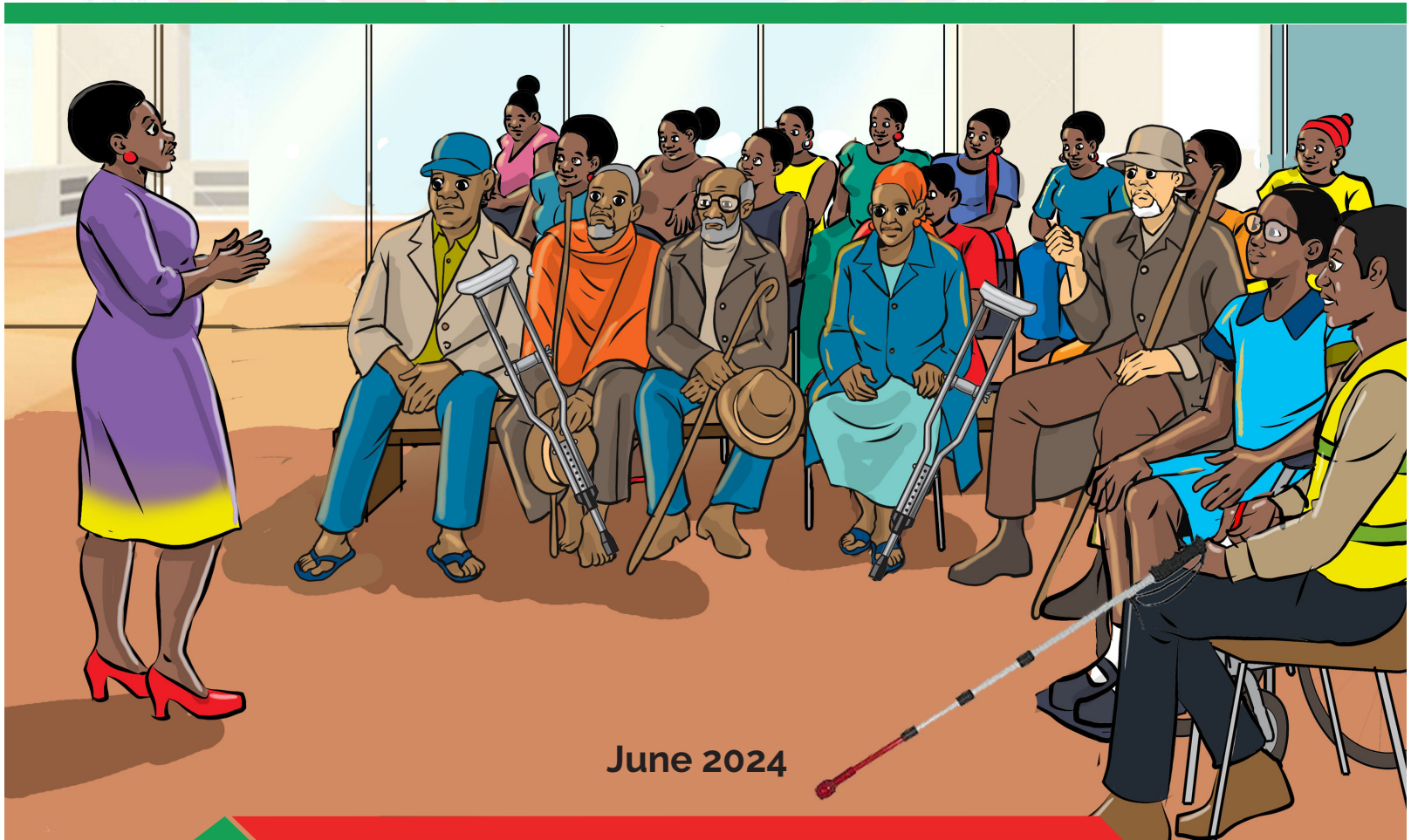


Uraia

STRATEGIC INSIGHTS RESEARCH REPORT ON ELECTORAL
EXCELLENCE: THEMATIC RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PRE-
2027 ELECTORAL REFORMS.

THEMATIC KNOWLEDGE PRODUCT
AND RESEARCH BRIEF ON
CIVIC AWARENESS AND VOTER
EDUCATION



June 2024

Naturing An Engaged, Empowered and Value-Based Citizenry



MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS
OF DENMARK
Denmark in Kenya



Foreign, Commonwealth
& Development Office



ITALIAN AGENCY
FOR DEVELOPMENT
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Irish Aid
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UNITED NATIONS
HUMAN RIGHTS
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INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW OF RESULTS

1.1 About the Study

Uraia Trust in partnership with the Consortium of Election Research and Advocacy (CERA) with financial support from DANIDA and UNDP, conducted four mini-studies on selected thematic areas related to the conduct of elections in Kenya. This brief summarizes the findings of one of the four thematic areas, namely, Civic Awareness and Voter Education conducted between August and December 2023. The overall purpose of the study was to generate insights on the topic under consideration that may be utilized to improve the execution of the 2027 elections.

1.2 Study Purpose and Rationale

This thematic research brief or knowledge product examines the progress and impact of civic awareness and voter education efforts in Kenya over the past decade, through an in-depth study conducted between the time of the promulgation of the 2010 Constitution and the 2022 elections. The report aims to inform future programming and recommendations leading up to the 2027 general elections. The analysis reveals civic and voter education to be critical pillars upholding democracy, governance, and inclusive participation in Kenya's electoral processes. However, achieving meaningful impact requires coordinated efforts between diverse stakeholders including IEBC, ORPP, PPDT, independent commissions, other government institutions, CSOs, faith communities and media outlets. Following an electoral cycle approach, these groups must collaborate to develop innovative and effective civic and voter education initiatives. Of particular importance, is reaching underserved populations like women, youth, and PWDs, who have historically lower rates of voter registration and turnout compared to other demographics.



