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IMPLICATIONS FOR DEMOCRACY IN AFRICA

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SIVI INSTITUTE

#TowardsAnInclusiveSociety

Contents

About The African Citizenship Index

Citizenship is a multi-faceted concept that is shaped by the political, economic, and social life within a place. The African Citizenship Index aims to understand the ways in which ordinary people interact with each other in economic, social-support focused and political networks across the continent. The inaugural survey was conducted by SIVIO Institute in March – April 2021 across 5 African cities: Harare, Zimbabwe and Lilongwe, Malawi in Southern Africa, Nairobi, Kenya in East Africa, Yaoundé, Cameroon in Central Africa and Accra, Ghana in West Africa.

For more information:

www.africacitizenshipindex.org

About SIVIO Institute

SIVIO Institute (SI) is an independent organisation focused on ensuring that citizens are at the centre of processes of socio-economic and policy change. It aims to contribute towards Africa's inclusive socio-economic transformation. It is borne out of a desire to enhance agency as a stimulus/catalyst for inclusive political and socio-economic transformation. SIVIO's work entails multi-disciplinary, cutting-edge policy research, nurturing citizens' agency to be part of the change that they want to see, workingwith communities to mobilize their assets to resolve some of the immediate problems they face.

For more information:

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Citizenship in Africa: Do We Understand What We Are Reading?

Tendai Murisa

1. Introduction

The democracy project is under threat across Africa. The convulsions to do with claims about rigged elections, increased incidences of coups and the ongoing citizen led challenges against authoritarianism in places like Eswatini and Ethiopia serve to suggest deep seated problems of power and its use. Even countries like Tunisia and Sudan that had been at the centre of the Arab Spring are in a new round of convulsions. Ethiopia, a country that was doing so well in terms of economic prosperity to an extent that its leader was awarded a Nobel Peace prize is also going through turmoil which threatens its existence. Coups have returned in Mali, Guinea (2021) and Zimbabwe (2017). Could it be that we celebrated the 'silencing of the guns' prematurely?

On the other hand, development is in retreat across many African countries. - after having been totally dismantled by the neoliberal experiments around structural adjustments. Instead, the majority of sub-Saharan Africa has acquiesced to a commodity-driven development project under the guidance of a resource-hungry China. However, as China's development has slowed down, commodity prices have tumbled, and many African countries face a debilitating debt crisis. Elected African governments on the other hand have not invested in areas that could potentially contribute towards inclusive and sustainable growth. African economies remain dominated by smallholder agriculture, informal spaces which also include micro, small to medium scale enterprises and weak social policy (especially around education and health). These are mostly underfunded or not even recognized by policy and relevant government strategies. Governments have devoted significant attention towards policy frameworks focused on investment in big mining and infrastructure projects that are inclined towards the interest of external investors. Industrialization is literally off the radar of many national development programs. This points to the need for an important reflective question; "how are African citizens cohering their livelihoods and related political questions away from the state"?

Citizenship is understood as the depth and breadth of activities that citizens enter either individually or collectively. These are indeed the lifeblood of any community. If one goes to Bulawayo in Zimbabwe they will learn of a tradition of 'zibutheni' where in the event of a funeral citizens collect mealie-meal from each household or cash equivalent to help the bereaved family. Other terms used to describe citizens actions include solidarity, social capital, support for one another. In Africa these norms of mutuality are codified around ubuntu. Furthermore, citizens are at the centre of social struggles across the globe and these range from the Solidarity movement of Poland, #blacklivesmatter and other variations of social struggles such as the social forum running under the theme 'another world is possible', #feesmustfall, #thisflag, #yellowcard and the more radical Arab Spring. These indeed encapsulate the energy and aspiration for a new social order. Bratton (2013) notes that whilst political elites and dominant institutions retain the upper hand in African politics, ordinary people are not powerless. Their political attitudes and behaviors should not be overlooked-they hold within their purview the power to bestow political legitimacy on-or withhold it from leaders, institutions, and regimes. However, whilst we can list a few of these there are very few platforms that systematically track what citizens are doing. Yet they are the engine of democracy or perhaps the missing component to the envisaged reinvigoration of democracy.

Is there another way? So far, there is no agreement on the missing ingredient. We believe there is. A renewed focus and investment into what citizens do and the public space (agora). No doubt elections are necessary. But is that enough to achieve democracy? We hold to the thought that 'free and fair elections are a necessary but not sufficient condition to achieve democracy'. What needs to be done? Perhaps we have been looking at the question of democracy in parts. We have not devoted significant attention to the other components of democracy - citizens and their agency. There is an urgent need to pay greater attention to civic associations, the informal economy, street protest and also the emergence of new forms of civic engagement. Democracy should not be limited to what takes place during elections, but it is also about what citizens do. What if citizens hold the key to complete democratisation? There are always the assumptions that citizens need to be mobilized into voting which explains the

investments into voter mobilisation campaigns. But what if they are already mobilized and are engaged in a variety of problem-solving initiatives in the public space on a day-to-day basis?

2. Background and Context

The revolutions that toppled dictatorships in Eastern Europe were a result of 'massive citizens' protests (Badescu 2010:7). Could it be that we have limited citizenship and the potential of democracy as a system of governance not only through the alleged rigging of elections but also through the failure to acknowledge and promote the role of citizens within the polity? The current conceptualization of democracy has mostly dwelt on the rules of taking power, legitimation, or rule, and the arrangement of governance systems and rarely does it talk about citizen politics. Instead, national legislation has devoted attention to qualifying what citizens can do by focusing on voting rights, the right of assembly, and freedoms of expression and speech in a prescriptive manner. These official processes do not have the capacity to understand in a more detailed manner the issues in which citizens are engaged or what citizenship really entails.

The continent remains highly unstable characterized by threats of armed conflict and increasingly civil protests led especially by the youths. Others (see, for instance, Moyo and Yeros, 2005) see the resurgence of social movements around land and broader economic grievances as potentially suggesting the inadequacies of the existing frameworks of governance. Indeed, citizens, globally, have begun to make demands on power outside of the political party based parliamentary system either through public protests (for instance, the global Occupy Movement), the hashtag-based challenges to power and in some instances formation of post-modern utopias of self-governed territories.

Since the turn of the century, citizen-led protests have been the order of the day across the continent. These riots have mostly been about (but not limited to) the failure of the economic development project, electoral process, and broader governance concerns. Food prices focused riots spread like a veld fire across the continent beginning earnestly in 2007. In September of 2007 in Morocco people took to the streets to protest about the price of food which

had been deemed too excessive. On February 20, 2008, rioters protested a 65% rise in the price of some foodstuffs in Burkina Faso. The rioters burnt government buildings and looted stores. Literally, a couple of days later similar riots erupted in Cameroon, a taxi drivers' strike over fuel prices became a massive protest soaring food prices leaving around 20 people dead and hundreds were arrested (Sasson 2012:5). A month later police in Senegal had to use tear gas and beat people protesting high food prices.

In Egypt in April 2008, workers in Mahalla launched an expanded strike that encompassed larger concerns about inflation and low salaries. Protestors burned two schools, and over 150 demonstrators were hurt. Protestors in Cairo and other cities joined the call for a general strike. In Cairo, stores were closed, and students protested at three universities. These events converged with the long lines and shortages especially throughout Egypt. Fights at bakeries left at least seven dead during this period. In his annual May Day speech a few weeks later, Mubarak announced wage increases of 30% to help Egyptians cope with increased prices. To calm public anger, the state-owned Al Ahram announced the arrests of 12,000 people for selling flour on the black market (Sachs 2012).

A couple of years later in 2010 people took to the streets in Mozambique (Maputo) after the government had announced a 25% to 30% increase in the price of bread. Shops and banks were looted, and roads barricaded with rocks and burning tires during three days of rioting that paralyzed the capital. The urban-based food riots were dramatic and helped to bring to the fore the need for a pro-poor development compact undergirded by equitable agricultural development.

In the second decade of the 21st century, we also saw an emergence of hashtag-based forms of mobilisation and protest. The region witnessed the emergence of bold citizen-led loosely established hashtag-based formations around the need for improved accountability, social and economic justice, effectively dealing with corruption, improved service delivery and transparent electoral systems. These mostly worked alongside NGO based activism for the respect of the rule of law, human rights, and free and fair elections. They mostly operate outside

of organized civil society-based organizations but are not necessarily in contradiction with the demands and aspirations of civil society. They are not constrained by the rigidities within formal organisation and tend to be spontaneous in how they operate. Hashtag based forms of mobilisation and protest are common across most of the African region. Some of the early hashtags were #bringbackourgirls and #blacklivesmatter.

The #bringbackourgirls, focused on the return of schoolgirls who had been abducted by the Islamist terrorist organisation Boko Haram in Northern Nigeria quickly evolved into a global campaign-thanks largely to leveraging technology. There is also a demographic aspect to these new forms of organising. Most of the technology leveraging campaigns are run by millennials and GenZers. Chika Oduah (a blogger) argues that the organizers want the world's attention, but they aren't asking for the West to come in and solve their problems.

In 2020 alone hashtags fueled campaigns in Namibia, Zimbabwe, Cameroon, Democratic Republic of Congo and Nigeria. In Namibia citizens organized #ShutItAllDownNamibia in response to the ongoing challenge of femicide[1]. The police had reported on the murder of Gwashiti Ndahambela Tomas (27) killed by her husband when she tried to break up with him. The campaign that ensued took off dramatically, it galvanized street protests across the country, made demands for the Minister of Gender to resign and drew unprecedented social media attention to femicide in Namibia. In Nigeria the #EndSars campaign emerged in response to the violence of a special unit (Special Anti-Robbery Squad-SARS) within the Nigeria police. The #EndSars morphed into a decentralized social movement with tens of thousands marching in the major cities of Nigeria. Other popular hashtag movements included #thisflag (Zimbabwe), #feesmustfall (South Africa), #Zumamustfall (South Africa), #Tajamuka/Ses'jikile (Zimbabwe). Countries such as Malawi, Zambia, Kenya and Ghana also experienced youth-led convulsions. In Zambia, a mostly youth-led movement under the banner of #YellowCard emerged as a protest to 'widespread official corruption'. The organizers received support from ordinary Zambians and civil society groups. In 2019 and 2020 Malawi was characterized by unprecedented levels of protests. The protest focused on a variety of issues ranging

1. According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), 1 in 4 Namibian women are survivor of intimate partner violence. Between 2016 and 2019, the Namibian police received more than 3,000 reports of rape and 209 of domestic violence related murders.

from conditions of services for teachers, sanitation workers, truck drivers and airline staff. The protests also focused on rural grievances- students protested land grabs. Most of the protests were however related to the disputed May 2019 elections.

3. Problem Statement: Who are the Citizens; What Do They Do?

For the purpose of this discussion, we consider a citizen as 'one who shares in governing and being governed...in the best state he/she is the one who is best able and chooses to be governed and to govern with a view to the life of excellence' (Aristotle-edited by Everson 1988). In his treatise on the Social Contract, French philosopher Jean Jacques Rousseau (1754) observed that individuals surrender their ungoverned individual liberty for collective political power, and this in order to realise individual freedom-that lies at the heart of democracy. There is a need to find a way of re-connecting with this thinking especially when we are re-imagining governance frameworks that are inclusive and democratic.

According to Bratton (2013:4), democratic citizenship involves (i) participation in popular collective action and (ii) engagement with political leaders and institutions, including between elections and within a rule of law. The recasting of what citizens do with each other as part of democracy entails a new and urgent agenda to revisit where and how citizens cooperate with each other. The literature on associations, social movements, loose civic networks, trade unions is vast, but few of those studies focus on or create a relationship between what citizens do in these voluntary platforms with democracy. The focus has mostly been on what political parties and formal institutions (either the state or Non-Governmental Organisations-NGOs) do for citizens. However, when an analysis is made of how livelihoods are created and sustained, we realize that the core actors or agents of change are not necessarily political parties, NGOs, the state or related institutions, but ordinary people working mostly with other like-minded colleagues within networks of varying sizes and purposes and undertaking common purposes. Furthermore, the collective actions of citizens are broader than the concerns of democracy. Citizens' actions contribute towards:

- Creation of/forging conditions for socio-economic wellbeing

- Providing solidarity for one another
- Production/creation of public goods
- Resolving social conflicts
- Improving governance
- Holding power in check
- Taking care of the natural environment for the greater good
- Worshipping together
- Promoting and preserving culture

There is a need to broaden the notion of citizenship beyond the formal attributes of legal citizenship such as birth, marriage or naturalization- that entitle an individual to hold a passport or national identity card (Bratton 2013:4). We also need to delve a bit more into what citizens do outside of voting once every five years or so. In this instance, there is need for a political understanding of citizenship based on civic engagement and participation. We need to know what citizens think and do when they inhabit political, social and economic spaces. From the literature, we have learnt that citizens engage in a variety of activities from protesting, creating collective platforms for the improvement of the economic circumstances, providing each other with welfare support, establishing paths of solidarity and worshipping together. Perhaps it is important at this stage to discuss three common ways in which citizens come together. First, as per the preceding discussion, citizens come together to establish social movements which focus on or seek to address various grievances. "Networks of informal interactions between a plurality of individuals, groups and/or organizations, engaged in political or cultural conflicts, on the basis of shared collective identities", (Diani 1992). Social movements can be about any kind of issue or set of issues – health, housing, land, education, environment, human rights, good governance etc. A distinction is often found in the literature between 'service delivery' versus 'rights-based' Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) and social movements.

Scholars of civil society theory argue that most social movements reflect the radical and uncaptured part of society. In many instances what passes for NGOs are entities that began as social movements

but due to resource needs, they had to re-organize (corporatize) themselves with structures and eventually changed their accountability to be focused on reporting to donors. Africa has gone through phases/types of social movements; initially, the liberation movements, co-opted by the discipline framework of capital into political parties with structures, alliances and at times into a government. Southern Africa's second biggest movement was the labour movement - however its role and potential to influence the post-colonial discourse of resolving the national question (labour vs. capital) has been neutralized by the disciplining forces within capital - currently the labour movement is either in alliance with a political party - ruling or opposition (e.g. Confederation of South African Trade Unions - COSATU in South Africa and Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions - ZCTU in Zimbabwe) or in some cases has captured political power (e.g. Zambia). Furthermore, whereas traditionally the labour movement was dependent on membership fees it has now - like the NGO formations - managed to source for funding from external agencies- the issue of autonomy becomes much more complex. Most Unions now spend more energy reporting to their principals - who in most cases have an association with capital - and therefore the labour unions tend to tone down their demands against capital but rather focus on reforming the state.

There has emerged bold citizen-led loosely established hashtag-based formations around the need for improved economic performance, creation of jobs, addressing corruption and improved service delivery.

There are the new rural social movements, which are emerging all over the global South in response to unfair land ownership patterns, weak land tenure regimes and these are independent of electoral parties and urban politicians, use largely 'uncivil' tactics to address their grievances. However, their potential to influence power relations at a broader level has not been systematically analysed.

As already mentioned there has emerged bold citizen-led loosely established hashtag-based formations around the need for improved economic performance, creation of jobs, addressing corruption and improved service delivery. These mostly worked alongside NGO based activism for the respect of the rule of law, human rights and free and fair elections. They mostly operate outside of organized civil society-based organizations but are not necessarily in contradiction with the demands and aspirations of civil society. They are not constrained by the rigidities within formal organisation and tend to be spontaneous in how they operate. But they do not necessarily fit the social movement tag easily;

they have no defined membership but are mostly identified by the cause that they are attempting to address. For the purpose of this discussion, we define them as 'new social movements'.

Others (Moyo and Yeros, 2005, Moyo, 2001) have argued that NGOs have served to depoliticize and co-opt rural grievance into welfarist projects, maintain their own selves in means of external funding and indeed serve as the new vehicles of 'indirect rule'.

Table 1: Differences between Social Movements and NGOs

Analytic Construct	Social Movement	NGO
Social Base	Rural-urban mix of smallholders and working-class including urban retrenched and unemployed.	Mostly urban-based intellectuals and activists
Leadership	Composed of 'local/organic/dynamic/ charismatic' leaders and operates on the principles of 'every member an organizer'	Composed of the 'university/middle-class intellectual' and is run through a bureaucracy/ clear hierarchy which includes a board of directors, executive directors, senior managers- with clear communication lines and roles for each staffer.
Tactics	Based on mass mobilisation and direct action such as occupation of land, public spaces, public protests	Mostly 'civil' within the confines of the 'rule of law'. Engage in advocacy and lobbying
Strategy	Anti-political - autonomy from political parties and the state	Alliance building with political parties, related network, policy advocacy
Ideologies	Tend to fuse Marxian thinking and ethnic/ religious radical political languages	Not well developed - localized in different organisations - professes anti-neoliberalism but rarely positive of an ideology as a set of values
Financing	Based on member contributions	Mostly dependent on donor funds

Secondly, citizens establish associations. The associations under discussion respond to or seek to address grievances ranging from economic wellbeing, need for social welfare, solidarity, creation of political agency. The associations under discussion can be very localised whilst others cover an entire region or country. They mostly have recognisable structures, constitutions and at times assets owned in common. The tradition is not new. There is a school of thought which recognises civil society as the space occupied by associations and not for profit corporations (McKnight, 2013:1). In his seminal work, Tocqueville (1835) put the bases of an entire stream of thought on civil society around the importance of voluntary associations and the potential of associate behaviour to encourage citizenship skills (Angi, 2010:49). Tocqueville identified small local citizen-led organisations as central to the newly forming democracy in America. Tocqueville provided an exhaustive description of American associational life thus:

> **Americans of all ages, all conditions, and all dispositions constantly form associations. They have not only commercial and manufacturing companies, in which all take part, but associations of a thousand other kinds of religious, moral, serious, futile, general or restricted, enormous or diminutive. The Americans make associations to give entertainment, to found seminaries, to build inns, to construct churches, to diffuse books, to send missionaries to the antipodes, in this manner they found hospitals, prisons and schools...**

In this tradition, citizenship is closely aligned to associative behaviour which is the bedrock of civil society. These associations vary in nature. Some go on to create institutions like hospitals, schools, and universities. One may ask is the phenomenon of associationalism limited only to America? According to Tocqueville (1835) the associations were not just numerous and variegated, they embodied what he saw as a unique and distinct American understanding of democracy. However, the phenomenon of an associations based civil society[2] is not unique to America. Here in Africa, Rahmato (1991) has argued that the failure of the independence project to deliver on national development especially on efficiency, equity, and freedom yielding instead monopolisation of property and concentration of power in the hands of a small elite has led to the questioning of the role of the state in the development project. Communities (especially rural) responded to this failure by mobilizing organic associative activities and relationships (Rahmato 1991:3). The associative activities take the form of popular local organisations, and their proliferation is based on the real needs, interests and knowledge of the people involved.

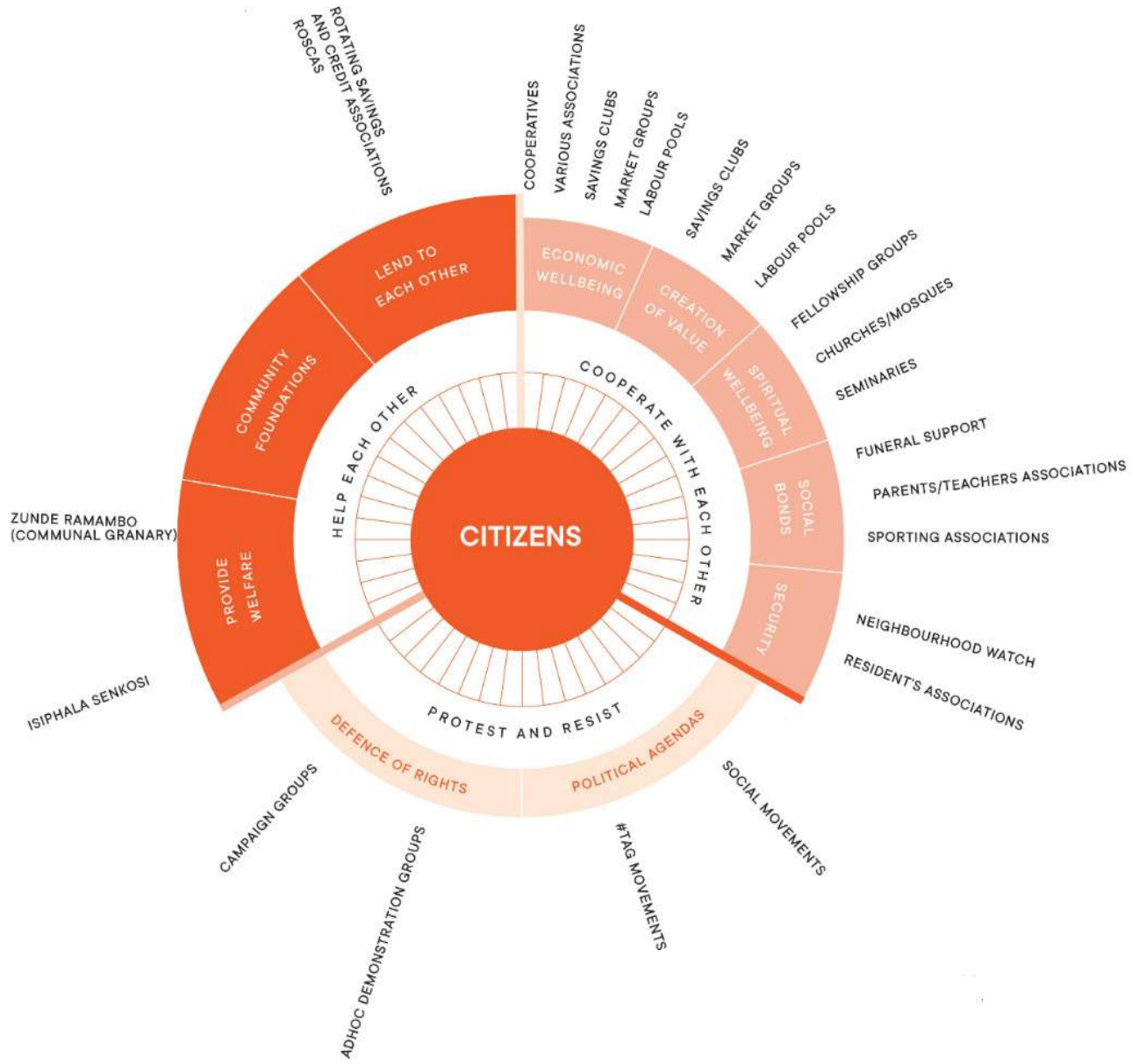
What are the benefits of belonging within an association? Badescu (2010:9) argues that 'individuals who are members of associations tend to be more interested in politics, [are] better informed and tend to be more involved in acts of political participation than people who are not members of such associations. The same author also observes that increased citizen involvement in associations

2. Civil society belongs to the category of concepts that developed a long and troublesome tradition of theorization. It originates from the work of Greek philosophers- it was conceived of as a sphere where individuals build social bonds and solidarities. Civil society was explicitly delimited from both state and economy, starting with Hegel's theoretical contribution on this matter. Karl Marx treated civil society as being the same as with the bourgeoisie society and stressed on the conflict driven nature of this sphere. For this discussion, we treat civil society in the Tocquevillian sense as described in the text.

and other civil society organisation has been associated with several other conditions that are said to 'make democracy work'. Furthermore, group activity is found also to promote higher levels of generalized social trust of participants, whereas increased trust generates higher levels of social capital reflecting an extended sense of 'social connectedness within the community. Associations are also sites of social learning and nurturing democratic practices. Some of the lessons learnt within associations include leadership, mobilisation, consensus building and conflict resolution. In many instances, associations have been viewed as breeding grounds for future political leaders. In most cases associations help to give voice to ordinary citizens, improve representation and in the process strengthen the interactions with officeholders.

Third, citizens establish temporary spaces/platforms of solidarity. These are intricate relationships of solidarity/welfare which can be hidden from the outsider as they are usually seasonal and are triggered by codes that are at times embedded either in tradition or cultural practices. These include, for instance, the different forms of asset and labour pooling initiatives that emerge during the farming seasons and are non-existent during the dry seasons or community mechanisms of pooling together resources (food, transport and money) during a funeral. Furthermore, there is reason to believe that with increased urbanization these norms of solidarity have been replicated within urban settings. Religion also plays a significant role. Many of those who have engaged in ad hoc giving or the creation of ephemeral pools cite their Christian and Muslim backgrounds as reasons behind their involvement. Figure 1 provides an approximation of what citizens do.

Figure 1: What Citizens Do



The papers after this introduction provide insights on patterns of belonging, especially the varying ways that citizens have mobilized themselves within associations. The papers also look at internal dynamics within these collective platforms.

4. Problem Solving Citizens

The African Citizenship Index created by SIVIO Institute measures and amplifies the actions of citizens in the public space. In this instance, citizenship refers to the breadth and depth of the ways in which citizens act collectively within what one may call the public space. The public sphere is subject to many interpretations. Odugbemi (2008) provides a more succinct description. He describes it as

> **...the agora-the main political, civic, religious, and commercial centre of the ancient Greek city. It was here that citizens traded goods, information, concepts and ideas to try to better their situations and impact the powers that governed them (Odugbemi 2008:17).**

In modern political philosophy the agora takes on many names such as the public arena, public realm, public domain or public sphere- it represents that space between the state and the household where free and equal citizens come together to share information, to debate, discuss or to deliberate on common concerns. The public space is thus the arena of interaction over the definition of public goods such as justice, values, morality and a constant thinking about the best way of allocating public goods and ensuring social reproduction. One of the central questions in this discussion is the way citizens affect the values of the public sphere. Borrowing from Alexander (2003), we observe that the premise of the public sphere is that society is not governed by power alone- feelings for others matter and how they are structured by the boundaries of solidarity. The critical issues for every social order are the way solidarity (within the public space) is structured, governed, how far it extends and what it is composed of. Such an analysis can only be carried after an exhaustive undertaking of analysing the meaning of democracy (its structures, institutions, and norms) and citizenship

The Kettering Foundation has for over three decades been preoccupied with the question 'what makes democracy work as it should?' They have mostly focused on what citizens do with each other in their communities in resolving public problems. The quest is to understand how 'a diverse body of citizens joined together in ever-changing alliances make choices about how to advance their common well-being' (Mathews 1999:1). Theirs is an attempt at developing a democracy that integrates two forces that have been in conflict ever since the emergence of electoral-based democracy;(i) power is in representative government and (ii) power comes from direct citizen action. The kind of democracy being envisaged is broader than the narrow framing around elections. It can thrive only when communities have citizens who take responsibility for what happens and who can make sound decisions about their future. In other words, there is a need for an engaged citizenry. Xavier Briggs (2008:32–35) suggest that democracy is about problem-solving.

