze continental progress toward Agenda 2063's vision of equitable governance. This positions Kenya as a pivotal leader in advancing women and youth empowerment in African political systems and form a blueprint for AAPPRO.





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Introduction:

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY AND RELEVANCE TO KENYA'S DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE

Political parties are central to democratic governance. They serve as the primary vehicles through which citizens express their political will, shape policy preferences, and hold governments accountable. In Kenya, the evolution of multiparty democracy since the early 1990s has been accompanied by significant reforms to strengthen political party regulation and ensure greater transparency, accountability, and inclusivity. The enactment of the Political Parties Act (CAP 7D) and the establishment of the Office of the Registrar of Political Parties (ORPP) have created a more coherent framework for party registration, regulation, and compliance (Office of the Registrar of Political Parties [ORPP], 2023).

However, despite these legal and institutional advances, the inclusion of women and youth in party structures and decision-making remains a persistent challenge. The Constitution of Kenya (2010) enshrines principles of equality and non-discrimination under Articles 27, 55, 81, and 100. It mandates the state to take affirmative action measures to ensure equitable participation (Republic of Kenya, 2010). Unfortunately, the reality of political competition continues to be shaped by patriarchal norms, monetized politics, and patronage systems that limit the meaningful participation of women and youth. As of 2024, women constitute approximately 23% of the National Assembly and Senate, while youth representation remains comparatively low (Inter-Parliamentary Union [IPU], 2024).

At the regional level, Kenya's experience aligns with continental priorities under the African Union's (AU) Agenda 2063, which envisions "an Africa of good

governance, democracy, and respect for human rights, justice and the rule of law." The WYDE Political Parties Project, implemented under the auspices of the European Union and KIC, seeks to advance this vision by fostering cross-learning among regulatory authorities and promoting gender and youth inclusion in political processes. The proposed Africa Association of Political Party Regulatory Authorities (AAPRA) provides an opportunity for countries such as Kenya to share experiences, harmonize standards, and strengthen collaborative approaches to political party regulation.

Kenya's established institutional framework and growing experience in party regulation positions it as a valuable case study in understanding both the opportunities and constraints that shape inclusive political governance in Africa.

PURPOSE AND SCOPE OF THE STUDY

This country report presents an in-depth examination of Kenya's political party regulation landscape, focusing specifically on the inclusion of women and youth within party structures and governance. The study forms part of a comparative assessment involving Kenya, Malawi, and Sierra Leone, undertaken within the framework of the WYDE Political Parties Project.

The analysis is intended to generate evidence-based insights into how Kenya's Office of the Registrar of Political Parties (ORPP) has operationalized its legal and policy mandates to promote inclusivity, and to identify practical lessons that can inform regional cooperation through AAPRA. The Kenya study also highlights national innovations, challenges, and prospects for reforms that are relevant to strengthening democratic governance both domestically and across Africa.

SPECIFIC COUNTRY OBJECTIVES

This study is guided by four interrelated objectives that inform both the national and comparative analyses:

To examine and analyse the existing legal and institutional frameworks governing political parties, with particular attention to gender and youth inclusion.

To identify and compare mechanisms, practices, and regulatory approaches adopted by ORPPs that promote gender and youth inclusion.

To assess the opportunities and challenges for inter-country collaboration among the three ORPPs in advancing inclusive political party governance.

To propose a framework for potential collaboration among the ORPPs, including the establishment of the Africa Association of Political Party Regulatory Authorities (AAPRA).

METHODOLOGY SUMMARY

The study employed a mixed-method qualitative design combining a desk review, key informant interviews (KIIs), focus group discussions (FGDs), and legal-policy mapping to ensure depth and triangulation of data sources.

Desk Review: The study analysed constitutional, legal, and policy documents. The documents included the Constitution of Kenya, Political Parties Act (CAP 7D), ORPP reports, IEBC publications, and research by governance-focused organizations such as the Centre for Multiparty Democracy–Kenya (CMD-Kenya).

Key Informant Interviews (KIIs): These interviews were conducted with representatives from the ORPP, political party secretariats, gender and youth caucuses, and civil society actors working on democratic inclusion.

Focus Group Discussions (FGDs): The group discussions gathered qualitative perspectives from women and youth members of political parties, who shared their practical lived experiences of political participation and barriers to access.

Legal Mapping: Legal mapping applied a standardized comparative matrix to identify inclusion provisions, implementation gaps, and best practices.

Comparative Analysis: This analysis attempted to benchmark Kenya’s experiences against those of Malawi and Sierra Leone to inform AAPRA’s potential framework.

LIMITATIONS

The research was limited by time constraints, incomplete gender-disaggregated data from some political parties, and sensitivities surrounding intra-party dynamics that affected the depth of stakeholder responses.

REPORT STRUCTURE AND USE OF ANNEXES

The report is structured into eight main sections that align with the four objectives above. The report is organized into eight sections, as follows:

Section 1: This section introduces the study, background, objectives, and methodology.

Section 2: The section describes the national context for political party regulation and inclusion.

Section 3: This section examines the legal and institutional frameworks guiding party regulation.

Section 4: The section analyses ORPP regulatory practices with a focus on women and youth inclusion.

Section 5: Explores inter-country collaboration opportunities and challenges.

Section 6: Discusses prospects for establishing AAPRA and Kenya’s potential leadership role.

Section 7: This section presents conclusions and actionable recommendations.

Section 8: Provides references and annexes, including legal mapping matrices and data tools.

The Annexes contain supporting materials, including the list of interviewees, legal and policy matrices, sampling frames, and detailed data tables. These annexes should be used for reference and validation of evidence cited within the main report.

National Context for Political Party Regulation and Inclusion

OVERVIEW OF THE POLITICAL SYSTEM AND PARTY LANDSCAPE

Kenya is a constitutional democracy with a presidential system of governance, where executive authority is vested in the President and legislative authority in a bicameral Parliament, comprising the National Assembly and the Senate (Republic of Kenya, 2010). Since the reintroduction of multiparty politics in 1991, the country has witnessed an evolving and often fluid political party landscape characterized by frequent realignments, coalition formations, and personalized political movements (Cheeseman, Lynch, & Willis, 2021).

As of 31st October 2025, there were 91 fully registered political parties while over 20 are provisionally registered, awaiting full registration. These parties are registered and regulated by the Office of the Registrar of Political Parties (ORPP) (ORPP, 2024). Despite this numerical diversity, the political party ecosystem remains dominated by a few major alliances such as Kenya Kwanza (Meaning “Kenya First”) and Azimio la Umoja (Meaning “Quest for Unity”), whose influence is largely shaped by ethnic and regional mobilization patterns. Party stability is often undermined by weak institutionalization, the personalization of leadership, and limited ideological distinction among parties (Kadima, 2023).

The Bicameral Parliament of Kenya plays an important oversight and law-making role in shaping the regulatory framework governing political parties, particularly through its Justice and Legal

Affairs Committee (JLAC). However, the highly competitive and adversarial nature of Kenyan politics tends to prioritize short-term electoral gains over long-term institutional development. Consequently, political contestation and coalition instability place additional pressure on the ORPP to remain impartial and effective in enforcing the Political Parties Act. The legitimacy of the ORPP is therefore closely tied to its perceived neutrality and its ability to implement inclusion mandates fairly and consistently.

POLITICAL, SOCIAL AND HISTORICAL DRIVERS OF REGULATION AND INCLUSION

Kenya’s contemporary party regulation framework is rooted in the 2010 Constitution, which redefined the country’s governance architecture and entrenched democratic principles, including devolution, equality, and the rule of law (Republic of Kenya, 2010). The 2010 constitutional transition was a direct response to decades of centralized power and exclusionary politics that had marginalized women, youth, and minority groups from meaningful participation in governance.

Socially, Kenya’s political culture continues to be shaped by patronage networks, ethnic clientelism, and patriarchal norms, which often privilege older male political elites. These structures reinforce barriers to entry for women and youth, who may lack financial capital and access to political networks (FIDA-Kenya, 2022). Gender stereotypes and informal party hierarchies further discourage women

from contesting leadership positions, while youth are often relegated to mobilization and campaign roles rather than decision-making positions.