Civic/voter education session)

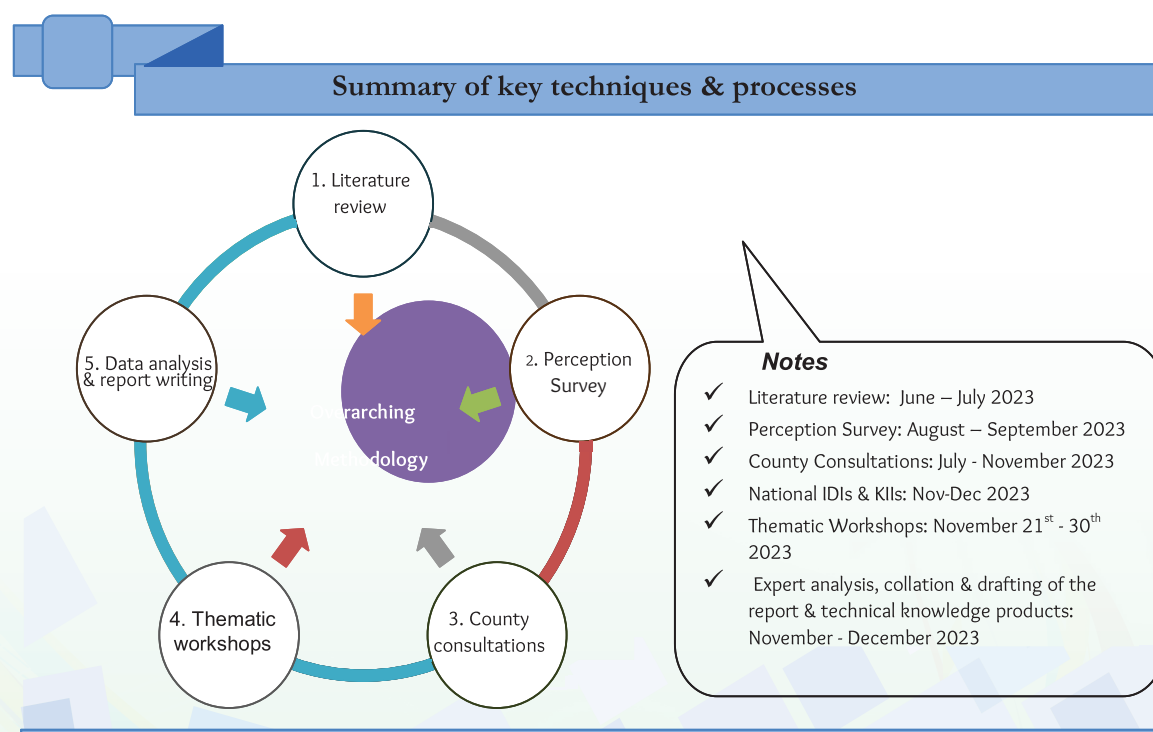
1.3 Summary of Recommendations

The report suggests targeted outreach using platforms that are popular among these demographics as a means of promoting engagement. Specifically, it recommends that the IEBC undertakes accreditation of civic/voter education providers well in advance of elections and partner with local community groups/centers and places of worship to provide accessible venues for ongoing education activities. It also advises incorporating voting process overviews during national ID registration for first-time voters and providing practice ballots to familiarize voters. For civil society, the report suggests recruiting influencers as champions and establishing volunteer networks to expand grassroots engagement. Interactive media and entertainment platforms are also proposed to better resonate with the youth. The report puts forth detailed recommendations for each stakeholder group to enhance quality, reach, and impact of civic efforts. From localized grassroots campaigns to long-term funding commitments, stakeholders have a crucial role to play in strengthening democracy and social inclusion. With renewed vigor and commitment to equitable civic/voter education, Kenya has potential to mount effective civic awareness and voter education initiatives contributing to civically engaged populace.

1.4 Five Key Take a Ways from the Study

In the final analysis five key issues stand out. **Timing:** Most civic and voter education activities were concentrated in the period between 6 to 12 months before the elections (IEBC 2022, ELOG 2022). **Resource shortfalls:** Have hindered civic education efforts by undermining effective grassroots mobilization and outreach, for both the electoral commission as well as civil society organizations working in this field (ELOG, 2017; The Elephant, 2022; IRI, 2022). **Messaging:** Civic and voter education providers should invest more in designing messages that target different demographics and utilize appropriate mediums for each category. **Targeted outreach:** To women, youth, PWDs and marginalized groups is also essential for inclusive civic awareness & voter education. **Strategies & approaches:** Various reports and evaluations show that grassroots efforts that engage citizens are more effective in building civic knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors compared to passive mass media. (Commonwealth Election Observation Mission 2022). Creative use of new technologies like social media, mobile platforms and interactive apps to enhance reach and resonance with youth as well as community radio talk shows. **In summary**, through its insightful findings and practical guidance, this report provides a roadmap towards deepening citizen participation, promoting good governance and mature democracy and safeguarding electoral integrity in Kenya.

1.5 Study Design and Methodology



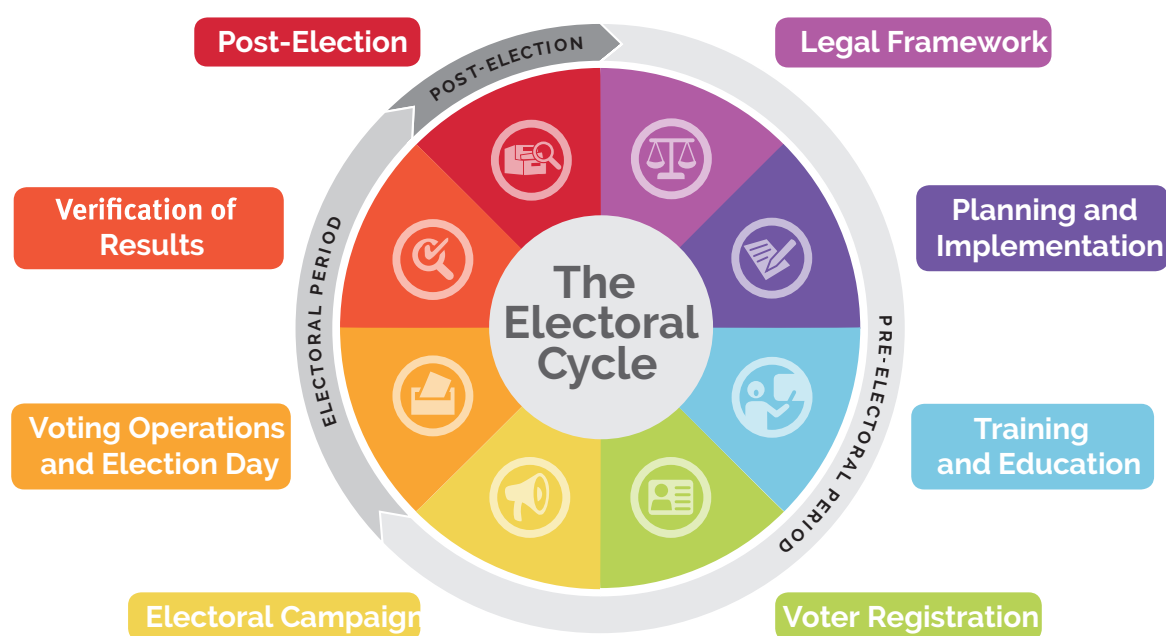
Source: CERA 2023

2.0 ELECTORAL CYCLE APPROACH TO CIVIC AWARENESS AND VOTER EDUCATION IN KENYA

2.1 Main Players in the Civic/Voter Education Agenda

Over the past decade, efforts have been made to increase civic and voter education awareness among the Kenyan populace. The 2010 constitution has provided for civic and voter education campaigns including public participation (Constitution of Kenya, 2010). Voter education is primarily conducted by the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (IEBC), a constitutional commission. Civil society organizations primarily conduct the broader civic education of which voter education is a component. For the past decade, civil society organizations have been partnering with IEBC in undertaking voter education as part of collaborations and best practice approaches. This collaboration was evident in the development and implementation of nationwide civic and voter education initiatives leading up to the 2013, 2017, and 2022 general elections, as part of empowering citizens on their democratic rights (Oseni, 2015; USAID, 2013).

