

Women's Participation in Leadership Positions in Tanzanian Local Government Authorities: Structural, Institutional, and Socio-Cultural Determinants in Singida Region

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Abstract

This study examined factors influencing women's participation in leadership positions within Local Government Authorities (LGAs) in Singida Region, Tanzania. Guided by Liberal Feminist Theory and Institutional Theory, the study employed a qualitative case study design to explore structural, institutional, and socio-cultural determinants shaping women's engagement in leadership. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with 84 purposively selected participants from 18 wards in Singida District Council and Singida Municipal Council, and were analysed using thematic content analysis. The findings revealed that women's participation is constrained by interconnected personal, institutional and socio-cultural factors. Personal barriers included limited financial resources, domestic responsibilities, low self-confidence and internalised gender stereotypes. Institutional challenges comprised weak implementation of gender-responsive policies, inadequate leadership development and mentorship programmes and gender-insensitive recruitment and electoral processes. Socio-cultural barriers included patriarchal norms, early marriage and unequal educational opportunities for girls, which undermined women's visibility and acceptance as leaders. The study concludes that women remain underrepresented in leadership, particularly at the grassroots level. It recommends strengthening gender equality policies, expanding leadership training and mentorship, enhancing institutional support mechanisms and promoting community initiatives that challenge discriminatory gender norms and advance inclusive local governance.

Keywords: *Women's participation, leadership positions, local government authorities, gender equality, socio-cultural determinants, Tanzania.*

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1.0 Introduction

Over the past three decades, women's participation in political leadership has increased globally, reflecting growing commitments to gender equality and inclusive governance (UN Women, 2026; Xu & Zhou, 2024). Despite this progress, gender parity in political representation remains uneven, particularly in developing countries. Women hold approximately one-quarter of parliamentary and cabinet positions worldwide, although a few countries, including Rwanda, Cuba, Nicaragua, Mexico, and the United Arab Emirates,

have achieved or surpassed gender parity in their national legislatures (IPU, 2023). Nevertheless, significant disparities in political leadership and decision-making persist globally. In Sub-Saharan Africa, women hold approximately one-quarter of parliamentary seats (IPU, 2023). While Rwanda has achieved the highest level of female parliamentary representation globally (Bauer, 2020), many African countries continue to experience gender inequalities, particularly within local governance structures. This suggests that gains in national representation do not necessarily translate into equitable participation at the local level, where leadership opportunities are shaped by institutional and socio-cultural contexts.

Understanding these disparities requires attention to both structural inequalities and institutional processes. Liberal Feminist Theory attributes women's underrepresentation to unequal access to rights, education, economic resources and political opportunities (Reddy et al., 2020). In response, Tanzania has implemented constitutional guarantees of equality, gender quotas through special parliamentary seats and policies promoting women's participation in political decision-making (Lihiru, 2023). The election of President Samia Suluhu Hassan further symbolises progress in women's political representation. However, the persistence of gender disparities suggests that formal equality alone may not produce substantive equality. Institutional Theory complements Liberal Feminist Theory by emphasising the roles of formal institutions, such as laws and governance structures, and informal institutions, including cultural norms, organisational practices, and social expectations (Gimenez-Jimenez et al., 2020). These arrangements can reproduce inequalities through recruitment processes, leadership selection mechanisms and entrenched power relations. Together, the two theories provide a useful framework for examining factors influencing women's participation in leadership.

Although women's representation in Tanzania's national political institutions has gradually increased (Lihiru, 2023), they remain underrepresented in Local Government Authorities (LGAs), particularly at the grassroots level. Local governments are important arenas for democratic participation, service delivery and community development (Muchunguzi, 2023). Consequently, women's exclusion from local leadership positions undermines both gender equality and the inclusiveness of governance. Recent statistics highlight these disparities. According to UN Women Tanzania (2024), women constitute 23.1 per cent of Regional Commissioners, 28.5 per cent of District Commissioners, and 27 per cent of District Executive Directors. However, representation declines sharply at the grassroots level, where women account for only 2.7 per cent of Ward Development Committee Chairpersons, 2.1 per cent of Village Chairpersons, 12.65 per cent of Mitaa Chairpersons, and 6.7 per cent of Hamlet Chairpersons (UN Women Tanzania, 2024). These figures

indicate that progress in appointed positions has not been matched by comparable gains in elected local leadership.

