KONRAD ADENAUER STIFTUNG

WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP HANDBOOK



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KONRAD ADENAUER STIFTUNG

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When women step forward to lead, they help shape a stronger, more inclusive democracy.

FOREWORD

Women's leadership is integral to a strong, inclusive democracy. The Constitution of Kenya, 2010, guarantees equality and freedom from discrimination under Article 27, affirms every citizen's political rights under Article 38, and upholds the principle of gender representation under Articles 27(8) and 81(b).

This handbook also serves as a practical workbook for women preparing to seek political party nominations, contest elections, or strengthen their leadership. It provides practical tools and guidance to help you understand the electoral process, build strong support networks, engage meaningfully with voters, and lead with confidence, integrity, and purpose.

As you turn these pages, remember that your voice matters, your participation counts, and your leadership has the power to shape the future of your community and your nation, Kenya.



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INTRODUCTION

Women's leadership is essential to building an inclusive, accountable, and responsive democracy. Across Kenya, women continue to lead and influence change in their families, communities, businesses, civil society, and public institutions. Their participation in political leadership brings diverse perspectives, strengthens decision-making, and contributes to more representative governance.

ENABLING LEGAL AND POLICY ENVIRONMENT

The critical question is: How do we move from constitutional guarantees to actual political power and meaningful representation for women?

Kenya has made significant progress in advancing women's political participation through the Constitution of Kenya, 2010, and a range of complementary national, regional, and international legal and policy frameworks. The Constitution guarantees equality, freedom from discrimination, and the right of every citizen to participate in political processes. Article 81(b) requires that the electoral system complies with the principle that no more than two-thirds of members of elective public bodies should be of the same gender.

These constitutional guarantees are reinforced by national legislation, including the Elections Act, 2011, the Political Parties Act, 2011, and the National Gender and Equality Commission Act, 2011. They are further strengthened by regional and international commitments, including the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (Maputo Protocol), the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, particularly Sustainable Development Goals 5 (Gender Equality) and 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions).

Together, these constitutional, legal, and policy frameworks affirm women's right to participate fully and equally in political and public life and provide the foundation for promoting inclusive leadership, equal opportunity, and democratic governance in Kenya.

Despite this enabling legal and policy environment, many women aspiring to political leadership continue to encounter significant barriers throughout the electoral cycle. These challenges include discriminatory gender norms, political violence, harassment, intimidation, technology-facilitated gender-based violence, limited access to financial resources and political networks, and persistent stereotypes about women's leadership.



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COURAGE HAS A VOICE



Leadership requires courage, to speak when silence is easier, to stand for what is right when opposition is strong, and to step forward even when fear says you should stay behind.

Wangari Maathai's journey reminds us that one woman, driven by conviction and courage, can challenge powerful systems, mobilise communities, and create change that transcends generations.

Do not allow fear, discrimination, criticism, or the expectations of others to convince you that leadership is not for you. Your voice matters, your leadership is needed, and you have the power to make a difference.

Women aspirants also contend with misinformation, disinformation, and malinformation; unequal media coverage, competing family and caregiving responsibilities. For women in rural and marginalized areas, these challenges are often intersecting, further limiting their meaningful participation in politics and leadership. While these barriers are real, they are not insurmountable. Successful campaigns are built on preparation, credibility, strong relationships, resilience, and a clear understanding of the electoral process. With the right knowledge, strategic planning, and community support, women can confidently navigate the political landscape, build public trust, and compete effectively for leadership positions.

HANDBOOK STRUCTURE

This handbook has been developed as a practical companion for women aspiring to political leadership in Kenya. It provides clear, accessible guidance on preparing for elections, understanding the electoral process, building a strong leadership brand, engaging communities, mobilizing resources, managing campaigns, complying with legal and regulatory requirements, enhancing personal and digital safety, and sustaining leadership beyond elections. Rather than focusing only on election campaigns, the handbook encourages women to view leadership as a continuous journey of service, integrity, learning, and community engagement.

WHO THIS HANDBOOK IS FOR

This handbook is intended for women aspiring to political leadership and elective office at both county and national levels.

A RESOURCE FOR ALLIES AND PARTNERS

While this handbook is primarily intended for women aspiring to and serving in leadership, it also serves as a valuable resource for anyone championing inclusive leadership, political parties, election observers, governance practitioners, and institutions committed to advancing gender equality, democratic governance, and women's political participation.

HOW TO USE THIS HANDBOOK

This handbook may be read from beginning to end or used as a reference guide whenever specific questions or challenges arise. Readers are encouraged to reflect critically on the guidance, select the strategies that best fit their context, and adapt them to their leadership journey. The practical tools and insights are designed to support personal well-being and effective leadership throughout the electoral cycle and beyond.