During this period various institutions and development partners supported the electoral process in Kenya in pursuing the inclusive vision of democracy put forth by the Constitution of Kenya (2010) where all voters are fully enfranchised. Civil society organizations like Uraia Trust with a network of over 50 county-based civil society organizations and over 360 county-based civic educators has been consistent in running nationwide civic and voter education programs aimed at empowering citizens on their civic duties in partnership with key actors such as the Independent Elections and boundaries Commission and the Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development (KICD). In addition, other institutions including, the Institute for Election Systems (IFES) as well as the UNDP facility, Amkeni Wakenya, have also been working with various local civil society organizations and select state actors including IEBC to increase the participation and engagement of Kenyan voters, especially women, youth and People with disability (PWDs) in the electoral process.



Kenya electoral cycle

2.2 Declining Voter Turn-out Despite Civic/Voter Education Efforts

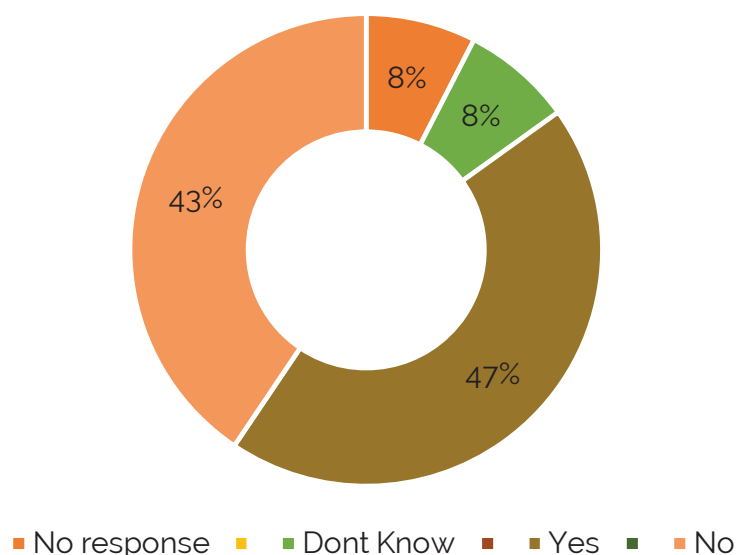
Studies including the African Union Election Observation Report (2022) and the Carter Centre Election Observation Report (2022) found that many eligible voters, particularly youth and first-time voters, still lacked sufficient awareness and knowledge regarding the voting process and implications of elections. According to a 2019 report by the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES), voter turnout in Kenya had improved from 56% in 2002 to 79% in 2017, indicating growing civic engagement. However, this trend did not continue as the turnout during the 2022 general elections reduced to 65.4%. According to the Kofi Annan Foundation Report (2022), Kenya's August 2022 general elections recorded the lowest voter turnout in 15 years where only 65.4% of the 22.12 million registered voters came out to cast their ballots. Out of this, 39.84% (8.8 million) of the total registered voters were youth, a decline of 5.17% from the 2017 figures. This low voter turnout strongly indicated voter apathy, particularly among young people. In 2017, a GeoPoll survey found that 40% of voters were unsure which political party their preferred presidential candidate belonged to. The lack of issue-based voting persists as many cast ballots based on ethnic affiliations.

2.3 Levels of Civic and Voter Education Awareness

According to the perception survey conducted by CERA (2023), as portrayed in figure 1 below, 47% of the respondents were aware of the various civic and voter education initiatives carried out in the country, 43% indicated they were not aware

of any civic and voter education initiatives and another 8% had no idea about the issue.

Figure 1: Awareness of Civic and Voter Education Initiatives in Kenya:



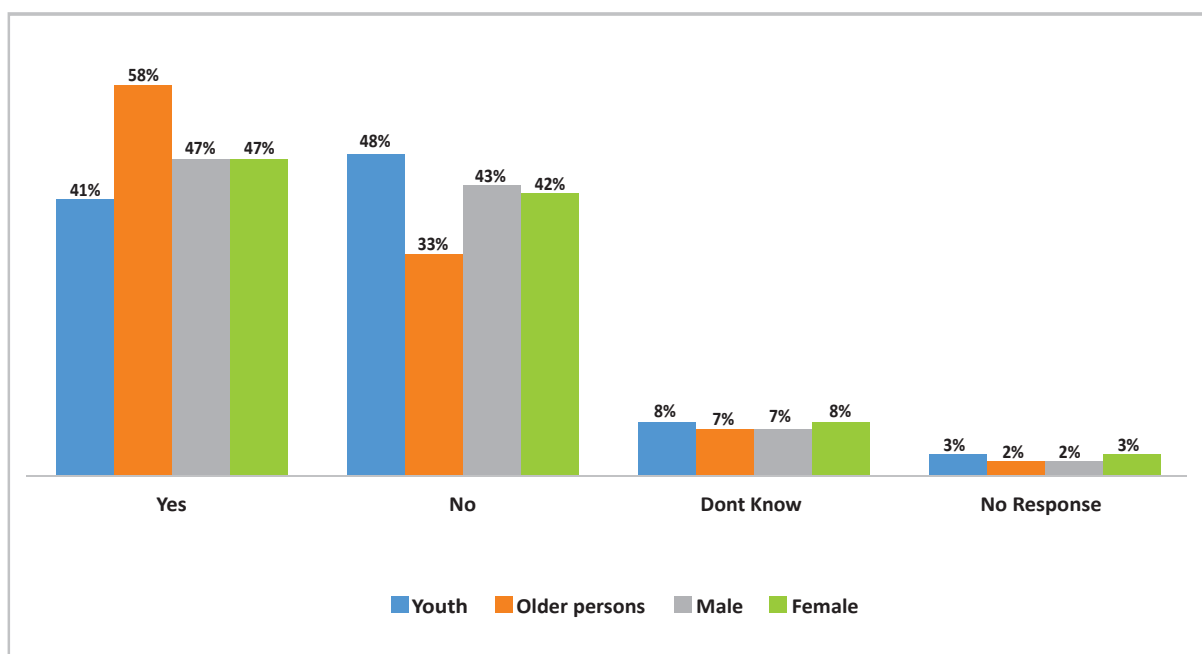
Source: (CERA 2023)

In addition, the responses that were received from the focus group discussions, Key informant interviews, and thematic workshops, validated these findings as the majority of the participants indicated that they had limited awareness of the various civic and voter education initiatives carried out in the country by various stakeholders. This finding implies that the measures used to undertake civic and voter education initiatives still have gaps, which need to be addressed. It also implies that the level of citizen engagement in these initiatives is low and can partly explain the challenges that the country is facing on issues around governance and leadership.