The persistence of these inequalities is closely linked to institutional and socio-cultural factors. Gender norms that associate leadership with men continue to influence perceptions of authority, leadership legitimacy and political participation (UNDP, 2023). Women aspiring to leadership positions often encounter resistance, heightened scrutiny and limited acceptance due to persistent patriarchal norms and gender stereotypes (Khan & Bibi, 2024). These challenges are further reinforced by unequal access to education, economic resources, political networks, and campaign-financing opportunities.

Singida Region offers an important context for examining these dynamics. Despite national commitments to gender equality, women remain underrepresented in local leadership positions, including ward councillorships, council chairpersonships, and mayoral offices (Singida Region Investment Guide, 2020). While studies in Tanzania have largely focused on parliamentary representation, affirmative action, and national politics, attention to women's participation in LGAs, particularly in regions where traditional norms continue to influence political engagement and leadership selection, has been limited. Consequently, there is insufficient understanding of how formal equality measures interact with localised institutional practices and socio-cultural structures to shape women's participation in grassroots leadership.

This study addresses this gap by examining the structural, institutional and socio-cultural determinants of women's participation in leadership positions within Local Government Authorities in Singida Region, Tanzania. Drawing on Liberal Feminist Theory and Institutional Theory, the study contributes evidence to inform policies and interventions aimed at promoting inclusive governance and gender-equitable political participation.

2.0 Literature Review

2.1 Theoretical Review

2.1.1 Liberal Feminist Theory (LFT)

Liberal Feminist Theory, associated with scholars such as Mary Wollstonecraft and John Stuart Mill, posits that women and men possess equal rational capacities and that gender inequality arises primarily from discriminatory laws, institutional barriers, and social practices rather than biological differences. The theory advocates reforms that promote equal access to education, employment, political participation, and leadership opportunities. According to Makalanga et al. (2022), eliminating discriminatory structures and expanding equal opportunities can reduce women's exclusion from political and administrative leadership. In this study, LFT provides a useful lens for examining how unequal access to resources, gender stereotypes and discriminatory attitudes constrain women's participation in leadership positions within Local Government Authorities (LGAs). Although criticised for paying limited attention to deeply rooted cultural norms and patriarchal power relations, the theory remains relevant for understanding how equality-oriented reforms can enhance women's participation in leadership.

2.1.2 Institutional Theory (IT)

Institutional Theory complements this perspective by emphasising the influence of formal and informal institutions on individual behaviour and participation. Formal institutions include laws, policies, electoral systems and organisational procedures, whereas informal institutions encompass cultural norms, values, traditions and social expectations. The theory suggests that women's access to leadership opportunities is shaped by the interaction of these institutional dimensions. Within LGAs, formal mechanisms such as recruitment procedures, political party structures and gender policies may either facilitate or constrain women's participation, while informal gender norms influence perceptions of leadership legitimacy (Paxton & Hughes, 2014; UNDP, 2023). Institutional Theory, therefore, explains women's underrepresentation as a consequence of barriers such as weak policy implementation, gender-insensitive organisational cultures and unequal access to resources. Despite criticism for emphasising structures over individual agency, the theory remains valuable for understanding how institutional arrangements shape women's leadership opportunities. Together, the two theories provide a comprehensive framework for examining the personal, institutional, and sociocultural factors that influence women's participation in leadership positions within LGAs.

2.2 Empirical Studies

2.2.1 Women's Participation in Leadership Positions: General Overview

Women's participation in leadership positions has attracted considerable scholarly and policy attention due to its importance for democratic governance, organisational effectiveness and socio-economic development. Despite constituting nearly half of the global population, women remain underrepresented in political, public and private decision-making structures, occupying only about one-quarter of leadership positions worldwide (Algahtani, 2020; Bekele & Nigatu, 2023). Although representation has improved over recent decades, progress remains uneven across regions. Developed countries generally report higher levels of female representation than developing countries, where institutional constraints and gender norms continue to limit women's advancement (Ahmed et al., 2016). Similar disparities persist in Sub-Saharan Africa, where women's participation in political leadership varies considerably among countries (Okot & Altmann, 2025).