There is another perspective. Rather than seeing democracy as comprising of competition for political office only, it should be recast as a framework for cooperation. Democracy is a social rather than a political term to refer to a society marked by equality of social conditions with no ascriptive aristocracy, and all careers are open to all citizens including the opportunities to be in government (Tocqueville, 1835). The kind of democracy under discussion is the one which assumes that there is no one of us that will make the best decision for others-we have to figure it out for ourselves. In other words, democracy is about learning together. Briggs (2008:32–35) suggests that democracy is about problem-solving, and we should focus on the arrangements that allow for vibrant governance systems.

5. What is Democracy Today?

It is commonly limited to a 'system of elections and representative government as developed in 17th Century England. Lipset (1981:45) defined it as 'a complex political system which supplies regular constitutional opportunities for changing the governing officials, and as a social mechanism which permits the largest possible part of the population to influence major decisions by choosing among candidates. Democracy is embraced not only across the globe but also across the political spectrum- even the Left (or remnants of it) hails democracy to redress Marx's abandonment of the political despite the common exclusionary form of politics that it promotes. The effectiveness of platforms for the interaction between the elected and the electorate is very limited in many ways; firstly, they are too few and secondly are structured in a way that does not promote dialogue but rather the speaking down to citizens by the elected citizens rarely have the opportunity to influence day to day allocation of resources. Thirdly democracy has eschewed substantive issues of material well-being and equity and focused on the more formal aspects of 'good' governance', that is free and fair elections and transparency" (Mkandawire; 2011:41). Fourthly, on average more than 51% of those eligible to vote do not do so. Finally, although many African countries have gone through several rounds of elections, they always yield three possibilities; a contested result, a straight win for the opposition or a consensus for a government of national unity- suggesting that elections do not resolve the question of who should govern. Perhaps democracy's current popularity depends on the openness and even vacuity of its meaning and practice, an empty signifier to which all can attach their dreams and hope (Brown 2011:44).

The democratisation project remains partially implemented. The Economist's Democracy Index of 2018 classifies most African countries as authoritarian regimes or flawed democracies[3]. According to the Index, there are no full democracies and the best we have achieved so far is hybrid regimes. In fact, democracy has generally become more adjectivized for instance in the late

2. https://www.eiu.com/topic/democracy-index

1990s Mkandawire and Soludo came up with the term 'choiceless democracies', Fareed Zakaria added 'illiberal democracy' and the Economist Magazine suggested 'incomplete democracy'. These qualifications suggest that there are outstanding features to our democratisation processes. More importantly, the figures of non-participation in elections suggest the need to investigate on the one hand how citizens relate with the state and supposedly the self-governance mechanisms that have emerged.

An essential challenge to the ideal democratic governance framework is that citizens may feel powerless or do not see the need to exercise control over their communities' and national futures. An inclusive society is only enabled if there is an acceptance of a common good-justice. It is to the 'common good' that appeals to justice and equity must be made if they are to have resonance. The dominant approaches in our politics have created a schism between the rulers and the ruled. The rulers have over the years either made concessions on what citizens can do or have curtailed processes of broader citizen mobilisation. In the long run, this has created an environment of uncertainty on what is permissible. However, we have to take cognisance of the fact that citizens, regardless of class, race and gender should be at the centre of our political process in a more significant way than the five minutes of voting accorded to them by the political class after every four or five years. Policy making should no longer be purely a technocratic top-down process but rather it should entail negotiation between the experts and targeted beneficiaries through platforms of coproduction. Users must be centrally located within the decision-making matrix.

> **Most human life happens within local communities and that democracy can only be nurtured at this level of sociability.**

We have to start by acknowledging that most human life happens within local communities and that democracy can only be nurtured at this level of sociability. It is worth reiterating that the efforts to transform the state as well as to strengthen civil society cannot be fully accomplished in the absence of the development and fostering in the population of a culture of responsible citizenry, which feeds both civil society as well as the governmental and political process (Doubon, 2007: 3). While some citizens can respond individually to changes in economic conditions, there is need to realise that in many instances of cooperation the sum total of their collective action is greater than the sum of the different parts. The current political reforms have also missed

out on the global zeitgeist, in 2002, the World Bank published a seminal three-volume study called Voices of the Poor, which for the first time explicitly recognized that their ultimate clients (the poor) did not only have needs –they had voices to express them. It would no longer be the job of the experts to assess and diagnose the needs of the poor; they would now be expected to listen to what the poor had to say. Outside assistance, therefore, would now shift toward helping the poor coordinate and articulate their voices more effectively so that they could design and carry out their own initiatives (World Bank, 2002: 4).

6. Purpose of the Volume

We seek to influence a new agenda for both practitioners and academics in the field of democracy and development. Our study acknowledges that there are existing challenges with the development and democracy projects across Africa. We note from the outset that the nexus between democracy and development in Africa has been one of the most contested issues in recent years. However, scholars and related institutions treat these separately (see for instance Freedom House's Democracy Index focusing on democracy and the World Bank and IMF's measure of economic growth on the other hand). The siloed approaches to democracy and development at times hide the interconnectedness between the two. Furthermore, suggestions on how to address economic stagnation or decline are in some instances at odds with the democratisation project. Economic liberalisation has not necessarily led to democratic gains but rather a consolidation of the coercive instruments of the state to defend the austerity measures ostensibly aimed at stabilizing economies.

Studies focused on citizens' agency are rare and in many instances are either framed around coping mechanisms in the context of non-performing states or they focus on voting behaviours. Whilst these two tendencies are essential, they, unfortunately, do not provide a comprehensive understanding of the public work done by citizens. There is evidence of citizens' agency in resolving social, economic, and political problems. Furthermore, studies focusing on what citizens do with each other and for each other also face the same risk of compartmentalizing what citizens do. Those focused on ways in which the continent can entrench democracy tend to view citizens' agency as limited to voting or protesting. Political elites use words such as 'the masses', 'citizens' or colloquially as 'povo' (people of various opinions) to describe citizens. The descriptions used serve to expose the imaginary hierarchies at play. After elections, citizens withdraw to their day-to-day lives whilst elected officials are expected to deliver on their electoral processes. Unfortunately, this formula

has failed dismally across the continent. Instead, it has yielded an oligarchic clique not accountable to the voters and on the other hand, seemingly disempowered citizens for the next round of elections with the promise of better from those vanquished in the previous round. The process repeats itself in different electoral cycles is akin to 'waiting for godot' or a state where 'politicians promise, citizens expect, and nothing happens in between'.

On the other hand, those focused on livelihoods, solidarity and welfare focus on what citizens do within economic and social-focused associations and networks. The actions taken by citizens in the economic and social space are viewed as separate from politics or democracy. The increase or decline in membership or intensity of activities is also not seen as related to the political environment or effectiveness of the 'elected government'

Inadvertently both approaches do not adequately provide a comprehensive picture of the 'what' and 'why' of citizens actions. Can citizens' actions be understood outside of the complex political and socio-economic environment? There is need for a more holistic approach that views citizens as political actors with social and economic interests. Such an approach will perhaps illuminate the need for renewed understanding of citizenship and hopefully feed into a discourse on democracy and development.

The proposed combined approach could broaden the fascination with democracy beyond elections. Is it possible that 'democracy can be viewed as a process, a way of life in which citizens take responsibility for as much as possible of what happens around them' (Ostrom 1993:7)? Given the above what would a new framework of governance look like if we were to put citizens at the centre? Hainoean writes that the new model of governance happens if governments, instead of providing services to citizens, learn to achieve results with citizens. This would mean a fundamental change in how citizens are seen, a shift from consumer citizens to value-creating and problem-solving citizens. The volume should be read together with the African Citizenship Index. The volume and the index seek to accomplish the following;

i. Address the limited ways we have understood

citizens' actions and how they relate to democracy,

ii. rack the ways in which citizens act collectively

iii. Develop a taxonomy of citizens initiatives

iv. Contribute new insights on measuring progress towards democracy or lack thereof

v. Develop a comparative base and ranking of societies(countries) based on citizenship

The papers that follow examine the extent of the work of citizens across three areas of existence: social economic and political. The papers are based on fieldwork carried out in Cameroon, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi and Zimbabwe. The papers provide in-depth country analysis.

The discussion contributes towards a re-imagination of citizens agency and an identification of the factors that nurture the emergence of problem-solving citizens. Such a discussion also informs ways in which we re-imagine the agora (public space-where citizens gather and interact with each other and officeholders) and should perhaps also include a new understanding of democracy beyond the current fascination with an event-based definition rather than a culture or practice approach.

7. Methodology

Our methodology is built on the need to learn about what citizens are doing collectively and the aspirations they hold. The collective endeavours of citizens in various collaborative platforms such as associations, networks and even the more fluid ephemeral like formations appear as black boxes. There is limited knowledge about what goes on within the different platforms established by citizens. Very little is known about the governance codes, ways of inclusion, roles played in these associational platforms. Yet there are claims that more than 60% of citizens in African countries belong to an association. There is a recognition (albeit anecdotally) that many Africans eke out their existence in informal spaces of socio-economic reproduction and that these are sites of what Bratton (1994) has referred to as micro-democracy.

The volume is a result of a combination of desktop-based country-focused analysis of published literature and field-based surveys that were carried out in each country.
The survey sought to understand the following:

i. What kind of formations do citizens belong to?

ii. What benefits do they derive from belonging in it?

iii. How do citizens and the formations they establish relate with formal processes of governance and engage with official processes (protest and cooperation)? Given the different contexts in which the studies were conducted the research paid particular attention to the relationship between governments and citizens.

iv. Examine the extent to which citizens play a role in influencing official development processes and citizens and

v. What is the scope for autonomous citizen-led initiatives?

7.1 Literature Review

The primary purpose of the literature review was to help us further refine the research questions. We expanded the literature beyond the usual academic texts to

include blog articles and newspaper articles.

7.2 Collection of Primary Data

The study combined the use of qualitative and quantitative research methods. Qualitative data was collected through interviews with key informants, focus group discussions and observations of ongoing citizens' led initiatives. Quantitative data was collected using a close-ended online questionnaire that was administered using an online digital platform. These tools are described in the table below:

Table 2: Research Tools

Type of Research Tool	Research Tool	Brief Description
Quantitative	Close Ended Questionnaire	Representative samples that determine the extent to which citizens are part of formations (associations, loose civic coalitions, religious bodies, social movements), benefits and challenges of belonging and expectations
	Key Informant Interviews	Held with community leaders, founders of citizen-led initiatives
Qualitative	Open Ended Questionnaire	There were held to identify/discuss issues otherwise not captured within the close-ended questionnaire and subjected them to further review through key informant interviews
	Key Informant Interviews	With founders, practitioners within citizen platforms
	Participant observations	Immersion into/within citizens formations
	Focus Group Discussions	These will mostly be context specific based on the need to triangulate research findings.

8. Conclusion

The emergence of a strong core of citizens that are value-creating -of necessity co-operating with each other and the State in ways that constitute inclusive ways of governing life in common. What citizens do within their own organizations, unions and associations is an integral part of what democracy and governance are. This transcends the fixation with what formal institutions of state or civil society do for citizens. Inclusive governance is fundamentally about how livelihoods are created and sustained. In this regard, the key actors and agents of socio-economic and political transformation across Africa are not NGOs or external interlocutors, but rather ordinary people working in partnership with each other or acting in solidarity within local associations of varying sizes.

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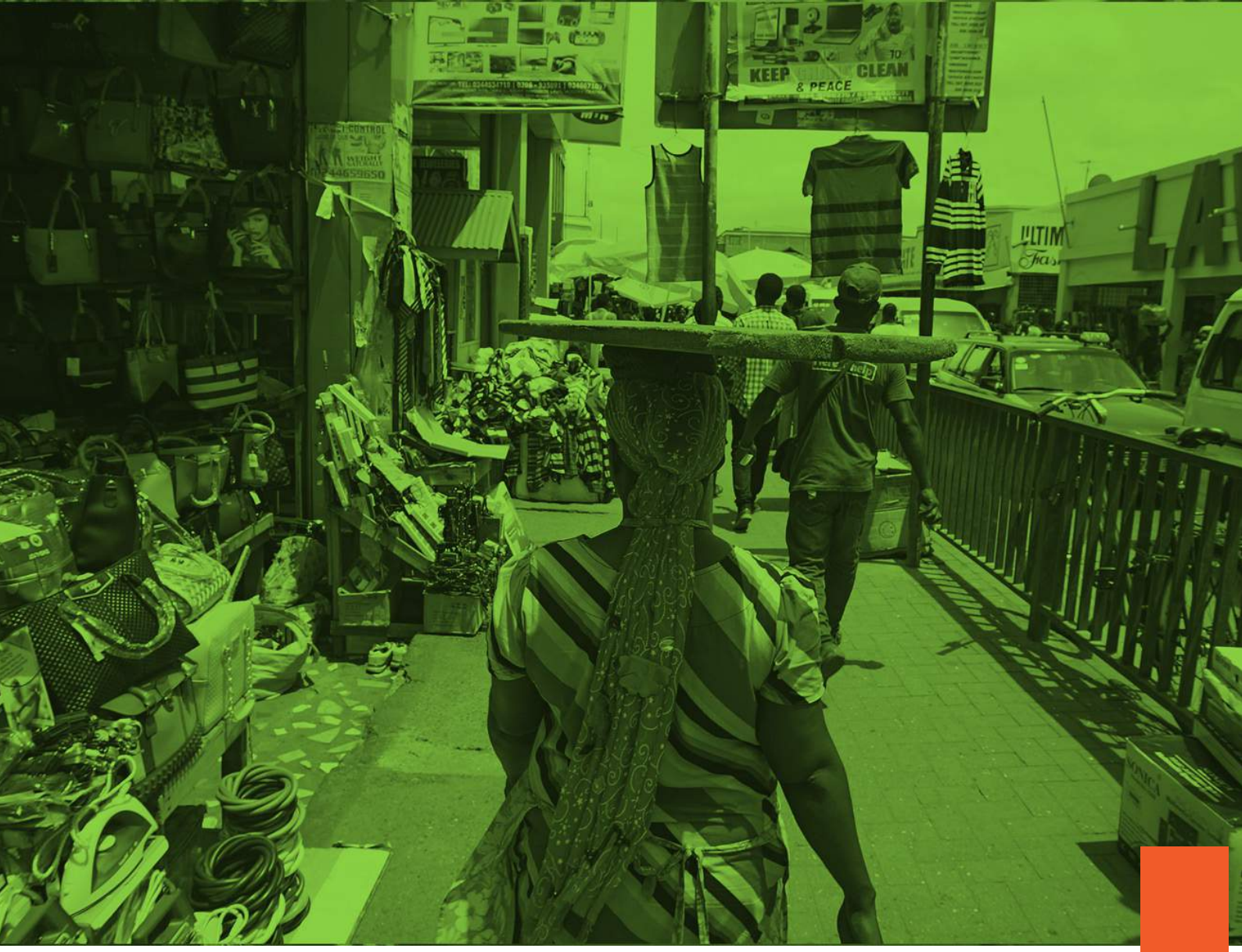

Citizenship in Africa: Exploring Trends And Patterns

Tendai Murisa

1. Introduction

Studies focused on what citizens do with each other and for each other are rare. There is limited empirical evidence of how citizens engage each other outside of the more formal spaces and little is known about the platforms or mechanisms that they establish. The data presented in this paper is based on field surveys carried out across five African countries spread across Central, East, Southern and West African countries. In the study, we are seeking to learn the extent to which citizens engage in different forms of solidarity and resolve issues within the political, economic and social spaces. The objective of the survey was to (i) develop deeper insights into how citizen-led formations emerge, (ii) their methods of operation, (iii) roles played, (iv) the extent to which they have embedded democratic principles with their processes and (v) ways in which they sustain themselves. The country focused papers that follow provide in-depth discussions on the issues listed above. The volume is probably best read alongside the African Citizenship Index that is also based on similar data sets

Ultimately the volume, as already mentioned in the introductory paper is about democracy. As a way of reiteration, the democracy under discussion goes beyond a fascination with elections and participation in public policy-related processes. It is instead about what citizens do to solve public problems together. Traditional conceptions of democracy focus on how we elect those who 'steer' government, how political interests and claims are voiced, processed and ways in which political conflicts are resolved, how citizens are protected by rights from abuses by the state (Briggs, 2008:6). Our approach in this jpurnal and indeed many other works (see for instance Mathews, 2021) is to view democracy as a collective search for better answers above and beyond self-interest, as a way of developing citizenship. According to Briggs (2008:8) the theory and practice of what makes democracy work should necessarily include the study of problem-solving in action and the collective capacity to problem solve. The discussion in this and the papers that follow provide a detailed description of what citizens are doing with each other and the motives behind their collective work.

2. Description of Sample

A total of 2085 citizens spread across countries in Central, East, Southern and West African countries responded to our survey as per the table below. The largest number of respondents was from Zimbabwe. The survey was administered in the capital cities of each country.

Table 1 Size of Sample (Respondents by Country)

Country	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Cameroon (Yaoundé)	402	19.28%
Ghana (Accra)	413	19.81%
Kenya (Nairobi)	421	20.19%
Malawi (Lilongwe)	403	19.33%
Zimbabwe (Harare)	446	21.39%

Source: Survey Data

We also sought to ensure equal representation across gender. However, eventually, slightly more males participated (55.73% participated in the survey) compared to women (44.27%). It was only in Malawi where we had a greater number of female (52.85%) respondents. The Ghana figures are a bit concerning and may affect representativity. There were 263 (63.68%) males and 150 (36.32%) females responding to the survey. Moreso in a context where the studies have already demonstrated that there are more females engaged in informal associational life across many African countries.

Table 2 Sample by Gender

Country	Male		Female		Total sample size by country
	#	%	#	%	
Ghana	263	63.68%	150	36.32%	413
Cameroon	215	53.48%	187	46.52%	402
Kenya	228	54.16%	193	45.84%	421
Malawi	190	47.15%	213	52.85%	403
Zimbabwe	266	59.64%	180	40.36%	446
Total sample size	**1162**	**55.73%**	**923**	**44.27%**	**2085**

The majority of the respondents are married (see Table 3 below). However, in Cameroon, the majority (62.19%) are single. This could be due to the youthful nature of the Cameroonian sample (see Table 4 on Age) where close to 70% of the sample are aged between 18–35. The figures suggest that the majority of respondents are members of a married family and their patterns of belonging within an association/ network/ movement could be based on that level of social organisation representing their families rather than as single individuals.

Table 3: Sample by Marital Status

Country	Single		Married		Divorced		Widowed		Total
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	
Ghana	81	19.61%	270	65.38%	40	9.69%	22	5.33%	413
Cameroon	250	62.19%	147	36.57%	3	0.75%	2	0.50%	402
Kenya	119	28.27%	255	60.57%	27	6.41%	20	4.75%	421
Malawi	125	31.02%	228	56.58%	31	7.69%	19	4.71%	403
Zimbabwe	201	45.07%	200	44.84%	29	6.50%	16	3.59%	446
Total	**776**	**37.22%**	**1100**	**52.76%**	**130**	**6.24%**	**79**	**3.79%**	**2085**

Sample by Age

There is an even distribution across age groups in all countries except Ghana where the majority (50.85%) are in the 36–45 age group. There are fewer respondents across all countries that are aged above 56 years. The majority (619) of the respondents are in the 36–45 age range, perhaps this also explains the reason behind the fact that the majority (52.76%) are married.

Table 4: Sample by Age

Country	18 – 25		26 – 35		36 – 45		46 – 55		56 – 65		65+		Total
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	
Ghana	3	0.73%	66	15.98%	210	50.85%	79	19.13%	27	6.54%	28	6.78%	**413**
Cameroon	154	38.31%	128	31.84%	81	20.15%	34	8.46%	5	1.24%	0	0.00%	**402**
Kenya	90	21.38%	98	23.28%	109	25.89%	80	19.00%	30	7.13%	14	3.33%	**421**
Malawi	78	19.35%	138	34.24%	111	27.54%	56	13.90%	16	3.97%	4	0.99%	**403**
Zimbabwe	141	31.61%	125	28.03%	108	24.22%	49	10.99%	13	2.91%	10	2.24%	**446**
Total	**466**	**22.35%**	**555**	**26.62%**	**619**	**29.69%**	**298**	**14.29%**	**91**	**4.36%**	**56**	**2.69%**	**2085**

Literacy levels

Literacy is considered vital to the processes of establishing and sustaining an associational platform. Skills that are required in associations include record keeping, planning, communicating and also providing leadership. Mafeje (1993:17) argued that these loose formations require no special skills, to run them as they are usually small and characterised by face-to-face relations based on mutual trust. However, increasingly there is an emerging argument (see Murisa, 2009, 2013) for certain levels of basic craft competency skills especially in the development and growth of the associational platforms. In our study sample, we found that an average of 95.83% possesses basic literacy skills. Zimbabwe has the highest levels (98.88%) of literacy with Ghana having the lowest (93.22%) but still, this is very high.

Table 5: Literacy

Country	Yes		No		Total
	#	%	#	%	
Ghana	385	93.22%	28	6.78%	**413**
Cameroon	388	96.52%	14	3.48%	**402**
Kenya	403	95.72%	18	4.28%	**421**
Malawi	381	94.54%	22	5.46%	**403**
Zimbabwe	441	98.88%	5	1.12%	**446**
Total	**1998**	**95.83%**	**87**	**4.17%**	**2085**

Beyond basic literacy, we were also interested in finding the education levels attained by respondents in more detail. The majority (41.49%) of respondents across the five countries attained secondary education while 1.63% (n=34) did not have any formal education. An analysis by country indicates that Cameroon has a comparatively greater number (75.63%) of those who attained tertiary education than any other country in the sample (see Table 6 below).

Table 6: Education level

Country	Primary school		Secondary school		Tertiary education		No formal education		Total
Ghana	27	6.54%	236	57.14%	139	33.66%	11	2.66%	413
Cameroon	23	5.72%	78	19.40%	296	73.63%	5	1.24%	402
Kenya	40	9.50%	181	42.99%	193	45.84%	7	1.66%	421
Malawi	15	3.72%	155	38.46%	227	56.33%	6	1.49%	403
Zimbabwe	14	3.14%	215	48.21%	212	47.53%	5	1.12%	446
Total	119	5.71%	865	41.49%	212	10.17%	34	1.63%	2085

Monthly income

We sought to understand the economic profile of respondents to the survey. We used the proxy of incomes in order to determine the socio-economic status of respondents. The majority of

the respondents earn less than USD250. Within this cohort, Zimbabwe has the highest number of respondents who earn less than USD $250. Ghana, on the other hand, has very few (2.66%) respondents earning less than USD250. The majority (49.64%) of respondents in Ghana earn between USD501 and US$1,000. On the other hand, Ghana is the only country in the sample with more than a third (36.56%) of respondents earning between USD1,001 and USD3,000.00. The figures suggest that poverty is probably more widespread in Zimbabwe compared to other countries whilst Ghana has the wealthiest respondents.

Table 7: Monthly Income Range

Country	Under USD 250.00		Between USD 251 and USD500		Between USD $501 and USD $1,000		Between USD $1,001 and USD $3,000		Between USD $3,001 and USD $5,000		Above USD $5,001		Total
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	
Ghana	11	2.66%	18	4.36%	205	49.64%	151	36.56%	24	5.81%	4	0.97%	**413**
Cameroon	203	50.50%	130	32.34%	51	12.69%	9	2.24%	6	1.49%	3	0.75%	**402**
Kenya	236	56.06%	125	29.69%	44	10.45%	15	3.56%	1	0.24%	0	0.00%	**421**
Malawi	161	39.95%	139	34.49%	57	14.14%	32	7.94%	6	1.49%	8	1.99%	**403**
Zimbabwe	296	66.37%	84	18.83%	33	7.40%	21	4.71%	3	0.67%	9	2.02%	**446**

Individual country currencies were converted into United Stated Dollars.

3. Patterns of Membership

All the respondents belong to an association. We grouped associations into 3 clusters, economic political and social. There are more (69.57%) people who belong to associations that focus on social issues compared with 40.77% in associations that focus on political issues and 50.46% that focus on economic issues.

The levels of belonging across all types of association are very high in Malawi, 87.34% in economic focused associations, 72.70% in political focused associations and 77.17% in associations that focus on social issues. Respondents in Ghana on the other hand do not reflect similar patterns. There are very low levels of membership in economic focused associations (5.08%), and also in political focused associations (15.50 %) compared to the socially focused associations (86.20%). As already mentioned, there are high levels of members across all countries in the socially focused association. Zimbabwe exhibits slightly even distribution across all types of associations. Membership is spread evenly (39.69%) for associations that focus on economic issues, (32.51%) for those that focus on political issues and (49.33%) for those that focus on social issues. Ghana scores lowest on membership in political focused associations compared to other countries. Interestingly the two countries that have low levels of memberships in associations that have a political focus are also extreme opposites. Ghana has for years been celebrated as a peaceful democracy with the capacity to hold free and fair elections. Zimbabwe, on the other hand, has developed a reputation of running disputed elections with allegations of rigging. It could be that the citizens in both countries see no reason for participation in politically focused associations but for different reasons. In Ghana, the citizens are probably satisfied with the level of reforms carried out to date and could be at a point of complacency with their as far as political processes are concerned. In Zimbabwe, the reasons for limited membership in political associations could be due to despair. According to surveys carried out by SIVIO Institute[1] and Afro-Barometer[2] many respondents in Zimbabwe do not trust the electoral process. They believe that the body responsible for

1. www.sivioinstitute.org

2. https://afrobarometer.org/

managing elections is biased and tends to favour the incumbent.