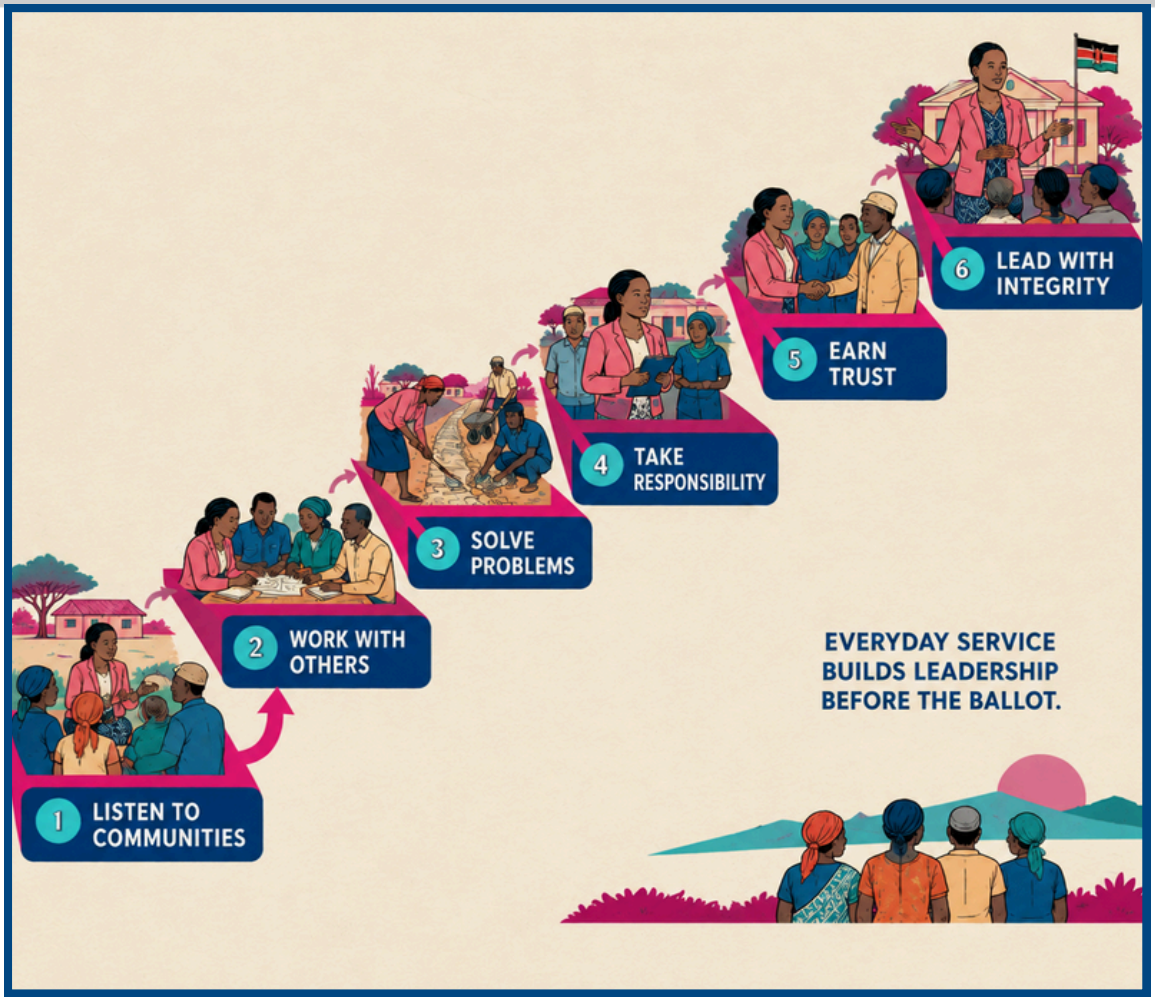


1 YOUR LEADERSHIP JOURNEY STARTS HERE

Leadership starts before the ballot. It is rooted in service, built through consistent action, and strengthened by integrity.

Political leadership begins long before a woman appears on the ballot. It is built through teamwork, support, competence, communication, responsibility, skills, motivation, and the responsible use of power. These qualities are demonstrated through everyday service–listening to communities, working with others, solving problems and earning trust.

A woman who develops these qualities before seeking office is not simply preparing to contest an election; she is building the foundation to lead.





Some women aspirants step into the political arena thinking that leadership kicks off the moment they join a political party, launch a campaign, or seek a nomination. But the truth is, it begins much earlier than that. It starts when a woman decides to tackle a problem in her community or when she rallies people around a shared vision.

In Kenya, the most admired women leaders began their journeys far from the much-hyped campaign rallies and political offices. They dedicated their time to community groups, schools, faith-based organizations, businesses, professional associations, youth initiatives, and development projects. Through these experiences, they built trust, forged relationships, and displayed their leadership skills.

Politics should be an extension of an existing leadership journey. Elections may come and go, but true leadership endures.Take a moment to reflect.

A woman who has consistently served her community earns a level of credibility that no catchy campaign slogan can replicate. She grasps the local realities, knows the key players, and has cultivated relationships and a reputation that can weather political storms. This groundwork is particularly vital because women often face greater scrutiny than their male peers. Voters might question their experience, capabilities, family commitments, or resilience under political pressure.

Effective leadership means listening before speaking, learning before leading, and understanding before offering solutions. Communities are more inclined to support leaders who truly grasp their daily challenges and show a sincere commitment to tackling local issues. Therefore, aspiring leaders should engage with citizens throughout the electoral cycle, not just during campaign season.