2.4 Awareness Levels Disaggregated by Gender and Age

From the study, it also emerged that awareness of civic and voter education is higher among older persons at (58%) in comparison to the youths (41%). This implies that methods used to deliver civic education resonate with the older population and not with the young people. It also emerged that there is no disparity between the sexes when it comes to the level of awareness both stood at 47%. As illustrated in Figure 2 below.

Figure 2: Awareness of Civic and Voter Education Initiatives segregated by gender and age



Source: CERA 2023

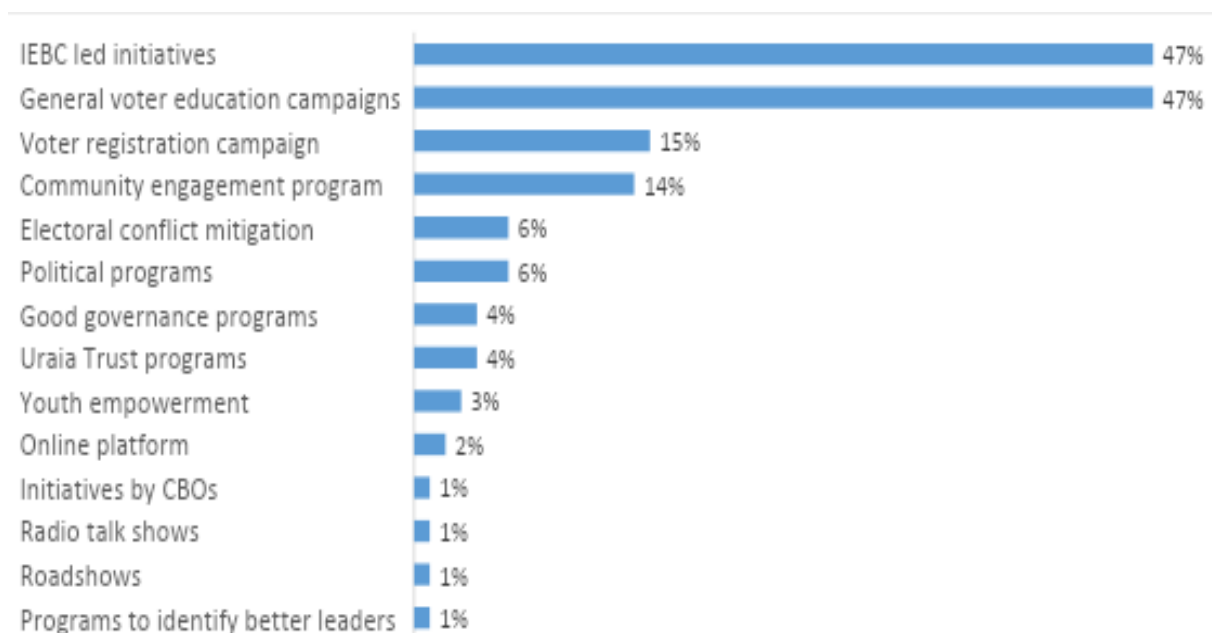
Participants who attended the focus group discussions at the constituency level explained that many of the strategies used to deliver civic and voter education do not appeal to the youth and the ones that are youth-friendly, are not tailor-made to differentiate between the needs of the urban youth and the rural youth.

2.5 Civic/voter Education Platforms and Initiatives in Kenya

Civic awareness and voter education in Kenya are undertaken using various platforms by the different civic education providers. The choice of platform is critical as it determines which demography will be reached as well as the impact of the intervention. According to the perception survey by CERA, (2023) 47% of the respondents were aware of the IEBC-led initiatives. Equally 47% of the respondents were also aware of the general voter education initiatives as demonstrated in Figure 3. However, awareness on voter registration campaign platforms was at (15%) while ¹Community engagement programs in the electoral process were at (14%), which is quite low bearing in mind their significance in the electoral process and overall governance landscape necessary to nurture a democratic culture. In addition, awareness of civic and voter education was below 10% when it came to knowledge about online platforms, political programs, youth platforms, and radio talk shows. This means that more effort is required to effectively utilize these platforms better.

¹ Community engagement programs – these are programs initiated by local community organizations e.g. youth groups, women groups, religious bodies etc.

CBO led initiatives – are programs initiated by CSOs. Officially registered bodies

Figure 3: Civic and Voter Education Initiatives & Platforms

Source CERA (2023)

2.6 Preferred Civic/voter Education Channels/Platforms

During the focus group discussions and thematic workshops, participants indicated that these initiatives need to be well publicized and be brought to the grassroots and not confined to town centers and big cities. They also felt that the strategies used should be cognizant of the respective unique socio-cultural context to ensure there is acceptance. It was proposed that faith communities, community social platforms, and local community radios/media houses should be used for disseminating civic and voter education initiatives to increase its reach and impact. While progress has been made, recommendations from different election observation missions² including the African Union, The Koffi Annan Foundation, The European Union Observer Mission, The Carter Centre, and the Election Observation Group (ELOG), emphasize that greater investment in civic education resources and voter awareness building is required to strengthen Kenya's democracy. Sustained non-partisan initiatives targeting marginalized and special interest groups like women, people with disability (PWDs), pastoralists and the youth remain vital for upholding principles of good governance and promoting inclusive democratic participation in Kenya.

² IEBC elections report 2022



Voter education channel – radio and social media platforms

3.0 DISCUSSIONS ON EXTENT & IMPACT OF CIVIC AND VOTER EDUCATION UNDERTAKEN IN 2022 ELECTIONS COMPARED TO 2013 & 2017

3.1 How much civic/voter education was undertaken in the 2022 elections compared to 2013 and 2017 and what was its impact?

Over the past three election cycles, civic and voter education in Kenya has experienced both advancements and as well as some gaps. While there has been positive progress made in some aspects, certain persistent challenges remain unresolved. Overall, the landscape reflects a combination of encouraging improvements alongside limitations that continue to require attention. The 2013 cycle saw the government initiate a large-scale civic education program, the Kenya National Integrated Civic Education (KNICE) initiative. This focused on building awareness of the new constitution and electoral framework. Civil society organizations (CSOs) like Uraia Trust also conducted significant civic education activities supported largely by local donors. However, outreach concentrated on voting logistics rather than deeper civic issues. Most civic/voter education occurred just pre-election. There were some significant wins for example with the voter turnout in 2013 reaching 86%, up from 69% in 2007³, one of the highest in the last twenty years.