3.1 Membership in Economic Focused Groups

There are different types of economic focused groups but as already noted the boundaries we assign to these formations are mostly for analytical purposes. In real life these associations although initially set up for specific and narrow purpose they end up covering other dimensions of life. In our survey, we sought to understand the original intention of coming together to establish an association. The savings and lending association was found to be the most popular formation focused on addressing economic survival challenges.

Table 8: Membership in economic focused groups

Association	Ghana		Cameroon		Kenya		Malawi		Zimbabwe	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Savings and Lending Group	12	2.91%	168	41.79%	160	38.00%	167	41.44%	47	10.54%
Labour pooling group	0	0.00%	23	5.72%	17	4.04%	29	7.20%	11	2.47%
Production Cooperative	1	0.24%	12	2.99%	25	5.94%	55	13.65%	21	4.71%
Buying Clubs (e.g., collective group to buy groceries)	0	0.00%	9	2.24%	28	6.65%	170	42.18%	38	8.52%
Marketing Cooperative (involved in jointly selling commodities)	0	0.00%	14	3.48%	19	4.51%	69	17.12%	12	2.69%
Common Property Group (natural resources)	0	0.00%	6	1.49%	19	4.51%	26	6.45%	8	1.79%
Asset Pooling Group	0	0.00%	5	1.24%	12	2.85%	27	6.70%	8	1.79%
Market Group/Platform (a place or network where members sell goods/services to each other)	1	0.24%	64	15.92%	21	4.99%	65	16.13%	63	14.13%
Business Promotion Council	0	0.00%	6	1.49%	12	2.85%	28	6.95%	8	1.79%

There are high levels of participation within these types of formations in Cameroon, Kenya and Malawi. Ghana and Zimbabwe buck the trend. Only 2.91% and 10.54% in Ghana and Zimbabwe respectively belong to savings and lending groups. There are quite a number of plausible explanations for the levels of membership in savings and lending groups amongst Ghanaians and Zimbabweans. First, the survey was carried out in urban

settings that have been penetrated by the formal financial services sector, especially microfinance institutions that provide lending facilities. Second, the Zimbabwean economic space has been characterized by an ongoing crisis associated with inflationary pressure and loss of value of the local currency. In the process the appetite for saving has been severely damaged. Other reasons could explain the low levels of participation in savings and lending groups in Ghana and Zimbabwe. Affluent societies (such as the respondents in Ghana) served by a functioning financial services sector, at times do not see the need to establish savings and lending groups. As already mentioned, Zimbabwe has probably the highest levels of poverty within the five countries under study. The poverty in Zimbabwe is widespread and is part of the broader crisis that has bedevilled the country since the turn of the century. However, poverty should instead be a driver towards associationalism. It could be the instabilities to do with the currency and unavailability of cash that has discouraged associationalism in this space. An earlier study by Murisa (2009) found that in some periods of currency stability many (albeit within rural areas) tended to coalesce around savings and lending groups.

Furthermore, it is also important to note that countries where there are high levels of membership within savings and lending groups are also characterised by growing informalisation and a longer tradition of collective action within these spaces. Overall Malawi exhibits high levels of membership within economic focused associations such as savings and lending groups (41.44%) production cooperative (13.65%), buying clubs (41.18%) and production cooperative (17.12%). Cameroon and Kenya are a distant second and third respectively in terms of levels of membership. The paper on Malawi provides some detailed analysis on the patterns of membership. It is important to note that Malawi has only now begun to expand the formal financial services sector thanks to the growth of the formal microfinance sector. Challenges to do with productive asset acquisition also leads to tendencies towards higher levels of cooperativism. Finally, the economy in Malawi is perhaps the most informal in comparison to the other countries under study and thus creates the need for citizens to forge their instruments to achieve collective synergies.

3.2 Membership in Political Associations

There are various ways in which citizens actively participate in politics and these include, organising protests, public campaigns over an issue of concern seeking to take over power, addressing local issues within neighbourhoods, engaging or confronting office/power holders over grievances. In the process, citizens create a number of platforms/associations that include a campaign group, a political party, a neighbourhood watch committee, residents associations and a social movement. It is important to note that economic and socially focused associations also engage in political activities either through advocacy, engaging office holders or defending their rights. The table below provides a comparative analysis of patterns of belonging within associations that engage in political activities. The most common formation for promoting political objectives is the political party. There is a higher number of respondents belonging to a political party compared to other types of organisations; Kenya (20.98%), Malawi (52.62%) and Zimbabwe (20.24%). Membership in political parties is very low in Ghana (6.54%) and Cameroon (10.05%).

Malawi has the highest levels of active membership in political parties (52.62%) and campaign groups (34.01%). There are quite a number of reasons that possibly explains why this is so; first, Malawi was up until the close of the 20th century a one-party state. Multi-partyism is a very recent phenomenon, less than 25 years old. Second, the survey was conducted just after the courts had called for an election rerun. The court had observed that the first round of elections was not 'free or fair'. The decisions of the court should be understood as a culmination of citizen-led protests against the election results announced in May 2019 (and later annulled by the courts in February 2020). The process could have possibly galvanised participation in political processes amongst citizens. Malawi also has high levels of membership in women's groups (25.87%) and youth groups (16.28%). The figures suggest that Malawi potentially has a more politically engaged citizenry compared to other countries.

The levels of membership in political parties in all countries are higher than any other category. Maybe this suggests citizen's growing confidence in political parties as the appropriate platform to bring about political change. There are low levels of membership in resident's associations (average of 3.73%) across all the countries.

Could it be that there are no service delivery issues in the countries under study? Data from elsewhere suggests that service delivery is an acute challenge affecting many of the countries under study. In Kenya for instance there were concerns about urban-based land grabs (especially of parks), in Zimbabwe poor local service delivery remains a topical issue and is constantly raised by officials of residents associations and also the auditor general. Could it be then that the residents' associations that exist are not necessarily membership-based and instead have also gone through 'civilisation ' processes promoted by donors through fundraising for essential resources. In the process, the emphasis on membership recruitment has probably been negatively affected. Furthermore, it is also important to note that in many instances when citizens participate in a protest action they do not necessarily see themselves as belonging to an association related to that action.

Table 9: Membership in Political associations

Association	Ghana		Cameroon		Kenya		Malawi		Zimbabwe	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Campaign Group	3	0.73%	13	3.27%	31	7.56%	117	34.01%	11	2.62%
Political Party	27	6.54%	40	10.05%	86	20.98%	181	52.62%	85	20.24%
Social Movement	1	0.24%	23	5.78%	23	5.61%	48	13.95%	13	3.10%
Joint Public Petition	1	0.24%	5	1.26%	5	1.22%	13	3.78%	4	0.95%
Local Peace Committee	1	0.24%	5	1.26%	11	2.68%	24	6.98%	4	0.95%
Residents Association	9	2.18%	10	2.51%	12	2.93%	20	5.81%	22	5.24%
Online Based Civic Coalition	4	0.97%	1	0.25%	9	2.20%	9	2.62%	3	0.71%
Women's Group	11	2.66%	37	9.30%	47	11.46%	89	25.87%	36	8.57%
Youth Group	24	5.81%	77	19.35%	55	13.41%	56	16.28%	32	7.62%

Note: % calculated per sample size

3.3 Membership in Social Associations

Associations that focus on delivery or resolving social problems include churches/mosques, burial societies, sporting associations, communal granaries and even entertainment groups. Perhaps these are the platforms where social interactions are contained. Even though there is a clear focus in resolving social problems these groups also intermittently contribute to resolving economic and political problems. The fellowship/ religion groups (temples, churches, mosques, shrines) are the most popular in almost all the countries under study. For the first time, there are more respondents from Ghana (85.47%) who belong to an entity compared to any other country. Malawi and Kenya also have high levels of membership in fellowship groups whilst Zimbabwe has the lowest (38.33%) of memberships. There has been a consistent evangelical based mobilisation into churches across most of Africa for over three decades now. Different studies have already demonstrated the extent to which citizens in Africa have been mobilised into different forms of religious expression especially the Christian church. Perhaps the project of the colonial era missionaries has been a success given the popularity of the church as an institution and also an associational platform.

The second most popular association within the social cluster is the burial society except in Ghana where the school association of parents is more popular. Burial societies have a long history associated initially with colonial-era based rural to urban migration. In many instances migrants into the city continued to forge relationships with colleagues from the same village or rural area. They would pool together resources over time. These would be used in the event of the death of a member to transport the body to the village and assist with funeral costs. The burial societies although social in nature serve an economic function. Funerals in many of the countries understudy are a large economic burden that is usually shared by the community. In some instances, those studying philanthropy tend to include burial societies as part of the complex institutional arrangements that enhance solidarity within communities (see for instance Moyo 2004). It is also important to note the absence or retreat

of citizens from certain associations. Based on the findings very few or no citizens are invested in book reading clubs, service organisations, neighbourhood watch committees and communal granary schemes. The limited participation of citizens in communal granary schemes is perhaps due to the fact that the majority of respondents are based in urban areas.

Table 10 : Membership in Social Associations

Association	Ghana		Cameroon		Kenya		Malawi		Zimbabwe	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Fellowship Group /Religious Group (temples, churches, mosques, shrine etc)	353	85.47	188	47.24	220	53.66	230	66.86	161	38.33
Burial Societies	2	0.48	2	8.54	35	8.54	9	8.54	23	8.54
Sporting Association	3	0.73	50	4.63	19	4.63	39	4.63	21	4.63
Entertainment Group (dance, choir etc)	3	0.73	41	5.37	22	5.37	63	5.37	24	5.37
School Association Parent/ Teacher Group	29	7.02	49	4.88	20	4.88	34	4.88	26	4.88
Alumni Association	26	6.30	39	7.07	29	7.07	16	7.07	22	7.07
Book/Reading Club	0	0.00	8	1.71	7	1.71	16	1.71	12	1.71
Community Development Association	1	0.24	32	2.44	10	2.44	20	2.44	7	2.44
Service Organisation or Club (e.g. Lions Club; Rotary International)	0	0.00	1	0.48	2	0.48	15	0.48	8	0.48
Neighbourhood Watch Committee	0	0.00	4	1.19	5	1.19	22	1.19	15	1.19
Communal Granary	0	0.00	1	0.95	4	0.95	2	0.95	5	0.95
Community Feeding Group	0	0.00	1	1.19	5	1.19	8	1.19	10	1.19
Community Foundation	1	0.24	5	1.90	8	1.90	4	1.90	4	1.90

4. Benefits of Belonging in Associations

There are a number of benefits that are common in all associational types. These include the organisation of (i) collective security and (ii) welfare support. There is a general consensus that belonging within an association contributes towards enhancing prospects for improving economic well-being, capacity to defend existing opportunities and also helps to amplify voice. Those who belong to Economic Associations identified improved access to financing (42%) as one of the major benefits alongside skills exchange (46%) and additional income (41%). It is perhaps the financial benefits that loom large when discussing associations that focus on resolving economic grievances. These benefits together with the capacity to pool together assets and saving (36%) define the manner in which many African economies function. In the absence of inclusive financial services sector, citizens in the countries under study and indeed beyond have devised mechanisms to (i) finance their ventures by pooling together resources (ii) impose benign peer pressure on each other to save on a long-term basis for the acquisition of assets and (iii) exchange of skills and information. The latter has in most circumstances not been emphasized as one of the major benefits of belonging. In many instances those belonging within associations are also active in the informal economy. There is usually very little formal training that goes into establishing these ventures. The associations established contribute towards information and exchange.

Those in political associations derive a sense of belonging (49%) from their membership. Other benefits associated with political associations include prospects for an improved social order (46%) capacity to defend existing insights (37%) and also possibilities of ensuring change or reforms within the community. It is perhaps the political focused associations that bring to the spotlight the civic mindedness of citizens. Only 28% of the respondents identify with improved voice in engaging with officeholders as a benefit derived from belonging and similar number also identify change of government as a benefit. The other benefits cited do not suggest

engagement or confrontation with power holders except maybe the defence of rights (37%). Does it mean that citizens do not see associations as a site of contestation or drawing benefits from authorities? Could it be that these responses actually provide insights into the kind of politics that citizens engage in. We have stated from the beginning that there is a certain type of politics and democracy with communities. The politics involve erecting a sense of belonging (49%), providing collective security (23%), defence of rights (37%) and involvement towards a better social order (46%). The above are indeed stuff of community politics. In the process associations established to provide these benefits contribute towards developing new sites of nurturing of community embedded leaders and enhance prospects for organising welfare support. David Matthews (2006) has suggested that community-based or driven (bottom-up) collective action largely depends on what he calls leaderful communities. David Mathews (2016:2) has aptly observed that 'democracies need something more than written constitutions, multiple parties, free and fair elections and representative governments. Although he doesn't state what the 'more' contains- we are persuaded that these political focused associations are part of the equation. Furthermore, these associations (alongside economic and social-focused ones) provide benefits that governments or local authorities are unable to deliver further buttressing the importance of problem-solving citizenship in a democracy.

Finally, social focused associations provide the following: (i) spiritual support (58%), (ii) a sense of belonging (41%) and (iii) organize welfare support. Table 10 above has already demonstrated the extent to which citizens are active in religious platforms such as churches, mosques and shrines. It is these religious focused platforms that provide spiritual support to members. Social focused associations also play a key role in enhancing a sense of belonging amongst members. Other unique benefits associated with socially focused associations include entertainment (22%) and physical wellbeing (29%).

Table 11: Benefits of belonging to associations

Type of benefits	Economic	Political	Social
Collective security	20%	23%	12%
Improved access to financing	42%		
Pooling together assets/savings	36%		
Exchange information about market opportunities	35%		
Organising welfare support	24%	34%	32%
Improved voice in engaging with officeholders	12%	28%	15%
Exposure to new concept or ideas	39%	39%	28%
Collective ownership of assets	18%		
Skills exchange	46%		
Additional Income	41%		
Sense of belonging		49%	41%
Defence of rights		37%	
Changes/Reforms within community		31%	
Change of government		28%	
Better social order		46%	
Entertainment			22%
Physical wellbeing			29%
Spiritual support			58%
Networking			27%
Improved education outcome/quality of education			5%
Other (please specify)	1%	2%	2%

5. Democratic Tendencies within Associations

Other scholars (see for instance Bratton 2013) have argued that associations are sites of micro-democracy. They provide opportunities for the nurturing of a certain type of organic and consultative leadership and also enhancing democratic practises are cultivated. We sought to understand the ways in which leaders are chosen. We found four ways of leadership selection; elections, appointment, hereditary and voluntary. In the majority of instances leaders were elected into office by all the other members (see Table 12 below). The second most popular route is through appointment of members into positions. In some instances, members volunteer themselves for service. These are proxies to understand the extent of participation in leadership selection. Associations almost always have unique backgrounds which defy generalization but suffice to note the elections route possibly provides wider participation compared to other methods. There are very few who utilize the hereditary route in appointing leaders.

Table 12: Ways in which leaders are chosen in associations

Ways of choosing leaders	Economic	Political	Social
Elections	32%	47%	35%
Appointment	29%	30%	28%
Hereditary	3%	2%	1%
Voluntary	17%	17%	21%

Beyond the selection of leaders, we also sought to understand the grievances that members have within their associations. The major challenge that associations face has to do with low levels of funding, (economic 36%, political 49%, and social 42%). We consider funding to be an external issue beyond the direct influence of the association. Internal grievances that members have include low

levels of participation (economic 25%, political 33% and social 40%) and gender-based discrimination (economic 11%, political 15% and social 8%). There are also concerns to do with corruption, weak governance procedures within the associations. These findings suggest that associations are inherently problematic and can be sites of frustration for others especially where governance issues and gender-based discrimination are not resolved. If the grievances listed above are not adequately dealt with they may lead to stunting within associations and further weaken participation of members. However, in many instances these problems go unchecked without any external intervention. There is no clear consensus on how these issues can be resolved. Should outside agencies seek to influence or strengthen associations? The question of providing support to associations and or social movement remains highly contentious and unresolved. Whilst there are glaring weaknesses that can be resolved through capacity building initiatives, it is not clear if in the end that will not create totally different organisations either within the association or an evolution of the association. One of the advantages of the association is the perception of ownership and influence that member have. However, when these formations are taken through support to improve governance which normally entails development of constitutions and other internal control measures a new aristocracy within the associations is created. There is a tension between high levels of formalisation and ensuring that members are not alienated. It is perhaps incumbent upon the members to help nurture processes that they are comfortable with. The principle of 'do no harm' must take precedence in instances where donors and other technical partners have to intervene.

6. Conclusion

The papers that follow provide a more detailed analysis of how citizens engage with each other. The evidence that we have gathered suggests uneven levels of citizen-to-citizen forms of engagement across the five cities. Across similar sample sizes we found higher levels of citizen-to-citizen engagement in Lilongwe (Malawi) and Yaoundé (Cameroon). Perhaps the political context matters especially when it comes to Malawi and Cameroon. The two countries have been associated with high levels of citizen-to-citizen mobilisation for improved management of electoral processes a governance. That alone however, does not adequately explain the low levels of citizen to citizen mobilisation in Harare. The similarities between Cameroon and Malawi go beyond the recent mobilisations. These countries do not have a long history with multi-party democratic systems. The logic of organisation or political contestation has not always been along political party lines compared to other countries in the study, for example Zimbabwe. Citizens in Cameroon and Malawi have nurtured a level of mobilisation autonomy outside of established political parties. In Zimbabwe high level levels of political mobilisation have been associated with political parties. However, there is yet no adequate explanation for the low levels of citizen-to-citizen engagement in Zimbabwe. The findings from Accra are equally difficult to explain. There are low levels of citizen-to-citizen engagement in the political and economic spaces compared to the social spaces. Does it suggest that as the country becomes more politically stable and affluent citizens retreat from the public space?

The findings in this volume suggest the need to re-invest in deepening our understanding of the relationship that African citizens have with the public spaces. Indeed, the continent has gone through numerous cycles of silver bullet like solutions from the idea of liberation itself, to economic reforms and constitutional multi-party democracies but very little progress has been made in terms of making sure that governments (inclusive of elected officials and the bureaucrats) lifting people out of poverty, ensuring equality of all before the law and all the other benefits associated with democracy. Can public life, meaning intense

citizen to citizen engagement be regenerated to rescue the democracy project? Should the democracy project be broadened beyond the current formulaic approach of elections, rule of law, free media to include bringing back citizens at the centre of public discourse? We are not sure how that will be done, suffice to note that the current formula has only worked for a few.

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Citizen Engagement and Networking in Cameroon: An Economic, Socio-Political and Legal Perspective

Christopher Funwie Tamasang

1. Introduction

Cameroon's Citizenship Index is a multi-faceted concept that aims to showcase/demonstrate the ways in which ordinary people interact with each other in economic activities, social-support systems and political participation across the country. It shows how the lives of the citizens are shaped by the economic, social and political interactions, all of which are hinged on a legal undertone.

Cameroon's democratic process has been predominantly influenced by forces beyond the control of its citizens. Though, traditional avenues such as voting and demonstrations among others remain the most widespread forms of citizens' participation, they have been unable to translate the political demands of citizens into substantive outcomes capable of responding to the needs of citizens. Regarding elections, the extent and breath of this form of participation is still highly flawed and limited. According to Ngwane (2004:4) "Cameroonian democracy is arguably about voting without choosing". This is compounded by an un-even political playing field, disorganised political opposition (Ngwane, 2004, 2014), as well as other institutional challenges which coalesce to strip the voice and agency of the people. Hence, it is logical to imply that the role of voting as a feedback mechanism between the elected and the electorate is unlikely to ensure the effective participation of citizens in the democratic process. The implications of ineffective democratic participation on the part of citizens are that it strips them of the ability to hold political office holders accountable, which by extension signifies the existence of a bifurcated system. Such a system tends to cater for the needs of an elite ruling class while simultaneously paying lip service to the masses.

Up to the present moment, emphasis has focused on inclusive governance and sustainable development, even though current trends suggest that the practice of democratic governance in Cameroon hardly fulfil the principles of good governance and sustainable development, and has been limited to the realm of colourful political rhetoric. Apparently, there seems to exist a mismatch between the theory of democratic governance on the one hand and its actual applicability if not practice on the

other. Increasingly, liberal democracy is seen as falling short of the desires of citizens with Stefan and Yascha, (2016:6) noting that the disenchantment of citizens with liberal democracy as a political system does not end at the level of 'government legitimacy' but extends to 'regime legitimacy'. The disconnect between conventional processes and mechanism of citizen expression exacerbated by excruciating socio-economic challenges have motivated Cameroonians to tilt towards alternative modes of collaboration and participation in the form of citizen led formations. Not only do citizens enjoy a proximity benefit with such formations, they are also designed to fulfil a particular urgent need for which public institutions and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) have been unsuccessful in providing. Citizen led formations are increasingly playing an important role in the lives and lived realities of Cameroon by offering them a wide range of options and spaces which guarantee decision making, fulfilment of material needs, pooling resources together, just to name a few. Even though citizen led formations can be identified as an important site of citizen engagement, ample research has not uncovered its breath and reach as well as its significance

within the Cameroonian context. Considering the proximity of citizen led formations to citizens and also noting that research has mainly focused on formal mechanisms/processes likewise interventions by NGOs, the need to examine citizen led formations as alternatives to formal processes cannot be overstated.

2. Background to Citizen Led Formations in Cameroon

The existence of citizen led formations in Cameroon is not a novel phenomenon as such formations can be identified before, during and after colonialism (Meyer, 1940; Tankou and Adams, 1994). Even though in their conventional genealogy, it will be difficult to talk of citizen led formation in the pre-colonial era, close similarities can be drawn between citizen led formation and general modes of living and/or community organisation in Cameroon prior to colonialism. Citizen engagement in the pre-colonial era occurred in the form of cross border transactions such as trade between various tribes, inter-marriages and settling of conflicts through wars and other dispute resolution mechanisms. Though such initiatives occurred prior to colonialism, their principal aim was to ensure the material wellbeing of the community and tribe as a whole. The notion of citizen as understood in the present connotation did not exist and had no implications on the day to day running of community affairs. In other words, the tribes which make up modern day Cameroon and which were highly heterogeneous basically functioned on parallels which are not very distinct from citizen led formations; that is traditional codes of interaction and transaction were principally meant to bolster community ties, satisfy material wellbeing, assure collective security, and build bonds of solidarity among and between community members. It basically represented what Mbaya, (2011:1) refers to in the South African context as the close association between social capital and the African concept of Ubuntu (see also, Fagunwa, 2019). This idea is captured by African belief systems which observe that one is only as strong as the whole and also harkens to African idioms such as "It takes a village to raise a child."

In the colonial era, which was principally influenced by Germany (1884–1916), France (1916–1960) and Britain (1916–1961), modern understandings of citizenship emerged and thrived, while notions of democracy were far-fetched. With colonial occupancy, the territory adopted the cultural and imperial trappings of the coloniser and

hence functioned according to the agenda of the latter (Ngoh, 1979). For example, the language of the coloniser became the official language of the territory during the reign of that colonial power, which further explains why French and English emerged as the official languages of Cameroon once independence was attained in 1960–61 (Nana, 2016). As such, the colonial enterprise dictated how citizenship was attained, maintained and by extension, lost. However, the entire colonial project and the eventual anti-colonial movement which emerged was as a direct result of contested understandings of citizenship and the need for self-governance. Resistance to colonial rule in Cameroon can be traced to the protest effected by the coastal chief Akwa and King Bell over German dispossession of the Duala from their lands. The spirit of resistance dogged the colonial enterprise and resulted in fierce guerrilla warfare between the Union des Populations du Cameroon (UPC) and the first postcolonial regime in Cameroon. The UPC espoused immediate independence from French domination and imperialism while the French administration as well as the first post-colonial regime of President Amadou Ahidjo on the other espoused continued French interference and control of Cameroon's socio-economic, political and cultural destiny. It should be reiterated that the French colonial policy of assimilation laid emphasis on the total conversion of Africans into French men and the transformation of French colonies into overseas French provinces (France a autre mere). Assimilation envisaged the total annihilation of the belief systems and cultural significance of Africans, and by extension Cameroonians. The policy stressed on the potential equality of African subject and French citizens only with the intervention of western standards of education. It is vital to stress at this point in time that the French also implemented policies of paternalism and association to a greater or lesser degree. As a result, assimilation emphasized distinctions between citizens and subjects; citizens who were more often white settlers enjoyed and received the benefits and rights associated with citizenship. On the other hand, subjects who were predominantly the indigenous populations were categorised as second class and exploited with harsh policies of forced labour. To be citizens, one had to completely abandon all that was culturally significant in adherence to westerns precepts of civilization. Likewise, development in the colonial enterprise was catastrophic for Cameroon.

“The spirit of resistance dogged the colonial enterprise and resulted in fierce guerrilla warfare between the Union des Populations du Cameroon (UPC) and the first postcolonial regime in Cameroon.”

Unlike the French, the British implemented a policy of indirect rule in their administration of the British Northern and Southern Cameroons. This policy was designed to integrate local traditional institutions into the bureaucracy of British colonial administration (Nzume, 2004:91–92). Even though this approach can be credited for involving citizens in the management of their affairs, it also created a hierarchy between subjects and citizens, racialized colonial populations and neglected investments targeting development. Hardly any meaningful investments were dedicated to the development across all sectors during the colonial era. Rather, under French and British colonial administration, extensive exploitation of the material and human resources of the colonized population was carried out. Within the context of Africa, Walter Rodney, (1973) depicted the extent to which the colonial enterprise was deployed to loot, expropriate and exploit colonies while disguised under the banner of enlightenment, civilization and development. This disconnect and eventual decolonization effectively ended imperialism. However, with decolonization, the nascent country of Cameroon experienced serious complications associated with citizenship, democracy and development. With regards to democracy, Cameroon officially became a one-party state and was ruled with an iron fist by its first president. This era of the country's history was marked by political repression, extra judicial killings and gross human rights violations. Even though development indicators were positive during the earlier decades in the immediate post-independence period, this growth was not sustained. Cameroon's economy is predominantly agriculture based and was significantly affected by the Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) implemented in the late 1980's and early 1990's. Social policy interventions in health, education and a freeze in public sector investment in social services were some of the negative externalities of SAPs. Added to this was a triple devaluation of the country's currency as well as skyrocketing inflation in commodity prices. In the face of these structural challenges, the already precarious situation of the citizens was confounded as unemployment rose, public sector investment in social services constricted, and the formal economy shrank. Faced with these challenges, adaptation strategies such as rotating financial schemes, self-help groups, among other citizen led initiatives thrived. Informal sector activities blossomed with makeshift markets springing up overnight in urban centers

Hardly any meaningful investments were dedicated to the development across all sectors during the colonial era.

such as Yaoundé, Douala, Buea and Bamenda among others.