The affirmative action provisions in the Constitution, such as the “two-thirds gender rule” (Articles 27(8) and 81(b)) and provisions for youth inclusion (Article 55), have spurred legal reforms and advocacy efforts to enhance representation. Nevertheless, implementation has been uneven, with repeated delays in enacting legislation to operationalize gender quotas. Historical exclusion has therefore continued to shape how both women and youth engage in party politics, making regulatory interventions by the ORPP increasingly vital.

INSTITUTIONAL SETTING OF THE OFFICE OF THE REGISTRAR OF POLITICAL PARTIES (ORPP)

The Office of the Registrar of Political Parties (ORPP) was established under the Political Parties Act, Cap 7D, as an independent state office responsible for the registration, regulation, funding, and oversight of political parties (Political Parties Act, Cap 7D). The Registrar reports to the National Assembly and is audited by the Office of the Auditor General (OAG) pursuant to the Public Audit Act, ensuring accountability within Kenya’s governance structure.

The ORPP’s key functions include:

Maintaining and updating the register of political parties.

Administering the Political Parties Fund (PPF) to eligible parties based on representation and inclusion criteria.

Monitoring compliance with legal requirements, including those related to gender and youth representation.

Promoting capacity building and institutional strengthening within parties.

Institutionally, the ORPP collaborates closely with the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (IEBC), the National Gender and Equality Commission (NGEC), and the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports. However, its operations are often constrained by limited funding, staffing shortages, and the political sensitivity of party regulation (ORPP, 2023). The Fund is capped at 0.03% of all the national government’s share

of revenue as divided by the annual Division of Revenue Act. Budgetary allocations to the Political Parties Fund have therefore fluctuated annually, impacting the ORPP’s ability to effectively monitor compliance and implement inclusion initiatives. However, it is gratifying to note that there has been a progressive increase in the amounts allocated to the Fund over the years.

Despite these challenges, the ORPP has made strides in streamlining party registration and recruitment procedures, digitizing party registers, enhancing transparency, and promoting inclusion through training and outreach programs. Its high public ratings and credibility has largely depended on balancing enforcement with political neutrality in an environment of intense competition.

SNAPSHOT OF WOMEN’S AND YOUTH PARTICIPATION

Kenya has made incremental gains in women’s political representation since 2013. Following the 2022 general elections, women held 26% of parliamentary seats (23.5% in the National Assembly and 28.4% in the Senate) (Inter-Parliamentary Union [IPU], 2024). While out of the 47 counties in Kenya, 7 women were elected to serve as county governors, marking notable progress but still falling short of the constitutional threshold.

Youth participation in formal politics remains limited despite the demographic dominance of young people, who constitute over 70% of Kenya’s population under 35 years (Kenya National Bureau of Statistics [KNBS], 2023). Youth representation in Parliament remains below 6.5% inclusive of both elected and nominated to fill youth quotas. Most participation in politics occur through mobilization roles during campaigns or through youth leagues within parties.

Party leadership structures reflect similar disparities. Women and youth often occupy lower-tier positions such as organizing secretaries or deputies, with limited access to strategic decision-making forums (CMD-Kenya, 2022). However, outliers exist such as the then Narc-Kenya party, now rebranded as Peoples Liberation Party (PLP) whose founder and party leader is Martha Karua. Financial barriers, violence in party primaries, and lack of internal democracy further constrain their participation.

CONCLUDING SYNTHESIS

Kenya's political context presents a complex mix of progressive legal frameworks and enduring socio-political constraints. The 2010 Constitution, the Political Parties Act and the National Gender and Equality Commission (NGEC) Act have established a solid basis for inclusion, but entrenched patronage systems, gender stereotypes, and resource inequalities continue to limit meaningful participation for women and youth.

The ORPP occupies a pivotal position in bridging this gap, balancing enforcement of legal obligations with facilitation of party capacity development. Its evolving role as both a regulator and an enabler of inclusion offers critical insights for regional collaboration under the proposed AAPPRA framework, which seeks to promote peer learning and harmonized standards among African political party regulators.



Legal and Institutional Framework Governing Political Parties in Kenya

Objective A: To examine and analyse the existing legal and institutional frameworks governing political parties, with particular attention to gender and youth inclusion.

CONSTITUTIONAL FOUNDATIONS FOR POLITICAL PARTY REGULATION AND INCLUSION

Kenya's system of political party regulation and inclusion is founded on the Constitution of Kenya (2010) and the Political Parties Act (Cap 7D, Revised 2022). These instruments among others, jointly define the legal architecture through which democratic pluralism, equality, and participation are realised.

CONSTITUTIONAL PROVISIONS

The Constitution embeds political party regulation and inclusion within its broader framework of sovereignty, equality, and political rights.

The relevant key provisions include:

Article 4(2): This article declares Kenya as a multiparty democratic state founded on the national values of human rights, equality, and social justice.

Article 27(1–8): The article guarantees equality and freedom from discrimination and provides for affirmative action measures to address historical and structural exclusion.

Article 38(1–3): Article 38 grants every citizen the right to form, join, and participate in political activities, including joining political parties.

Article 55: Requires the state to take measures to ensure youth participation in political, social, and economic spheres.

Article 56: This article provides for the inclusion of minorities and marginalised groups in governance and other spheres of national life.

Article 81(b): The article establishes the two-thirds gender rule, requiring that no more than two-thirds of elective or appointive positions be held by one gender.

Article 91(1): The article outlines the basic requirements of political parties, including respect for human rights and the promotion of gender equality and equity.

Article 100: This article mandates Parliament to enact laws promoting the representation of women, youth, persons with disabilities, and other marginalised groups. This is the basis for the enactment of the National Gender and Equality Commission Act.

Article 177(1)(b): This article requires parties to nominate members to county assemblies to ensure that no gender occupies more than two-thirds of seats in the respective County Assemblies.

These constitutional provisions form the bedrock of Kenya's political inclusion framework, situating equality and participation as preconditions for legitimate political competition and party governance.

POLITICAL PARTIES ACT (CAP 7D, REVISED 2022)

The Political Parties Act (PPA) operationalises these constitutional mandates by regulating the formation, registration, funding, and management of political parties. It also establishes the Office of the Registrar of Political Parties (ORPP) as the independent authority responsible for oversight and enforcement.

The key provisions include:

Section 9(1)(c): The Registrar shall register a political party as fully registered if the composition of its governing body reflects regional and ethnic diversity, gender balance, and representation of special interest groups, including youth, persons with disabilities, and workers.

First Schedule, Paragraph 11 (Code of Conduct for Political Parties): A political party shall promote the representation of women, youth, and persons with disabilities in the party list and all elected or appointed positions. Paragraph 4(d) further directs parties to develop and implement measures for the progressive realisation of representation of these groups in decision-making organs, while paragraph 4(e) requires the implementation of affirmative action programmes and policies under Article 27(6) of the Constitution.

Section 24: The section provides for the criteria to use in the distribution of the Political Parties Fund. 15% (fifteen percent) of the Fund is proportionately distributed to qualifying political parties, based on the number of candidates of the party from Special Interest Groups, including Women and Youths elected in the preceding general election

Section 25(2)(a–b): This section restricts access to the Political Parties Fund (PPF) for any party in which more than two-thirds of office bearers are of the same gender or which lacks representation of

special interest groups in its governing body. This links financial incentives directly to inclusion and diversity compliance.

These legislative provisions translate constitutional principles into enforceable criteria for registration and funding. They position inclusion not merely as a moral imperative but as a regulatory requirement and eligibility condition for participation in Kenya's political system.

INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORKS

THE OFFICE OF THE REGISTRAR OF POLITICAL PARTIES (ORPP)

The Political Parties Act, Cap. 7D, established the Office of the Registrar of Political Parties (ORPP) under Section 33, with the mandate to register and regulate political parties. The Political Parties Act, Cap. 7D, established the Office of the Registrar of Political Parties (ORPP) under Section 33, with the mandate to register and regulate political parties as well as administer the Political Parties Fund. Section 34 of the Act outlines the functions of the Office, which include:

1. Registering, regulating, monitoring, investigating, and supervising political parties to ensure compliance with the Act.
2. Administering the Political Parties Fund.
3. Ensuring publication of audited annual accounts of political parties.
4. Verifying and making publicly available the list of all members of political parties.
5. Keeping and maintaining a register of political parties and their symbols.
6. Ensuring and verifying that no person is a member of more than one political party, and notifying the Commission of such findings.
7. Certifying that an independent candidate in an election is not a member of any registered political party.
8. Certifying that the symbol intended to be used by an independent candidate in an election does not resemble that of a registered political party.