For the 2017 elections, government-civil society partnerships expanded through joint curriculum as well as civic and voter education material development. The concept of "action-oriented" civic education for active citizen engagement also emerged during this phase. Social media assumed greater prominence for youth outreach, and radio remained key for remote areas. However, late funding constrained the impact of CSOs' civic and voter education programs. There were also urban-rural disparities in the messaging formats used. Voter turnout dipped slightly to 80% in 2017⁴. In 2022, multimedia civic education was more systematic and collaborative. Mainstream media, social media influencers, edutainment ⁵shows, and interactive community theater informed and engaged citizens on voting logistics and electoral issues. WhatsApp, TikTok, and Chatbots enabled youth appeal. However, a government ban on foreign funding for civic education hampered CSOs and electoral commission programs. Most education again happened in the months right before

³ International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, Voter Turnout Database 2018

⁴ European Union Election Observation Mission Final Report on 2022 Kenya Elections

⁵ Edutainment: refers to content that is designed to be both educational and entertaining. The goal of edutainment is to teach or inform audiences while also engaging them with fun, engaging presentations.

the elections rather than over the electoral cycle. Voter turnout rebounded to 65% in 2022⁶

Across the three cycles, partnerships between state and civil society strengthened, though remained partly ad hoc and frosty. Approaches gradually encompassed more technologies, vernacular outreach, and differentiated messaging for youth and marginalized groups. However, funding and timing challenges persisted, limiting the depth of sustained civic education. A comprehensive electoral cycle approach is still needed to instill participatory citizenship. Despite expanded state-civil society partnerships and diverse formats like social media and interactive theater, civic education prior to Kenya's 2022 elections continued to face limitations around funding, timing, and depth of messaging. Consequently, while multimedia tools increased reach, especially amongst youth, persistent gaps meant civic learning remained superficial. This hindered deep engagement on participatory governance and active citizenship. Furthermore, voter turnout decreased to 65% in 2022 compared to 80% in 2017, indicating limitations in civic education's impact on voter mobilization. More comprehensive, sustained initiatives are required to transform civic knowledge and shape public discourse beyond just voting logistics

3.2 Are the Civic/Voter Education Strategies Working or what Alternatives Can be Explored for More Effectiveness?

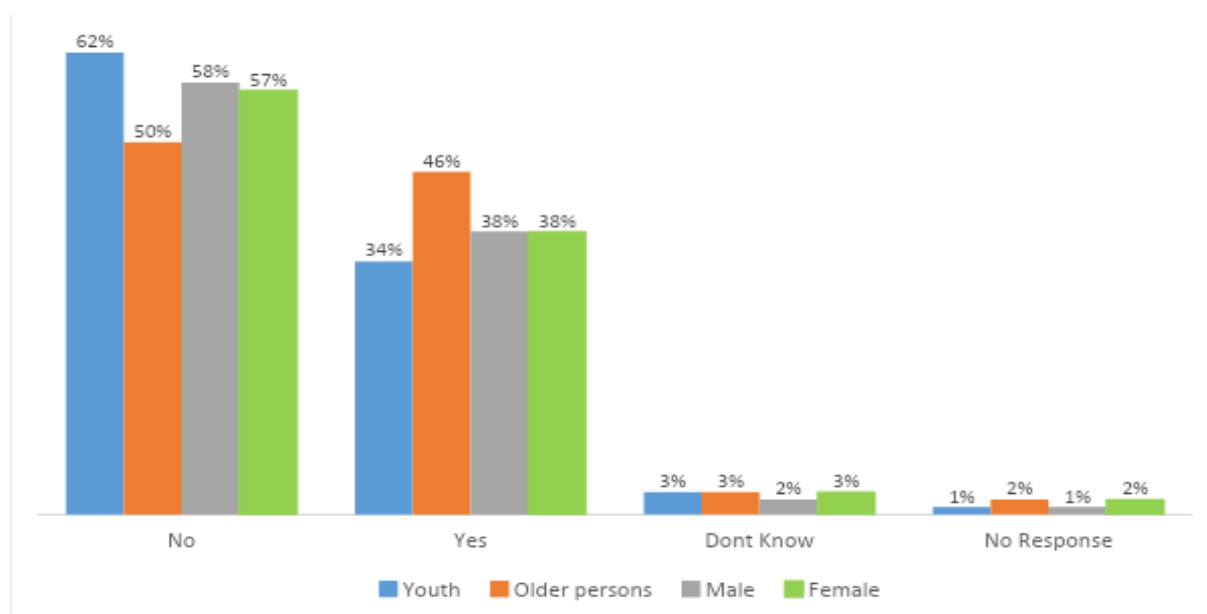
Delivery of civic and voter education has seen many innovative ways and strategies being deployed with different success rates. In the lead-up to Kenya's 2013 and 2017 general elections, civic and voter education efforts focused on mass media campaigns, public forums and grassroots mobilization to inform citizens about voter registration and voting procedures (Oseni, 2015). Civil society organizations collaborated with the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (IEBC) to implement programs using radio, television, newspapers, and social media to disseminate educational messages (USAID, 2013). These campaigns focused on boosting women and youth voter turnout, and they had a significant impact in major cities and town centers but lacked grassroots mobilization in rural counties to match the impact (Twaweza East Africa, 2017). Civic education programs during this time prioritized community-based interactive outreach, especially targeting youth and marginalized groups. This involved training and deploying local civic educators⁷, holding community forums and simulation exercises on various voting procedures, as well as incorporating civic learning into school curricula (NDI, 2020; Murunga, 2011).

6 European Union Election Observation Mission Final Report on 2022 Kenya Elections

7 Uraia Trust Midterm Evaluation Report 2017

The Commonwealth Secretariat Report (2017), noted that even though these nationwide campaigns helped reach and register millions of new voters, their efficacy was limited, as some of these strategies lacked interactivity to sufficiently build civic knowledge and civic capabilities. It was also noted that many of the strategies were not sufficiently tailored to target and engage the youth demography (Mbeke et al., 2017). According to the CERA Perception Survey (2023), participation of youth in civic and voter education initiatives has been low at 34% when compared with that of older persons which stood at (46%) as illustrated in Figure 4 below. The findings imply that most of the approaches, strategies and methodologies which are used, are more appealing to the older generation than to the young citizens.

Figure 4: Participation in civic and voter education programs by segments.