Incidentally, the implementation of SAPs in Cameroon coincided with the reintroduction of multiparty politics and the enactment of the law on freedom of association (Law no 90/053 of 19 December 1990). After almost four decades since multiparty politics was outlawed in the country, the fall of the Berlin Wall unleashed a wave of democratic transitions which did not leave Cameroon unscathed. Within this prevailing socio-economic and political context, citizen led formations have increasingly emerged as alternative sites to respond to the needs of citizens. Economically, saving and lending groups as well as other informal economic formations have become a permanent feature of Cameroonian life. Cameroonians of all walks of life readily identify with and claim membership to such formations. Economic focused groups exist in all ten Regions of Cameroon and are called tontines among French speakers and njangi in the English-speaking communities of the country almost all of which are not legally registered. They are particularly popular among the Bamileke - the largest ethnic group of the West Region (Soen and Comarmond, 1972) - and among inhabitants of the two Anglophone Regions: Northwest and Southwest (Harteveld, 1972). Studies reveal that a variety of forms of economic focused groups that range from the most elementary, through groups that combine rotating savings and credit associations (ROSCAs) and accumulating savings and credit associations (ASCAS), to groups that have evolved into formal banks (Haggblade 1978). Schrieder and Cuevas (1992) estimate that nearly 80 percent of the adults in Cameroon participate in self-help financial groups (ASCAS or ROSCAS), that these groups handle about one-quarter of the total volume of money lent in the country, and that they manage about one-half of total financial savings nationwide.

“After almost four decades since multiparty politics was outlawed in the country, the fall of the Berlin Wall unleashed a wave of democratic transitions which did not leave Cameroon unscathed.”

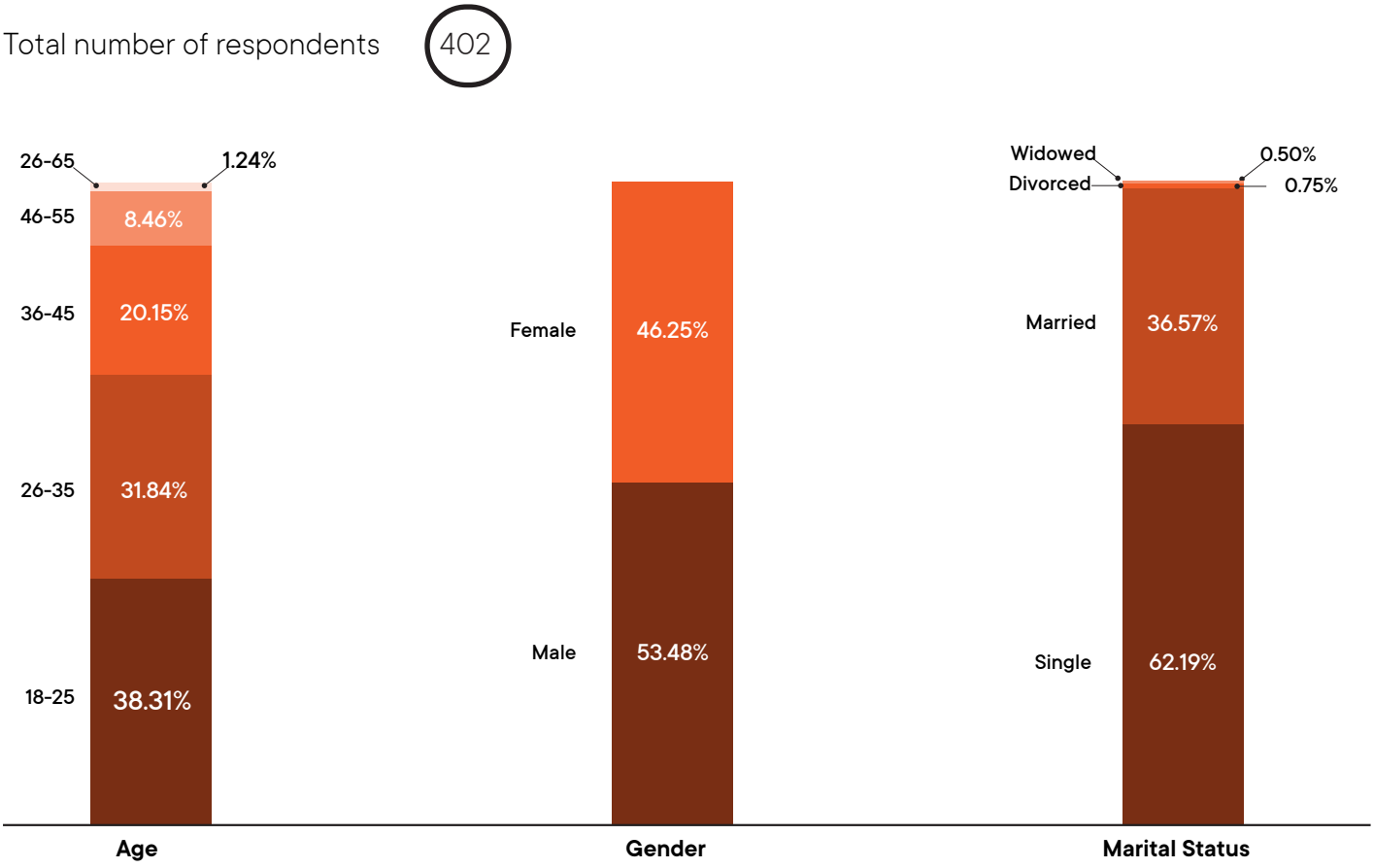
3. Description of Sample

Although the study is conducted in Cameroon as a pilot country, it is important to highlight the fact that the spatial scope was the city of Yaoundé, which is the political capital of Cameroon. The population of the city is estimated at 4,164,167 in 2021 according to the World Population Review (2021). The sampled population shared the following characteristics;

3.1 Age, Gender and Marital Status

With regards to the age category (Figure 1), the highest proportion of respondents 38.31% (that is, 154 respondents) were between the 18–25 age brackets while the 26–35 age bracket constituted 31.84% (128) of the population of study. The third most represented category were those located between 36–45 age brackets who made up 20.15% (81) of respondents. Respondents within the 46–55 and 56–65 age brackets were least represented in the sample making up 8.46% (34) and 1.24% (5) respectively. This implies that the majority of respondents in the study were young and energetic according to the age classification. Other insights gained from the sample population reveal that the study sample is representative of general population indicators with regards to age. According to the current population trends, more than half of the population of Cameroon is less than twenty years old.

Figure 1: Frequency Distribution of Respondents by Age, Gender and Marital Status



Source: Online Survey, 2021

Turning to the gender 53.48% (215) of respondents were male while 46.52% (187) were female. This gender response rate corresponds with current literature which suggests that males tend to participate in research related activities more than females, with wide gender disparities in usage of online platforms. With regards to the marital status, single respondents made up 62.19% (250); married respondents constituted 36.57% (147); divorced respondents were 0.75% (3) and; finally, widowed respondents made up 0.50% (2). This therefore implies that the marital statuses of the majority of respondents in this study were single.

3.2 Literacy Level

The result from the sampled population shows that 96.52% (388) of respondents could read and write as opposed to 3.48% (14) who could not (Table 1). Furthermore, participants in this study who had completed primary education were the second least group and made up 5.72% (23) of the sample. Only

a negligible proportion (1.24%) of the sample did not possess any formal education. Respondents with tertiary education were the most represented, collectively making up 73.63% (296) while respondents with secondary level education made up 19.40% (78). According to the levels of education possessed by the sampled population, the respondents of the study can be described as overwhelmingly literate.

Table 1: Distribution of Respondents by Level of Education

Ability to read and write	No.	%
Yes	388	96.52
No	14	3.48
Total	**402**	**100**
Level of Education	**No.**	**%**
Primary	23	5.72
Secondary	78	19.40
Tertiary	296	73.63
No formal Education	5	1.24
Total	**402**	**100**

Source: Online Survey, 2021

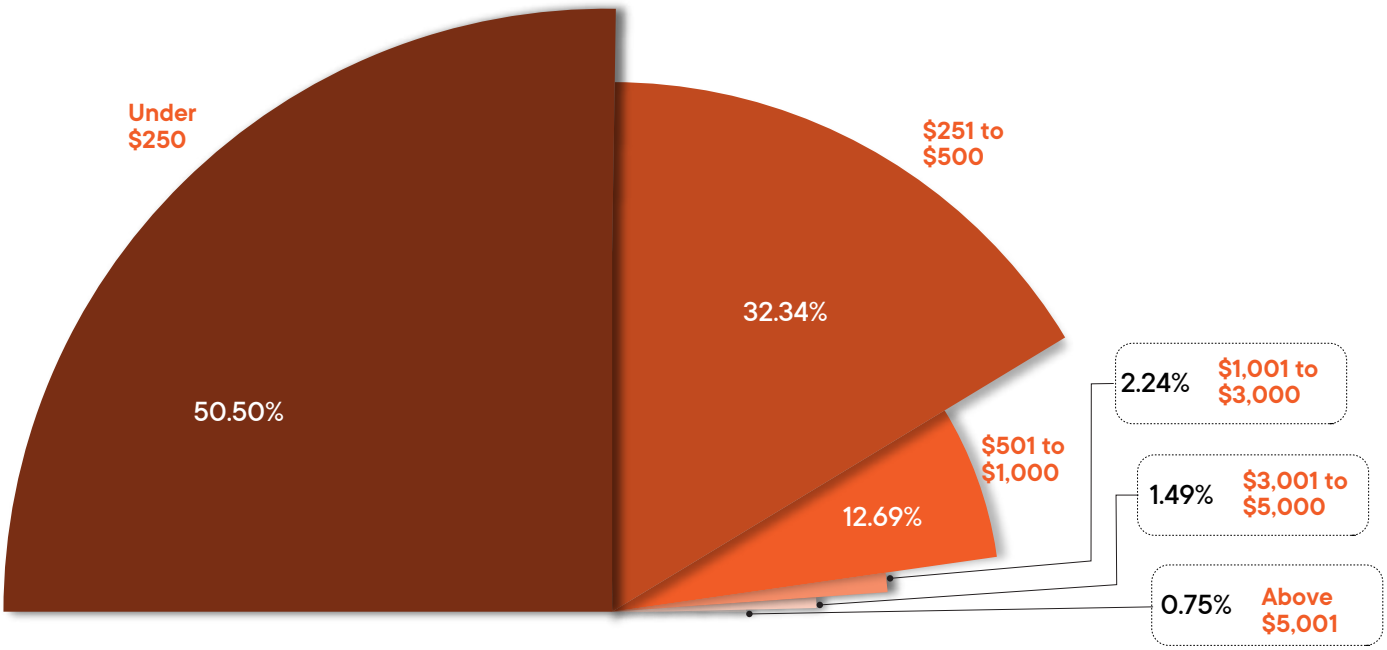
3.3 Income Levels/Ranges

The income levels of respondents varied from under USD$250 to above USD$5,001 per month (FIgure 2). Respondents earning above USD$5,001 per month were the least represented in the sample and constituted less than 1% (0.75%). Similarly, respondents earning between USD$3,001– USD$5,000 and USD$1,001 - USD $3,000 were the second and third least represented groups who collectively, made up less than 5% (15) of the sample population. Sample respondents who earned between USD$501– USD$1000 made up 12.69% (51); those earning between USD$250–USD$501 represented 32.34% (130) and finally; the income level of the vast

majority of respondents per month was under USD$250 (50.50%). The sources of income revealed by the respondents shows that formal employment accounts for 28.11% (113); formal businesses make up 13.43% (54); informal employment accounts for 28.86% (116); informal business make up 13.43% (54); pension 1.74% (7); remittance or money gifts 4.98% (20); property investment 2.99% (12) and; farming is 6.47% (27). This income categorization syncs with income levels of the country from credible international organizations such as the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF). In addition, the statistics on incomes coincides with the per-capita income of Cameroon which, according to the World Bank (https://data.worldbank.org) is less than USD$2000 per annum. This situation is further reinforced by the fact that majority of the country's population is involved in the informal sector.

Figure 2: Distribution of Respondents by Level of Income

Total number of respondents 402 Salary currency USD



Source: Online Survey, 2021

3.4 Participation in Electoral Processes

When asked about participation in political activities such as voting only 30.60% (123) of the respondents were registered

in the electoral polls as opposed to 69.40% (279) who were not registered (Table 2). This is in line with national levels of voter registration statistics which show that less than 40% of eligible voters are actually registered to vote. It further demonstrates the extent of political apathy with regards to voter registration which is a pre-condition to vote in Cameroon.

Table 2: Distribution of Respondents by Voter Registration and Voting Status

Voter Status	No.	%
Registered	123	30.69
Unregistered	279	69.40
Total	402	100

Voting Status in the Last Elections (n=402)								
Status/Response	Yes (Registered & Voted)	No (Registered but Decided not to Vote)	No (Did not register to vote)	No (Could not find polling Station)	No (Name did not appear on registration poll	No (was prevented from voting)	No (Was too Young -under 18)	N/A
Local Gov't/ County Elections	n=25 6.22%	n= 33 8.21%	n=239 59.45	n=1 0.25%	n=2 0.50%	n=2 0.50%	n=10 2.49%	n=90 22.39%
Provisional Elections	n=18 4.48%	n=37 9.20%	n=262 65.17%	n=1 0.25%	n=1 0.25%	n=1 0.25%	n=11 2.74%	n=71 17.66%
Parliamentary Elections	n=55 13.68%	n=44 10.95%	n=268 66.67%	n=3 0.75%	n=1 0.25%	n=1 0.25%	n=11 2.74%	n=19 4.73%
Presidential Elections	87 21.64%	n=34 8.46%	n=251 62.44%	n=4 1.00%	n=1 0.25%	n=2 0.50%	n=13 3.32%	n=10 2.49%

Source: Online Survey, 2021

With regards to voting, the proportion of respondents who registered and voted in the most recent elections stood at: 6.22% (25) for the local government elections; 4.48% (18) in the provincial elections; 13.68% (55) in the parliamentary elections and; 21.64% (87) in the presidential elections. From the data, it can be inferred that the majority of respondents are more likely to vote in presidential elections than other elections. Current literature confirms this by noting that due to the high stakes associated with

presidential elections, registered voters tend to participate more in presidential elections than others. Data from the respondents also revealed that 8.21% (33), registered voters did not vote in local government elections; 9.20% (37) for provincial elections; 10.95% (44) for parliamentary elections; and finally, 8.46% (34) for presidential elections. In another dimension, the proportion of respondents who did not register to vote were: 59.45% (239) in local government elections; 65.17% (262) in provincial elections; 66.67% (268) in parliamentary elections; and 62.44% (254) in presidential elections. Cumulatively, less than 3% (9) of respondents could not locate a polling station in the previous elections at the local government, provincial, parliamentary and presidential elections. In terms of not being able to vote because names did not appear on voter registration polls, less than 2% (5) of the sampled population encountered this obstacle. Specifically, 0.50% (2), 0.25% (1), 0.25% (1), and 0.50% (2) of respondents were unable to vote in the local government, provincial, parliamentary and presidential elections respectively. In another dimension, very few respondents observed that they were unable to vote because they were prevented from voting. The sampled data reveals that 0.50% (2), 0.25% (1), 0.25% (1), and 0.50% (2) of respondents were prevented from voting in the local government, provincial, parliamentary and presidential elections respectively. Finally, in terms of age restrictions from voting, 2.49% (10), 2.74% (11), 2.74% (11) and 3.23% (13) had not attained 18 years and thus could not respectively vote in the local government, provincial, parliamentary and presidential elections

3.5 Number of officeholders within associations

The sampled population shows that 66.67 % of respondents were officeholders in their respective associations while 33.33% did not occupy any office.

4. Mapping of Citizen's Initiatives in Cameroon

The citizens' initiatives considered for this study are subdivided into; (a) citizens and the economy; (b) citizens and politics and; (c) citizens and social support. It is therefore logical to conclude that interventions of these associations are tailored to respond to the needs of citizens in the economic, political and social domains. As such, their relevance in terms of how citizens are economically, socially and politically empowered justifies their existence and activities in their preferred field of activity.

a. Citizens and the Economy

According to the findings of this study, citizen-led formations in Cameroon whose intervention target the economy have many objectives. From the culled data (Table 3), 41.79% of citizen-led formations in Yaoundé, Cameroon focus on savings and lending activities. This is very revealing as it shows the trend of membership as well as the preference of citizens in joining such formations.

Table 3: Membership in Economic Associations

No	Association	No.	%	Total
1	Savings and Lending Group	168	41.79	402
2	Labour pooling group	23	5.72	402
3	Production Cooperative	12	2.99	402
4	Buying clubs (e.g. collective groups to buy groceries)	9	2.24	402
5	Marketing cooperative (involved in jointly selling commodities)	14	3.48	402
6	Common property group (natural resources)	6	1.49	402
7	Asset pooling groups	5	1.24	402
8	Market Group/Platform (a place or network where members sell goods/services to each other)	64	15.92	402
9	Business Promotion Council	6	1.49	402
10	Business Advocacy/Lobby Group	5	1.24	402
11	Business Mentorship/Training Group	14	3.48	402
12	Housing Cooperative	4	1.00	402
13	Multi-level marketing scheme (e.g. Avon, Tablecharm, Tupperware)	6	1.49	402

The findings in Table 3 further reveal that market groups which seek to provide commodity and services exchange make up 15.92% of the sampled population. This implies that the latter constitutes the second most dominant form of economic citizen-led formations. In a similar light, labour pooling groups are accountable for the membership of 5.72% of economic citizen-led formations. Labour pooling activities are a constant feature in the organisational context of most societies in Cameron. Market cooperatives involved in jointly selling commodities and business mentorship or training groups respectively account for 3.48% of economic citizen-led formations in Yaoundé, Cameroon.

On the other hand, production cooperatives account for 2.99% while buying clubs make up 2.24% of the economic focused associations. Other associational types in the economic category such as multi-level marketing schemes, housing cooperatives, business advocacy, and business promotion councils just to cite these cases each make up less than 2% of economic focused associations in Yaoundé, Cameroon (Table 3 provides more elaborate details on the levels of belonging in economy focused associations).

Due to the vital role they play and the various types which exist, variations can be identified in the ways in which economy focused associations were established in Cameroon. The findings of this study reveal that (Table 4), savings and lending groups were established in the following ways: by Trust (26.79%); by a Constitution (8.33%); as a company limited by guarantee (1.79%); by association (25%) and finally, through no formal registration (28.57%). According to these results, the majority of savings and lending groups were not formally registered. This is very revealing seeing that the current legislative framework of Cameroon makes provision for the existence and operation of associations operating in the economic domain. On the other hand, 52.00% and 44.00% of labour pooling groups were established by association and through no formal registration respectively. Production cooperatives were also established by association (83.33%) and through no formal registration (8.33%). As for buying clubs, the results of this study reveal that they were established by trust (11.11%), association (22.22%), through no formal registration (44.44%). Likewise, marketing cooperatives were established by trust (16.67%), association (25.00%), and through no formal

registration (8.33%). From the data, a similar pattern can be identified in the manner in which an overwhelming majority of economic focused associations were created. This signifies that, economic focused association operate out of the sphere and direct supervision of administrative services in Cameroon.

Another important aspect to understand in the structure of economic focused association is the gender dynamics which are embedded in these associations. This is particularly relevant seeing that the vast majority of those involved in the informal sector activities are women (ILO, 2011). In addition, the effects of economic hardship are felt more by women who are more likely to perform and are expected to provide care and nutrition to family dependents such as children and relatives.

Table 4: Distribution on Ways of Establishing Economic Associations

Method of Establishment of Association	Trust		Constitution		Company Limited by Guarantee		Association		No Formal Registration		I Do Not Know		Other		Total per question
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
Saving & Lending group	45	26.79	14	8.33	3	1.79	42	25.00	48	28.57	15	8.93	1	0.60	158
Labour Pooling group	0	0.00	1	4.00	0	0.00	13	52.00	11	44.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	25
Production Cooperative	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	10	83.33	1	8.33	1	8.33	0	0.00	12
Buying Clubs	1	11.11	1	11.11	0	0.00	2	22.22	4	44.44	1	11.11	0	0.00	9
Marketing Cooperatives	2	16.67	0	0.00	1	8.33	3	25.00	1	8.33	3	25.00	2	16.67	12
Common Property Group	1	16.67	1	16.67	0	0.00	2	33.33	1	16.67	1	16.67	0	0.00	6
Asset Pooling group	0	0.00	1	20.00	0	0.00	2	40.00	1	20.00	0	0.00	1	20.00	5
Market Group/ Platform	8	12.31	3	4.62	5	7.69	7	10.77	24	36.92	14	21.54	4	6.15	65
Business Promotion Council	1	16.67	0	0.00	0	0.00	2	33.33	1	16.67	0	0.00	2	33.33	6
Business Advocacy/ Lobby Group	1	20.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	1	20.00	3	60.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	5
Business Mentorship	4	30.77	0	0.00	1	7.69	3	23.08	1	7.69	4	30.77	0	0.00	13
Housing Cooperative	1	25.00	1	25.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	2	50.00	0	0.00	4
Multi-Level Marketing Scheme	0	0.00	0	0.00	2	33.33	1	16.67	0	0.00	3	50.00	0	0.00	6

Source: Online Survey, 2021

This probably explains why generally, women are more likely to belong to and outnumber men in the vast majority of economic focused associations such as savings and lending groups (Rickard and Johnsson, 2018). Seeing that these associations have important and real-life implications on the lives of its members with particular emphasis on women, it is relevant to understand the gender dynamics which exist in economic focused associations in Cameroon. According to the collected data of this study (Table 5), findings reveal that, no single gender tended to dominate leadership positions in economic focused associations across the board. In some associations, women tended to dominate while in others the representation of men in leadership was overwhelming. As an illustration, the proportion of men as opposed to women in leadership positions in savings and lending groups was 48.39% for the former and 51.61% for the latter. In labour pooling groups, men tended to dominate making up 57.14% while women constituted 42.86%. Men also dominated leadership in production cooperatives accounting for 64.62% while women made up only 35.38%

Table 5: Gender Diversity in Office Holder Positions in Economic Associations

Association	Males		Females		Total
	No.	%	No.	%	
1. Labour Pooling Group	64	57.14	48	42.86	112
2. Production Cooperative	42	64.62	23	35.38	65
3. Buying Clubs	14	29.17	34	70.83	48
4. Marketing Cooperative	29	46.77	33	53.23	62
5. Common Property Group	22	64.71	12	35.29	34
6. Asset Pooling Group	22	68.75	10	31.25	32
7. Market Group/Platform	114	40.57	167	59.43	281
8. Business Promotion Council	15	71.43	6	28.57	21
9. Business Advocacy, Lobby Group	9	36.00	16	64.00	25
10. Business Mentorship/Training Group	28	43.08	37	56.92	65
11. Housing Cooperative	6	46.15	7	53.85	13
12. Multi-Level Marketing Scheme	29	85.29	5	14.71	34
13. Saving & Lending Group	480	48.39	512	51.61	992

Source: Online Survey, 2021

Regarding the internal organisation of economy-focused associations, findings show that their leadership structure is made up of a number of positions such as chairperson, vice-chairperson, secretary, treasurer and other committees. Other positions which could be identified by this study include but are not limited to bank account manager, disciplinarian and publicity secretary. In terms of how the leadership positions are constituted in economy focused associations such as savings and lending groups, findings reveal (Table 6) that elections were applied in 72.46% of cases while appointments were preferred in 15.57% of cases.

Table 6: Selection of Office Holders, Frequency of Meetings and Manner of Interactions in Economic Associations (Saving and Lending Groups) (n=167)

Mode of Selection	No.	%
Elections	121	72.46
Appointment	26	15.57
Hereditary	0	0.00
Voluntary	17	10.18
I do not Know	3	1.80
Others	0	0.00
Frequency of Meetings	No.	%
Daily	11	6.59
Weekly	48	28.74
Monthly	98	58.68
Annually	10	5.99
Mode of Interaction	No.	%
Regular Face to Face	89	52.98
Digital Online Platform (e.g Zoom, Skype, WhatsApp, Telegram , Facebook)	17	10.12
Combination of both face to face and digital online platforms	62	36.90

Source: Online Survey, 2021

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bank account manager, disciplinarian and publicity secretary. In terms of how the leadership positions are constituted in economy focused associations such as savings and lending groups, findings reveal (Table 7) that elections were applied in 72.46% of cases while appointments were preferred in 15.57% of cases.

Table 7: Selection of Office Holders, Frequency of Meetings and Manner of Interactions in Economic Associations (Saving and Lending Groups) (n=167)

Mode of Selection	No.	%
Elections	121	72.46
Appointment	26	15.57
Hereditary	0	0.00
Voluntary	17	10.18
I do not Know	3	1.80
Others	0	0.00
Frequency of Meetings	**No.**	**%**
Daily	11	6.59
Weekly	48	28.74
Monthly	98	58.68
Annually	10	5.99
Mode of Interaction	**No.**	**%**
Regular Face to Face	89	52.98
Digital Online Platform (e.g Zoom, Skype, WhatsApp, Telegram , Facebook)	17	10.12
Combination of both face to face and digital online platforms	62	36.90

Source: Online Survey, 2021

From this result, it can be surmised that, the internal structure as well as the process through which executive members are selected are clearly defined for the former and democratic for the latter. From the foregoing, it can be observed that these organisations are structured and depend on a consistent schedule which requires the active, consistent and committed participation of its members. As such, evidence from the data (Table 7) collected also shows that the frequency of encounters between members and the association happened on a daily, weekly, monthly and annual basis. Specifically, daily encounters happened in 6.59% of the cases; weekly interactions occurred in 28.74% of the time; monthly meetings happened 58.68% of the time and finally; annual encounters occurred 21.74% of the time. In another dimension, the manner and type of interactions also varied with the latter occurring overwhelmingly on a regular face to face basis 52.98% of the time. Another less used type of interaction occurred on online platforms such as Zoom, WhatsApp, Telegram, and Facebook accounted for just 10.12% of meetings. A combination of regular face to face meetings and online interactions was also identified as accounting for 36.90% of interactions. Restrictions on public gathering and barrier measures caused by the COVID–19 pandemic may be invoked (even though no evidence exist to support this claim) as reason why economy focused associations which are predisposed to privilege face to face meetings had to adopt online platforms despite this occurring on a very limited scale.