PRACTICAL TIP

List the community initiatives you've supported, committees you've served on, challenges you've helped address, and partnerships you've built.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Listening sessions, community meetings, development initiatives, mentorship activities, and volunteer work present invaluable chances to grasp people's priorities and dreams. These interactions also help women leaders build their confidence.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Summarize your key takeaways from this Chapter.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____



2 UNDERSTANDING KENYA'S ELECTORAL CYCLE

Kenya's electoral process has three key phases: before, during, and after the election. As a woman aspiring to lead, understanding each phase helps you prepare strategically, navigate the electoral process, and plan your next steps

PRE-ELECTION
- Voter Registration
- Candidate Nomination
- Campaigns & Education

→

ELECTION DAY
- Biometric Verification
- Secret Ballot Voting
- Counting at the polling station

→

POST-ELECTION
- Dispute Resolution
- Form 34A/B/C Tallying
- Official Results Declaration

2027 ELECTION TIMELINE — KEY DATES TO KNOW

By 9 Feb 2027	Public officers intending to contest must resign.	Confirm whether you need to resign—and act early.
16 Mar 2027	Political parties submit membership lists and details of planned party primaries to IEBC.	Confirm your party membership and nomination pathway.
9 May 2027	Party primaries and internal disputes must be concluded; independent aspirants must also meet the applicable party-membership requirements.	Know your nomination outcome and next steps.
29 May–11 Jun 2027	IEBC nomination period for candidates.	Have your nomination documents ready.
12 Jun 2027	Deadline for lodging nomination disputes with IEBC.	Know where and how to raise a nomination dispute.
29 May–7 Aug 2027	Official campaign period. Campaigns must stop after 7 Aug.	Run your campaign within the legal rules.
27 Jul 2027	Deadline for submitting election agents.	Confirm and prepare your agent team.
10 Aug 2027	General Election Day.	Be ready to vote, monitor and participate.

WHERE YOU TURN MATTERS

Before you act, know where to get accurate information, guidance, and support. The institutions below play key roles in Kenya's political and electoral process.

IEBC – Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission

Manages elections, voter registration, nominations, and electoral processes.
Helps you understand how to register, contest, and participate in elections lawfully and effectively.

ORPP – Office of the Registrar of Political Parties

Registers and regulates political parties and oversees party membership and internal party processes.
Helps you understand party membership, nominations, party rights and responsibilities.

PPDT – Political Parties Disputes Tribunal

Resolves disputes arising within or involving political parties.

Provides a formal avenue for challenging unfair or unlawful party decisions.

JUDICIARY

Interprets and enforces the law and determines electoral disputes before the courts.

Protects your constitutional and legal rights and provides a pathway for seeking justice.

Ombudsman – Commission on Administrative Justice

Addresses maladministration and complaints about unfair treatment by public institutions and promotes administrative justice.
Gives you a channel to challenge unfair, unreasonable, or improper administrative action.

PPLC – Political Parties Liaison Committee

Provides a platform for consultation and dialogue between political parties and the ORPP.

Helps parties resolve issues through dialogue and cooperation in the political process.

EACC – Ethics and Anti-Corruption Commission

Prevents and investigates corruption and promotes ethical leadership and integrity.

Helps you lead with integrity, avoid corruption and understand your ethical obligations.

NCIC – National Cohesion and Integration Commission

Promotes national cohesion, equality and peaceful coexistence.

Helps you campaign responsibly, promote unity and avoid divisive or discriminatory politics.

NPS – National Police Service

Maintains law and order, protects people and property.

Important for your safety, peaceful campaigning and public activities.



TEAM: RIGHT PEOPLE, RIGHT ROLES

TEAM CHECK

Define roles and decision authority.

Protect sensitive information on a need-to-know basis.

Choose people for integrity, competence, and readiness.

A strong team helps you stay informed, protected, compliant, and ready to act.

PRACTICAL TIP

Join a political party early, understand its nomination rules, comply with IEBC requirements, uphold integrity, campaign peacefully, and seek timely legal remedies whenever disputes arise.

Write down your key reflections from this chapter.



FROM KNOWLEDGE TO PRACTICE

Outline five (5) Key activities to do in each of the 3 phases of the electoral cycle

Identify at least 5 key institutions and stakeholders that are important for your leadership journey.

Track the dates. Write down what you need to do and when



3 BUILD YOUR NAME. EARN TRUST.

Your reputation isn't built by chance. It's built by what you do, say and stand for.

1	2	3	4
Consistency builds recognition.	*Recognition earns trust.*	*Trust creates influence.*	*Influence drives visibility.*

IT'S MORE THAN JUST A CAMPAIGN

Many aspiring leaders focus on campaign messages, catchy slogans, eye-catching graphics and media content. While these matter, they aren't the foundation of true leadership.

- *What does she represent?*
- *Can she be relied upon?*
- *Will she follow through on her promises?*

A STRONG BRAND IS BUILT THROUGH ACTIONS

Every leader builds a reputation, whether they plan to or not. It's hard to shape it intentionally.

- *Listen to your people.*
- *Honour your commitments.*
- *Stay visible between elections.*

Your leadership brand isn't just about a logo, a tagline or a colour palette; it's about what people think when they mention your name.

LIVE YOUR VALUES

Be clear about the values you want to embody, such as:

- *Integrity*
- *Service*
- *Unity*
- *Problem-solving*

COMMUNICATE CLEARLY

Communities need to know:

- *What you stand for*
- *The issues that matter to you*
- *How you plan to address them*

USE TECH WISELY

- *Your digital footprint matters. People often form opinions about leaders long before they meet them. Social media can help you share your ideas, connect with citizens and showcase community projects and collaborate.*

HANDLE CHALLENGES WITH GRACE

- *Avoid unnecessary conflicts.*
- *Verify information before sharing.*
- *Respond to criticism professionally.*
- *Always treat others with respect.*



PRACTICAL TIP: CHECK YOUR LEADERSHIP REPUTATION

Ask five people from different parts of your community to describe you as a leader in three words. Write their responses below.