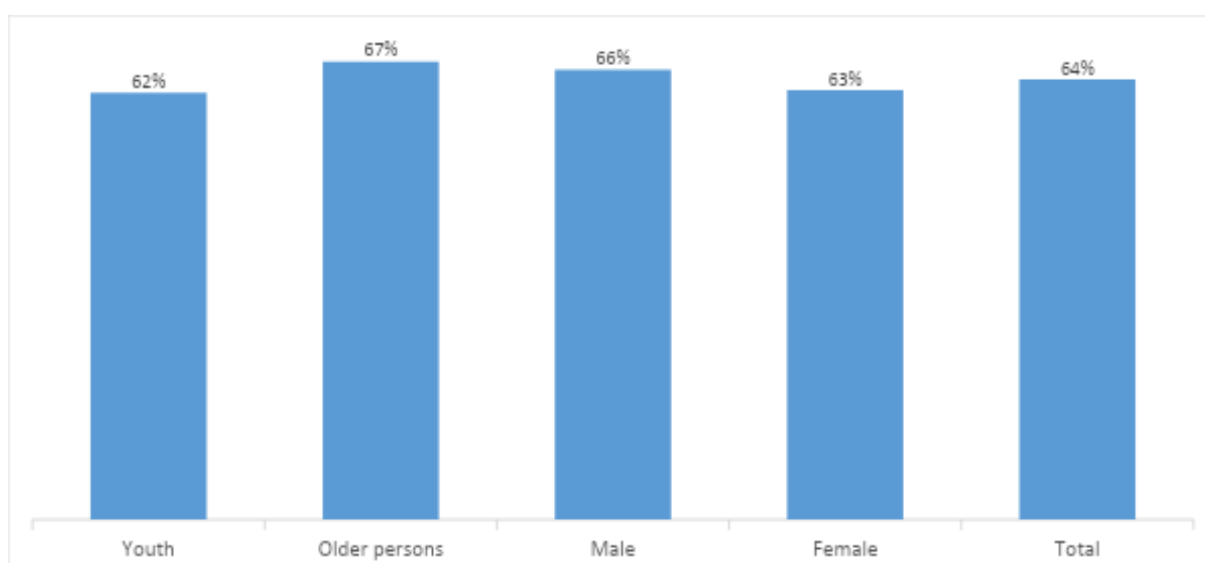
Source CERA (2023)

In addition, feedback collected from the key informant interviews (KIIs) as well as from the thematic workshop sessions indicated that the failure of civic and voter education providers to develop and provide youth-friendly platforms contributed to a large extent the apathy shown by the young people on the question of civic engagement. In 2022, the IEBC had an expanded budget⁸ and personnel for civic and voter education, which enabled it to achieve a wider national reach. However, timing was late, and messaging was criticized as overly repetitive and not creative enough to capture voter attention (European Union Election Observation Mission, 2022). Civil society groups conducted localized voter registration and turnout drives with recorded success in specific counties, but mobilization was still not consistent nationwide (USAID, 2022). Further from the study, 64% of the respondents believed that the civic and voter education that had been carried out during this period had

⁸ IEBC 2022 Post Election Report

been effective. In addition, and as had earlier been established, it emerged that civic and voter education programmes as designed were resonating better with older members of society and specifically the males as compared to the youth. According to CERA's perception survey, older persons recorded the highest percentage at 67% when responding to the question of the effectiveness of civic and voter education initiatives while the youths recorded 62%, as shown in the figure below.

Figure 5: Effectiveness of civic and voter education programs



Source: (CERA 2023)

There will thus be a need to infuse methodologies which will be suitable for young people to enhance the effectiveness of the civic and voter education work.

3.3 Summary Key Issues and Challenges Linked to Strategies and Content

One major challenge that affected the strategies used in the delivery of civic and voter education was on the issue of timing. It has been established that most civic and voter education activities were concentrated in the period between 6 to 12 months before the elections (IEBC 2022, ELOG 2022). This timing limits the ability to undertake long-term and comprehensive civic awareness and voter education, engagement that can translate into tangible results. According to EISA (2016) civic and voter education⁹ is most effective when implemented broadly across communities and integrated into school curriculums as well as other community-based activities over an extended period. Starting programs earlier and making civic/voter education a continuous process, are recommended to strengthen knowledge retention and shape civic behavior.

⁹ EISA 2014

Further resource shortfalls have hindered civic education efforts by undermining effective grassroots mobilization and outreach, for both the electoral commission as well as civil society organizations working in this field (ELOG, 2017; The Elephant, 2022; IRI, 2022). In addition, reliance on conventional methods like radio and chiefs' barazas limits resonance with youth audiences primed for modern digital engagement (Youth Agenda, 2020). According to this study, it emerged that there is a gap as far as the conceptualization and development of the messages is concerned. Civic and voter education providers should invest more in designing messages that target different demographics and utilize appropriate mediums for each category.

In addition, the curriculum should be expanded to include day-to-day governance issues which affect the populace to make the education practical and impactful. On top of tackling issues on governance, human rights and civic responsibilities there is need to include topics on public participation, access to information, open government, environment, public finance, and political parties among others. This can empower citizens to claim their democratic rights and chart the country's future course. Targeted outreach to women, youth and marginalized groups is also essential for inclusive nation-building.

3.4 To what Extent is the Rolling out of Civic and Voter Education taking Cognizance of the Electoral Cycle Approach?

Civic and voter education is a crucial component in building a robust democratic culture. However, various assessment indicates civic and voter education activities in Kenya have only partially adopted an electoral cycle approach¹⁰. While some programs span multiple years, most efforts remain concentrated in the months before elections. This limits the ability to foster long-term, continuous democratic participation.

The electoral cycle approach appreciates elections as continuous processes rather than isolated events. An electoral cycle approach entails implementing targeted interventions across each of the three broad phases.¹¹ At the most general level, the electoral cycle is divided into three main periods: the pre-electoral period, the electoral period and the post-electoral period. Notably, the electoral cycle has no fixed starting or ending points, which is also true for the three periods and the segments within the cycle. In theory, it may be said that one cycle ends when another begins. However, some post-electoral period activities may still be ongoing when activities related to the subsequent electoral cycle commence. Similarly,

¹⁰ IEBC Report 2022

¹¹ <https://aceproject.org/electoral-advice/electoral-assistance/electoral-cycle>

some segments, such as civic education and support to political parties, cut across the whole cycle and are therefore to be considered ongoing activities throughout all three periods. This requires long-term investment and coordination.