9. Certifying that the names appearing in a party list are those of members of the political party presenting the list.
10. Training political party election agents upon request and financing by the political party.
11. Investigating complaints received under the Act.
12. Performing such other functions as may be conferred by the Act or any other written law.

COORDINATION WITH OTHER INSTITUTIONS

The ORPP’s inclusion agenda depends heavily on collaboration with key institutions:

The Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (IEBC) verifies party nomination lists and enforces compliance with the two-thirds gender rule.

The National Gender and Equality Commission (NGEC) monitors inclusion indicators and conducts gender audits.

The Ministry of Youth Affairs and State Department for Gender support youth and women’s participation programmes.

The Political Parties Liaison Committee (PPLC) serves as a dialogue platform between parties and the regulator.

Development partners, including **UN Women**, **International IDEA**, and **CMD-Kenya**, support inclusion research, training, and advocacy

Budgetary constraints, however, continue to affect the ORPP’s operational autonomy. While allocations have progressively increased since 2021, resources remain inadequate for comprehensive compliance audits and inclusion monitoring across all 47 counties.

PROVISIONS ON INCLUSION

Kenya’s legal and institutional system embeds inclusion in both normative obligations and practical incentives.

1. Gender and Youth Quotas:

Although the Constitution mandates the two-thirds gender principle, legislative efforts to operationalize it have faced persistent political resistance.

Nevertheless, the Political Parties Act and the Code of Conduct require gender-balanced leadership structures and affirmative action for youth and persons living with disabilities.

2. Internal Party Rules:

All political parties have established Women’s and Youth Leagues, while some have formalized inclusion committees. These internal mechanisms aim to align with constitutional values, though their actual influence on decision-making remains limited.

3. Funding Incentives:

The Political Parties Fund (PPF), managed by the ORPP, ties financial eligibility to gender balance and diversity within party structures. There are clear sanctions for non-compliant parties which include denial of access to the fund under Section 25(2) (a–b).

4. Reporting Obligations:

Registered parties are required to submit detailed workplans which must include inclusion provisions, submit annual audited accounts and inclusion reports, detailing measures undertaken to promote participation by special interest groups. These reports form the basis for compliance audits and fund disbursements.

These provisions create a dual mechanism, legal compulsion and financial incentive, intended to institutionalize gender and youth inclusion within party governance structures.

IMPLEMENTATION AND ENFORCEMENT

The enforcement of inclusion measures rests primarily with the ORPP, supported by the IEBC and NGEC. The ORPP conducts regular compliance audits, issues advisory notices, and may impose sanctions or deregistration for persistent violations under Section 34 of the PPA.

There is empirical evidence from ORPP reports (2018–2023) showing moderate progress:

- Over 70% of registered parties have women’s and youth leagues.
- Only 28% of parties allocate budgets for inclusion activities.
- Gender representation within top leadership remains below 30%.

However, some challenges remain including:

- Limited enforcement capacity due to financial and staffing constraints.

- Political interference in disciplinary actions.
- Weak inter-agency coordination on compliance verification.
- Low awareness among party members of legal inclusion obligations.

Despite these constraints, the ORPP has initiated innovative tools such as the digital compliance management system (DCMS), inclusion training modules, and a Gender and Inclusion Audit Framework under development with CMD-Kenya and UN Women.

SUMMARY TABLE: LEGAL FRAMEWORK OVERVIEW

Law/Policy	Inclusion Clause	Enforcement Mechanism	Observed Effect	Key Gaps
Constitution of Kenya	Articles 27, 38, 55, 56, 81(b), 91(1), 100	Judicial oversight, IEBC, Parliament	Strong normative base	Lack of enabling law for two-thirds rule
Political Parties Act (Cap 7D, Rev. 2022)	Section 9(1)(c); Section 25(2)(a–b)	ORPP compliance audits, sanctions	Encourages gender balance	Enforcement inconsistencies
First Schedule (Code of Conduct)	Paragraphs 4(d–e), 11	ORPP & party self-regulation	Promotes inclusion rhetoric	Weak internal accountability
Elections Act & Regulations (2011–2017)	Gender balance in nominations	IEBC oversight	Improves candidate equity	Weak enforcement
Political Parties Fund Regulations (2019)	Conditional funding linked to inclusion	ORPP Fund management	Incentivizes inclusion	Favours major parties

Table 1. Overview of Kenya's Legal and Policy Framework for Inclusive Political Party Regulation

Mechanisms and Practices of the Office of the Registrar of Political Parties (ORPP) in Promoting Inclusion and Accountability

Objective B: To identify and compare mechanisms, practices, and regulatory approaches adopted by ORPPs that promote gender and youth inclusion.

This section draws primarily from Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) conducted with officials from the Opposition Coalition (Azimio La Umoja) The Governing Coalition (Kenya Kwanza), and the Office of the Registrar of Political Parties (ORPP). It integrates these insights with existing legal and policy sources to assess Kenya's framework for political inclusion, implementation practices, incentives, and oversight. A summary table at the end of the section consolidates the main comparative insights emerging from the interviews and supporting documentation.

LEGAL AND INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK

The legal foundation for political inclusion in Kenya is anchored in Articles 91 and 92 of the Constitution. These articles require political parties to respect gender equity and representation of special interest groups. The Political Parties Act (Cap 7D) operationalizes these principles, designating the Office of the Registrar of Political Parties (ORPP) as the statutory regulator as detailed in Section 33 of the Act.

Under Section 34, the ORPP is mandated to

register, supervise, and ensure compliance by political parties with the law, while promoting democracy and inclusion. Inclusion obligations are further embedded in:

Section 7(2)(d) – This section requires party constitutions to reflect gender balance and representation of youth, persons with disabilities, and marginalized groups in governing organs.

Section 9(1A) – This stipulates that officials of any party organ should consist of not more than two-thirds of the same gender.

Section 25(2)(a–b) – This section links eligibility for the Political Parties Fund (PPF) to adherence to inclusion and special-interest representation standards.

To support implementation, the ORPP utilizes several institutional tools:

- **Regular compliance Audits** (since 2020) to assess adherence to inclusion standards within

leadership and membership structures.

- **The Integrated Political Parties Management Information System (IPPMS)**, including the USSD code *509# which enhances data transparency and curbs duplication in membership records.
- In addition, each political party is required to have a **fully operational website for ease of access of information** by members, including audited accounts when applicable.
- **The Political Parties Code of Conduct**, which enshrines equity, inclusiveness, and internal democracy.

The Key Informant Interviews with ORPP officials reinforced that while the legal framework is comprehensive, enforcement tends to rely on persuasion and dialogue through platforms such as the Political Parties Liaison Committee (PPLC), rather than punitive sanctions. This “soft-law” enforcement approach aligns well with the Registrar’s strategy of promoting compliance through institutional capacity-building rather than deregistration.

IMPLEMENTATION PRACTICES – PARTY AND RPP PERSPECTIVES

Although compliance audits and formal structures exist, implementation of inclusion commitments varies across parties. Evidence from key informant interviews and document review highlights three perspectives:

A. ORPP PERSPECTIVE

The ORPP has conducted periodic inclusion audits and organized training in partnership with CMD-Kenya, UN Women, among other partners. However, officials acknowledged that enforcement is constrained by limited field staff and the reliance on voluntary compliance. Forums like the PPLC serve as negotiation spaces where parties commit to corrective action.

B. OPPOSITION COALITION PERSPECTIVE

The Orange Democratic Movement (ODM) reports demonstrated structural commitment to inclusion through women’s, youth, and disability leagues. However, interviews and independent reports confirm persistent “top-down tokenism”, where inclusion targets are met just for purposes of procedural technicalities but not reflected in

actual decision-making power. Grassroots-level participation remains dominated by male elites, echoing findings from UN Women and Oslo Centre (2021) analyses of party democracy in Kenya.