Person 1: _____ **1.** _____ **2.** _____ **3.** _____

Person 2: _____ **1.** _____ **2.** _____ **3.** _____

Person 3: _____ **1.** _____ **2.** _____ **3.** _____

Person 4: _____ **1.** _____ **2.** _____ **3.** _____

Person 5: _____ **1.** _____ **2.** _____ **3.** _____

KEY TAKEAWAYS

REFLECT: WHAT BUILDS TRUST IN A LEADER?

Think about a leader you admire, such as Barack Obama, or another leader you respect.

1. What qualities make you trust this leader?

_____

_____

_____

_____

2. What makes this leader authentic and different from others?

_____

_____

_____

3. How does the leader communicate in a way that builds confidence and credibility?

_____

_____

_____

_____



FROM KNOWLEDGE TO PRACTICE

Identify three values you want people to associate with your leadership.

_____

_____

_____

_____

> ***"It's the little things citizens do. That's what will make the difference. My little thing is planting trees."***
>
> **— WANGARI MAATHAI**

CRAFT YOUR PERSONAL LEADERSHIP MESSAGE

Your leadership message should capture what you stand for, what you want to change, and the difference you want to make. (Keep it simple, authentic, and connected to the needs of the people you seek to serve).

MY PERSONAL LEADERSHIP MESSAGE

I stand for:

_____

I want to change:

_____

I will make a difference by:

_____

My leadership message in one sentence:

_____



4 PARTY NOMINATION IS THE FIRST ELECTION

Many political journeys end before voters ever get a chance to decide. Often, the issue is not capability—it is readiness, support, and strategy.

For women aspirants, securing a party nomination can be one of the toughest stages of the electoral journey. A strong candidate who misses the nomination may never reach the ballot.

Start early, know the ground, build your base.
Nominations are won through early preparation, strong relationships, and a clear strategy. Reflect on your readiness, understand local dynamics, and avoid physical confrontations. Let strategy, not conflict, lead the way.

KNOW THE RULES. STAY AHEAD.

Do not wait for nominations to understand the process. Political parties have different rules, structures, procedures, and timelines, and these can change.
Know:

- ***Nomination procedures and requirements***
- ***Political party structures and decision-making processes***
- ***Eligibility criteria***
- ***Key dates and deadlines***
- ***Appeals and dispute-resolution mechanisms***

DON'T ASSUME. VERIFY.

Get information from the right sources and keep records. Knowing the rules gives you confidence and helps you act quickly when issues arise.

BUILD RELATIONSHIPS BEFORE YOU NEED THEM

Do not wait for nomination season to introduce yourself. Build genuine relationships with party members, community leaders, and people in your constituency long before you need their support.

Attend meetings. Listen. Contribute ideas. Support community priorities. Stay engaged.
People are more likely to support a leader they know, trust, and have seen in action.

OWN THE GROUND

Visibility is not the same as connection. Spend time in the communities you hope to represent.
Listen to people's concerns, understand local priorities, and support practical solutions.
Be known not only as an aspirant, but as someone who shows up, listens, and gets things done.



BUILD YOUR TEAM

No woman wins a nomination alone. Build a trusted team that believes in your vision and will stand with you. Your support pillars should include:

- *Elders/faith/clan leaders*
- *Youth*
- *Persons with disabilities*
- *Community leaders*
- *Professionals*
- *Business groups*

A strong team is built on shared purpose, respect and trust—not personal ambition alone. Women are a powerful constituency. Engage women's groups, savings groups, self-help groups, professional networks and community associations. Listen to what matters to them and build relationships that go beyond election season.

Support is earned, not assumed.

PREPARE. ADAPT. STAY THE COURSE.

Nominations can bring misinformation, intimidation, criticism, and unexpected changes. Do not let pressure derail you.

- *Keep your records.*
- *Follow the rules.*
- *Verify information.*
- *Seek advice when necessary.*
- *Respond with professionalism.*

How you handle pressure is part of your leadership record.

PREPARATION IS YOUR ADVANTAGE

Money matters in politics, but it doesn't replace preparation.
A prepared aspirant knows the rules, understands her support base, communicates clearly, responds quickly, and keeps sight of the bigger goal.

Preparation builds confidence. Confidence builds trust.

IF YOU DO NOT WIN THE NOMINATION

A lost nomination is a setback—not the end of your leadership journey.
Stay engaged. Continue serving your community. Remain active in your party or pursue other leadership opportunities, including public boards, commissions, advisory roles, civil society, and community leadership.

Keep building your networks, experience, and public profile.
One nomination does not define your leadership journey.



PRACTICAL TIP: BUILD A NOMINATION READINESS TEAM

Consider creating a trusted team to track requirements, deadlines, documents, information, supporters, and key activities. Give each person a clear role and share sensitive information only with those who need to know.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- **What do I need to know before nomination season?**

_____

- **Who do I need in my corner?**

_____

- **Where do I need to strengthen my grassroots connections?**

_____

- **What setback can I turn into my next opportunity?**

_____

- **My next move:**

_____



FROM KNOWLEDGE TO PRACTICE

1. Know the rules
What are the key nomination requirements, procedures, and deadlines?

_____

_____

_____

2. Know your people
Who are the key party and community stakeholders you need to engage?

_____

_____

_____

3. Know your ground
Which areas are your strongholds, undecided areas, and areas where you need to build support?

_____

_____

_____

4. Build your team
Which groups and leaders can strengthen your nomination support?

_____

_____

_____

5. Strengthen your readiness
What is one area you need to improve before nominations?

_____

_____

REFLECT
What is one thing you will do now to strengthen your chances of securing the nomination?