In Kenya, the bulk of civic and voter education still occurs in the pre-election period, with some focus on getting out the vote messaging during elections. Funding patterns reveal the short-term emphasis, with over half of 2022 civil society organization budgets allocated in the final twelve to six months. Institutions like Uraia Trust, National Democratic Institute (NDI) and International Republican institute (IRI) however are able to undertake multi-year programs, even though their interventions mainly concentrate on pre-election awareness with limited engagement for post-election interventions, which are mainly in the form of supporting post-election research and evaluations.

Adopting a full electoral cycle approach would entail enhanced efforts during pre-election planning phases. This period, when public attention on governance often declines, provides an opportunity for civic education on responsiveness and transparency. Election planning phases allow for reflection on what worked well or poorly to guide improvements. Furthermore, an effective electoral cycle approach requires not only spreading activities across phases but intentionally linking programming in each phase to short and long-term outcomes. This coherence over time is critical for impact. According to the Commonwealth Observation Report, 2022¹² long-term, integrated civic education is more likely to instill participatory values and behaviors and should be adopted.

In summary, while Kenya has achieved moderate pre-election civic education success, a more comprehensive and sustained electoral cycle approach is needed. This requires dedicated resources; coordination across civic and voter education providers including the IEBC; utilization of phase-specific messaging opportunities; and aligning short and long-term objectives. Adopting these enhancements will strengthen the foundation for an engaged citizenry and vibrant democratic culture. The electoral cycle approach offers a promising roadmap for Kenya's civic education evolution.

3.5 Leveraging Technology to Enhance Civic and Voter Education Delivery

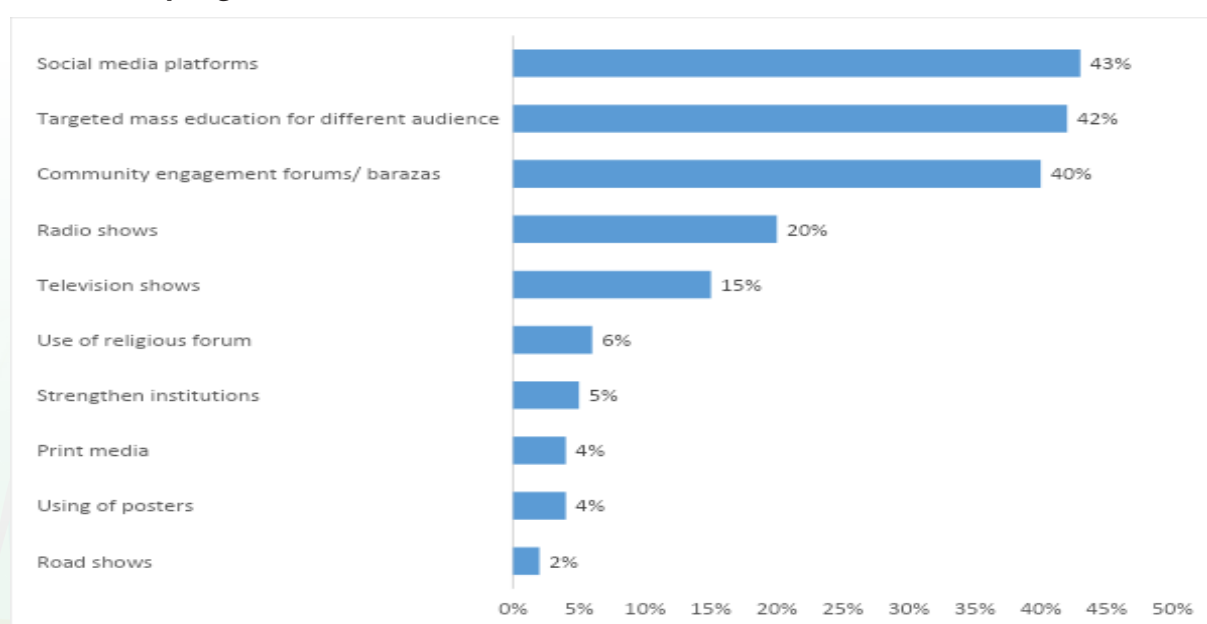
Technology presents immense potential to increase the reach, accessibility, and interactivity of civic and voter education. While traditional in-person and media

¹² Commonwealth observation report 2022

channels remain important, purposefully integrating new tech-enabled approaches can make education initiatives more dynamic and engaging. One strategy is tapping into surging social media usage, especially among Kenyan youth. Programs focused on governance, rights, responsibilities and election processes can be delivered through social media platforms and targeted outreach. Creative use of hashtags, influencer campaigns, interactive live talks, and viral infographics can all make content appealing and digestible.

Data from the 2023 (CERA) Perception Survey (figure 6 below) shows a shift in Kenyans' preferred platforms for accessing civic and voter education. As a result of increased access to and use of smartphones, social media has become more popular than traditional media like newspapers, radio, and TV. The survey found that social media was the most effective and widely used platform for civic and voter education, chosen by 43% of respondents while targeted mass media campaigns ranked second at 42%, followed by community forums at 40%. Given their wide appeal, especially among youth, who also make up the biggest percentage of new voters every electoral cycle, it means that social media platforms, as well as mass media campaigns and community forums, should remain key strategies/ platforms for civic and voter education. It also means that focusing on social media and grassroots community outreach will enable broader access to civic and voter education and information for all Kenyans. The survey highlights the need to use formats that engage target audiences, particularly younger citizens. Leveraging social media and community engagement will be critical to connect Kenyan voters with civic resources.

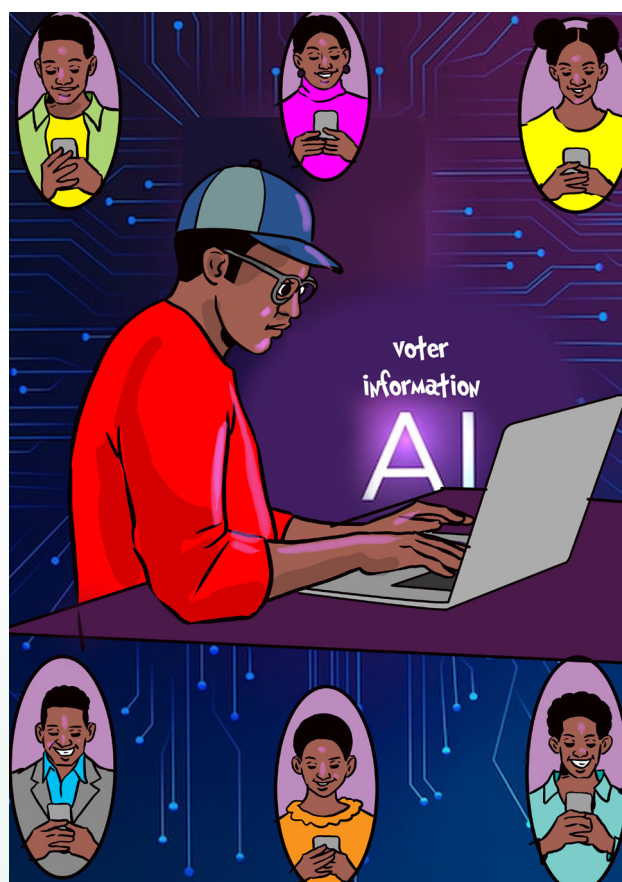
Figure 6: Methods that would help increase the reach of civic awareness and voter education programs