C. RULING COALITION PERSPECTIVE

The United Democratic Alliance (UDA)’s founding constitution integrates inclusion principles, and its Women’s League, Youth and disability initiatives have promoted leadership training. Interview data suggested roughly one-third female representation in top party organs; however, official figures could not be independently confirmed. Public records show that UDA fielded the largest number of women candidates in the 2022 elections. However, structural barriers, especially economic and cultural factors, continue to limit women and youth competitiveness in primaries and party nominations. Both UDA and ODM illustrate the same pattern: formal compliance driven by law and audits, but substantive gaps in exercise of power, funding access, and representation at grassroots levels.

INCENTIVES AND SANCTIONS

The Political Parties Fund (PPF) functions as the principal incentive mechanism for inclusion under Sections 25 and 26 of the Act. Allocation formulas reward parties that meet inclusion and representation criteria, including dedicating 30% of the fund to programs promoting women, youth, and persons with disabilities.

However, interviews with both ORPP and party officials described symbolic rather than transformative effects. Disbursements are often delayed, and the link between inclusion compliance and financial benefit remains weak. For example, ODM received Ksh. 430 million in FY 2020/21, part of which supported its leagues, but monitoring of actual inclusion outcomes is limited.

Whereas there are sanctions for noncompliance, these sanction mechanisms are rarely used. Section 21 provides for suspension or deregistration of non-compliant parties, but ORPP reports show that between 2020 and 2021, only eight notices were issued and none led to full suspension. The is clear preference for dialogue over deterrence and this reflects political sensitivity and institutional pragmatism within Kenya’s party system.

ACCOUNTABILITY AND OVERSIGHT

The accountability for inclusion performance is maintained through a combination of audits, digital reporting systems, and inter-party forums.

The Integrated Political Parties Management Information System (IPPMS) enables verification of membership data and transparency in registration. ORPP's Diversity and Inclusion Policy guides indicators used in compliance reviews.

The National Gender and Equality Commission (NGEC) and UN Women complement ORPP monitoring through periodic gender scorecards (e.g., 2022 elections showing 23.5% female representation in the National Assembly).

The Political Parties Liaison Committee (PPLC) forums provide cross-party spaces for dialogue, while CMD-Kenya facilitates training on internal party democracy.

At the regional level, the ORPP, in consultation with selected African regulators in the political parties' regulatory space is spearheading the creation of the Africa Association of Political Party Regulatory Authorities (AAPPRA). This association is intended as a peer-learning platform to benchmark inclusion, transparency, and regulatory enforcement.

Despite these mechanisms, data fragmentation, especially between the ORPP and the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (IEBC), and inconsistent reporting standards weaken systematic oversight.

CROSS-PARTY COMPARATIVE INSIGHTS

Analysis of the three perspectives reveals several converging patterns across Kenya's multi-party landscape:

- 1. Formal vs. Substantive Compliance** – All major parties meet the legal minimums but fall short in translating inclusion norms into internal power or candidate viability.
- 2. Economic Barriers** – Nomination fees for women and youth are capped to half of what older men pay but campaign financing remain the strongest deterrents to youth and women participation.
- 3. Regulatory Modesty** – The ORPP's emphasis on persuasion and voluntary compliance, rather than

sanctions has led to gradual but uneven change.

4. Cultural and Hierarchical Resistance – Deep-rooted patriarchal and gerontocratic norms perpetuate male dominance, particularly at county and constituency levels.

5. Emerging Good Practices – ODM's mentorship and UDA's leadership training have demonstrated scalable pathways to internal parties' reform.

6. Regional Learning Potential – The AAPPRA initiative could enhance comparative accountability across African jurisdictions by institutionalizing peer review and inclusion benchmarks.

ANALYTICAL SUMMARY

Kenya's political inclusion architecture continues to represent a progressively mature but under-enforced regulatory regime. The legal and institutional design, anchored inter alia in the Constitution and the Political Parties Act, embodies progressive inclusion norms, but their implementation remains contingent on party culture, resource access, and political will.

Interviews and secondary evidence confirm that the Office of the Registrar of Political Parties has been effective in establishing a rules-based foundation and transparency tools (e.g., IPPMS) yet constrained in imposing sanctions or systematically linking inclusion to financial incentives.

Both ODM and UDA reflect similar trajectories: they have formalized inclusion structures but remain shaped by elite dominance and financial gatekeeping. The result is a "compliance culture" where inclusion is symbolically achieved on paper but limited in impact. To close this gap, stronger monitoring, fiscal linkage (through PPF), and regional benchmarking (via AAPPRA) are needed to transform Kenya's inclusion frameworks from legal formality into substantive democratic practice.

SUMMARY OF KEY INFORMANT INSIGHTS AND CROSS-PARTY PATTERNS

The following table consolidates findings from the Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) conducted with representatives of the Orange Democratic Movement (ODM), the United Democratic Alliance (UDA), and the Office of the Registrar of Political Parties (ORPP). It captures the distinct perspectives of each actor while synthesizing the overarching patterns that emerge across Kenya's political inclusion landscape.

The purpose of this summary is to distil complex qualitative insights into a comparative format, which reveals how inclusion, regulation, and internal democracy are perceived and enacted in practice. While the preceding subsections provide detailed thematic analyses (Sections 4.1–4.5), this table offers a concise, side-by-side snapshot of where convergence, divergence, and systemic constraints occur. The synthesis reflects both the empirical depth of the interviews and the corroboration from verified institutional and secondary data sources.

Theme / Dimension	ODM Perspective	UDA Perspective	ORPP Perspective	Cross-Party / Systemic Insights
Policy vs. Practice Gap	Acknowledges a significant gap between democratic structures on paper and “oligarchic practices.” Highlights internal sabotage of women candidates.	Admits that while constitutional provisions are strong, implementation is inconsistent, especially at the grassroots level.	Identifies a major gap between formal compliance (e.g., on paper) and substantive participation (e.g., in power). Notes parties submit compliant documents but undermine inclusion in practice.	All entities acknowledge a vast implementation chasm. Formal rules exist but are routinely circumvented by informal power structures, cultural norms, and a lack of political will at local levels.
Economic Barriers	Identifies finance as the primary barrier. Details how women and youth cannot compete with the resources of older male candidates, even with party support.	Explicitly states “money matters more than we admitted.” Notes that training is ineffective if aspirants cannot fund campaigns costing millions.	Confirms economics as the “most pervasive barrier.” Notes that the 30% party fund allocation is insufficient and poorly timed, failing to level the playing field.	Campaign finance is the unaddressed elephant in the room. The high cost of politics systematically excludes women and youth, and current interventions are described as a drop in the ocean.
Violence & Intimidation	Candidly discusses internal party violence, threats, and the specific use of gendered smears against women. Reports limited success with hotlines due to poor police response.	Notes stronger legal frameworks and more secure seats for women. Youth representation in its NEC is very low (11%), and provisions are “vague.”	Reports 187 incidents in 2022, with 83% of victims being women. Highlights a critical 95%+ impunity rate for perpetrators, identifying it as a fundamental failure of the justice system.	Electoral violence, particularly against women, is endemic and weaponized. All point to a near-total lack of enforcement and prosecution, creating a climate of fear with minimal consequences.
Gender vs. Youth Inclusion	Observes that youth are less organized and have less political clout than women. Suggests older men may see women as less threatening than young male challengers.	Notes stronger legal frameworks and more secure seats for women. Youth representation in its NEC is very low (11%), and provisions are “vague.”	States youth inclusion is their weakest area. Attributes failure to a lack of mandatory quotas (unlike the two-thirds gender rule) and a deeply entrenched wait your turn gerontocratic culture.	The system is significantly more advanced on gender than youth inclusion. Youth lack constitutional leverage, strong legal benchmarks, and face unique cultural age hierarchies that are harder to regulate.