_____



5 WINNING STARTS WITH A TEAM

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Great leaders don't do it alone. They bring people together, share responsibilities, and turn a vision into reality.

BUILD YOUR CORE TEAM

Build a lean, needs-based team that strategically aligns with the national and county political landscape.

RIGHT PEOPLE. CLEAR ROLES. GREATER IMPACT

Key roles include:

- *Coordination and planning*
- *Information tracking and compliance; community engagement, stakeholder mapping*
- *Communications and media; resource mobilisation*
- *Volunteer coordination*

Clarity of responsibility creates accountability, and accountability builds a stronger, more reliable team.

BUILD A CULTURE OF SERVICE

When people feel valued and respected, they stay committed. Create a team culture that values service, professionalism, mutual respect and growth.

This means:

- *Recognising contributions*
- *Appreciating hard work*
- *Listening to different viewpoints*
- *Promoting learning and growth*

Respect Builds Strong Teams

MOBILIZING RESOURCES

Resources are not just about money. Successful campaigns thrive on different kinds of support. Support can come from:

- *Time*
- *Skills*
- *Expertise*
- *Networks*
- *Volunteers*
- *Community goodwill*
- *Financial contributions*

Resource Mobilisation is Friend Raising, not just money.
Build relationships. Trust opens doors and encourages people to support you in meaningful ways.



TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Handle every resource with care and responsibility. Keep accurate records, communicate openly, and ensure resources are used for their intended purpose. Accountability builds trust, strengthens your reputation, and lasts beyond the election.

Campaign spending is regulated under the Election Campaign Financing Act. Before planning your budget, check the latest spending limits and campaign finance requirements from the IEBC.

INVEST IN VOLUNTEERS

Volunteers bring energy, local knowledge and community ties. They are the vital link between you and the voters. Treat them with respect, give clear information, and assign meaningful tasks.Keep them connected.

DELEGATE

Delegation isn't a sign of weakness; it's a leadership strength. It helps you avoid burnout, reduces stress, and creates space for focus and better decision-making. Share responsibilities wisely and trust your team.
Share the work. Multiply the impact.

A strong team builds stronger leaders.

FROM KNOWLEDGE TO PRACTICE: BUILD YOUR TEAM

1. Who are five people you could count on to support your leadership journey?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

2. What roles does your team need? Who could take each role?

Role	Who could take this role?
Campaign Manager	_____
Finance/Bookkeeping	_____
Communications	_____
Research	_____
Mobilisation	_____



3. What do you already have access to beyond money?

Skills: _____

Time: _____

Networks: _____

Information: _____

Volunteers: _____

Other: _____

4. How will you recognise, appreciate and keep your volunteers motivated?

_____

_____

5.What strengths do you need around you?

□ Advisor
□ Mentor
□ Mobiliser
□ Fundraiser
□ Team Leader
□ Communicator
□ Researcher
□ Connector
□ Other: _____

Which strength is currently missing from your team?

_____

REFLECTION & JOURNALING

What is one thing you will do differently after completing this exercise?

_____



6 KNOW THE PULSE

WINNING HEARTS. EARNING VOTES.

Leadership begins with listening. Before asking for votes, understand the people you want to lead. Hear their hopes, concerns, frustrations, and priorities. Look beyond reports and statistics to understand what is happening in people's everyday lives. People want leaders who see them, hear them, and value them.

LEAD BY LISTENING

Great leaders do not assume they know what people need. They ask. They listen. They learn. Ask yourself: what matters most here? Who is most affected? What is already being done? Listening is not a campaign tactic. It is a leadership habit. Is there an opportunity to make a difference?

Listening is not a campaign tactic. | It is a leadership habit.

LEAVE NO ONE OUT

Your community is bigger than your supporters. Reach beyond your usual networks and engage women, elders, religious leaders, men, young people, older persons, persons with disabilities, farmers, entrepreneurs, professionals, faith groups, and community organisations.
Do not only listen to people who agree with you. Make room for dissenting voices. More voices. Better understanding.

SHOW UP BEYOND THE BALLOT

People remember who showed up—and who disappeared. Do not wait for election season to reconnect with the community. Stay present throughout the electoral cycle. Attend important community moments. Check in. Listen. Follow up.
You do not have to be everywhere. Be present where it matters. Visibility builds familiarity. Consistency builds trust.

Visibility builds familiarity. Consistency builds trust.

SPEAK SO PEOPLE CAN HEAR YOU

Leadership is not about being the loudest person in the room. Use language people understand. Focus on issues that affect everyday life.

BUILD RELATIONSHIPS, NOT TRANSACTIONS

Authentic relationships cannot be switched on at election time.
Build relationships that go beyond asking for votes. Champion local initiatives.



FROM KNOWLEDGE TO PRACTICE

1. Know your people

Think beyond your immediate supporters. Identify five groups whose experiences, concerns, or perspectives you want to understand better.

_____

_____

2. Map your stakeholders

Who influences your community, shapes conversations, or connects you to different groups?

_____

_____

3. Build a listening plan

Choose one group you will make a deliberate effort to stay connected with, and plan how.

_____

_____

4. Stay present

What can you do to remain useful in your community even when there is no election?

_____

_____

_____

5. Ask your community

"What leadership qualities do you value most in a leader?" Record what you hear — not what you expect to hear.