Economic focused associations perform numerous activities and provide a wide range of services to its members. Among others, associations such as savings and lending groups ensure improved access to financial resources, provides additional income to its members, and enables members to pool together assets and savings. Apart from these services, economic focused associations also facilitate the organisation of welfare support as well as provide information to its members about market opportunities. Due to the low capital base of most Cameroonians, economic focused associations have emerged as an indispensable alternative of financial resources to formal financial institutions such as banks, credit unions and other micro-finance institutions (Tchuindjo, 1999). Available literature (Hunguana et al, 2020:4) suggests that formal financial institutions tend to avoid providing financial services to low-income earners such as loans and investment

opportunities because the economic status of these earners can be described as high risk and prone to default. Due to the informal and socialist oriented nature of economy focused associations, low-income high-risk earners are able to slowly build their capital base through collective rotating financial schemes and other activities which leverage and scale up the possibility of the latter to ensure some level of economic empowerment. Moreover, such associations also play an invaluable role in ensuring the material welfare of its members particularly those engaged in the wholesale purchase of groceries and other family consumables. In a nutshell, in terms of ensuring the economic welfare of the vast majority of Cameroonians who are involved in the informal economy and are also farmers, economic focused associations are of the utmost importance in terms of mitigating their economic challenges.

Despite the many benefits and the important role economy focused associations play in the lives of their members, their effectiveness is unfortunately curtailed by a number of challenges. This study was able to identify some of these challenges such as gender-based discrimination, low levels of participation from members, weak governance procedures, leadership limitations, corruption, absence of registration, government regulation, and funding problems among others

Table 8: Challenges Faced by Economic Associations

Association	Gender-Based Violence		Low Levels of Participation		Weak Governance Procedures		Leadership		Corruption		Formal Registration		Gov't Regulation	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Saving & Lending Group	14	8.33	68	40.48	33	19.64	35	20.83	19	11.31	34	20.24	6	3.57
Labour Pooling group	2	9.09	7	31.82	4	18.18	4	18.18	2	9.09	3	13.64	3	13.64
Production Cooperative	0	0.00	5	41.67	4	33.33	3	25.00	3	25.00	2	16.67	2	16.67
Buying Clubs	3	33.33	5	55.56	2	22.22	3	33.33	0	0.00	2	22.22	1	11.11
Marketing Cooperatives	1	8.33	6	50.00	0	0.00	2	16.67	1	8.33	1	8.33	2	16.67
Common Property Group	0	0.00	2	33.33	1	16.67	2	33.33	1	16.67	2	33.33	2	33.33
Asset Pooling group	3	60.00	2	40..00	1	20.00	3	60.00	2	40.00	1	20.00	3	60.00
Market Group/ Platform	6	9.52	28	44.44	12	19.05	11	17.46	3	4.76	7	11.11	3	4.76
Business Promotion Council	0	0.00	3	50.00	0	0.00	2	33.33	1	16.67	0	0.00	0	0.00
Business Advocacy/ Lobby Group	0	0.00	4	80.00	0	0.00	2	40.0	0	0.00	2	40.00	0	0.00
Business Mentorship	0	0.00	9	69.23	4	30.77	4	30.77	2	15.38	2	15.38	1	7.69
Housing Cooperative	1	25.00	2	50.00	1	25.00	1	25.00	0	0.00	1	25.00	0	0.00
Multi-Level Marketing Scheme	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	2	33.33	1	16.67

Source: Online Survey, 2021

To illustrate these challenges, saving and lending groups reported that challenges related to gender-based discrimination accounted for 8.33% of the problems they encounter. The same economy focused associations also noted that low levels of participation, weak governance procedures, leadership and corruption respectively accounted for 40.48%, 19.64%, 20.83% and 11.31% of their challenges. In the same light, formal registration (20.24%), government regulatory requirements (3.57%) and funding difficulties (27.98%) seriously limited their activities. These challenges were not limited to savings and lending groups but also extended to and affected similar associations to a greater or lesser extent. For instance, labour pooling groups highlighted gender-based discrimination (9.09%) as being responsible for a negligible proportion of the challenges they encounter. However, low participation from members emerged as a serious obstacle accounting for 31.82% of their challenges. Similarly, weak governance and leadership inadequacies were each responsible for 18.18% of their challenges. Another salient challenge witnessed by labour pooling groups was funding which was responsible for 36.36% of their problems. As for production cooperatives, buying clubs, and marketing cooperatives, low levels of participation consistently emerged as one of the most serious challenges these associations experience accounting for 41.67%, 55.56% and 50% of the challenges the latter associations face respectively.

From the data, low levels of participation seemed to negatively affect all economy-related associations consulted for this study accounting for a significant proportion of their challenges. Gender-based discrimination was highlighted as a significant challenge in only three associations; buying clubs, asset pooling groups and housing cooperative and respectively accounted for 33.33%, 60% and 25% of the difficulties these associations face. Asset pooling groups also reported serious challenges pertaining to leadership (60%), corruption (40%), government regulatory requirements (60%), and funding (80%). It can be concluded that economy focused association facing the most challenges are asset pooling groups with one of their biggest challenges related to funding. The reasons why asset pooling groups seem to experience challenges at double the rate of other economy focused associations in Yaoundé, Cameroon necessitates further studies. In a nutshell, economy-focused association in Cameroon require intervention to resolve the challenges identified in order to reinforce their postures in a

bid to fulfil their objectives. Respondents identified priority areas in need of urgent intervention as a function of their needs. However, for the most part funding opportunities and levels of participation were the most requested form of intervention which economy-based associations seemed to need. The two challenges just highlighted seemed to disproportionately affect the vast majority of associations and emerged as the most important issues which could improve the effectiveness of the associations if addressed.

Issues related to inclusion and discrimination also emerged as important markers in economy-based associations. One of the most important prohibitive aspects was linked to the issue of geographical boundaries which accounted for 29.41% of the discouragement faced by members in savings and lending associations. Discrimination on the basis of sex was highlighted by the latter group as accounting for only 11.76% while prohibitive membership costs played a more discriminatory role and accounted for 23.53% of the discouragement for membership into economy-based associations. However, the only discouragement in labour pooling groups was linked to disability which accounted for 100% of the discriminatory practices observed in these groups in Yaoundé, Cameroon.

Finally, the most popular asset held by economy-based associations is land. For example, 75.00% labour pooling groups noted that 88.89% of their common asset was land while 22.22% was composed of buildings. Conversely, 83.93% of savings and lending groups did not possess any common property. For the 16.07% of savings and lending groups who possessed common property, 74.07% of their property was in the form of land while 59.26% were buildings. From the foregoing, it will seem that the appreciative value of land and land-related property informs the reason behind its preference for collective ownership.

In terms of the number of years the economic association consulted for this study have existed, the findings revealed that 8.33% of saving and lending groups were established between 1990–2000 with a significant majority (54.76%) of these groups emerging between 2011–2020. (Table 9).

Table 9: Duration of Economic Associations

Association	1999–2000		2001–2010		2011–2020	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Saving & Lending Group	14	8.33	25	14.88	92	54.76
Labour Pooling Group	1	4.35	2	8.70	11	47.83
Production Cooperative	1	8.33	1	8.33	8	66.67
Buying Clubs	0	0.00	1	11.11	7	77.78
Marketing Cooperative	1	7.14	2	14.29	8	57.14
Common Property Group	0	0.00	0	0.00	4	66.67
Asset Pooling Group	1	20.00	0	0.00	3	60.00
Market Group/Platform	1	1.56	3	4.69	40	62.50
Business Promotion Council	1	16.67	0	0.00	4	66.67
Business Advocacy/ Lobby Group	0	0.00	0	0.00	5	100.0
Business Mentorship/Training Group	1	7.14	0	0.00	10	71.43
Housing Cooperative	1	25.00	1	25.00	1	25.00
Multi-Level Marketing Scheme	3	50.00	1	16.67	1	16.67

Source: Online Survey, 2021

This trend was repeated with other economic-based associations such as lobby groups (100%), business mentorship (71.43%) and common property groups. It will seem that, the creation of economic associations witnessed a significant uptick in between 2011 and 2020. In a nutshell, it can be surmised that economic organisations consulted for this study have existed for at least thirty years as can be observed from Table 9. That notwithstanding, evidence of the existence of savings and lending groups in Cameroon can be traced as far back as the late colonial and immediate post-colonial period when ethnic-based association in urban towns and coastal areas pooled resources together for various development and welfare-related purposes.

b. Citizens and Politics

Politically focused associations, like their economic-based counterparts are also indispensable with regards to involving erstwhile excluded and disenfranchised categories into spaces of decision making and political participation. This implies that

politically focused associations are concerned with how citizens engage with and hold political office holders accountable among others. From the findings presented in Table 10, it can be observed that youth groups account for 19.35% of all politically focused associations in Yaoundé, Cameroon. This is understandable seeing that Cameroon's population is overwhelmingly dominated by young people, yet the presence and representation of youths at the level of leadership and decision making is deplorable and insignificant. The mean age of Cameroon's top officials is at least 60 years explaining why, efforts have increased in the last few years to increase the presence of young people in places of decision making and leadership. The second most represented politically focused group in Yaoundé, Cameroon are political parties who make up 10.05% of the latter association. In terms of their number, there are more than 250 political parties in Cameroon with new and upcoming ones authorised by the state every year. The reintroduction of multiparty politics in Cameroon in 1991 led to the creation and legalisation of many parties. However, these political parties have been unable to significantly affect the political landscape and continue to face many challenges and obstacles. The Cameroon People's Democratic Party (CPDM) has consistently maintained its grip on power amidst accusations of unfair practices related to democratic elections from the opposition political parties and other watchdog groups (Ngwane, 2014). Despite their unimpressive track record, political parties have continued to animate political discourse and educate the masses even though the electorate has increasingly developed a dim view of their relevance in terms of development and democracy. Thirdly, women's groups make up 9.30% of politically focused associations in Yaoundé, Cameroon. A number of reasons can be advanced for this situation among which is the unimpressive representation of women's concerns and needs in political processes, structures and institutions. Despite an overall improvement in gender relations and the acknowledgement of gender disparities in Cameroon, the situation of women as opposed to men particularly in the political domain remains timid and unimpressive (Fonjock and Endeley, 2013).

Table 10: Membership in Political Associations

No	Association	No.	%	Total
1	Campaign Group	13	3.27	398
2	Political Party	40	10.05	398
3	Social Movement	23	5.78	398
4	Joint Public Petition	5	1.26	398
5	Local Peace Committee	5	1.26	398
6	Residents' Association	10	2.51	398
7	Online Based Civic Coalition	1	0.25	398
8	Women's Group	37	9.30	398
9	Youth Group	77	19.35	398

Source: Online Survey 2021

Men still dominate all political processes and institutions while mentalities about the role and place of women are still influenced by gendered stereotypes which tend to essentialise, stigmatise and discriminate against women as political actors (Pemunta, 2017; Kah and Tembi, 2018). It is therefore logical to observe the existence and emergence of politically-focused groups which cater for the needs and concerns of women. Social movements can also be identified as the fourth most popular kind of politically focused association in Yaoundé, Cameroon. The advent of social media and the significant role it has had on political processes has witnessed the birth of many social movements in Cameroon. While some of these movements such as the #MeToo Movement and the #He4She Campaign have been imported from other countries, social movements have increasingly emerged as veritable accountability mechanisms with serious effects on political office holders. Their role and relevance is therefore, indisputable and if the present trends are suggestive of their importance, it will be logical to conclude that these movements will increasingly encroach into and influence political outcomes in Cameroon. Table 11 presents the proportion of politically focused associations in Yaoundé, Cameroon and the extent to which they are popular. For the most part, the other politically focused association listed each have less than 4.00% representation with some such as online based civic coalitions representing as little as 0.25% of

politically focused associations in Yaoundé, Cameroon.

Considering the establishment of politically-focused organisations in Yaoundé, Cameroon, findings in this study reveal that the latter associations were established through a variety of ways. Youth groups which make up the majority of these associations were established in the following ways: no formal registration (30.67%); association (28%); constitution (9.33%) and by trust (8%). As for political parties, no formal registration accounted for 2.44%, association was responsible for 26.83%, and constitution made up 19.51% in their manner of establishment. Women's groups on the other hand were established as follows; 10.18% were respectively established through trust and constitution, while association and no formal registration each accounted for 35.14% in their method of establishment. Social movements on their part were established through trust (13.04%), constitution (21.74%), association (39.13%) and finally through no formal registration (17.40%). From the foregoing and according to the data collected for this study, it can be observed that significant numbers of politically focused associations in Yaoundé, Cameroon exist and operate without any formal registration. In terms of their political nature and the state's interest in regulating and controlling politically based organisations, this situation implies eventual complications for these associations in the future.

Table 11: Establishment of Political Associations

Method of Establishment of Association	Trust		Constitution		Company Limited by Guarantee		Association		No Formal Registration		I Do Not Know		Other		Total per question
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
Campaign Group	0	0.00	2	16.67	0	0.00	7	58.33	1	8.33	2	16.67	0	0.00	12
Political Party	0	0.00	8	19.51	0	0.00	11	26.83	1	2.44	9	21.95	12	29.27	41
Social Movement	3	13.04	5	21.74	0	0.00	9	39.13	4	17.39	2	8.70	0	0.00	23
Joint Public Petition	0	0.00	0	0.00	1	20	1	20.00	2	40.00	1	20.00	0	0.00	5
Local Peace Committee	1	20.00	1	20.00	0	0.00	2	40.00	1	20.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	5
Resident's Association	0	0.00	1	10.00	0	0.00	4	40.00	5	50.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	10
Online based Civic Coalition	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	1	100.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	1
Women's Group	4	10.81	4	10.81	0	0.00	13	35.14	13	35.14	3	8.11	0	0.00	37
Youth Group	6	8.00	7	9.33	0	0.00	21	28.00	23	30.67	15	20.00	3	4.00	75

Source: Online Survey, 2021

Politically focused associations are more likely to be dominated by men as historical and cultural barriers have been used to exclude, limit and/or tokenise the participation of women on the same basis as men (IDEA, 2021; Maguire, 2018; Hughes, 2016). With the exception of special interest associations such as women groups, the tendency is for gender representation to favour men. This study discovered from collected data (Table 12) that gender diversity was prevalent in politically focused associations in Cameroon such as Youth groups. In fact, the male office holders made up 56.11% as opposed to females who made up 43.89%. Political parties, unlike youth groups were overwhelmingly dominated by males who made up 81.21% office holders as opposed to females whose representation at the same level was only 18.79%. Gender bias in representation also occurred in women's groups in which females constituted almost 97% of the leadership while men had less than 4%. Interestingly, female office holders made up 54.60% in social movement which was more than that of males who represented 45.40%. The results therefore demonstrate that gender patterns in office holders' positions were more or less replicated at the level of politically focused associations. Going by the recommendations of the Beijing Platform of Action (BPA) which stipulates 30% representation as a benchmark for female representation in positions of decision making, it wouldn't be presumptive to conclude that gender diversity in politically focused associations is more than average. However, disturbing patterns of gender bias which either favour males or females, are still discernible even though this situation tends to be more evident in associations which have more or less been associated with a particular gender. This is the case with political parties for males and women's groups for females. That notwithstanding, 50–50 gender parity which has been earmarked by the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the National Gender Policy of Cameroon should be used as the appropriate threshold to assess gender diversity in office holder positions at all levels.

Table 12: Gender Diversity in Office Holder Positions in Political Associations

Association	Males		Females		Total
	No	%	No.	%	
Campaign Groups	53	67.09	26	32.91	79
Political Party	268	81.21	62	11.79	330
Social Movement	79	45.40	95	54.60	174
Joint Public Petition	7	38.89	11	61.11	18
Local Peace Committee	27	61.36	17	38.64	44
Resident's Association	44	52.38	40	47.62	84
Online Based Civic Coalition	4	40.00	6	60.00	10
Women's Group	10	3.16	306	96.84	316
Youth Group	326	56.11	255	43.89	581

Source: Online Survey, 2021

Regarding the leadership structure of politically focused associations, findings revealed that these structures were not so different from economic focused associations. Specifically, leadership positions such as chairperson, vice-chairperson, secretary and treasurer could be identified. These leadership positions were filled principally through elections (Table 13) even though a slight percentage occurred through appointment (12%) and volunteerism (8%). In youth groups and political parties, elections were used 77.33% for the former and 75% for the latter to fill in positions. Appointments and volunteerism were responsible for 12% and 2.50% for youth groups and 8% and 5% for political parties respectively. In women's groups, elections accounted for 83.33% of methods used to fill leadership positions. This implies that politically focused associations conduct their activities by interacting in a particular manner.

Table 13: Selection of Office Holders in Political Associations (Youth Group and Political Party)

Mode of Selection	Youth Group		Political Party	
	No.	%	No.	%
Elections	58	77.33	30	75.00
Appointment	9	12.00	1	2.50
Hereditary	1	1.33	1	2.50
Voluntary	6	8.00	2	5.00
I do not Know	1	1.33	6	15.00
Others	0	0.00	0	0.00

Source: Online Survey, 2021

Results show that youth groups primarily interacted on a weekly (44.7%) and monthly (40.79%) basis. However, political parties preferred interactions on a monthly and annual basis. Most political parties consulted for the study observed that annual meetings accounted for 47.50% while monthly ones made up 40% of interactions. Daily and weekly interactions were unimpressive for political parties. Unlike political parties, women's groups overwhelmingly preferred monthly interactions which made up 75% of overall interactions. Weekly and daily interactions were preferred only by 16.67% and 8.33% of women's groups respectively. The above findings amply demonstrate that politically focused associations developed functioning platforms which cater for their objectives. The frequency of interactions explained above also correspond with participant observations in Yaoundé, Cameroon. Principally, associations such as political parties mainly meet on a yearly basis given that their membership is more likely dispersed across the country. Hence, the logistical and resource implications of organising monthly or weekly meetings may discourage such frequent interactions. That notwithstanding, local chapters of national parties are more likely to interact on a more frequent basis. This same situation does not necessarily replicate itself at the level of youth groups and women's groups whose membership are more likely to be located in close proximity

to each other. In another dimension, considering the activist orientation of youth and women's group, interactions organised around a more frequent schedule such as weekly or monthly sound logical. This is so because, such associations have to constantly strategize and touch base with their members in order to ensure effective communication of ongoing programmes to members, mobilisation of resources and coming up with new strategies.

Logically, politically focused associations provide a wide range of benefits to their members (Table 14). The extent to which these benefits are appraised varies according to the politically focused association. For example, 72.22% of women's groups submit that they provide their members with a sense of belonging. Another, 61.11% note that they are exposed to new concepts and ideas while 58.33% highlight better social order, 50% underscore the defence of rights, 44.44% emphasise receipt of welfare, and 41.67% talk of collective security. Similarly, 75% of youth groups also provide their members with a sense of belonging while 53.95% of members highlight exposure to new concepts or ideas.

Table 14: Benefits Derived from Politically Focused Associations (Women's group and Political Party)

Benefits Derived	Women's Group		Political Party	
	No.	%	No.	%
Collective Security	15	41.67	7	17.50
Organising/receiving welfare Support	16	44.44	3	7.50
Improved voice in engaging with officeholders	5	13.89	28	70.00
Exposure to new concepts or ideas	22	61.11	10	25.00
Sense of belonging	26	72.22	15	37.50
Defence of Rights	18	50.00	10	25.00
Changes/Reforms within community	6	16.67	24	60.00
Change of government	1	2.78	34	85.00
Better social order	21	58.33	27	67.50
Other	1	2.78	0	0.00

Apart from providing benefits to their members, politically focused associations also experience a wide range of problems. The data shows that political parties tended to experience gender-based discrimination more than other politically focused association at a rate of 27.50%. Interestingly, 11.43% of women's groups also highlighted this problem. This demonstrates that gender-based discrimination can be observed in spaces which are primarily or exclusively composed of women. Weak governance procedures (42.50%) and leadership (47.50%) also affected political parties at a higher rate than all other politically focused associations. On the other hand, low levels of participation also emerged as a serious problem affecting socially-focused associations. About sixty one percent (60.53%) of youth groups highlighted this problem while 60% of resident associations, local peace committees, and joint public petition groups also identified this challenge. Corruption was a serious challenge identified by online-based civic coalitions (100%), local peace committees (40%) and political parties (35%). Furthermore, formal registration was identified by online-based civic coalitions (100%) and local peace committees (40%) as a serious constraint. Apart from the just mentioned associations, government registration did not significantly affect the other politically focused associations considered for this study. Local peace committees also highlighted government regulatory requirements (40%) as a problem they faced. In conclusion, problems associated with funding affected youth groups (52.63%) and women's groups (54.29%) at a higher rate than it did others.

In terms of inclusion and discrimination, 84.21% of youth groups did not raise any concerns with regards to this. Regarding the less than 20% who noted that they had faced issues related to discrimination, age restrictions accounted for 30.77% of the reasons for this discrimination. In women's groups, 88.89% of respondents did not experience any difficulties with regards to inclusion. Of the 11.11% who raised this issue, gender and tribal restrictions each accounted for 25% for the advent of discrimination. Political parties also did not encounter issues related to inclusion and discrimination as almost 93% of them did not raise it. Language barriers (75%), age and tribal restrictions (50%) and prohibitive membership costs (50%) were the only issues raised by less than 8% of political parties who raised concerns relating to discrimination and inclusion.

Finally, politically focused associations which had access to collective property indicated that it is mostly in the form of land and buildings. Almost 98% of women's groups however did not own any collective property. That notwithstanding, land made up the preferred collective property for the significantly few women's groups who owned collective property. Turning to youth groups, 85.71% of such groups also did not have access to collectively owned property. In a similar situation with women's groups, the few youth groups (14.29%), who owned property tended to have it in the form of buildings (70%) and land (50%). This pattern repeats across the board with other politically focused associations. It is also indicative of the high equity value and appreciative nature of such commodities which are ideal for investment initiatives and collective ownership.

c. Citizens and Social Support

Social support groups have been a permanent fixture of Cameroonian society from time immemorial. These groups play a vital role with regards to keeping community bonds alive and ensuring that African (Cameroonian) values in terms of solidarity, empathy, jubilation and support thrive among community members. Hence, their existence and relevance cannot be overemphasised considering the indispensable role they play in the Cameroonian society. Such groups can be located in almost all communities and the reason for their popularity rests on the close ties their basic structure have with Cameroonian values and cultural understanding vis-à-vis solidarity and living together (vivre ensemble). Social support groups can be identified in almost all strata of Cameroonian society ranging from churches to Parent Teacher Associations (PTA) burial societies, alumni associations among others. The social support groups identified for this study are presented in Table 16. The findings presented in the latter table reveal interesting patterns with regards to the composition of such groups. It can be observed that fellowship and religious groups make up the vast majority (47.24%) of social support groups in Yaoundé, Cameroon. The second most popular social support group in the country are sporting associations collectively making 12.56% of social support groups. The data in terms of levels of belonging to social support groups appropriately captures the reality in Cameroonian society.

Table 15: Membership in Social Organisations

No	Association	No.	%	Total
1	Fellowship Group/Religious group (temples, churches, mosque, shrine, etc)	188	47.24	398
2	Burial Societies	2	0.50	398
3	Sporting Associations	50	12.56	398
4	Entertainment Group (dance, choir, etc)	41	10.30	398
5	School Association Parent /Teacher Group	49	12.31	398
6	Alumni Association	39	9.80	398
7	Book/ Reading Club	8	2.01	398
8	Community Development Association	32	8.04	398
9	Service Organisation or Club (e.g. Lions Club, Rotary International)	1	0.25	402
10	Neighbourhood Watch Committee	4	1.00	402
11	Communal Granary	1	0.25	402
12	Community Feeding Group	1	0.25	402
13	Community Foundation	5	1.24	402

Source: Online Survey 2021

The ascendancy of nascent religious movements and the spiritually inclined nature of Cameroonians (and Africans in general) explains why fellowship groups emerge as favoured sites of social support associations. This situation is further compounded by the tenets of religion which lays emphasis on "Being One Another's keeper", empathy, solidarity and compassion. Turning to sporting associations, Cameroon has a cultist obsession with sports, with football being the most popular sports in the country. Hence, sporting associations have also emerged as significant rallying platforms through which social support can be provided. Of course, the emphasis on fellowship groups and sporting associations does not imply the trivialisation of other social support groups such as PTAs, community development and alumni associations. These social support groups among others presented in Table 16 represent important avenues in Cameroonian society through which average citizens find resources and benefit from a wide range of social support services.

Social support associations in Yaoundé, Cameroon were established in a number of ways such as trust, constitution, company limited by guarantee, association, as well as those existing with no formal registration. Fellowship/religious organisations were primarily established by association (20.97%). Almost 18% of fellowship associations in Yaoundé, Cameroon have no formal registration even though legal provisions require them to be registered. Burial associations on their part were established through no formal registration as well and primarily function according to specific codes developed by such associations. More than 50% of the latter associations do not possess any registration as well. The same scenario also applies to sporting associations in which 31.37% have not been registered whereas 25.49% were established by association. Service organisations seemed to be well structured in their organisation with 100% having been established by trust. Community development associations which are very popular in Cameroonian societies were established by association (50%) while 28.13% were established through no formal registration. It is important to point out that no social support group considered for this study was established as a company limited by guarantee.