Table 2. Summary of Key Informant Insights and Cross-Party Patterns

Theme / Dimension	ODM Perspective	UDA Perspective	ORPP Perspective	Cross-Party / Systemic Insights
Party Nomination Processes	Describes primaries as democratic in structure but oligarchic in practice. Details manipulation of voter registers, vote-buying, and the use of “direct nomination” to sideline competitors.	Acknowledges voter register manipulation and violence during primaries. Experimented with women-only forums, but admits money and intimidation dictate outcomes.	Identifies party primaries as the primary bottleneck. Highlights the direct nomination loophole and its own inability to monitor more than a fraction of the contests due to resource constraints.	Party primaries are the stage where inclusion most often fails. They are characterized by manipulation, violence, and financial muscle, which parties and regulators have limited capacity to control.
Regulatory Enforcement & Capacity	Criticizes the ORPP and IEBC for having weak enforcement powers, being under-resourced, and focusing on procedural over substantive compliance.	Views the ORPP as a necessary partner but notes limitations in its capacity and enforcement, especially during the nomination phase.	Candidly admits to its own constraints: chronically understaffed (12 officers for 91 parties), underfunded, and lacking graduated sanctions between doing nothing and the nuclear option of deregistration.	The regulator is aware, strategic, but hamstrung. It lacks the legal authority, financial resources, and staff to effectively oversee the political ecosystem it is mandated to regulate.
Cultural & Structural Barriers	Highlights entrenched political interests, patriarchal attitudes, and the confidence gap where women self-select out.	Points to cultural attitudes and the silver-back syndrome where older politicians guard their turf. Notes voters explicitly state they won't vote for women.	Identifies deep-rooted patriarchy and gerontocracy as fundamental challenges that regulation alone cannot fix. Notes that cultural change is generational work.	Technical and legal solutions are insufficient against deep-seated cultural norms. Patriarchy, age-based hierarchies, and ethnic politics consistently override formal inclusion mechanisms.
Internal Party Democracy	Reveals internal power brokers and established interests control outcomes. Mentions male leaders sabotaging women candidates by diverting resources.	Acknowledges tension between party leadership and grassroots, and that county structures often ignore “Nairobi directives” on inclusion.	Observes that real decisions are made in informal settings (e.g., WhatsApp groups, golf clubs) from which women and youth are excluded, making formal rules irrelevant.	Informal power structures within parties consistently undermine formal democratic processes. Power is concentrated in the hands of established, predominantly male elites.

Table 2. Summary of Key Informant Insights and Cross-Party Patterns

Opportunities and Challenges for Regional Collaboration

Objective C: To assess the opportunities and challenges for inter-country collaboration among the three ORPPs in advancing inclusive political party governance.

RATIONALE FOR REGIONAL COLLABORATION

There is growing complexity of political-party regulation across Africa which underscores the need for structured mechanisms for dialogue, knowledge exchange, and harmonisation of standards. Kenya's Office of the Registrar of Political Parties (ORPP) recognises that democratic governance can no longer be sustained through isolated national reforms. Rather, shared learning and coordinated regional action are essential for addressing cross-cutting challenges such as party financing, internal democracy, and the inclusion of women and youth.

Regional collaboration aligns with the emerging ideas around establishing a continental body known as The African Association of Political Party Regulatory Authorities (AAPPRA) initiative, conceived to establish a peer-learning and technical cooperation platform for regulators across the continent. For Kenya, collaboration within this framework offers the opportunity to share its regulatory innovations, such as the Political Parties Management Information System (PPMIS), compliance audits, and inclusion scorecards, while learning from the institutional experiences of Ghana and Sierra Leone, where party financing and autonomy models have evolved differently.

This cooperation is therefore both strategic and practical, it enhances mutual capacity, strengthens democratic accountability, and promotes inclusive political governance consistent with Agenda 2063 and the African Union Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance (ACDEG).

EXISTING FOUNDATIONS FOR REGIONAL AND CONTINENTAL ENGAGEMENT

Kenya already engages in a range of regional and intergovernmental platforms that can support the operationalisation of AAPPRA:

East African Community (EAC): The EAC's Treaty (1999) commits partner states to uphold good governance, democracy, and the rule of law. Kenya's ORPP can collaborate with equivalent institutions in Tanzania, Uganda, and Rwanda to develop regional benchmarks on political-party regulation.

African Union (AU) and African Governance Architecture (AGA): The AU's AGA framework promotes coordination among democracy and governance institutions across Africa. AAPPRA would complement this by providing a technical arm focused on political-party regulation.

Association of African Election Authorities

(AAEA): This existing network of electoral bodies offers a precedent for AAPPRA, demonstrating the value of institutionalised cooperation for shared challenges in political governance.

Development Partners and CSO Networks:

Organisations such as UNDP, UN Women, and Westminster Foundation for Democracy (WFD) have established cross-country programs supporting women’s political participation, creating fertile ground for multi-country partnerships anchored in inclusion (UNDP, 2022; WFD, 2023).

OPPORTUNITIES FOR KENYA AND THE ORPP

The creation of AAPPRA presents significant opportunities for Kenya’s ORPP to consolidate its leadership role in regional governance and institutional development:

1. Regional Leadership and Knowledge Transfer:

Kenya can leverage its technical sophistication, particularly its digital registration and compliance systems, to support peer institutions in modernising regulatory operations.

2. Policy Harmonisation: Joint frameworks under AAPPRA could standardise core rules on party registration, funding eligibility, and inclusion thresholds, thereby enhancing coherence across African jurisdictions.

3. Capacity Building and Peer Learning: The association would institutionalise regional training, exchange visits, and compliance workshops, enabling regulators to collectively address emerging challenges.

4. Enhanced Visibility and Diplomacy: Hosting or co-chairing AAPPRA activities would reinforce Kenya’s international reputation as a champion of inclusive democracy and innovative regulation.

5. Resource Mobilisation: Regional collaboration opens access to pooled donor funding and technical assistance from the AU, UNDP, and bilateral partners, expanding the ORPP’s resource base for domestic initiatives.

6. Support for Women and Youth Networks:

AAPPRA could institutionalise mentorship,

advocacy, and leadership development programmes across member states, amplifying the voice of women and youth in political processes.

ANTICIPATED CHALLENGES TO REGIONAL COLLABORATION

Despite the strong rationale for cooperation, several challenges could hinder AAPPRA’s establishment and effectiveness:

Legal and Institutional Diversity: Political-party regulation varies widely across African states, from dedicated registrars (as in Kenya and Ghana) to electoral commissions or ministries handling party affairs. This diversity complicates standardisation.

Resource Inequality: Many countries lack the financial and technical capacity to sustain independent regulatory institutions. Establishing a regional network will require significant coordination and external support.

Political Sensitivity: Party regulation intersects directly with political power. Some governments may resist regional oversight, perceiving it as interference in domestic political affairs.

Coordination Fatigue: Multiple overlapping continental bodies already exist (e.g., AGA, AAEA, ECOWAS mechanisms), which may create duplication or jurisdictional confusion if not harmonised.

Sustainability and Governance Structure: Ensuring the financial and administrative sustainability of AAPPRA will require a clear governance framework, membership contributions, and a neutral secretariat.

Lesson	Explanation
Legal Autonomy Strengthens Legitimacy	The ORPP's independence enhances its credibility, an essential design feature for regional regulatory bodies.
Digital Systems Promote Transparency	PPMIS demonstrates how technology can enhance cross-country data sharing and party compliance tracking.
Incentive-Based Inclusion Works Better Than Sanctions Alone	Linking funding to compliance has proven more effective in encouraging gender and youth representation.
Strategic Partnerships Are Key	Collaboration with development partners has amplified ORPP's impact and could anchor AAPPRAs' early programs.
Institutionalising Learning	Kenya's periodic compliance clinics could inform AAPPRAs' regional training modules.

Table 3. Key Lessons from Kenya's Experience in Political Party Regulation and Inclusion

ROADMAP FOR KENYA'S CONTRIBUTION TO AAPPRA FORMATION

Kenya can play a catalytic role in the conceptualisation and operationalisation of AAPPRA through the following steps:

1. Convening a Regional Technical Working Group:

Led by ORPP in partnership with the AU and EAC, to define AAPPRA's mandate, membership criteria, and governance structure.

2. Hosting the Inaugural Continental Dialogue on Political-Party Regulation:

Bringing together registrars, electoral bodies, and gender commissions to exchange best practices.

3. Drafting a Model Framework for Party Regulation:

Drawing from the Kenyan model to guide member states on inclusion and compliance standards.