_____

_____

_____

REFLECT

One thing I will do differently from now on:

_____

_____

_____



7 SAFETY, SECURITY, AND PERSONAL WELL-BEING

Women aspiring to lead may face intimidation, harassment, online abuse, threats, discrimination, and gender-based violence. These risks should never silence your ambition, but they demand preparation.

1. LEAD BOLDLY. STAY SAFE. PROTECT YOUR PEACE.

Equality cannot thrive without safety. At meetings, rallies, and community events: share your movements with someone you trust, avoid travelling alone late at night where possible, keep emergency contacts handy, stay alert, plan alternative routes, trust your instincts, leave unsafe situations, and watch your food and drinks.

YOUR SAFETY IS NOT A LUXURY. IT IS A LEADERSHIP PRIORITY.

2. PROTECT YOURSELF ONLINE

Your digital presence is a leadership tool. Protect it.

- *Use strong, unique passwords and enable two-factor authentication.*
- *Verify information before sharing it. Do not amplify misinformation.*
- *Limit the personal information you disclose online, including details that could expose your location or compromise your safety.*
- *Review your privacy settings and secure your social media accounts.*
- *Report abusive content, impersonation, and threats to the relevant platforms.*
- *Preserve evidence of threats, harassment, and suspicious accounts, including screenshots, links, dates, and account details.*
- *Avoid clicking suspicious links or sharing sensitive information in response to unexpected messages.*

3. IF YOU EXPERIENCE HARASSMENT, THREATS, OR VIOLENCE

- **Get safe. Prioritise your immediate protection.**
- **Seek support. Contact someone you trust.**
- **Preserve evidence. Keep relevant messages, screenshots, dates, and details, if safe to do so.**
- **Report the incident. Depending on the circumstances, contact the police, the relevant oversight body, or a legal support organisation.**
- **Seek medical and psychosocial care when needed.**



4. BUILD YOUR SUPPORT SYSTEM

Leadership should never be a lonely journey. Build a trusted network that offers encouragement, practical help, honest advice, and emotional support. This may include:

- *Family and friends: encouragement and help with daily responsibilities.*
- *Mentors and colleagues: guidance, experience, and professional connections.*
- *Women's peer networks: solidarity, shared experiences, and practical solutions.*
- *Faith leaders: spiritual and moral support, where appropriate.*
- *Counsellors and coaches: emotional well-being, resilience, and stress management.*
- *A supportive spouse or partner, where available: shared responsibilities and respect for your leadership ambitions.*

5. COMMUNICATE AND SEEK SUPPORT

Discuss your goals and support needs with your spouse, family, or other significant people. Encourage shared responsibility for childcare and household duties. Where support is limited, turn to trusted friends, mentors, women's networks, and other reliable sources.

6. PROTECT YOUR EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING

Campaigns can bring pressure, criticism, uncertainty, and disappointment. Protect your peace before, during, and after the election. Watch for persistent fatigue or irritability, difficulty concentrating or sleeping, feeling overwhelmed or losing motivation, and anxiety, depression, burnout, or distress following violence. When these signs appear, pause and assess what you need. Consider counselling, peer support, spiritual care, mindfulness, physical activity, or time away to recover.

7. MAKE SELF-CARE PART OF LEADERSHIP

You cannot pour from an empty cup. Get enough rest, drink water, eat regular balanced meals, make time for movement and relaxation, take breaks and set realistic boundaries, stay connected to people who encourage you, and make time for reflection, renewal, and activities you enjoy.

8. CAREGIVING PLAN

Identify trusted childcare and reliable help with school runs, household duties, and other care needs, especially during demanding campaign periods. Plan for emergencies and changes in care arrangements where possible. Caregiving should not mean abandoning your leadership ambitions.

USEFUL CONTACTS IN KENYA

National GBV Helpline: 1195
Police: 999 or 112
FIDA Kenya: legal assistance and support for women.
IEBC, ORPP, NGEC, and KNCHR: election-related complaints, political party matters, equality concerns, or human rights violations.

Seek an Occurrence Book (OB) number when reporting to the police. Report promptly where possible, but do not delay seeking safety or medical care.

PRACTICAL EXERCISE: MY PERSONAL SAFETY AND WELL-BEING PLAN

1. Who is my trusted emergency contact?

_____

2. What are my biggest safety or digital risks?

_____

3. Who can help with my family or campaign responsibilities?

_____

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Reflect on essential principles of sustainable leadership:

_____

MY SUPPORT NETWORK

Identify three people you can reach out to when you need emotional support, practical assistance, advice, or help with a safety concern.

1. Name: _____ How they can support me: _____

2. Name: _____ How they can support me: _____

3. Name: _____ How they can support me: _____

What simple habits can help protect my well-being while serving others?

_____

_____

REFLECTION & JOURNALING

What have I learned about the relationship between my safety, well-being, and leadership effectiveness?

_____

_____

What currently puts my safety or well-being at risk?

_____

_____



8 LEAD WITH PURPOSE

BEFORE, DURING AND BEYOND ELECTIONS

Elections test a leader's preparation, judgment, and resilience. Emotions run high, information moves fast, and pressure mounts. For women candidates, the challenge is to remain focused, make sound decisions, and lead with integrity.

THE STRONGEST LEADERS DO NOT REACT TO EVERYTHING. THEY STAY FOCUSED ON WHAT MATTERS.