Turning to the gender dynamics of leadership and decision making in social support groups, the findings of this study uncovered interesting results. Men tended to dominate office holder positions in the majority of social support groups. In fellowship associations, males made up 59.42% as opposed to 40.58% for females in leadership and decision making. The gender bias in office holder position in sporting associations was more profound as males made up 73.85% against 26.15% for females. Results for gender diversity in office holder positions for religious fellowships and sporting associations confirmed the dominance of males in these spaces. Literature (Ojong, 2017; Drummond, M., 1995; Senne, 2016; Mowad, 2019) shows that religion and sports are primarily masculine inclined in terms of the decision makers and the leadership. As such, while women can be found in and participate in such associations, stereotyped conceptions and cultural limitations about their ability to be decision makers usually restrict them from occupying these positions. Females were able to dominate leadership in only three out of the thirteen social groups considered for this study. These groups were community feeding groups (100%), burial societies (57.89%) and entertainment groups (52.94%). In a nutshell, gender

patterns of leadership in social support group reinforce notions of women's role in society which more often than not confines women in the domestic role they have been associated with, which by extension reinforces the gender inequality between women and men in leadership positions. Hence, it is logical to conclude from the data that females are more predisposed to lead social support associations such as feeding groups which reinforce them in their traditional and domestic capacity as mothers and caregivers.

In terms of the leadership structure of social support organisations, the same structure identified for economy-focused and politically focused citizen-led formations can be observed. Positions such as chairperson, vice chairperson, secretary, treasurer and ad-hoc committees can be identified. With the exception of fellowship organisations which have a spiritual leader and sporting clubs who possess a social organiser, all leadership positions are basically the same. Selection of leaders also occurs along similar lines as the two previous categories of citizen-led formations. For sporting associations, elections accounted for 66% and was the principal method through which officeholders were selected. Only a limited percentage (18%) were appointed. Similarly, fellowship associations also adopted elections 50% of the time to designate their leaders. However, an impressive percentage (29.57%) of leaders were appointed. Alumni associations also overwhelmingly used elections (80%) to choose their leaders. The data therefore shows that social support associations like the previous two types of associations employ democratic approaches in selecting its leaders.

Table 16: Gender Diversity in Office Holder Positions in Social Associations

Association	Males		Females		Total
	No.	%	No.	%	
Fellowship Group	760	59.42	519	40.58	1279
Burial Societies	8	42.11	11	57.89	19
Sporting Associations	209	73.85	74	26.15	283
Entertainment Group (dance, choir)	120	47.06	135	52.94	255
School Association (Parent Teacher Group)	191	59.50	130	40.50	321
Alumni Association	127	50.60	124	49.40	251
Book/Reading Club	14	73.68	5	26.32	19
Community Development Association	155	61.02	99	38.98	254
Service organisation or club	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Neighbourhood watch committee	13	100.0	0	0.00	13
Communal Granary	4	66.67	2	33.33	6
Community Feeding Group	0	0.00	6	100.0	6
Community Foundation	17	60.71	11	39.29	28

Source: Online Survey, 2021

In another dimension, the frequency of interactions in social support associations varies according to the association. Primarily, weekly interactions make up 68% of fellowship interactions while daily interactions account for 20%. This can be rationalised on the basis that Sundays and Fridays are days of worship which also allows for related fellowship activities to take place. Weekly interactions (68%) also occurred for sporting associations. Parent Teacher Associations however primarily met on an annual basis (42.86%). The majority of social support associations interact on a weekly basis due to the nature of their activities and the support role social services play in the lives of their members. Fellowship and sporting associations like the majority of social support associations prefer regular face to face meetings. However, the COVID–19 pandemic has redefined interactions and most social support services noted that they preferred a combination of both face to face and digital encounters in online platforms. Sporting associations whose activities are dependent on regular

face to face encounters also demonstrated a shift towards combining regular face to face meetings and online encounters.

Fellowship groups provide important benefits to their members. The findings of this study show that spiritual support constituted the most significant benefit (86.02%) derived from fellowship groups. A sense of belonging (53.23%) also emerged as an important benefit derived from fellowship associations. Exposure to new ideas (29.87%) which was a significant benefit in economy and politically focused associations was also derived from fellowship associations. On the other hand, the most significant benefits derived from sporting associations were physical wellbeing (84%) and entertainment 52%). Members of burial associations also enjoy entertainment (73.17%) and sense of belonging (56.10%) from being part of these associations. Generally speaking, social support associations provide a wide range of benefits to their members. The data shows that enjoying a sense of belonging as a benefit, cuts across most if not all social support associations.

Table 17: Benefits Derived from Social Associations

Benefits Derived	Fellowship Association		Sporting Association		Parent-Teacher Ass.	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Collective Security	0	0.00	7	14.00	8	16.33
Entertainment	2	100.0	26	52.00	4	8.16
Organizing receiving welfare	2	50.0	13	26.00	8	16.33
Improved voice in engaging with office holders	0	0.00	2	4.00	8	16.33
Exposure to new concepts or ideas	1	50.0	13	26.00	25	51.02
Physical Wellbeing	1	50.0	42	84.00	12	24.49
Sense of belonging	0	0.00	19	38.00	18	36.73
Spiritual Support	1	50	1	2.00	5	10.20
Networking	0	0.00	7	14.00	11	22.45
Improved Education Outcome	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	32	65.31
Other	N/A	N/A	2	4.00	N/A	N/A

Source: Online Survey, 2021

Some of the problems encountered by social support associations range from low levels of participation to limited funding, and poor leadership. Fellowship associations highlighted low levels of participation (100%) as one of their biggest challenges, while leadership and weak governance procedures each accounted for 50% of other challenges. Sporting associations on their part were constrained by funding (32%) challenges while low levels of participation also emerged as a serious issue. Community development associations on their part also identified funding (68.75%) as a serious problem. In the same vein, leadership (46.88%) and low levels of participation (43.75%) emerged as major problems affecting community development associations. The prevalence of funding challenges in social support hinges on the fact that unlike economy and politically based associations, the people who identify with social support groups can be viewed as the most vulnerable categories in societies. In addition, unlike economy focused associations which may be designed to generate funds, socially focused groups are more tailored to provide basic and welfare needs to vulnerable groups such as women, orphans, widows, among others. This probably explains why with the exception of sporting associations, the majority of social support groups such as fellowship groups (100%) and community development associations do not have access to collectively held property.

Finally, in terms of discrimination and inclusion, language barriers and restrictions related to age respectively made up 100% of the discriminations listed by members of fellowship associations. With regards to sporting associations, 90% of its members did not raise any issues related to discrimination. For the 10% who felt they had experienced discrimination, defined geographical boundaries and disability respectively accounted for 60% and 20% of the proportion of discriminations.

5. Conclusion

This study has examined the importance of citizen led formations in Cameroon within the context of how they intervene in the economic, social and political domains and the legal basis of their engagement. The results of the online survey demonstrate that citizen led formations play a vital role and are indispensable with regards to the socio-economic and political empowerment of citizens in the country. Apart from the various benefits these formations accrue to their members, important dimensions regarding how they can be better supported have been uncovered. Issues such as corruption, financing, leadership, low participation of members and government regulatory requirements continue to straggle these formations. In recognising the inadequacies constraining the government and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) from providing the services which citizen led formations have mastered, it is also relevant to ensure that these associations be supported with financial and other resources to scale their effectiveness and broaden the length and breadth of their interventions. This is particularly important if we consider the crises of development and democracy which Cameroon currently faces. A crisis which has stymied livelihood prospects of citizens and distorted the role and place of the latter in a country like Cameroon. It is against this backdrop that a call for action is launched with an emphasis on multi stakeholder approach that can draw useful insights from the wealth of knowledge and experience possessed by citizen led formations.

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Citizenship And Democracy in Ghana

Ewald Quaye Kwabla Garr

Executive Summary

The definition and standards for democracy have been free and fair regular elections, freedoms and liberties of citizens, and the media. Countries with regular and relatively peaceful elections are celebrated as well-performing democracies. On a daily basis, citizens are engaged in the public arena solving problems. They do these in their communities, churches, credit unions, cooperatives, schools' associations, among many other civic groups.

In spite of these production and co-creation roles, and the fact that democracy is about citizens, democracy research, discourse and practice have overlooked the role of citizens and how they organize themselves. This has influenced popular views about democracy and also impeded the level of responsiveness of governments to the welfare of citizens.

The African Citizenship Index seeks to understand democracy better and to fill in the gaps by documenting and developing an index that measures how citizens across regions, amidst different internal dynamics, act collectively to shape their lives. As part of this, studies were commissioned in five African countries, of which Ghana is one.

As a country that is described as a beacon of democracy on the continent, or a well-performing democracy, the study sought to document and show what citizens in Ghana do together or among themselves to solve their common problems and shape their lives. The study used a combination of a desktop-based analysis of literature and field-based research. Below are the key findings of the study.

- Although Ghana is highly rated as a beacon of democracy in Africa, the citizens have retreated from the political and economic spaces to the social spaces. Most Ghanaians do not trust their elected leaders or public office holders. Instead they trust more their religious and traditional leaders.
- Among various groups, economic, political, and

social groups, a great majority of Ghanaians, 86%, are more engaged in social groups.

- There are low levels of engagement in political groups. Only 15.5% of respondents belonged to one political group or the other.
- There is also an even lower level of engagement in economic-focused groups in Ghana. In total, only 5% of all respondents indicated that they belonged to economic focused groups. The economic group that most respondents belonged to is the Savings and Lending group, with 3%.
- An overwhelming majority of Ghanaians, 86%, are engaged in religious or fellowship groups such as temples, churches, mosques, shrines.
- Most Ghanaians do not understand democracy. For them, democracy means elections and not what they do among themselves.
- Ghana's democracy is weak as most citizens are not engaged but are detached from it.

1. Introduction

Ghana is often described as a well-performing democracy with good governance on the continent (USAID, 2011), guaranteeing fundamental human rights and relative peace and credibility over the years. Good governance and democracy are all about citizens and their welfare. For instance, good governance provides the appropriate and sustainable conditions for citizens to exercise their fundamental rights and actualize their aspirations. Democracy means the power of citizens to rule (Garr, 2018). It is about citizens ruling, deciding, and taking actions to shape their lives and future (Tocqueville, 2000). Similarly, in the words of Diamond (2004), "in a democracy, the people [citizens] are the sovereign - they are the highest form of political authority." Yet, despite the centrality of citizens in public life, very little attempt has been made to understand citizenship and how citizens work together or engage with each other in shaping their lives.

Increasingly, democracy and good governance have been reduced to mean free and fair elections. The United Nations Development Program (2014) and the United Nations Commission on Human Rights (2015) describe elections as the only means through which citizens are directly engaged in what affects them (Ijon, 2020). Many Ghanaian researchers and scholars have associated democracy to successive free and fair elections (Gyimah-Boadi, 2009; Danso and Lartey, 2012; Asante, 2013; Ijon, 2020). Similarly, Ghana's description as a beacon of democracy in Africa is tied with the country's record of relatively successful successive free and fair elections. In the words of Ijon (2020), "...periodic elections have earned Ghana the accolade the beacon of democracy in Africa". According to Armah-Attoh and Robertson (2014), citizens preferred democracy defined within the context of free and fair elections and their interest in collective actions was rather low.

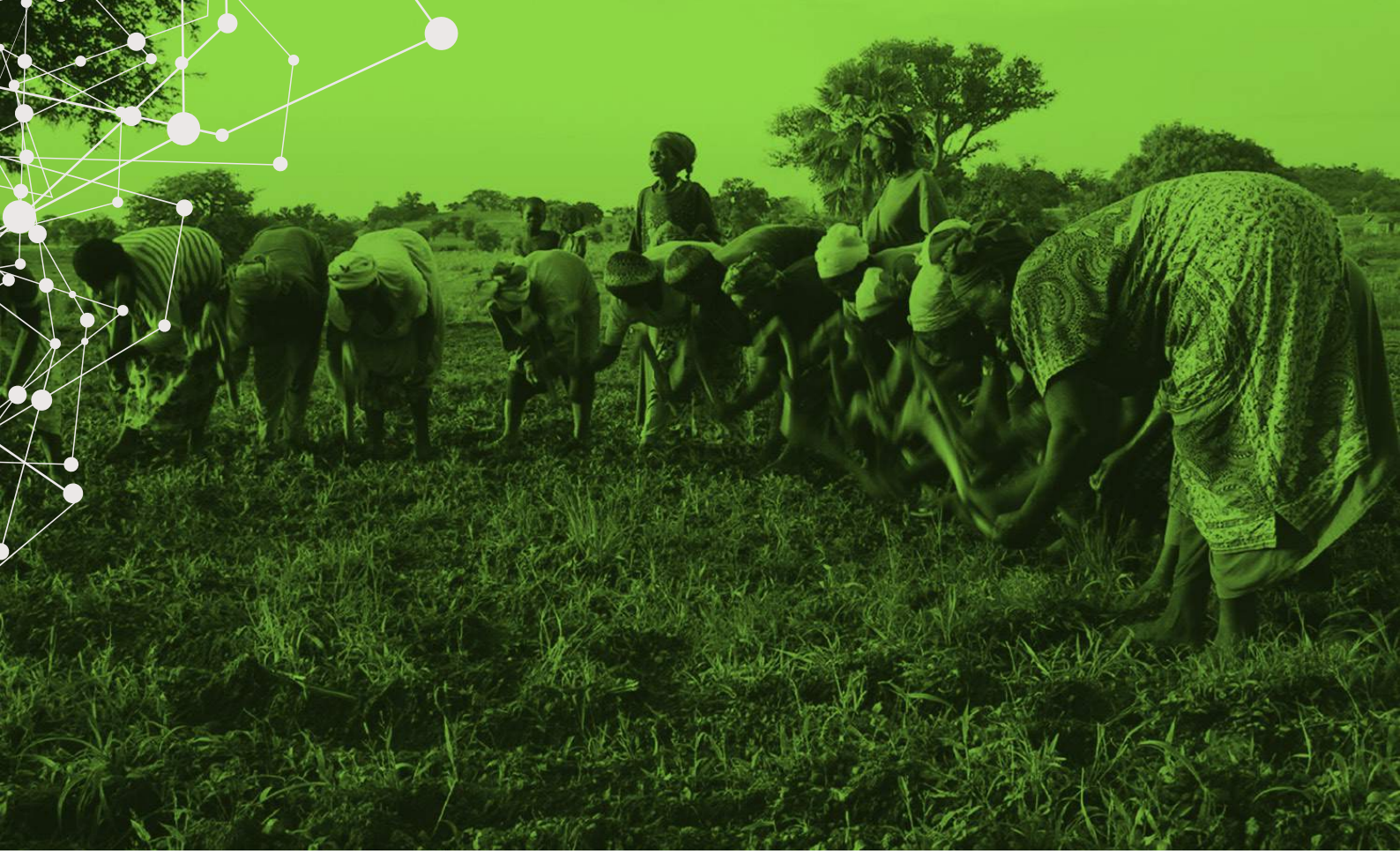
Mathews (2014) noted that the expected outcome of politics and democracy is transformation - the advancement and improvement in the quality of lives of citizens and communities. Democracy is about pursuing the common good of citizens. However, the wrong characterization has taken attention from

citizenship and what they do daily to provide for their common good and shape the community. The increasingly poor public service delivery and unresponsiveness of the government to the welfare of its citizen is a demonstration of this fact.

Citizenship is defined as the "depth and breadth of activities that citizens enter into individually or collectively" (SIVIO, 2020). Citizenship and what citizens do daily is so powerful that it cannot be ignored. If ignored for long, it turns to manifest in various forms, which are often disruptive and explosive. The "Arab Spring" and the "BlackLivesMatter" movements are just two of the international examples. In Ghana, a virtual civic pressure movement called the "#FixTheCountry campaign" has emerged. The #FixTheCountry group of citizens is protesting the harsh living conditions in the country and demanding the government to improve living conditions in the country. Since the 1st of May 2021, the group emerged spontaneously in response to the rising cost of living amidst the government's continuous introduction of additional taxes.

It is important to note that although citizens are retreating from active and mainstream politics, they are still engaged in what Mathews (2014) and Boyte (2004) call "everyday politics." On a daily basis citizens are engaged in the public arenas solving problems or discussing one issue or the other that affects them. They are in their communities, churches, credit unions, cooperatives, schools' associations, among many other civic groups. These and many other forms of citizen engagement have been overlooked due to the narrow definition of democracy. Citizens are producers and co-creators of their communities. A better understanding of citizenship and democracy, or what citizens do and what they can do is critical to understanding and improving the practice of democracy while ensuring the welfare of citizens and the development of communities.

Generally, literature on democracy and governance in Ghana abounds. They include Ayee, 2001; Boafo-Arthur, 2008; Crook, 2017; IDEG, 2017; Ayee, Kwamena, and Deku, 2014; MacLean, 2014; Ninsin, 1993, 2002; Gyimah-Boadi E, 2007, 2009; Abdulai and Crawford, 2010; ISODEC, 2006 among others.



However, there is very little study on citizens and what they do together. Instead, most of the literature focuses on Multiparty politics, elections, decentralization, and institutions.

The study sought to document and show what citizens in Ghana do together or among themselves to solve their common problems and shape their lives. The study will feed into or contribute to the African Citizenship Index, which seeks to develop an index that measures how citizens act collectively and in the public arena. Currently, there is no such comprehensive framework to document, track, and compare across regions how citizens are working together to shape communities amidst different internal dynamics (SIVIO, 2020). The following section looks at the methodology through which this study was carried out.

1.1 Methodology

Overview of the approach and scope

The study is based on a combination of a desktop-based analysis of literature and field-based research. Generally, the study sought to document and show what citizens in Ghana do together or

among themselves to solve their common problems and also shape their lives. More specifically, the study sought to establish;

i. how citizens organize themselves,

ii. ways in which citizens practice influence self-governance,

iii. (the initiatives and formations of collaboration that they establish with each other,

iv. how they relate with formal governance processes and engage with official processes (protest and cooperation).

Literature Review and secondary data

The study made references to key national policy frameworks and data sources, and scholarly works in the field. The national frameworks, policies, and data sources referred to in the study include the Constitution of Ghana (Republic of Ghana, 1992), key government policies, Local Government Act 936 (Republic of Ghana, 2016), Ghana's latest Living Standard Survey (GLSS) published by the Ghana Statistical Service (GSS, 2019). The GLSS for example provides information for understanding and examining living conditions in the country. It is a nation-wide household survey and this is the seventh round. The data was collected over a period of 12 months (22nd October, 2016 to 17th October, 2017). Relevant scholarly works of individual researchers and institutions were also reviewed.

Primary Data Collection

The study combined the use of qualitative and quantitative research methods. The research tools used for collecting primary data are; close and open-ended questionnaire (online via survey monkey), key informant interviews, participant observations of citizen in established platforms, and case study analysis.

Quantitative data was collected through the use of a close-ended online questionnaire which was administered using the survey monkey platform. Representative samples were used to determine the extent to which citizens are part of formations (associations, loose civic coalitions, religious bodies, social movements), and benefits and challenges of belonging.

Qualitative data was collected through the use of open-ended

questionnaire. This was done through interviews with key informants, and observations of ongoing citizen led initiatives. The key informant interviews included community leaders, founders of citizen led initiatives, practitioners within citizen platforms, among others.

Population and sampling

The population of the study was restricted to Accra, which is the capital city of Ghana. A total of 413 respondents were engaged to complete the survey monkey tool using accidental non-probability sampling method. Purposive non-probability sampling method was however used to select key informants for the case studies.

Challenges of data collection

The fieldwork was done during the time of COVID–19. As part of efforts to protect public health and to reduce the spread and impact of COVID–19 the government of Ghana implemented and enforced tight restrictions. These restrictions included a ban on public gathering, restriction on getting closer to people, the wearing of face masks and frequent washing of hands among other protocols.

The ban on public gathering, restriction on getting closer to people, and the general fear of contracting COVID–19 made it difficult to administer questionnaires in the open as people were not comfortable with getting close to other people. In response, and in order not to endanger the health of the enumerator and the public, a combination of methods were used. These were physical interviews where possible, phone interviews, supporting people to complete the survey via the online platform themselves and administering questionnaires via phone.

The questions in the survey were many and this led to people opting out mid-way. Many of these people were women who often said they had to go do something or were busy. Coupled, with the COVID–19 restrictions it reduced the speed of data collection.

Interpreting and Analysis of Data

Most of the quantitative data collected through the close-ended questionnaire were analysed using SPSS and qualitative data were also analysed using NVIVO.

Structure of the Paper

The paper is structured into five sections. Beyond this introductory section, section two provides the background to Citizen Led Formation. It reviewed the literature on democracy and development. Section three looked at the sample for the study. Section four, on Mapping of Citizens initiatives, examined three key sectors of citizens: Citizens and the Economic, Citizens and Politics, and Citizens and Social Support. It presented the findings of the fieldwork. Section five summarizes and concludes the picture. Finally, the references are listed in section six.

2. Background to Citizen Led Formations in Ghana

2.1 Brief Overview of Governance in Ghana

Ghana is a relatively stable democratic country in West Africa. The country has an estimated total population of 30 million, with women constituting about 51%. It has a young population with close to 60% of the population under 25 years (GSS, 2019).

Ghana was the first in sub-Saharan Africa to attain its independence in 1957. However, after a decade (1957–1966) of monumental development, the country descended into decades of political instability and economic meltdown as it traversed from one coup d'état to the other until it transitioned to a decade of quasi-military era between 1981 to 1992 and then to multiparty democracy in 1992. It has since held eight successive Presidential and Parliamentary elections with a relatively peaceful outcome. Over this period, there has been a change of government from one party to the other without violence.

The Constitution of Ghana guarantees fundamental human rights, civil liberties, and freedoms and nurtures an active civil society environment and media pluralism. The country has over 25 registered political parties, thereby allowing citizens the freedom to form or associate with any political group. State institutions such as Parliament, the Judiciary, Commissioner for Human Rights and Administrative Justice, Police Service, and many others have been empowered, with some given autonomous status to ensure that rights, freedoms, and liberties are enjoyed. Ghana is also a signatory to many international human rights laws, including the African Charter and the Maputo Protocol, among others. Based on the above, Ghana is considered a beacon of democracy and good governance in Africa. The Global Peace

Index ranks Ghana as the most peaceful country in the sub-region and third in Sub-Saharan Africa (National Peace Council, 2020). On freedom of speech and press freedom, Ghana was ranked second in Africa in the 2020 World Press Freedom Index (Annor, 2021). Consistently, the Ibrahim Index of African Governance has also ranked Ghana among the top performing countries.

The stability in the country has contributed to national gains in the economic and social sectors over the past three decades. Since 1991 Ghana has halved the proportion of people living below poverty (Cooke et al. (2016). In 2011, it attained a Lower Middle-Income Country status. Per the United Nations 2019 Human Development Report, Ghana is a 'medium' country for living standards. However, it is important to note that a lot remains to be done as these indicators have not necessarily translated into economic development or improved welfare for the general population. According to Prof. Chris Gordon of the University of Ghana, Ghana is a middle-income country by name not in practice (Gordon, 2017).

2.2. Legal Framework for Citizens Engagement

For clarity, citizenship in this study refers to "the breadth and depth of how citizens act collectively" (SIVIO, 2021). The Constitution of Ghana (1992) provides for the centrality of citizens in national affairs and makes the wellbeing of the Ghanaian citizen the ultimate goal of government. As a matter of fact, the first article of the Constitution instructs that:

The Sovereignty of Ghana resides in the people of Ghana in whose name and for whose welfare the powers of government are to be exercised in the manner and within the limits laid down in this Constitution.

Legally, it is evident that provisions are in place for citizens to participate in national politics.

The Constitution is explicit on realizing the above and lays down the basis for citizens' engagement in politics. The State instructs in Article 35, (1) "Ghana shall be a democratic state dedicated to the realization of freedom and justice; and accordingly, sovereignty resides in the people of Ghana from whom Government derives all its powers and authority through this Constitution".

In Article 35(6, d), the Constitution further directs the State to put in place measures to: "make democracy a reality by decentralizing the administrative and financial machinery of government to the regions and districts and by affording all possible opportunities to the people to participate in decision¬ making at every level in national life and in government"

It does not end there; in the Local Government Act, 936 (2016), the law explicitly instructs for consultation of citizens and their participation at all levels. Similarly, the Constitution states in Article 240 (2 e) that "to ensure the accountability of local government authorities, people in particular local government areas shall, as far as practicable, be afforded the opportunity to participate effectively in their governance".

Legally, it is evident that provisions are in place for citizens to participate in national politics. Having established the legal

guarantee or basis for citizens' engagement in politics, what is the state of citizens' engagement in the public arena?

2.3. Citizens Led Formation and Engagement

Despite the elaborate legal provisions for citizens' participation and engagement in national politics at all levels, citizens' engagement is minimal. Officials of state institutions and people close to the ruling government have captured the public arena with little resistance from citizens (Garr, 2018). According to MacLean (2018) and Garr (2018), citizens feel disconnected from the State and their elected officials. Citizens also report being excluded from development planning and decision-making, and they do not trust the State and its officials. There is a feeling of powerlessness and a sense of despondency among large sections of the Ghanaian population. People do not believe they can influence public policy (Garr, 2018; Crook, 2017; IDEG, 2017; CDD, 2015; Ayee, Kwamena and Deku, 2014; MacLean, 2014; Garr, 2014; Send-Ghana, 2013; and ISODEC, 2006). For example, the CDD Afrobarometer survey reports that most Ghanaians have lost trust and are dissatisfied with the government and allied state institutions (CDD, 2015). Subsequent studies in 2017 and 2019 shows that things have not changed. Citizens trust religious and traditional leaders and contact these leaders more regularly than political leaders and public office holders (CDD, 2020).

> **Under the fourth republic, Ghana's multiparty system has evolved into a duopoly, where the country's leadership is dominated and controlled by two main parties, who alternate power...**

The case of state capture by political parties and the abundant exclusion of citizens can be explained or attributed to several factors: first, there is a structural defect in Ghana's multiparty system, which promotes a winner-takes-all system (IDEG, 2019, 2014; USAID, 2011). Ghana's democracy under the fourth republic, since 1992, has been the most stable. However, under the fourth republic, Ghana's multiparty system has evolved into a duopoly, where the country's leadership is dominated and controlled by two main parties, who alternate power (IDEG, 2019, 2014; Garr, 2021). When in power, each party feels it is their turn to hold political power and exploit the State's economic resources. At

every particular time, while one main political party feels they have the 'inalienable right' to rule, make all the decisions, and exploit the State resources, the other main political group is excluded. The smaller political parties, the larger public, and various groups are excluded too. This situation has contributed to the exclusion of citizens from active national politics.