4. Establishing a Regional Secretariat in Nairobi:

Leveraging Kenya's infrastructure and diplomatic status to host the AAPPRA headquarters.

5. Developing a Funding and Sustainability Strategy:

Engaging development partners (UNDP, WFD, NIMD, AU) to co-fund initial operations and capacity-building activities.

This roadmap would reinforce Kenya's position as a continental leader in democratic regulation and inclusion, while promoting institutional synergies across Africa.

SYNTHESIS: KENYA'S STRATEGIC ROLE IN REGIONAL POLITICAL-PARTY REGULATION

Kenya's regulatory journey illustrates the transformative potential of structured, independent oversight for political-party governance. The ORPP's emphasis on inclusion, accountability, and innovation situates Kenya as a benchmark country for regional collaboration. The establishment of AAPPRA offers a timely opportunity to translate national experience into continental practice, promoting peer learning, standardisation, and collective progress toward inclusive democracy. By sharing its institutional model, Kenya contributes not only to regional democratisation but also to the consolidation of Africa's governance architecture, ensuring that the principles of gender equality, youth empowerment, and political accountability are embedded within party systems across the continent.

Prospects for the Formation of the Africa Association of Political Parties Regulatory Authorities (AAPPRA): Kenya's Potential Contribution and Strategic Positioning

Objective D: To propose a framework for potential collaboration among the ORPPs, including the establishment of the Africa Association of Political Party Regulatory Authorities (AAPPRA).

RATIONALE FOR ESTABLISHING AAPPRA

Africa's political-party landscape remains diverse and fragmented, with varying levels of institutionalisation and accountability. While most countries recognise political parties as key vehicles of democratic participation, regulatory frameworks differ widely, ranging from strong, independent registrars (such as Kenya's ORPP and Ghana's Political Parties Commission) to loosely supervised systems under ministries or electoral commissions (WFD, 2023).

The Africa Association of Political Parties Regulatory Authorities (AAPPRA) is therefore envisioned as a continental coordination and learning mechanism, bringing together national regulatory bodies to strengthen political-party governance, share experiences, and develop harmonised standards on inclusion, funding, and accountability.

AAPPRA's formation is driven by three imperatives:

1. Democratic Consolidation: Addressing the growing need for institutional checks and accountability in party operations, especially around inclusion and financing.

2. Knowledge Exchange and Peer Learning: Creating a structured forum for sharing good practices and lessons across African countries.

3. Regional Integration and Policy Harmonisation: Supporting the African Union's Agenda 2063 and the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance (ACDEG), which emphasise institutional collaboration for democratic governance (African Union, 2015).

KENYA'S STRATEGIC ADVANTAGES IN CHAMPIONING AAPPRA

Kenya's Office of the Registrar of Political Parties (ORPP) is uniquely positioned to play a pioneering role in the conceptualisation and operationalisation of AAPPRA due to its regulatory maturity, legal framework, and regional credibility.

Key comparative advantages include:

- **Strong Legal and Institutional Framework:** The Political Parties Act (2011) provides Kenya with one of the most comprehensive legal mandates for party regulation in Africa, covering registration, compliance, funding, and inclusion (Republic of Kenya, 2011).
- **Functional Autonomy and Credibility:** ORPP's operational independence has enhanced public confidence and positioned it as a model regulatory institution in the region (ORPP, 2023).
- **Digitalisation and Data Systems:** Kenya's Political Parties Management Information System (PPMIS) offers a replicable digital model for membership verification, compliance tracking, and gender audits (ORPP, 2021).
- **Proven Inclusion Practices:** The integration of inclusion clauses into registration criteria and access to the Political Parties Fund demonstrates how legal mechanisms can drive representation of women, youth, and persons with disabilities.
- **Active Regional Diplomacy:** Kenya's consistent engagement in AU and EAC governance mechanisms provides diplomatic leverage for mobilising other member states toward AAPPRA's creation.

PROPOSED MANDATE AND STRUCTURE OF AAPPRA

Based on comparative lessons from the Association of African Election Authorities (AAEA) and other intergovernmental forums, AAPPRA could be structured as a network of independent national political-party regulators operating under a common charter.

PROPOSED CORE MANDATE:

- 1. Promote Peer Learning and Exchange:** Facilitate training, knowledge sharing, and capacity building among African political-party regulators.
- 2. Harmonise Standards:** Develop model laws and regulatory guidelines for political-party registration, financing, and inclusion.
- 3. Support Data and Research:** Establish a continental data observatory on party systems, inclusion metrics, and gender/youth representation.
- 4. Facilitate Policy Dialogue:** Serve as an advisory platform to the AU's African Governance Architecture (AGA) on issues related to political-party regulation.
- 5. Strengthen Cross-Border Collaboration:** Support exchange programs, technical assistance, and regional monitoring missions.

PROPOSED GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE:

Body	Explanation
General Assembly	Comprising heads of national regulatory authorities, meet annually to set strategic direction.
Executive Board	Regional representatives (e.g., North, East, West, Central, and Southern Africa) to oversee implementation.
Technical Secretariat	Responsible for coordination, research, communication, and partnership development (potentially hosted in Kenya).
Advisor Council	Includes AU, UNDP, WFD, and civil-society partners offering technical support.

Table 4. Proposed Governance Structure of the Africa Association of Political Parties Regulatory Authorities (AAPPRA)

POTENTIAL PARTNERSHIPS AND FUNDING MECHANISMS

For sustainability, AAPPRA would need diversified partnerships across the public, multilateral, and civil-society sectors.

Partner	Potential Role
African Union (AU)	Policy endorsement, alignment with Agenda 2063 and ACDEG.
ENoP, KIC	Technical assistance on governance and gender inclusion.
Westminster Foundation for Democracy (WFD)	Capacity building on accountability frameworks.
European Union (EU)	Financial support for regional coordination programs.
NIMD and IFES	Research, training, and comparative data analysis.
Regional Economic Communities (RECs)	Integration into sub-regional political governance frameworks (EAC, ECOWAS, SADC).

Table 5. Potential Regional and International Partners for AAPPRA and Their Proposed Roles

A hybrid funding model combining member-state contributions, donor grants, and project-based financing could sustain AAPPRA's programs.

ANTICIPATED BENEFITS FOR KENYA AND THE REGION

The operationalisation of AAPPRA, with Kenya as a blueprint model, would yield several tangible benefits:

Enhanced Policy Influence: Kenya's ORPP could shape continental standards on party registration, funding, and inclusion.

Capacity Enhancement: Kenyan officials would access peer-learning opportunities and comparative insights from other regulators.

Institutional Legacy: Hosting AAPPRA would enhance Kenya's reputation as a hub for democratic governance institutions, complementing its leadership in election management through the IEBC.

Promotion of Gender and Youth Inclusion: Regional frameworks would amplify the enforcement of gender parity and youth representation norms, reinforcing Kenya's domestic efforts.

Harmonisation of Political Practices: Shared continental norms could reduce political instability linked to weak or unregulated party systems.

CHALLENGES AND RISK MITIGATION

Despite its potential, AAPPRA's establishment faces foreseeable challenges that require proactive mitigation:

Challenge	Mitigation Strategy
Political Will and Buy-In: Some states may be reluctant to cede oversight space.	High-level AU endorsement and phased voluntary membership.
Resource Limitations: Limited financing for regional bodies.	Develop joint funding frameworks and align with donor-supported governance programs.
Institutional Overlap: Duplication with existing AU structures.	Formal integration under the AU's African Governance Architecture (AGA).
Operational Sustainability: Risk of inactivity after launch.	Establish a permanent secretariat with a clear results framework and accountability mechanisms.

Table 6. Key Challenges and Mitigation Strategies for the Establishment of AAPPRA

KENYA'S ROADMAP TOWARD AAPPRA ESTABLISHMENT

To translate opportunity into action, a five-step roadmap should be considered:

- 1. Regional Consultations:** Convene Regional-level (EAC, ECOWAS, COMESA) dialogues to build consensus on AAPPRA's formation.
- 2. Concept Paper Development:** Lead drafting of an AAPPRA Concept Note and Charter in collaboration with AU and development partners.
- 3. Pilot Peer-Learning Platform:** Initiate a digital knowledge exchange platform hosted by ORPP to test inter-country collaboration.
- 4. Continental Launch Conference:** Organise a founding conference in under AU patronage to formalise membership.
- 5. Secretariat Establishment and Operationalisation:** Set up a regional secretariat within the ORPP's institutional framework, later transitioning to a standalone entity.