Source: CERA 2023

Civic and voter education providers should consider partnerships with mobile phone providers to zero-rate civic and voter education content to expand access. The same approach can also be used when engaging media houses to expand reach cost-effectively. In addition, due to the stable internet infrastructure in the country, it will be ideal to introduce digital learning platforms in the form of well-designed online courses, videos, webinars and mobile apps. Facilities for self-paced learning should also be introduced. Kenya can also learn from virtual citizen academies pioneered in countries like Indonesia and Estonia. Gamification through quizzes and contests to boost participation is also another way to utilize social media platforms for civic and voter education. For communities lacking internet connectivity, online content can be loaded onto devices for offline usage.

As elections near, technology can be used to assist in voter education and election preparedness of citizens. This may include the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) chatbots to answer common questions related to elections and governance. During the post-election phase as part of leveraging on technology, civil society organizations can develop tools like digital democracy dashboards which allow citizens not only to report and receive feedback on local governance issues, but also act as platforms for engaging with duty bearers on service delivery and related matters.



AI Voter Education

4.0 CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS

The analysis shows civic and voter education in Kenya has made some progress across the last 3 election cycles. However, there are still major gaps limiting people's meaningful participation in the democratic process. While education outreach has expanded into media, communities, and government-civil society team-ups, most interventions take place right before elections and there is little activity during the elections and post-election phases. Funding and resource shortages have been identified as an area of concern. In addition, not customizing interventions enough to suit the youth and marginalized groups, restricts impact to these groups.

Various reports and evaluations¹³ show that grassroots efforts that engage citizens are more effective in building civic knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors compared to passive mass media alone. In addition, sustained, widespread civic and voter education initiatives are still needed to foster a participatory democratic culture in Kenya. This means that a combination of revamped civic and voter education initiatives, with an expanded youth and grassroots outreach campaign should be adopted as this could help increase civic and voter knowledge and enhance citizen engagement, and voter turnout over time. There is also need for creative use of technologies like social media, mobile platforms and interactive apps to enhance reach and resonance with youth. In addition, it is important to institutionalize best practices such as post-election surveys for continuous assessment and identification of knowledge gaps to guide future programming.

The study participants also recommended the expansion of partnerships between civil society, government, international donors and media as a way of building synergies and capacities for civic and voter education initiatives in the country. In summary, while Kenya has a strong civic education foundation, enhancements to content, timing, technologies used, research on impact, and partnerships can amplify results. Investing in targeted improvements will not only increase democratic

¹³ Commonwealth Election Observation Mission 2022

participation in the short term but also nurture an actively engaged citizenry able to build a progressive, accountable democracy that realizes the full promise of Kenya's constitution. With strategic focus and collective effort, civic education can progress from being an exercise repeated before elections to an indispensable pillar supporting inclusive, transparent and responsive governance.

To support Kenya's democracy and development, there is a need to sustain a well-coordinated civic and voter education initiative that promotes an actively engaged citizenry. As 2027 elections approach, all players must work together towards this goal. This will nurture informed, participatory communities that hold leaders accountable and promote good governance. Some key recommendations moving forward include: - implementing the electoral cycle approach fully with tailored messaging and activities in each phase; creating targeted digital education campaigns to engage youth; securing adequate, timely funding; building sustainable partnerships between all the election stakeholders; and continuously strengthening the skills of accredited civic and voter education providers.

5.0 ELEVEN POINT AGENDA FOR IMPROVING CIVIC AWARENESS AND VOTER EDUCATION DURING THE ENTIRE ELECTORAL CYCLE

- 1. Adopt the electoral cycle approach to programming:** Civic and voter education activities should follow the electoral cycle approach with sustained civic education activities in each phase.
- 2. Engage youth through digital spaces:** Develop creative digital and social media campaigns, leveraging influencers, to engage youth on voting and governance issues. This should include developing educational entertainment programs and apps to engage and educate the public on governance through innovative outreach. This may include use of infographics, animated videos, virtual reality games, as well as mobile games
- 3. Voter education provider's accreditation to be undertaken well in advance:** The IEBC to undertake the accreditation of voter education providers at least 18 months before elections. This extended timeline may enable better preparation and implementation of activities.
- 4. Building the capacity of civic and voter education providers:** IEBC in partnership with national civil society organizations to take the lead in building the capacity of accredited civic and voter education providers for impactful voter education.
- 5. Expand civic and voter education for marginalized and special interest groups:** Measures need to be put in place to ensure targeted civic and voter education for the special interest groups, including marginalized communities, pastoralists, nomads, People living with disability as well as women and youth.
- 6. Synergy among Election stakeholders:** there is a need to develop partnerships between IEBC, civil society, the media stakeholders, and learning institutions to enhance coordination and impact in the delivery of civic and voter education to young people and to address the challenge of fragmented efforts which exists at the moment.
- 7. Ensure timely disbursement of funds to all the electoral stakeholders:** To enable adequate preparation, the IEBC should be able to access funds from the consolidated fund and development partners according to their budgetary needs and operational plans promptly. This will allow for proper resourcing

of personnel, educational materials, training, and outreach campaigns using an electoral cycle approach. Development partners funding civil society organizations should also adopt this approach.

- 8. Provide PWD-friendly materials and infrastructure:** There is a need to ensure voting materials, facilities and processes accommodate People with Disability (PwDs) to promote inclusivity in the electoral process. This should cover all the various forms of disabilities.
- 9. Tailor content to address community-specific governance issues using localized examples and data:** Curriculum should focus on service delivery, good governance, leadership, integrity, transparency and accountability of local leaders based on issues affecting specific communities, using localized issues affecting the day-to-day life of community members.
- 10. Sustaining Citizen Engagement through Digital Platforms:** To promote ongoing citizen accountability between elections, interactive digital platforms should be used to facilitate transparent public feedback and monitoring of governance, driving sustained civic engagement and official responsiveness.
- 11. Civic Education Training Institute (CETI):** Consider and work towards the establishment of a Civic Education Training Institute to create a specialized institute dedicated to provision of structured and specialized civic education training – both online and phase to phase. Through CETI, implement a comprehensive online training program tailored for a wide range of civic educators to enhance their skills and knowledge base across the country.

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