Secondly, the struggle for power among the two main parties is hostile and vitriolic, such that it has polarised the country on partisan, tribal, and ethnic lines. The polarisation and the antagonistic struggle by the two main parties for political power has since 2004 led to violence in by-elections, during voter registration, and in national elections (Ijon, 2020; Danso and Lartey, 2012). For example, at least five people lost their lives in the 2020 Presidential elections. That same year during the voter registration, which ordinarily should be a peaceful process, saw the death of one person, the use of guns, and violence in some registration centres, and in 2019 during a by-election in Ayawaso West Constituency State security was used to perpetrate violence on opposition party supporters (WANEP, 2019). These are just a few cases. These hostile and violent experiences make partisan politics unattractive to most Ghanaians. They do not want to get involved.

The struggle for power among the two main parties is hostile and vitriolic, such that it has polarised the country on partisan, tribal, and ethnic lines.

Thirdly, is what is now called the "growing threat of culture of silence" where the government or its associates persecute people who criticize it (Jonah, 2021). Citizens engaged in active civic activities such as demanding for accountability and holding public officers accountable have been victimized. In a recent incident, a social activist who has been advocating for the development of his community has been killed after receiving several threats to stop making the government unpopular (myjoyonline, 2021; ABCnewsgh, 2021). Youth protesting harsh living conditions in the country under the name #FixTheCountry have been prevented by the police from demonstrating resulting in court battles and arrests of the youths (myjoyonline, 2021). Commenting on the developments, a Ghanaian by name Kenneth Darko on Twitter wrote: **You drag the youth to Court for ATTEMPTING to demand better living conditions and you assault them when they're honouring same? Is it a trap to be a youth in this country? How tone deaf can these guys get? We really need to #FixTheCountry. #FixTheCountryGhana**

In responding to discussion on these developments a security expert, Prof. Kwesi Aning noted that "When the State and its representatives, over time, signal to people that they don't matter, it contributes to building frustrations" (myjoyonline, 2021). He added further "efforts by the growing youth to get their voices heard on various pressing issues seem to have been handled with dismissiveness by leadership culminating in what he describes as a looming tipping point" (ibid). Most Ghanaians have become concerned and worried about the state of politics (Jonah, 2021). They do not want to get involved in national politics and be tagged/targeted. It is, therefore, not surprising that although an overwhelming majority of Ghanaians (above 80%) claim they enjoy their freedoms and liberties, a rather large majority (71.5%) say that they are careful of what they say about politics (CDD, 2020). This emphasizes the argument that Ghanaians see politics as the partisan engagements of political parties and state institutions and not what they do. In other words, they are more hesitant to engage in such politics.

Fourthly, the inability of the political parties to deliver transformational development or improved public services amidst political party functionaries becoming rich overnight when they get into power has caused disaffection for political parties

in Ghana. Political parties are perceived by many as corrupt, selfish, and dishonest people who ride on the back of people for public office only to enrich themselves and exclude the larger population. Most people do not trust political parties, and in the system where political parties have captured the State, most people feel excluded and do not want to get involved in politics.

Another major challenge inhibiting citizens' engagement is the narrow and limited definition applied to democracy and good governance. Democracy and good governance have been reduced to relatively free and fair elections. Ghana's description as a beacon of democracy in Africa, although it may also be linked to freedom and civil liberties, has to do more with the relatively successful successive free and fair elections. This is to emphasize that democracy in Ghana is reduced merely to elections. For instance, Armah-Attoh and Robertson (2014), in their assessment of formal and informal practices and engagement, referred to Huber et al. (1997) definition of formal democracy as the basis for their analysis. Here democracy is defined within the context of free and fair elections and the guarantee of civil rights and liberties such as association and expression. The study observes that citizens were more enlightened and preferred democracy defined within the context of free and fair elections. Their interest in collective actions was rather low.

citizens were more enlightened and preferred democracy defined within the context of free and fair elections. Their interest in collective actions was rather low.

While voter turnout in national elections since 1992 Ghana's return to Multiparty democracy in the past 30 years has hovered around an average of 72%, local level elections that are closer to citizens and their daily experiences record lower interest, with turnout averaging 38% (Garr, 2021). The 2020 Afrobarometer survey also found that while large numbers of around 75% of voters will turn out to vote in national elections, post-election, over 85% of respondent never engaged their Member of Parliament on any development issue in their community, and 71% have not contacted their Assembly Member (CDD, 2020). About 84% have neither participated in a demonstration to make demands on the government. While 35% of respondents say they never discuss political matters, 42% discuss them occasionally, and 23% discuss them frequently. On participation in a community meeting, there is a disparity in the response of people living in urban areas and those in rural areas. While 30% of urban people

say they will never take part in community meetings, only 12% of respondents in rural communities shared that view. On the contrary, while 24% of rural respondents participate in the community meeting often, less than half of that, 11% of respondents in urban said they often participate in community meetings (Ibid).

Despite the limited engagement, a large portion (42.9%) of the Ghanaians, according to the CDD (2020) Afrobarometer survey, are of the view that the country is a democracy with minor problems. A good number (24.8%) see Ghana as a democracy with major problems, and 2.9% think Ghana is not a democracy at all. Similarly, the majority (65.6%) of Ghanaians are satisfied with how democracy works in the country. About half that number (31.8%) are not satisfied. These results, particularly the limited engagement among citizens and politicians after elections, largely confirm that politics and democracy have largely been reduced to holding elections.

Despite the limited engagement, 42.9% of Ghanaians, according to a Afrobarometer survey, are of the view that the country is a democracy with minor problems.

Another inhibiting factor to citizens' engagement is a weak civic culture. The loss of trust in the State and public institutions, the impunity with which State officials break the law, breakdown of the rule of law, corruption, poor public services delivery, the grave decline in patriotism and service to the nation, and related factors above have over the years led to a weak civic culture. It has reached the point where people have retreated to their private spaces where only their immediate family matters (Garr, 2018). The situation is summed up in a popular Ghanaian saying, "everybody for himself, God for us all."

Similarly, Audrey Donkor (2020) commended Ghana's efforts at peaceful elections but bemoaned the poor level of citizens engagement with their political representatives, which according to her, has led to poor governance, with state institutions dominated by incompetent self-seeking leaders and the failure of government to deliver on public goods and services. Similarly, Garr (2018) criticized this narrow view of democracy and asked that democracy should be seen as citizens working together to solve their common problems. The literature on citizenship and democracy in Ghana excludes the co-production and creative initiatives of the citizens in shaping the development of their communities.

A more recent but significant development, which could potentially give hope to citizens' engagement, is known as the #FixTheCountry campaign (DW, 2021). This is a virtual movement of citizens protesting the harsh living conditions in the country and demanding the government to take responsibility and improve living conditions in the country. Since the 1st of May 2021, when the government introduced additional taxes across the board, many citizens have taken to social media to protest the difficult living conditions and asked the government to address the numerous problems plaguing the country. This culminated in the #FixTheCountry campaign. The protesters cite high levels of unemployment, erratic power outages, irregular water supply, high cost of living, bad roads, bribery, and corruption, among others. Recent increases in fuel prices and the introduction of new taxes have worsened the already difficult living conditions for many in the country. The protestors are calling on the government to 'fix' these problems.

The campaign resonates with most Ghanaians, many of whom are beginning to explore this space to engage in mainstream politics. The group, which is also dominated by the youth, is growing by the day. Attempts by the government and its appointees to counter the #FixTheCountry campaign or prevent them from protesting are making the government unpopular. The #FixTheCountry campaign offers a glimmer of hope for active citizen engagement in mainstream politics.

Citizens' engagement in mainstream politics is on the decline. However, the same citizens are engaged in the public arenas such as in their communities, churches, credit unions, cooperatives, schools' associations, among many other civic groups. These and many other forms of citizen engagement are not being looked at due to the narrow definition of citizenship and democracy.

In view of these grave gaps, the African Citizenship Index sets out to highlight the broader implication of democracy and citizenship and to understand how citizens are working together to shape their communities. The next paper of the paper looks at the sample population for the study, and the subsequent papers present and discusses the study's findings.

3. Description of Sample

A total of 413 respondents were sampled. This chapter describes the sample population for the study. The focus is on Respondents Age, Gender and Marital Status, Literacy Levels and Education, Income Levels, and Participation in Electoral Processes.

3.1. Respondents' Age

Majority of the respondents, 50.85%, were in their active age group, 36 to 45 years. The second-largest group of respondents, 19.13%, were between the ages, 46 to 55 years. Respondents between the ages of 26 to 35 years constituted the third largest group with 15.98%. Elderly respondents above 65 years made up the fourth-largest group of respondents, with 6.78%. People between the ages 56 to 65 came slightly behind those above 65 years with 6.54%. The smallest group of respondents constituted 0.73%, and they happen to be young people between the ages of 18 to 25 years. The age grouping of respondents is summarised in the table 1 below.

Table 1: Age of Respondents

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
18 – 25	0.73%	3
26 – 35	15.98%	66
36 – 45	50.85%	210
46 – 55	19.19%	79
56 - 65	6.54%	27
65·	6.78%	28
TOTAL		**413**

The age distribution of the respondents is fairly representative of Ghana's population. People between the ages of 15 to

64 years, generally described as the active age groups, constitute the largest group, 56.7%, those below 15 years are 38%, and those 65 years and older are 5% (GSS, 2019).

3.2. Gender and Marital Status

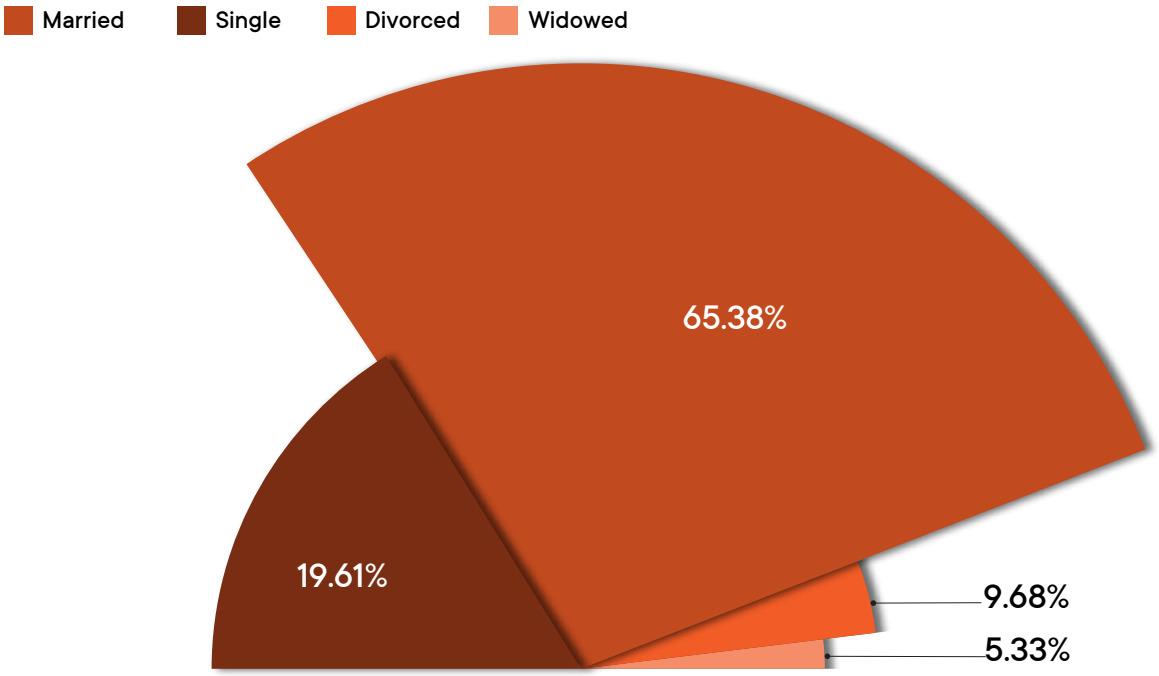
Gender

The study recorded more male respondents than female. While the male respondents were 63.7%, the female respondents were 36.3%. Generally, the population of women in Ghana is higher than that of men. According to the Ghana Statistical Service (2019), females constitute 51.5% of the country's population while males were 48.5%. The reasons for the lower number of females in the survey include their availability to participate in the study. Most women were likely to say they were busy or where they agreed to respond to the survey they would stop midway with the reason that the survey had too many questions and they had to attend to some other chores.

Marital Status

A large majority of the respondents, 65.38%, were married. The second-largest group of respondents, which constituted 19.61% or almost one in five respondents, were single. People who were divorced made up the third-largest group with 9.69%, about one in ten respondents. People who are widowed or have lost their spouses constituted the smallest group of respondents, with 5.33%, about one in twenty respondents. The marital status of the respondents is illustrated in the figure 1 below.

Figure 1: Marital Status



There is a relationship between the age group of respondents and their marital status. Research suggests that people between the ages of 30 and 49 are likely to be married than other age groups (GSS, 2019). The majority of the respondents, 50.85%, were in the age group 36 to 45 years, and therefore it is not surprising that 65% of the respondents were married. According to the Ghana Statistical Service (GSS, 2019) divorce rates in Ghana are high in the age group 50 to 54 years, 14.6%. The second-largest group of respondents for this survey is between 46 to 55 years (19.13%) which lies in this high divorce rate group. This could explain the high divorce rate of 9.7%. This divorce rate for the study is higher than that of the Ghana Living Standard Survey (GLSS) rate of 3.1 because the age groups in the sample sizes differ. While respondents in this study were 18 years and above, the Ghana Living Standard Survey (GLSS) respondents were 12 years and above, meaning that more people in the GLSS sample were not married and could not be divorced. Again in the case of the rate of widowed, 6.8% of the respondents were 65 years and above, and 5.3% of the respondents were widowed. Similarly, in the GLSS, the age group 65 and older had more widowed people, accounting for 52% of the national average (GSS, 2019).

There is also a relationship between gender and marital

status. More women, 36.6%, were likely to get married than men, 36.3% (GSS, 2019). Divorce rates are higher in women than men (GSS, 2019; Agbodza, 2016). According to the 2019 GLSS, 1.8% of men were divorced, while a large 4.3% of women were divorced (GSS, 2019). More women are widowed than men. While only 1.3% of men are widowed, the proportion of widowed women is about eight times that of men at 10.3% (GSS, 2019). This is because widowed men are more likely to re-marry and move into the married category than women.

3.2. Literacy Levels and Education

Education is the means of socializing members of communities and societies to become functional members. It is a critical determinant of the level of a country's human capital development. The Constitution of Ghana (1992) mandates that all citizens are provided with education. Ghana implements Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education (fCUBE) and Free Senior Secondary Education. This aligns with the global Sustainable Development Goal 4, which seeks to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all. The study looks briefly at the level of literacy in the country and the highest level of education of respondents.

Ability to read and write

The literacy rate in Ghana refers to 15 years and above who can read and write. As of 2018, the literacy rate in Ghana was 79% (World Bank, 2020). As the study population is urban and also the capital city of Ghana, an overwhelming majority of the respondents, 93.22%, can read and write. Only very few respondents, making 6.78%, said they couldn't read and write.

Highest Level of Education

The level of education of respondents is summarized in table 2 below. For more than half, 57.14%, of respondents, secondary school is the highest level of education. This is followed by people who have attained tertiary level education, who make up a third or 33.66% of respondents. Respondents with primary school education were few with 6.54%, and people with no

education were fewer making up only 2.66% of the respondents.

Table 2: Level of Education

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Primary school	6.54%	27
Secondary school	57.14%	236
Tertiary etticahon	33.66%	139
I have not had any formal education	2.66%	11
TOTAL		**413**

3.3. Income Levels

The employment to population ratio for Ghana, which is the measure of the capacity of the economy to create employment jobs for the population is 65% (GSS, 2019). This is lower in urban areas with 61%, where there are more unemployed people than rural areas with 65%.

Household Income levels

The monthly household income of respondents is summarized in table 3 below. Most of the respondents, 49.64%, have a monthly household income of between USD 501 and USD 1000. The second-largest group of respondents, 36.56%, have a monthly household income of USD 1001 and USD 3000. The third-largest group of respondents, constituting 5.81% earn a monthly household income of USD 3001 and USD 5000. The fourth-largest group of respondents who make up 4.36% has a monthly income of USD 251 and USD 500. The fifth-largest group of respondents is 2.66%, and they earn 250 and below. The smaller group of respondents who made up about 1 (0.97)% earn above USD 5000.

Table 3: Household Income Levels

Income Levels	Responses	
	%	No.
Under USD$250.00	2.66	11
Between USD$251 and USD500	4.36	18
Between USD$501 and USD$1,000	49.64	205
Between USD$1,001 and USD$3,000	36.56	151
Between USD$3,001 and USD$5,000	5.81	24
Above USD$5,001	0.97	4
Total		**413**

Households' Main Source of Income

The main source of monthly income for respondents' households is presented in table 4 below. For most respondents, 42.37%, their main source of income is through formal employment, where they receive payslips and pay taxes. The second-largest group of respondents, 25.67%, earn their household income from formal businesses. The third-largest group of respondents, 9.93%, earn income from informal businesses that belong to other people. The fourth-largest group, 8.23%, earns their income from their own informal businesses. The fifth-largest group of respondents, 5.81%, make their income from property investments. The sixth-largest group of respondents, 4.36% receive remittances. The seventh-largest group of respondents, 2.91%, receive pension. The smallest group of respondents,0.73%, earn their income from farming.

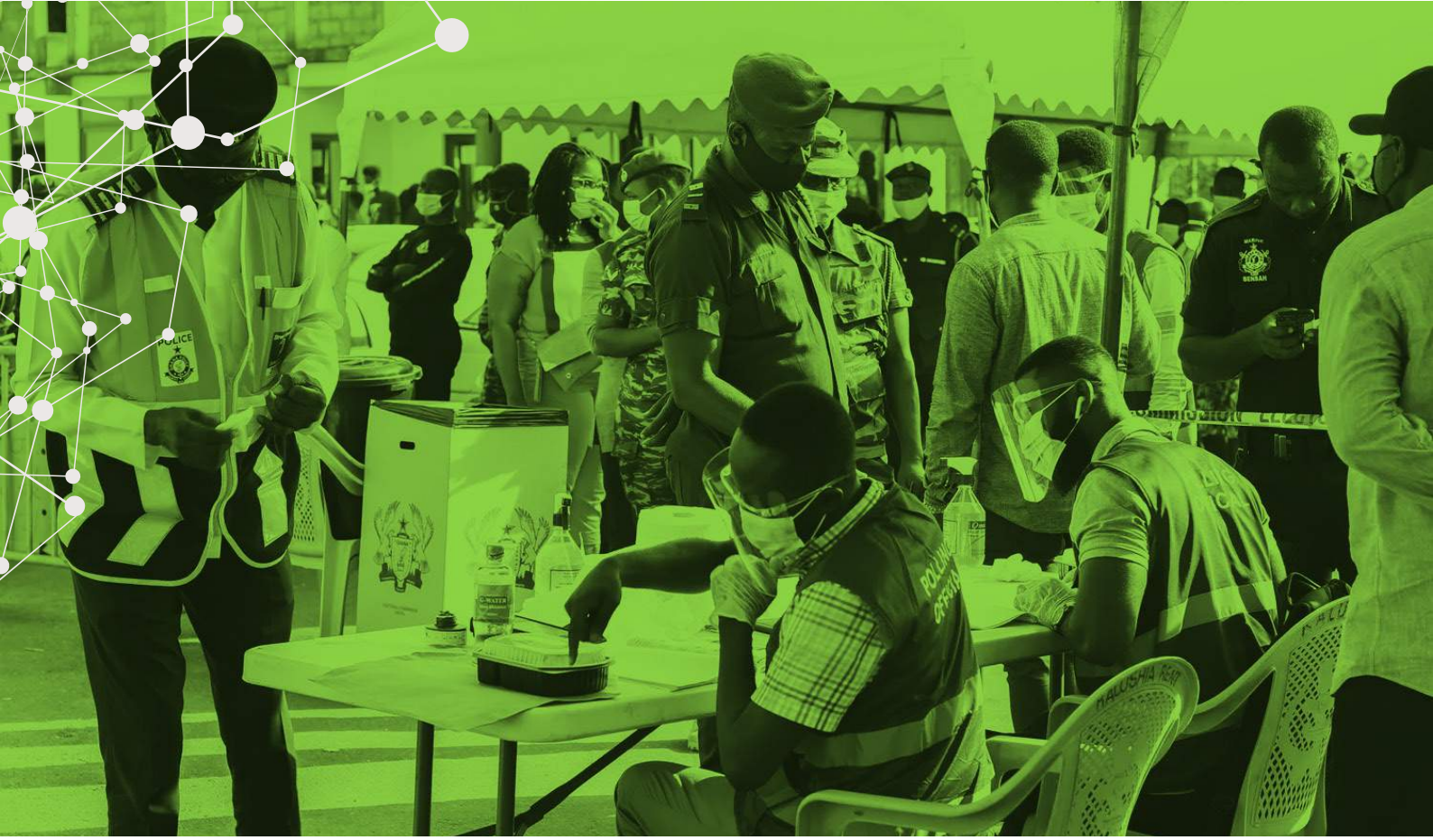
Table 4: Main Source of Income

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
	%	No.
Formal employment (provides payslip and pays formal taxes)	42.37%	175
Formal business (registered and pays formal taxes)	25.67%	106
I rimmed employment (no payslip. unregistered. the business belongs to someone else)	9.93%	41
Informal business (unregistered and belongs to you)	8.23%	34
Pension	2.91%	12
Remittances (Monetary gifts)	4.36%	18
Property Investments (sales and rentals of immovable and moveable assets)	5.81%	24
Farming	0.73%	3
TOTAL		**413**

3.4. Participation in Electoral Processes

Participation in electoral processes is one of the many means through which citizens influence decision-making and shape their communities. The level of participation in electoral processes here is defined by whether citizens eighteen years and above are registered voters and whether they voted in the last elections.

Almost all the respondents, i.e. 99.5%, were registered voters. Table 5 below presents the main types of elections in Ghana and the levels of participation among respondents. There are three main national elections in Ghana: the local government elections, parliamentary elections, and presidential elections. Comparable to the national voter turnout rate of 33% (Electoral Commission, 2019), 33.41% of respondents voted in local government elections. Generally, most Ghanaians do not take an interest in local government elections, and over the years, turnout has been between 28 to 33%. Ghanaians are more interested in parliamentary and presidential elections, where the turnout has been 60



and 80% (Electoral Commission, 2020). Almost all respondents voted in the parliamentary and presidential elections, 97.34% for the parliamentary and 96.31% for the presidential elections.

Table 5: Level of participation in elections

Status/Response	Yes (Registered & Voted)	No (Registered but Decided not to Vote)	No (Did not register to vote)	No (Could not find polling Station)	No (Name did not appear on registration poll	No (was prevented from voting)	No (Was too Young -under 18)	N/A
Local Gov't/ County Elections	n=123 33.41%	n= 268 64.89	n=1 0.24%	n=0 0.00%	n=0 0.00%	n=0 0.00%	n=0 0.00%	n=6 1.45%
Provisional Elections	n=13 3.15%	n=3 0.73%	n=0 0.00%	n=0 0.00%	n=0 0.00%	n=1 0.24%	n=0 0.00%	n=396 95.88%
Parliamentary Elections	n=402 97.34%	n=5 1.21%	n=0 0.00%	n=0 0.00%	n=0 0.00%	n=0 0.00%	n=0 0.00%	n=6 1.45%
Presidential Elections	n=406 98.31%	n=34 8.46%	n=251 62.44%	n=4 1.00%	n=1 0.25%	n=2 0.50%	n=13 3.32%	n=10 2.49%

4. Mapping of Citizen's initiatives in Ghana

4. 1. Citizens and the Economy

This section looks at how citizens are engaged in the economy. This includes their Levels of belonging to various economic focused associations; how the associations were established, gender dynamics within the associations; how they organize themselves by way of leadership structures and processes to select leaders, ways and frequency of interaction, benefits of belonging, types of problems that need fixing within associations, inclusion, discrimination, and assets within associations.

Levels of belonging to Economic Focused Associations/ Groups

There were a total of 13 focused economic groups, namely; Savings and Lending Group, Labour pooling group, Production Cooperative, Buying Clubs (e.g., collective group to buy groceries), Marketing Cooperative (involved in jointly selling commodities), Common Property Group (natural resources), Asset Pooling Group, Market Group/Platform (a place or network where members sell goods/ services to each other), Business Promotion Council, Business Advocacy/Lobby Group, Business Mentorship/Training Group, Housing Cooperative, and Multi-level marketing schemes (e.g., Avon, Tablecharm, Tupperware). Table 6, below summarises citizens responses to levels of belonging to economic focused groups.

Table 6: Citizens level of belonging to economic focused groups

Association	Yes		No		N/A	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Savings and Lending Group	12	3	92	22	30	75
Labour pooling group	0	0	28	7	38	93
Production Cooperative	1	0	31	8	38	92
Buying Clubs (e.g., collective group to buy groceries)	0	0	37	9	376	91
Marketing Cooperative (involved in jointly selling commodities)	0	0	35	8	378	92
Common Property Group (natural resources)	0	0	31	8	382	92
Asset Pooling Group	0	0	33	8	380	92
Market Group/ Platform (a place or network where members sell goods/ services to each other)	1	0	52	13	360	87
Business Promotion Council	0	0	94	23	319	77
Business Advocacy/Lobby Group	3	1	103	25	307	74
Business Mentorship/Training Group	3	1	362	88	48	12
Housing Cooperative	0	0	291	70	122	30
Multi-level marketing schemes (e.g. Avon, Tablecharm, Tupperware)	2	0	385	93	26	6

Low levels of belonging to economic groups

There is a very low level of belonging to economic focused groups in Ghana. In total, only 5% of all respondents indicated that they belonged to economic focused groups. The economic group that most respondents belonged to is the Savings and Lending group, with 3%. Business Advocacy/Lobby Group, and Business Mentorship/Training Group had 1% each. While Business Promotion Council is in the study population (Accra). It is also important to note that some of the economic group options are not in the target population of Ghana. Groups such as Labour pooling group, Production Cooperative and Marketing Cooperative are more common in rural Ghana. However, groups like Buying

Clubs, Common Property Group, Housing Cooperative, Asset Pooling Group, Market Group/Platform, and Multi-level marketing schemes are rare in the country. The rest of the analysis in this section will focus on Savings and Lending groups as the rest are insignificant in terms of the number of respondents.