KENYA'S STRATEGIC ROLE IN SHAPING CONTINENTAL POLITICAL-PARTY REGULATION

Kenya stands at the forefront of political-party regulation innovation in Africa. Its ORPP model demonstrates that inclusive, accountable, and digitalised regulation can enhance party legitimacy and citizen trust. By acting as a model blueprint for AAPPRA, the lessons learned can help institutionalise these values across the continent, contributing to a more harmonised, transparent, and gender-responsive political environment.

The establishment of AAPPRA, anchored in Kenya's experience, represents not just a regional milestone, but a step toward the realisation of Africa's democratic vision under Agenda 2063. It offers a tangible mechanism through which the continent can nurture credible political institutions capable of sustaining inclusive governance and durable peace.



Summary of Findings and Recommendations

This section synthesizes the key findings from the analysis of Kenya’s political party regulation landscape, with a particular emphasis on the inclusion of women and youth. Drawing from desk reviews, key informant interviews (KIIs), focus group discussions (FGDs), and comparative assessments with Malawi and Sierra Leone, it aligns conclusions with the study’s four objectives. The synthesis highlights Kenya’s regulatory advancements, ongoing challenges, and opportunities for regional collaboration through the proposed Africa Association of Political Party Regulatory Authorities (AAPPRA). Evidence-based recommendations are provided to advance inclusive governance, prioritizing mechanisms that empower women and youth as active participants in party structures and decision-making processes.

SYNTHESIS OF KEY FINDINGS

The study positions Kenya as a leading example in African political party regulation, supported by robust legal and institutional frameworks, yet hampered by socio-cultural and implementation barriers that limit women and youth inclusion. These findings integrate national context, regulatory practices, and regional prospects to inform strategies for equitable democratic participation.

A.

Legal and Institutional Frameworks (Objective A) Kenya’s 2010 Constitution and Political Parties Act (2011, revised 2022) provide a strong normative foundation for party regulation and inclusion, mandating gender equity through the two-thirds gender rule (Article 81(b)) and youth participation (Article 55). The Office of the Registrar of Political Parties (ORPP) enforces these via registration criteria (Section 9(1)(c)), compliance audits, and the Political Parties Fund (PPF), which ties funding to diversity requirements. Collaborative institutions like the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (IEBC) and National Gender and Equality Commission (NGEC) support oversight. However, persistent gaps, such as un-enacted enabling legislation for gender quotas and limited enforcement capacity, result in procedural adherence without substantive change. Women and youth remain underrepresented in leadership, with gender representation in top party organs below 30% and youth parliamentary seats under 5%, reflecting entrenched patriarchal and gerontocratic norms.

B.

Regulatory Mechanisms and Practices (Objective B) The ORPP employs innovative tools, including the Integrated Political Parties Management Information System (IPPMS), inclusion audits, and training programs in partnership with UN Women and CMD-Kenya, to promote women and youth participation. PPF incentives allocate 30% of funds to special interest groups, encouraging

parties like ODM and UDA to establish women's and youth leagues. KIs reveal good practices, such as mentorship initiatives, which contributed to increased female candidacy in 2022 elections (23% women in the National Assembly). FGDs, however, underscore barriers: economic hurdles like high nomination fees, electoral violence (83% of 2022 incidents targeting women), and informal power structures that marginalize women and youth. Youth inclusion trails gender progress due to weaker quotas, with parties often confining young members to mobilization roles. The ORPP's dialogue-based enforcement fosters incremental gains but falls short of addressing systemic tokenism, where inclusion is symbolic rather than empowering.

C.

Opportunities and Challenges for Inter-Country Collaboration (Objective C) Kenya's multiparty system, marked by over 80 registered parties and ethnic-driven alliances, highlights a dynamic yet fluid context where patronage and monetization exacerbate exclusion. Coordination among ORPP, IEBC, and civil society is present but fragmented, with inconsistent data on inclusion hindering policy effectiveness. Comparative insights from Malawi and Sierra Leone emphasize Kenya's strengths in digital transparency and funding incentives, offering opportunities for shared learning on audits and quotas. Challenges include institutional diversity across Africa, resource disparities, and political sensitivities that could impede harmonization. Nonetheless, platforms like the East African Community (EAC) and African Union (AU) Agenda 2063 provide foundations for collaboration, enabling Kenya to export lessons on inclusion while addressing common barriers to women and youth engagement.

D.

Framework for Collaboration and AAPPRA (Objective D) AAPPRA emerges as a promising framework for continental cooperation, with Kenya's ORPP positioned to lead through its autonomy, digital tools, and inclusion practices. Proposed as a peer-learning network with a general assembly, executive board, and technical secretariat, AAPPRA could harmonize standards on gender and youth representation, supported by partnerships with UNDP and WFD. Kenya's roadmap, including regional consultations and a Nairobi-based secretariat, could amplify benefits like policy influence and resource mobilization. Risks

such as coordination fatigue and funding shortfalls require mitigation, but AAPPRA's potential to mainstream inclusion norms aligns with Africa's democratic aspirations, fostering cross-border mentorship for women and youth. Overall, Kenya's progressive frameworks have driven moderate inclusion gains, but cultural, economic, and enforcement challenges perpetuate disparities for women and youth. Regional collaboration via AAPPRA offers a pathway to benchmark and scale reforms, enhancing equitable participation across the continent.

Most importantly, AAPPRA could provide an excellent framework for capacity building of political parties in member states, by linking parties with their ideologically linked parties in the older, well-developed democracies in Europe. For instance, an active political party in Malawi, Kenya or Sierra Leone whose ideology is Environmental Conservation and Climate Action (e.g. Green Action Party GAP) may be linked up through AAPPRA, with the Greens Party in Germany or Australia, Canada or ultimately the Global Greens Network.

ACTIONABLE RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations are derived from the study's evidence, focusing on bridging policy-practice gaps to promote women and youth inclusion. They are categorized by level, with timelines, responsible actors, and indicators for effective implementation.

A. NATIONAL POLICY AND LEGAL REFORMS

Focus Area	Key Recommendation	Lead Actor(s)	Timeline	Measurable Indicators
Party Nomination Processes	Enact legislation to operationalize the two-thirds gender rule and introduce youth quotas (e.g., 20% in party governing bodies).	Parliament, ORPP, NGEC	12-24 months	Bills passed; increase in women/youth representation in parties (target: 35% by 2027).
Reforming Funding Mechanisms	Adjust PPF criteria to allocate 40% for women/youth programs, with stricter compliance verification.	ORPP, National Treasury	6-12 months	Audited disbursements; 25% rise in inclusion-focused expenditures.
Combating Barriers	Reduce nomination fees for women/youth and establish enforcement protocols for violence prevention.	IEBC, ORPP, Ministry of Gender	Immediate-18 months	Fee waivers implemented; 50% reduction in reported violence incidents.
Promoting Awareness	Expand civic education on inclusion rights, targeting women and youth via digital and community channels.	ORPP, CSOs, County Governments	Ongoing	Reach of programs (target: 500,000 participants annually); improved knowledge surveys.

Table 7. Priority National Recommendations for Enhancing Women and Youth Inclusion

B. INSTITUTIONAL STRENGTHENING

Institutional Area	Recommendation	Implementation Modality	Timeline	Measurable Indicators
Data and Monitoring Systems	Enhance IPPMS with gender/youth analytics and launch an inclusion observatory for annual reports.	ORPP with UNDP/UN Women support	6-18 months	Dashboard usage by 80% of parties; comprehensive annual inclusion data.
Enforcement Tools	Adopt graduated sanctions and expand county audits for inclusion compliance.	ORPP Compliance Unit	6-12 months	Audits completed (target: 100/year); 85% compliance rate.
Training Initiatives	Roll out modules on inclusive democracy for party officials, emphasizing women/youth empowerment.	ORPP, CMD-Kenya, UN Women	12-24 months	Sessions conducted (target: 50/year); participant feedback on practice changes.
Inter-Institutional Coordination	Create a taskforce for joint data sharing and monitoring of women/youth participation.	ORPP, IEBC, Ministry of Youth	3-6 months	Joint reports issued quarterly; minimized data inconsistencies.