STAY ROOTED IN PURPOSE

When election pressure rises, let your values guide your decisions. Ask yourself: What drives my leadership? What change do I want to create? Which values guide my decisions? Your purpose is your anchor when the pressure mounts.

TRACK WHAT COUNTS

Information moves quickly during elections, but not all of it is reliable or relevant. Stay informed, verify before acting, and anticipate emerging risks. Monitor public sentiment and key developments. Identify emerging risks and follow up on necessary action. Good decisions begin with reliable information.

COMMUNICATE WITH PURPOSE

Visibility matters, but credibility matters more. Not every rumour deserves a response, and not every disagreement needs to become a public confrontation. Communicate clearly, stick to facts, remain respectful, and avoid inflammatory language. Speak with purpose. Protect your credibility.

BUILD A STRONG CAMPAIGN TEAM

Campaign pressure can affect morale and performance. Strong leaders support their teams through clear communication, recognition, and timely problem-solving. Check in regularly and listen to concerns. Clarify roles, responsibilities, and expectations. Recognise contributions and resolve conflicts promptly. Support team members through challenges. Strong campaigns are built by supported teams.

BE READY FOR ELECTION DAY

Election Day is not the time to start planning. Preparation must come first. Ensure that plans are in place, roles are clear, communication channels are working, and supporters understand their responsibilities. Follow electoral laws (see annex) and procedures and address concerns through the appropriate channels. Prepare early. Stay alert. Act responsibly.



FROM CAMPAIGN TO SERVICE

Winning is not the end goal; it is the beginning of public responsibility. Stay connected to the people who trusted you, listen to their concerns, act transparently, and deliver on your commitments. Lead with humility, not pride or arrogance. A mandate is not a trophy. It is a responsibility to serve.

RISE, LEARN AND CONTINUE

An electoral loss can be painful, but it does not erase your worth, experience, or leadership potential. Give yourself time to process the outcome, then reflect and move forward. Acknowledge your achievements. Learn from the experience. Thank those who stood by you. Maintain relationships and community involvement. Prepare for future opportunities. An election defeat may open new paths to community leadership, public service, advocacy, or another campaign. You may lose an election without losing your purpose.

LEADERSHIP THAT LASTS

Leadership extends beyond the ballot. Whether in elective office, community groups, business, professional organizations, or social movements, women can lead through service, integrity, and action. Keep learning. Keep serving. Create opportunities for other women to lead. Your legacy is not only the office you hold, but the change you create and the women you help rise.

LEADERSHIP READINESS CHECKLIST

LEADERSHIP READINESS CHECKLIST

- ☐ **Do I have a strong understanding of my values and the principles that guide my decisions?**
- ☐ **I have identified my strengths as a leader.**
- ☐ **I recognise the areas where I could use more learning or support.**
- ☐ **I am receptive to feedback and excited to grow from my experiences.**
- ☐ **I have developed my confidence in speaking and connecting with various audiences.**
- ☐ **I have a solid grasp of the leadership or electoral process that pertains to my role.**
- ☐ **I know exactly where to find trustworthy information and official updates.**
- ☐ **I am clear on the key requirements, timelines, and responsibilities that come with leadership.**
- ☐ **I can easily tell the difference between verified information and misinformation.**
- ☐ **I have set up a system to keep all my important information and documents organized.**



TEAM AND SUPPORT READINESS

- ☐ I have identified individuals who can provide guidance, mentorship, or technical support.
- ☐ I truly understand how vital teamwork and collaboration are.
- ☐ I am prepared to communicate effectively with volunteers, colleagues, and stakeholders.
- ☐ I appreciate the significance of respecting diverse opinions and perspectives.
- ☐ I am prepared to engage with the public professionally.
- ☐ I understand the importance of listening as a leadership skill.
- ☐ I can respond to challenges without compromising my values.
- ☐ I use communication to build trust and understanding.

ETHICAL LEADERSHIP READINESS

- ☐ I understand the importance of integrity in leadership.
- ☐ I am committed to transparency and accountability.
- ☐ I will avoid actions that compromise public trust.
- ☐ I am prepared to make decisions based on principles rather than pressure.
- ☐ I understand that leadership is a responsibility, not a privilege.

PRACTICAL TIP: REFLECT AND GROW

After every significant leadership experience, ask yourself:

1. **What went well?**

2. **What could I improve?**

3. **What will I do differently next time?**

Continuous learning turns experience into growth.



KEY TAKEAWAYS: FROM KNOWLEDGE TO PRACTICE

Leadership is bigger than the ballot. An election may decide who holds office, but leadership is defined by how you serve. Keep serving. Lead with purpose. Uphold integrity. Leave a legacy.

REFLECTION AND JOURNALING

> ***"Leadership is not about being the first woman to reach a position. It is about ensuring that many more women can follow."***

EVERY GREAT LEADER BEGINS SOMEWHERE.

MY LEADERSHIP COMMITMENT

Leadership begins with a personal decision to serve with integrity, purpose, and accountability. As I embark on my leadership journey, I make the following commitment:

I COMMIT TO:

- ☐ **Lead with integrity and honesty in all my actions.**
- ☐ **Serve with humility and respect for others.**
- ☐ **Listen to diverse voices and perspectives.**
- ☐ **Continue learning and improving my leadership skills.**
- ☐ **Promote inclusion, fairness, and equal opportunities.**
- ☐ **Support and encourage other women and girls to pursue leadership.**
- ☐ **Use leadership as a tool for positive change.**
- ☐ **Respect the trust placed in me by the communities and people I serve.**
- ☐ **Uphold accountability and transparency in decision-making.**
- ☐ **Lead with courage, even when challenges arise.**



MY PERSONAL LEADERSHIP PROMISE

I commit to using my knowledge, skills, and influence to serve others, uphold ethical principles, and contribute positively to my community, organisation, and society.