In Tanzania, affirmative action measures and gender quotas have increased women's political representation. Nevertheless, women remain underrepresented in leadership positions within Local Government Authorities and other decision-making institutions (Tarimo & Dominico, 2024). Existing evidence suggests that this underrepresentation is shaped by the interplay of personal, institutional, and socio-cultural factors that constrain women's access to leadership opportunities. These findings indicate that formal commitments to gender equality do not automatically translate into substantive representation, particularly within local governance structures, where multiple barriers continue to limit women's participation.

2.2.2 Personal Factors Influencing Women's Participation in Leadership Positions

Empirical studies consistently identify individual-level factors as important determinants of women's participation in leadership. Educational attainment has been found to

enhance leadership participation by increasing knowledge, skills, confidence, and access to professional opportunities (Mwita & Mwakasangula, 2023). Similarly, self-confidence and leadership self-efficacy influence women's willingness to seek and occupy leadership positions, with studies indicating that women often underestimate their leadership capabilities compared to men (Schmitt et al., 2014).

Work-life balance challenges further constrain women's participation in leadership. The unequal distribution of domestic and caregiving responsibilities limits women's time, mobility, and capacity to engage in leadership activities (Hochschild & Machung, 2012). However, evidence suggests that personal attributes alone do not adequately explain women's underrepresentation. Rather, their effects are often mediated by broader institutional and socio-cultural contexts that shape access to opportunities and resources.

2.2.3 Institutional Factors Influencing Women's Participation in Leadership Positions

Institutional factors are a critical dimension of women's participation in leadership. Studies have shown that gender quotas, affirmative action policies, and supportive organisational practices can enhance women's representation by addressing structural barriers to leadership (Kalumanga et al., 2023). Inclusive organisational cultures and transparent recruitment and promotion systems have similarly been associated with improved opportunities for women to attain leadership positions (Mbunda et al., 2023).

Conversely, institutional barriers, including discriminatory recruitment practices, inadequate leadership development programmes, weak policy implementation, and limited access to mentoring opportunities, continue to constrain women's advancement (Beshir, 2023; Hora, 2014). Although existing studies recognise the importance of institutional arrangements, evidence remains limited on how these factors operate within Tanzanian Local Government Authorities, particularly at the grassroots governance level.

2.2.4 Socio-Cultural Factors Influencing Women's Participation in Leadership Positions

Socio-cultural factors remain among the most persistent barriers to women's participation in leadership. Studies across Africa consistently show that patriarchal norms, gender stereotypes, and traditional expectations often associate leadership with men, thereby limiting women's access to decision-making positions (Yemenu, 2020). These norms shape educational opportunities, resource allocation, leadership aspirations, and community perceptions of the legitimacy of women's leadership.

Religious beliefs, traditional customs, and prevailing gender ideologies further reinforce women's marginalisation within leadership structures (Mauchi et al., 2020). Additionally, restricted access to professional networks and limited exposure to female role models may reduce women's opportunities for mentorship, sponsorship, and advancement into leadership roles (Kipnetich et al., 2022). Although these factors are well documented, there remains insufficient understanding of how socio-cultural norms interact with institutional structures to influence women's participation in leadership within Local Government Authorities in Tanzania.

2.2.5 Synthesis of the Empirical Literature and Research Gap

The reviewed literature shows that women's participation in leadership roles is shaped by a complex interplay of personal, institutional and socio-cultural factors. While existing studies offer valuable insights into the barriers to women's leadership, much of the evidence focuses on national politics, corporate leadership or cross-country comparisons. Limited empirical attention has been directed towards understanding how these factors operate within Local Government Authorities in Tanzania, particularly in regions characterised by strong traditional norms and localised governance structures. Consequently, there remains a significant knowledge gap regarding the mechanisms by which personal, institutional and sociocultural factors interact to influence women's participation in grassroots leadership positions. This study addresses this gap by examining the determinants of women's participation in leadership roles within Local Government Authorities in Singida Region, Tanzania.

3.0 Methodology

This study employed a qualitative case study design to examine factors influencing women's participation in leadership positions within Local Government Authorities (LGAs) in Singida Region, Tanzania. A qualitative approach was adopted to facilitate an in-depth exploration of participants' experiences and perceptions regarding women's leadership within their institutional and socio-cultural contexts (Kothari, 2014). Singida Region was purposively selected due to its persistently low representation of women in local and political leadership positions. The study population comprised local government officials, community leaders and community members with relevant knowledge of governance and leadership processes.