Table 8. Recommendations for ORPP and Partner Capacity Building

C. REGIONAL AND CONTINENTAL COLLABORATION

Focus Area	Key Recommendation	Responsible Actor(s)	Timeline	Measurable Indicators
Establishing AAPPRA	Draft charter and host founding consultations, prioritizing inclusion mandates.	ORPP, AU, EAC	6-12 months	Charter ratified; initial membership (target: 15 countries).
Knowledge Exchange	Develop a platform for sharing practices on women/youth audits with Malawi and Sierra Leone.	ORPP, WFD, NIMD	12-24 months	Exchanges held (target: 20/year); regional benchmarks adopted.
Inclusion-Focused Programs	Initiate mentorship networks for women/youth across borders, with AU funding.	ORPP, UNDP, UN Women	Ongoing	Participants engaged (target: 1,000/year); enhanced regional metrics.
Sustainability Measures	Formulate funding strategies and M&E for inclusion progress tracking.	ORPP, AU, Partners	18-36 months	Framework operational; annual continental reports.

Table 9. Recommendations for AAPPRA and Inter-Country Engagement

ACTIONABLE RECOMMENDATIONS

Potential risks to implementation are addressed as follows:

Risk	Likelihood/Impact	Mitigation Strategy
Political Resistance	High/High	Foster multi-stakeholder dialogues and use evidence from KIIs/FGDs to advocate benefits.
Resource Limitations	Medium/High	Secure diverse funding through PPF reforms and international partnerships.
Cultural/Structural Barriers	High/Medium	Pilot reforms in select regions, incorporating FGD insights for adaptation.
Regional Challenges	Medium/Medium	Integrate AAPPRA with existing AU structures for streamlined coordination.

Table 10. Risk Mitigation Strategies

Objective	Key Indicator	Data Source	Frequency
Improved Inclusion	% women/youth in party leadership/elections	ORPP/IPU Reports	Annual
Regulatory Effectiveness	Audit coverage and enforcement rates	ORPP Records	Biannual
Collaboration Success	AAPPRA activities and adopted practices	AAPPRA Secretariat	Annual
Democratic Outcomes	Participation rates for women/youth	NGEC/IEBC Data	Election Cycles

Table 11. Monitoring and Evaluation Framework.

WAY FORWARD FOR INCLUSIVE DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE

Kenya’s political party regulation framework demonstrates significant potential for fostering inclusive governance, particularly through the ORPP’s innovations in transparency and incentives. By addressing identified gaps in women and youth inclusion, via national reforms and AAPPRA-led collaboration, Kenya can enhance equitable participation, contributing to Agenda 2063’s goals of democratic resilience and social justice across Africa. Sustained implementation of these recommendations, guided by rigorous monitoring, will be essential to realizing this vision.



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Annexes

ANNEX 1: LIST OF KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS (ANONYMISED)

- Registrar of Political Parties and ORPP officials
- Members of Parliament
- UDA and ODM Political party representatives
- CSOs including ELGIA and ELOG

ANNEX 2: FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS (FGDS)

- Youth leaders from political parties
- Women party officials
- Regional coordination partners

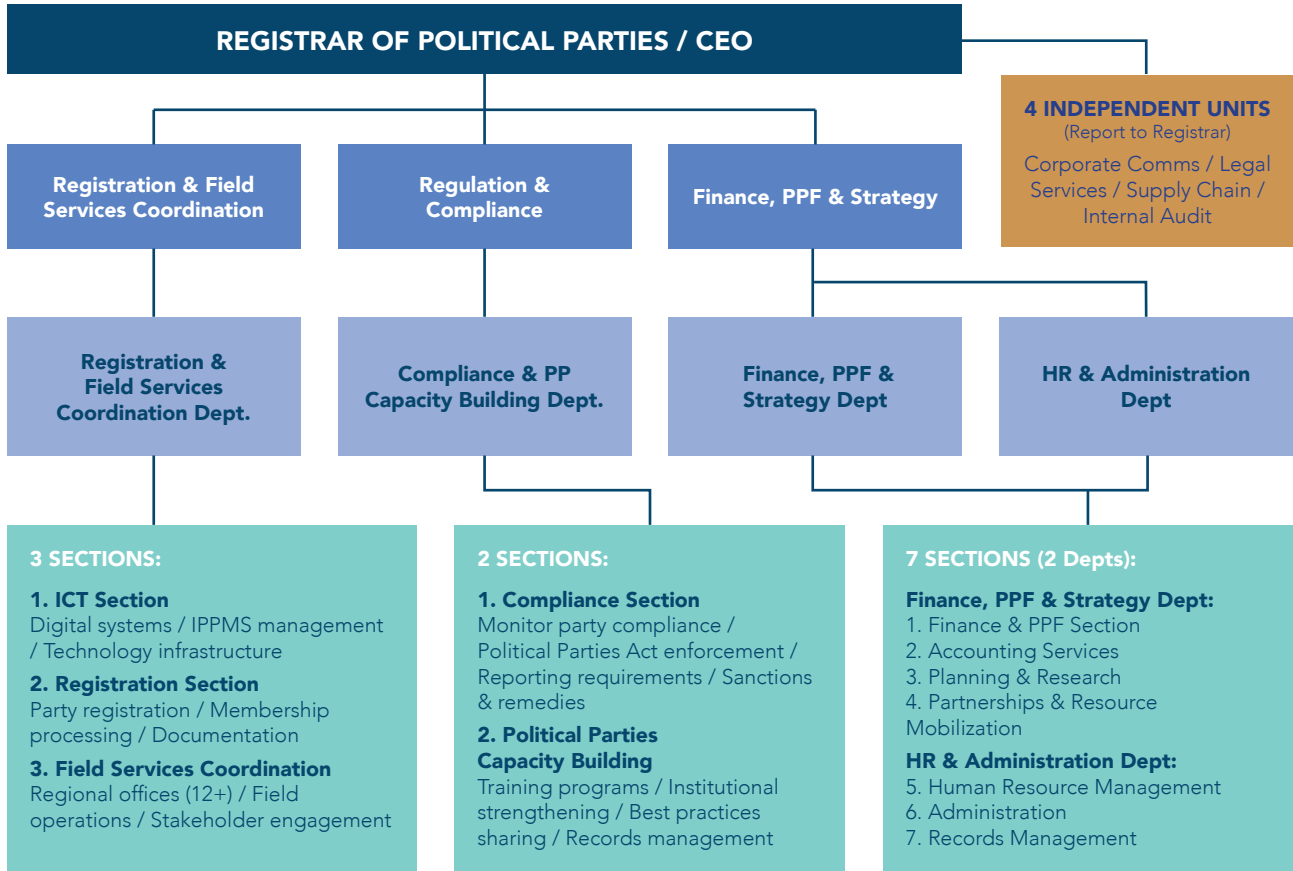
ANNEX 3: LEGAL AND POLICY MAPPING TABLE

Legal/Policy Document	Key Inclusion Provisions	Enforcement Mechanism	Observed Effectiveness	Gaps/Challenges
Constitution of Kenya (2010)	Two-thirds gender rule	Courts, ORPP oversight	Moderate	Partial implementation
Political Parties Act (2011)	Party registration, compliance, sanctions	ORPP	Limited enforcement due to resources	Low awareness of gender provisions
NGEC Guidelines	Gender mainstreaming	NGEC	Partially effective	Coordination with ORPP needed

Table 7. Priority National Recommendations for Enhancing Women and Youth Inclusion

ANNEX 4: ORPP ORGANOGRAM AND INSTITUTIONAL LINKAGES

OFFICE OF THE REGISTRAR OF POLITICAL PARTIES (ORPP) ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE - SEPTEMBER 2025



INDEPENDENT UNITS (REPORTING TO REGISTRAR)



ORGANIZATIONAL LEGEND



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ANNEX 5: TABLES AND MATRICES USED IN ANALYSIS

- Comparative enforcement of inclusion provisions across parties
- Regional collaboration feasibility matrix