NAME: _____

SIGNATURE: _____

DATE: _____

LOOKING AHEAD

Leadership is a journey of learning, service, and growth. No one begins fully prepared for every challenge. The goal is not perfection—it is readiness to learn, adapt, and lead with purpose. If you have checked most of the boxes, you are already taking meaningful steps toward effective leadership. If some boxes remain unchecked, view them as opportunities for growth rather than obstacles.



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YOUR NEXT MOVE

YOU HAVE THE KNOWLEDGE, NOW PUT IT INTO ACTION

Use the QR code below to access the templates to turn your leadership vision into a practical campaign plan. Adapt them to your electoral seat, community priorities, and available resources. Review your plans regularly, remain accountable to the people you seek to serve, and let your values guide every decision.

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GALLERY



Chelagat Mutai

Chelagat Mutai's legacy advises contemporary Kenyan leaders to govern with moral conviction, principled resolve, and unwavering commitment to public good.

Phoebe Asiyo

Her legacy instructs contemporary Kenyan leaders to champion gender inclusion, dismantle entrenched cultural and patriarchal barriers, and sustain resilient, principled public service.





Wangari Maathai

Leadership is not contingent upon favourable circumstances; it demands the courage to act for what is right, however difficult the moment. Embrace the Hummingbird Philosophy.

GLOSSARY

This glossary provides simple explanations of key terms used in this handbook. It is intended to help readers understand electoral, leadership, governance, digital safety, and gender-related concepts relevant to women aspiring to become Members of County Assembly (MCAs).

A

Accountability
The responsibility of leaders to explain their decisions and actions, take ownership of their conduct, and use public resources honestly and responsibly.

Aspirant
A person who seeks to be nominated or elected to a public office.

D

Deepfake
A digitally manipulated image, video, or audio recording created or altered using technology, including artificial intelligence, to make it appear tha a person said or did something they did not actually say or do.

Digital Footprint
The record of information, activities, interactions, and content that a person leaves behind through their use of the internet and digital platforms.

Doxing (Doxxing)
The deliberate publication or sharing of someone's private or identifying information online without their consent, often with the intention of causing harm, intimidation, harassment, or exposing them to risk.

G

Gender-Based Violence (GBV)
Any harmful act directed at a person because of thei gender that causes or may cause physical, sexual, psychological, or economic harm. GBV can occur in homes, communities, workplaces, political spaces, and online environments.

Grassroots Engagement
The process of building meaningful relationships and working directly with people and communities at the local level to understand their concerns, involve them in decision-making, and build support for shared goals.

I

Impersonation
The act of pretending to be another person, often by using their name, photograph, identity, or online account, with the intention of deceiving, misleading, or causing harm.

C

Candidate
A person who has been formally nominated to contest an election for a particular elective position.

Character Attack
A deliberate attempt to damage a person's reputation by spreading harmful, insulting, or misleading claims about their character, conduct, or personal life.

Coalition
An arrangement in which individuals, political parties, or groups work together to achieve shared political or electoral objectives.

Cyberbullying
The use of digital platforms, social media, messaging applications, or other electronic means to repeatedly harass, intimidate, threaten, humiliate, or harm another person.

E

Electoral Cycle
The series of stages and activities that take place before, during, and after an election. It includes voter registration, candidate nomination, campaigning, Election Day, vote counting, results announcement, dispute resolution, and post-election activities.

Election Period
The period covering key election-related activities, from the preparation and campaign stages through Election Day and the announcement of results.

Evidence Preservation
The process of safely keeping and documenting information that may be needed to support a complaint, investigation, or legal action. In cases of online harassment or digital attacks, this may include screenshots, messages, links, emails, recordings, or other relevant digital records.

H

Harassment
Unwanted conduct that intimidates, threatens, humiliates, or causes distress to another person. Harassment may be verbal, physical, sexual, psychological, or digital.

S

Sexual Harassment

Unwelcome sexual conduct, comments, requests, gestures, or advances that cause discomfort, humiliation, intimidation, or create a hostile or unsafe environment.

Stakeholder

An individual, group, or institution that has an interest in, is affected by, or can influence a particular issue, decision, programme, or political process

Stakeholder Mapping:

The process of identifying key individuals, groups, and institutions, understanding their interests and influence, and developing appropriate strategies for engaging them.

Stress Management:

- The process of recognizing and managing physical, emotional, and mental pressures in healthy ways to maintain well-being and effective functioning.

T

Technology-Facilitated Gender-Based Violence (TFGBV)

Gender-based violence that is committed, assisted, or amplified through digital technologies and communication platforms. It may include online harassment, cyberbullying, doxing, impersonation, non-consensual sharing of intimate images, threats, stalking, and other forms of digital abuse.

Transparency:

The practice of being open, clear, and honest about decisions, processes, actions, and the use of resources, particularly in public leadership and governance.

Two-Factor Authentication (2FA)

A security measure that requires two different forms of verification to access an online account, such as a password combined with a code sent to a phone or generated by an authentication application.

W

Well-being

A person's overall physical, mental, emotional, social, and psychological health and ability to function positively and cope with the demands of life and leadership.

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