A multi-stage sampling strategy combining purposive, snowball and stratified sampling techniques was used to identify information-rich participants and ensure representation across wards, villages and hamlets. Data were collected from 84 participants through semi-structured interviews conducted between October 2025 and January 2026. Interviews were conducted in Kiswahili, translated into English, and analysed using thematic content analysis, including coding, theme development and interpretation. To enhance trustworthiness, a pilot study was conducted, and credibility was strengthened through transcript verification and triangulation of evidence. Ethical clearance was obtained from the relevant authority, informed consent was secured from all participants, confidentiality was maintained through anonymisation, and participation was voluntary throughout the study.

4.0 Results and Discussion

4.1 Participants' Profile

A total of 84 participants were interviewed, comprising ward councillors (19.05%), local residents (19.05%), Mtaa Executive Officers (14.30%), hamlet chairpersons (14.31%), village chairpersons (13.09%), Ward Executive Officers (10.70%), Heads of Department

(7.15%), and the Municipal and District Electoral Officers (1.19%). This diverse composition ensured representation of policy-makers, implementers, and grassroots actors directly involved in local governance processes. The inclusion of participants from multiple leadership levels enhanced the credibility of the findings and provided rich contextual insights into factors influencing women's participation in leadership positions within Singida Region.

4.2 Current Status of Women's Participation in Leadership Roles at Local Government Authorities

The findings indicate that women's participation in leadership roles within Local Government Authorities (LGAs) in Singida Region has improved considerably, particularly in senior administrative and political positions. Respondents reported that women currently occupy influential leadership roles, including Regional Commissioner (RC), Regional Administrative Secretary (RAS), District Administrative Secretary (DAS), Chama Cha Mapinduzi (CCM) Chairperson and Member of Parliament (MP). As one respondent observed, *Top positions such as RC, RAS, DAS, CCM Chairperson and even some MPs are held by women (RESP 2).*

These findings suggest greater visibility of women in leadership than in previous generations, when such positions were largely dominated by men. Respondents attributed this progress to expanded educational opportunities, increased awareness of gender equality and women's empowerment initiatives. They noted that traditional practices among the Nyaturu and Nyiramba communities historically confined women to domestic roles and limited girls' access to education, thereby restricting leadership opportunities. However, changing social attitudes and improved educational attainment have contributed to greater acceptance of women as leaders. One participant remarked,

Women in Singida now serve as village leaders, councillors, MPs, teachers, health workers and entrepreneurs, indicating clear change from the past" (RESP 4). Another one added,

Increased access to education has significantly transformed societal perceptions of women's leadership capabilities (RESP 1).

Despite these gains, respondents acknowledged that women remain underrepresented relative to men. Persistent barriers include early marriage, heavy domestic responsibilities, gender-based violence and entrenched socio-cultural norms. As one respondent stated,

Early marriages, household responsibilities, inequality and gender-based violence still affect women's participation in leadership positions (RESP 14).

These findings indicate that while women's representation in leadership has improved, structural and socio-cultural constraints continue to limit their full participation. The results are consistent with previous studies highlighting the role of education, empowerment initiatives and institutional reforms in advancing women's leadership, while underscoring the persistence of cultural and structural barriers that impede substantive gender equality (Okot & Altmann, 2025; Mwita & Mwakasangula, 2023). The findings suggest that although

progress has been made in expanding women's access to leadership positions within LGAs, achieving meaningful gender parity will require sustained efforts to address the underlying institutional and socio-cultural barriers that continue to constrain women's participation in leadership.

4.3 Personal Factors Affecting Women's Participation in Leadership Positions

The findings revealed several personal factors influencing women's participation in leadership positions within Local Government Authorities in Singida Region. Limited access to financial resources emerged as one of the most frequently cited barriers, particularly during electoral processes. Respondents noted that campaigning requires substantial financial investment, which many women cannot afford. As one participant explained,

Today's elections require money, and most women in local authorities have no funds. This limits their ability to participate and compete for leadership roles. In addition, inadequate finances discourage many women from contesting leadership positions despite having the interest and capability to do so (RESP 12).

These findings suggest that economic inequality constrains women's ability to finance campaigns, mobilise support, and compete effectively for leadership positions, consistent with Liberal Feminist Theory's emphasis on unequal access to resources and opportunities.

Family responsibilities and limited family support were also identified as significant barriers. Respondents reported that women bear a disproportionate share of domestic duties, which reduces the time and flexibility needed for leadership activities. One participant observed,

Women are often expected to manage household responsibilities alongside community obligations, which limits their participation in political meetings, campaigns, and decision-making processes (RESP 9).

In addition, self-doubt and limited confidence among some women were reported as barriers to leadership participation. Respondents noted that internalised gender stereotypes sometimes lead women to question the capabilities of female candidates, thereby weakening collective support for women seeking leadership positions. As one respondent stated,

Women themselves lack confidence in one another. When they see a woman competing for leadership, their main concern is whether she is capable. In this case, they do not support her (RESP 2).

These findings align with previous studies showing that financial constraints, domestic responsibilities and limited self-confidence reduce women's participation in leadership and political processes (Tarimo & Dominico, 2024; Musa & Shauri, 2025). The findings demonstrate that personal factors shape women's participation in leadership by influencing their capacity, confidence, and ability to compete effectively within political and administrative structures.

4.4 Institutional factors affecting women's participation in leadership positions

The findings revealed several institutional factors that affect women's participation in leadership roles within Local Government Authorities (LGAs). Key barriers included weak implementation of gender-responsive policies, inadequate institutional support mechanisms, gender-insensitive political processes, and restricted access to economic resources. Respondents noted that although gender equality policies exist within Tanzania's legal and policy framework, their implementation at the local level remains inadequate. One participant observed,

Existing policies have not effectively addressed the barriers women face in communities and local leadership structures (RESP 2).

These findings suggest that institutional commitments to gender equality are often not supported by adequate enforcement mechanisms, monitoring systems, or the resources necessary to promote women's advancement into leadership positions. Respondents further reported that electoral procedures and political party nomination processes frequently disadvantage women by limiting their access to institutional support and campaign resources. As one interviewee explained,

Tanzania's constitution and legal frameworks provide equal rights to vote, be voted for, and stand for election, yet implementation gaps, particularly in local areas, remain evident. Another respondent noted, "Women often receive insufficient party support and funding to compete for elective positions" (RESP 1).

These findings indicate that, despite formal guarantees of equal political rights, institutional practices within political parties and electoral systems continue to create unequal opportunities for women's political advancement. Limited access to economic resources also emerged as a significant institutional barrier. Respondents highlighted constraints on land ownership, credit, and financial capital, which limit women's ability to finance campaigns and pursue leadership aspirations. One participant explained,

Legal and cultural norms favouring male asset ownership restrict women's access to the collateral required for loans and other financial opportunities (RESP12).

Consequently, many women lack the economic independence needed to compete effectively for leadership positions. These findings show that institutional arrangements governing property rights and access to finance can indirectly limit women's participation in leadership. Collectively, the findings indicate that women's underrepresentation in leadership positions is shaped by institutional barriers, including weak policy implementation, gender-insensitive political processes, inadequate support mechanisms, and restricted access to economic resources. These results align with previous studies showing that gender equality policies often fail to achieve their intended outcomes due to weak implementation and institutional resistance (Mutijima & Terzi, 2025; Muluneh et al., 2024). They also support Kabeer's (2021) argument that unequal access to property rights, credit, and economic opportunities constrains women's empowerment and participation in leadership. Overall, the findings underscore the need for stronger institutional reforms to promote women's effective participation in local governance and leadership.

4.5 Socio-Cultural Factors Affecting Women's Participation in Leadership Positions at Local Government Authorities in Singida Region

The findings revealed that socio-cultural norms and gender role expectations significantly influence women's participation in leadership positions within Local Government Authorities (LGAs) in Singida Region. Respondents indicated that prevailing cultural norms within the Nyaturu and Nyiramba communities assign women the primary responsibility for caregiving, household management, and family support, while leadership and decision-making roles are traditionally associated with men. One participant noted;

In both Nyaturu and Nyiramba societies, women are traditionally expected to manage household responsibilities including cooking, childcare and farm work (RESP 2).

Such expectations limit women's participation in public affairs and reinforce the perception that leadership is a male domain. Respondents also noted that women seeking leadership positions often face resistance because exercising authority over men is perceived as challenging established cultural hierarchies. As one interviewee stated,

Women who give orders to men or preside over men in decision-making forums are considered to be challenging the cultural hierarchy (RESP 6).

These findings suggest that traditional gender roles continue to shape societal perceptions of leadership and diminish community acceptance of women leaders.

The study also found that cultural expectations emphasising humility, obedience and submissiveness discourage women from developing the confidence and assertiveness often associated with leadership. Respondents reported that women who speak assertively or assume visible leadership roles may be labelled as disrespectful or arrogant, leading to social stigma and reduced support. In addition, certain cultural practices were reported to restrict girls' educational opportunities through early marriage and the prioritisation of boys' education, particularly in rural areas. One respondent noted,

Some parents still encourage their daughters to leave school to marry, thereby limiting their future leadership prospects (RESP 10).

These educational disadvantages limit women's access to the knowledge, skills and qualifications required for leadership roles. Overall, the findings indicate that patriarchal norms, restrictive gender expectations and educational inequalities continue to constrain women's participation in leadership within LGAs. These findings align with studies by Tamale (2020), Beshir (2023), Musa et al. (2025), and Mathetha and Dhanpat (2025), which show that patriarchal beliefs, gender stereotypes and cultural traditions remain significant barriers to women's advancement in leadership. Collectively, the findings suggest that addressing women's underrepresentation in leadership requires not only institutional reforms but also transformative efforts to challenge deeply entrenched socio-cultural norms and practices.

5.0 Conclusion

The findings of this study indicate that women's participation in leadership roles within Local Government Authorities in Singida Region has improved over time, particularly at higher levels. However, significant underrepresentation persists, especially at the grassroots level. Personal factors such as limited financial resources, heavy domestic responsibilities, lack of family or spousal support and internalised gender bias continue to constrain women's engagement in leadership. Domestic and caregiving roles reduce women's time, mobility and capacity to participate fully in electoral or leadership processes, while internalised doubts and lack of confidence, sometimes reinforced by peers, further inhibit aspirations and effectiveness. It can therefore be concluded that although formal inclusion has advanced over time, structural inequalities at the grassroots level persist, limiting women's participation in leadership roles, consistent with broader evidence given by scholars such as Zhou et al. (2025).

Institutionally, the study concludes that weak policy implementation, gender-insensitive electoral and organisational processes and limited access to economic resources collectively reinforce women's exclusion from leadership. Despite the existence of formal legal frameworks guaranteeing gender equality, significant gaps persist in enforcement, particularly at the local level, where institutional inertia and male-dominated power structures prevail. Furthermore, it can be concluded that socio-cultural norms, especially within Nyaturu and Nyiramba communities, continue to define leadership as a male domain, discouraging women's participation and shaping negative societal perceptions of female leaders, especially at the grassroots level. Also, weak enforcement of gender-responsive policies, restricted access to targeted leadership development programmes, gender-insensitive electoral procedures, and limited decision-making autonomy hinder women's progression, while financial constraints imposed or exacerbated by institutional rules reduce bargaining power and independence. These intersecting institutional and cultural barriers highlight that women's leadership underrepresentation is a systemic issue requiring integrated interventions that simultaneously address policy enforcement, economic empowerment and the transformation of patriarchal norms.

6.0 Recommendations

To enhance women's participation in leadership roles, Local Government Authorities should strengthen and enforce gender-responsive policies that explicitly promote women's leadership, including clear promotion guidelines and gender-quota mechanisms, to ensure women's voices are integrated into decision-making at all levels. Government and political parties should support women's financial empowerment through targeted funding, grants, or low-interest loans, particularly for aspiring leaders in local areas, to reduce economic barriers to participation. Additionally, structured training programmes should be developed to equip women with leadership, negotiation, and public administration skills, complemented by mentorship and peer support networks to build professional confidence and networks. Policies that incorporate flexible working arrangements, childcare support, and family-friendly practices are also essential for mitigating conflicts between domestic responsibilities and leadership roles.

To address socio-cultural barriers, government agencies and civil society should engage communities through awareness campaigns that challenge traditional gender norms that cast leadership as a male domain. Collaboration with religious and community leaders is vital to increasing societal acceptance of women leaders. Legal and electoral frameworks should be strengthened to ensure that constitutional and political provisions effectively promote gender equality, and political parties should adopt transparent, gender-sensitive nomination processes and actively support female candidates. Finally, prioritising girls' education and continuous professional development for women, particularly in rural areas, is critical to equipping them with the qualifications, skills and confidence necessary for sustainable participation in leadership.

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