Savings and Loans groups and microfinance play a very important role in expanding access to financial inclusion and improving the welfare of members. Through non-bank financial institutions, the standard of living and the welfare of members have improved. For example, the University of Ghana Co-operative Credit Union (UGCCU) has served as a "life blood" and trusted partner to its members over the decades (Interview with UGCCU). It has become a reliable source of loans for personal development. Most members have pursued higher education, taken care of their families, built houses, and procured various assets through the support of the Credit Union.

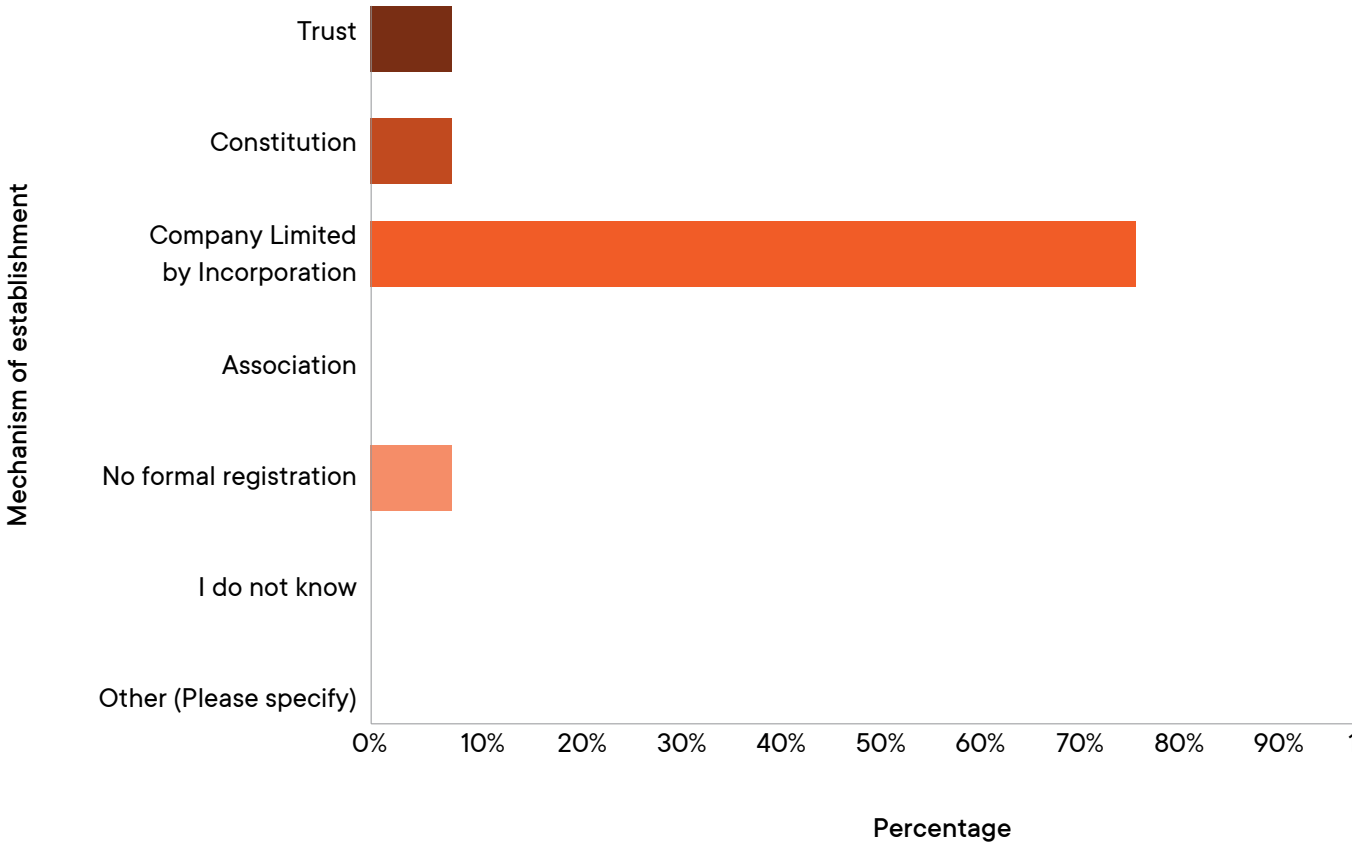
The low level of interest in savings and loans can be attributed to loss of public confidence in the sector. This can be explained by many cases of collapsed savings and loans and microfinance enterprises within the past decade. The biggest case is a recent financial sector crisis, which has resulted in the closure of eight (8) universal banks and over four hundred and twenty (420) microfinance institutions including savings and loans (Agyeman, 2020; Kamason, 2020). After the closure of these institutions, their accounts were blocked and their assets seized. This made it difficult for clients of these institutions to access their funds and investments. Partial or full payments to affected clients took more than two years (Ministry of Finance, 2020). The frustrations and tragedies of the affected public was always in the news, for the first year after the closure. According to the government and the Bank of Ghana the closure of the affected institutions was due to breaches in regulations which could collapse the financial sector. Explaining the closure of the financial institutions, the Governor of the Bank noted that "poor banking practices, coupled with weak supervision and regulation by the Bank of Ghana has significantly undermined the stability of the banking and other non-bank financial institutions" (Nyalatorgbui, 2018; see also Banahene, 2018,).

Generally, thanks to mobile money services the level of financial inclusion or access to formal financial service is on the increase. Between 2010 and 2017, access to formal financial services has increased from 41 to 58% (GOG, 2018). Before the advent of mobile money services in recent times, savings and loans or microfinance enterprises were the main sources of financial inclusion.

How economic associations were established

Savings and Loan companies form part of the Non-bank financial institutions in the country. Most of the Savings and Loans companies were established as a company limited by guarantee, as substantiated by 75% of respondents who belonged to this sector. However, a few were established through trust, constitution, and also no formal registration. Figure 2 below illustrates respondents' responses on how the Savings and Loans groups were formed.

Figure 2: Mechanisms for the establishment of Savings and Loans Groups



Gender dynamics in economic groups

Generally, more males, 67%, are affiliated to economic groups than females, 33%. At the level of officeholders, a higher%age, 61%, of the leadership or officeholders of Savings and Loans groups are male, and 39% are female. The proportion of women in Savings and Loans companies are higher than Members of Parliament, 14%, and the proportion of women heading public institutions, which stands at 7%.

How economic groups are organized - leadership structures and processes

Savings and Loans groups have board of directors who provide policy direction for the company. There is also a management team responsible for the day-to-day operations. Then among the respondents who belonged to Savings and Loan groups, half noted that leaders of their organization were elected during annual general meetings, while another half of the respondents indicated that the leadership or management of the company was appointed.

Ways and frequency of interaction in economic groups

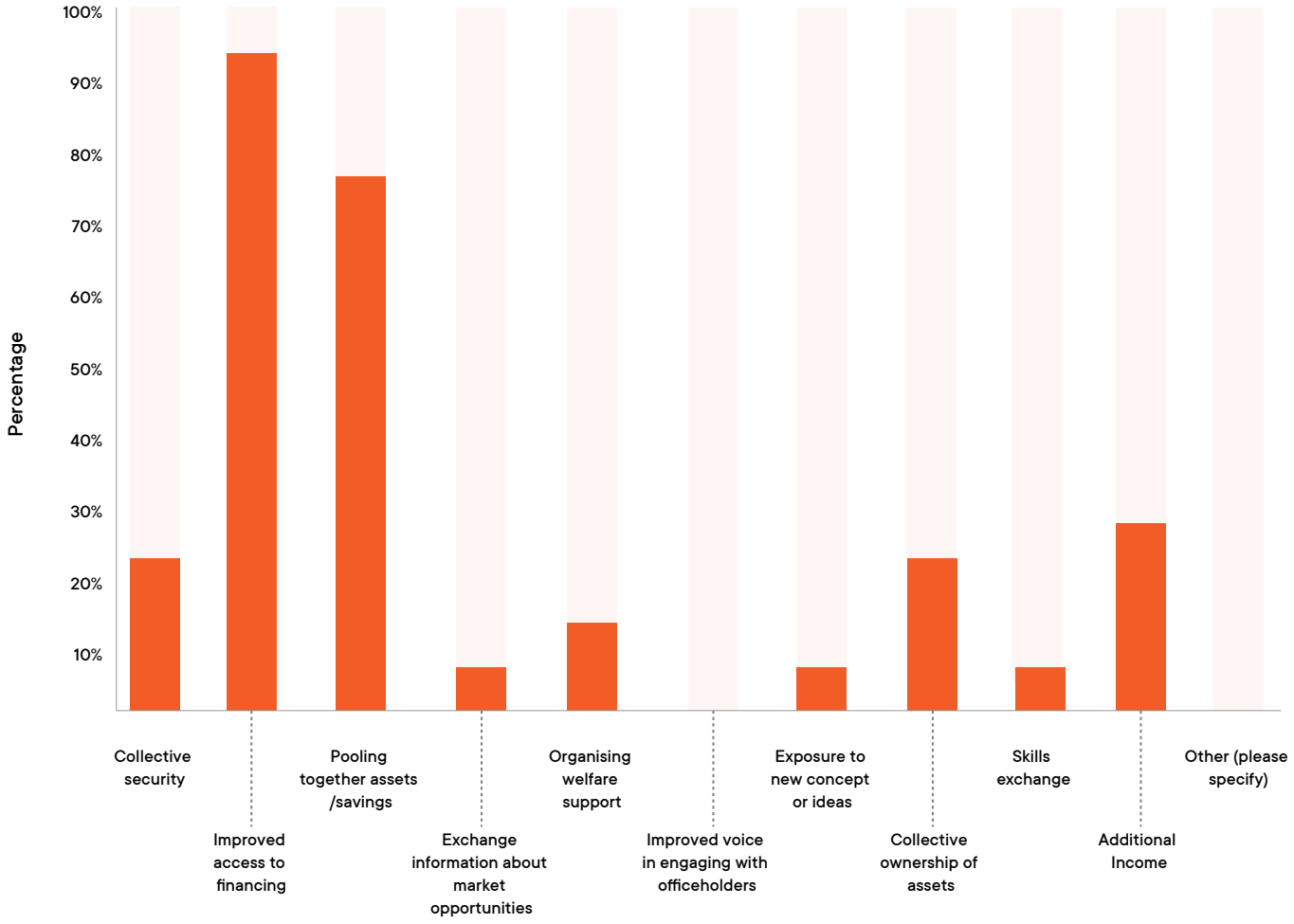
Among the respondents who belonged to Savings and Loan groups, most of them, 42% meet, interact or have access to information monthly. Then 33% indicated that they have daily updates and access to information from the group, and 25% have access to information weekly. With the fast pace of technology penetration and use, most groups have platforms through which members are engaged regularly. This is an improvement over the situation in the past where members will have to wait until the end of the year to attend meetings or receive information.

Benefits of belonging to economic groups

Savings and Loans groups play very important role in expanding access to financial inclusion. As evident in this study, almost all respondents (92%) who belong to this group joined to benefit from improved access to financing. Another vast majority, 75% of respondents, mentioned that Saving and Loans groups helped them pool together assets and savings. A quarter of the respondents, or one out of four, mentioned collective security, collective ownership of assets, and additional income as some of the additional benefits for joining such a group. Some respondents,

17%, also receive welfare support from their groups, and this continues to motivate their interest in the group. Few people mentioned the exchange of information on market opportunities, exposure to new ideas and skills exchange as their reasons for joining a Savings and Loans group. A summary of the benefits from Savings and Loans groups is presented in figure 3, below.

Figure 3: Benefits of belonging to Savings and Lending Groups



Benefits of belonging to a Savings and Lending Groups

Types of problems that need fixing within economic associations or groups

Although most of the respondents indicated that they did not have problems with Savings and Loans groups that needs to be fixed, poor communication with clients, reduction in interest rate and flexibility in loan processes were a few of the problems that respondents think should be addressed.

Inclusion and discrimination in economic associations

There was no record of discrimination among people who belonged to Savings and Loans companies.

Assets within economic associations

A quarter of respondents said that Savings and Loan groups have assets in buildings and land.

4.2. Citizens and Politics

This section seeks to understand the kinds of politics that citizens are engaged in. It examines the levels of belonging to politically focused associations, how the political associations were established, gender dynamics within associations, how they organize themselves in terms of leadership structures and processes to select leaders, ways and frequency of interaction, benefits of belonging, types of problems that need fixing within associations, inclusion and discrimination, and assets within associations.

Levels of belonging to political associations

The study found that most Ghanaians do not belong to political groups. Only 15.5% of respondents belonged to one political group or the other. The respondents had to select among nine political groups, which they belonged to, namely, campaign group, political party, social movement, joint public petition, local peace committee, resident's association, online-based civic coalition, women's group, and youth group. Table 7, below summarizes the scores of the levels of belonging to various political

Table 7: Levels of belonging to various political groups

Political						
	Yes		No		N/A	
Association	**#**	**%**	**#**	**%**	**#**	**%**
Campaign Group	3	0.73	394	95.40	16	3.87
Political Party	27	6.54	365	88.38	21	5.08
Social Movement	1	0.24	395	95.64	17	4.12
Joint Public Petition	1	0.24	286	69.25	126	30.51
Local Peace Committee	1	0.24	250	60.53	162	39.23
Residents Association	9	2.18%	336	81.36	68	16.46
Online Based Civic Coalition	4	0.97	396	95.88	13	3.15
Women's Group	11	2.66	367	88.86	35	8.47
Youth Group	24	5.81	369	89.35	20	4.84

Low levels of belonging to political groups

Although Ghana has been credited as a beacon of democracy, the study reveals that most citizens do not belong to political groups. Only 15.5% of respondents said they belong to political groups and the largest political group that respondents belonged to is the Political Parties. As presented in table 7 above, out of the 15.5% of respondents that belong to political groups, 6.54%

belonged to political parties. The second-largest political group the respondents belonged to was youth groups, with 5.81%. Women groups came in third with 2.66% of respondents. Residents Association was the fourth with 2.18% of respondents. Online Civic Based Coalition was fifth with 0.97% of respondents. Campaign group was sixth with 0.73% of respondents. Social movement, Joint Public Petition, and Local Peace Committee all had the lowest proportion of respondents with 0.24% each.

It is important to note that belonging to a political group here refers to active membership or being a registered member. In the case of the political parties in Ghana, although people may have their party preferences, they do not engage in party politics. They are also not registered members for the reasons explained earlier. As evident in the study's finding, almost all the respondents voted in the last national elections, 98.3% voted in the Presidential elections, and 97.3% voted in the Parliamentary elections. Yet, only 6.5% belong to political parties.

Similarly, the CDD (2020) Afrobarometer survey found that while half (51.1%) of respondents said they prefer one political party or the other, an overwhelming majority, 80%, said they have never contacted a political party, 81.5% said they have not worked for a political party or candidate and 69.2% have not attended any rally. Again, in the same study, close to half (41.9%) of the respondents said they are not attracted to any of the political parties, and a little more than half (52.1%) of respondents did not respond as to which political party they were close to. Again, another Afrobarometer study in 2019 showed that Ghanaians will contact religious and traditional leaders more than political parties or public office holders (CDD, 2020).

These confirm the position made earlier that for most people, democracy means elections and not what they do among themselves and, as a result, the lack of engagement by citizens, which is also seen in their lack of interest in belonging to political parties and other political groups.

How political associations were established

There are different methods and instruments through which associations or groups are registered. These include Trust, Constitution, Company Limited by Guarantee, Association, and No formal registration. Political party, which is the largest political group among respondents is formed through association. The large majority of respondents who belong to political parties do not know the instrument through which their parties were established. Only 18.5% of the respondents knew how their parties were formed.

Gender dynamics in political associations

Although interest in political associations is low, the level of affiliation among males and females was close. The males were 52% and the females 48%. At the decision-making level, most of the people in the political parties were male. According to the respondents, 89% of political party chairpersons were male, with women being 11%; among the vice-chairpersons, 52% were male, and 44% were female. (4% of respondents did not respond to this question.)

How political associations are organized - leadership structures and processes

Leadership structures and processes through which leaders are selected in associations or groups are indicators of the level of democracy and openness in groups. They can also be the drivers or barriers to the goals of the group. A study on political parties in Ghana found that while some parties had internal democratic structures where leaders are elected openly, others were not democratic and leaders of the parties are handpicked by the financiers of the party (Garr, 2021). Often the parties that have internal democratic structures are more likely to do well and also attract more members (ibid). Similarly, in the case of this study, most of the political parties, 77%, elect their leaders in a National Congress. Few respondents, 23%, indicated that the leaders of their parties are appointed.

Ways and frequency of interaction within political associations

About half, 50%, of respondents who belong to political parties, engage weekly. Then a large proportion, 35%, engage

daily. Few respondents, 11%, noted that they meet monthly, and fewer respondents, 4%, said they engaged annually

Most of the respondents who belong to political parties (85%) noted that political parties engaged through a combination of both face-to-face and digital online platforms. Only 15% of respondents who belong to political parties said they interact through Face-to-Face meetings.

Benefits of belonging to political associations

The benefits of joining political parties is summarised in table 8 below. For the respondents who belonged to political parties, the benefits or reasons they joined include receiving welfare support, sense of belonging, change of government, better social order, reforms within community, defence of rights, collective security, exposure to new ideas, and jobs.

Table 8: Benefits of belonging to political parties

Benefit	Percentage
Exposure to new concept or ideas	22.22%
Collective Security	14.81%
Organizing welfare support	51.85%
improved voce on engaging with officeholders	33.33%
Sense of belonging	37.04%
Defense of rights	22.22%
Changes/Reforms within community	25.93%
Change of government	37.04%
Better social order	33.33%
Other (please specify)	7.41%
Total Respondents: 27	

More than half of these respondents, 51.85%, said they benefited in the form of receiving welfare support. A sizeable proportion, 37.04%, said they felt a sense of belonging. Another 37.04% said they wanted a change of government. Similarly, 33.33% said they wanted better social order. For 22.22% of the respondents, it was to exercise their rights, and for another 22.22%, it was to

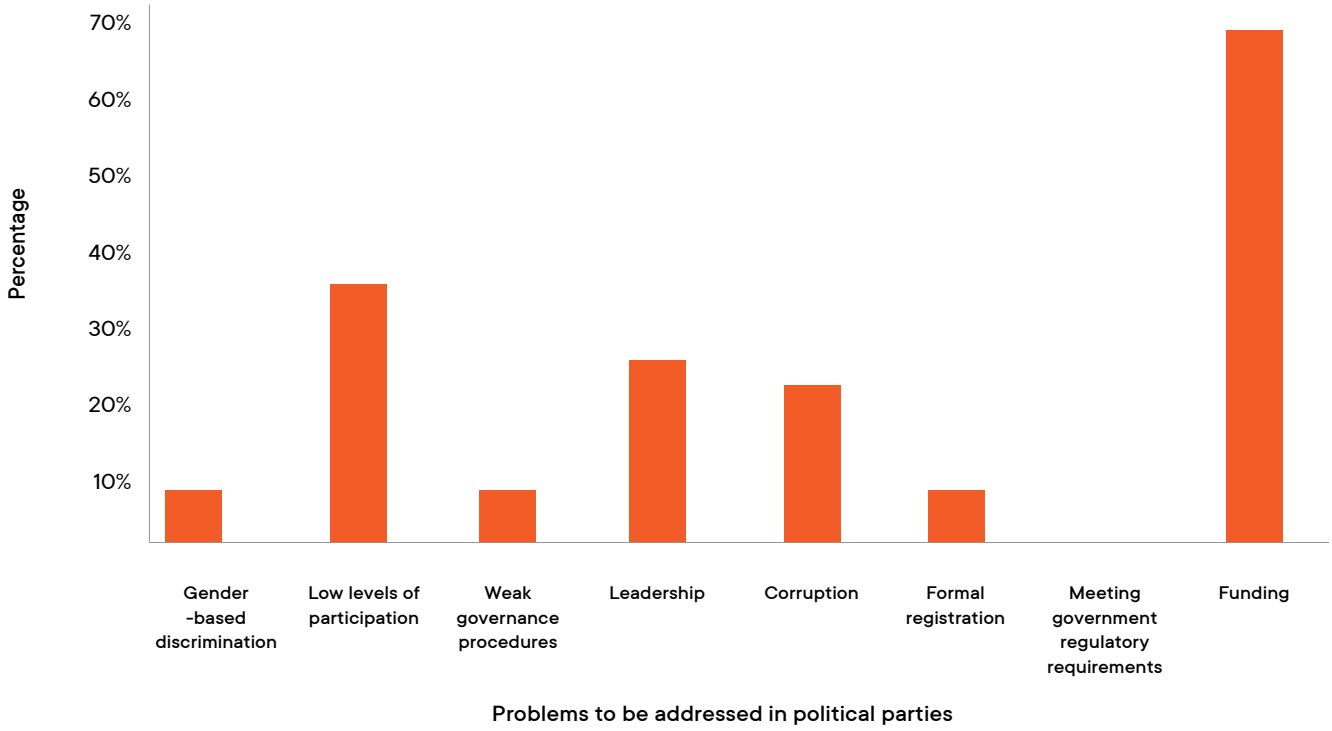
engage and be exposed to new ideas. Few respondents said they joined the party for collective security or to secure jobs.

Types of problems that need fixing within associations

The problems that need to be addressed in political parties are summarized in figure 4 below. Funding came up as the biggest problem for political parties, with 70% of respondents citing this as a problem that needs fixing. Political parties in Ghana are not funded publicly or by the state. The parties are expected to raise funds themselves. This continues to be a major obstacle to the functioning of political parties in Ghana, particularly the smaller political parties. The absence of a reliable source of funding for political parties has affected their ability to sponsor candidates for elections, open offices, campaign, or mobilize voters across the country.

Low levels of participation came up as the second major problem, with 37% of respondents alluding to it. As may be evident from the overwhelming numbers that vote, it is believed that most people belong to political parties, but they do not demonstrate it publicly for fear of being targeted, and as such, their participation and contributions to political parties are low. The other problems identified in political parties were bad leadership by 26% of respondents and corruption by 22% of respondents. Gender-based discrimination, weak governance procedures and issues of formal registration were cited as minor problems or by fewer respondents. 7%.

Figure 4: Problems to be addressed in political parties



Inclusion and discrimination within political associations

There are fewer issues of discrimination among political parties. Almost all respondents who belong to political parties, 93% stated that they had never been discriminated against in their party. Only 7% of respondents mentioned that they had been discriminated against, which was on ethnic, tribal, and language lines.

Assets within political associations

Among the respondents who belonged to political parties, 44% said their parties had assets. These assets were mainly in the form of office buildings, land, and vehicles.

4.3. Citizens and Social Support

This section examines the social support networks that citizens have built and how they are engaged within these networks. This is done through understanding the levels of belonging to the socially focused associations, how the associations were established, gender dynamics within associations, how they organise themselves by way of leadership structures and processes to select leaders, ways and frequency of interaction, benefits of

belonging, types of problems that need fixing within associations, inclusion and discrimination, and assets within associations.

Membership and level of belonging to social groups

The study reveals that a great majority of the respondents, 86%, belonged to social groups. Respondents were supposed to select from eleven (11) social groups which groups they belonged to. These social groups were Religious Group (temples, churches, mosques, shrine etc.), School Association Parent/Teacher Group, Alumni Association, Burial Societies, Sporting Association, Entertainment Group (dance, choir etc), Book/Reading Club, Community Development Association, Community Foundation, Communal Granary, and Community Feeding Groups. The membership of the various social groups is summarized in Table 9 below.

Table 9: Membership of Social Groups

Social Support						
	Yes		No		N/A	
Association	**#**	**%**	**#**	**%**	**#**	**%**
Fellowship Group /Religious Group (temples, churches, mosques, shrine etc)	353	85.47	57	13.80	3	0.73
Burial Societies	2	0.48	299	72.40	112	27.12
Sporting Association	3	0.73	398	96.37	12	2.91
Entertainment Group (dance, choir etc)	3	0.73	404	97.82	6	1.45
School Association Parent/Teacher Group	29	7.02	369	89.35	15	3.63
Alumni Association	26	6.30	383	92.74	4	0.97
Book/Reading Club	0	0.00	405	98.06	8	1.94
Community Development Association	1	0.24	362	87.65	50	12.11
Service Organisation or Club (e.g. Lions Club; Rotary International)	0	0.00	404	97.82	9	2.18
Neighbourhood Watch Committee	0	0.00	334	80.87	79	19.13
Communal Granary	0	0.00	284	68.77	129	31.23
Community Feeding Group	0	0.00	286	69.25	127	30.75
Community Foundation	1	0.24	320	77.48	92	22.28

An overwhelming majority of the respondents, 85.47%, belonged to religious or fellowship groups such as temples, churches, mosques, shrines. Apart from the religious groups, few people belonged to other groups. Some 7.02% of respondents belonged to School Association Parent/Teacher Group, and 6.30% belonged to Alumni Association. Although there are groups such as Burial Societies, Sporting Association, Entertainment Group (dance, choir, etc), Book/Reading Club, Community Development Association, and Community Foundation, they had a very low following of less than 1%. Social groups such as Communal Granary and Community Feeding Groups do not exist in Ghana.

High levels of belonging to religious groups

The finding that most Ghanaians (85.47%) belong to religious groups has been consistent. It aligns with the generally held view that Ghanaians are very religious. According to Ghana's 2019 Living Standard Survey, 93.9% belong to religious groups (GSS, 2019). Again, earlier studies by Afrobarometer (CDD 2020) in 2017 and 2019 has it that most Ghanaians trust religious leaders and engage them more regularly, than political leaders and public office holders. According to the 2019 study while a large 64% of Ghanaians said they trust religious leaders, less than 50%, specifically 41% said they trust their elected parliamentarians or local councillors, and only 38% said they trusted their local government chief executives (ibid). Also, 40% of Ghanaians said they contacted a religious leader in a year while only 20% contacted their political party and even fewer, 15%, contacted their parliamentarians.

How social associations were established

Most people do not know how or the method through which their social groups were formed. At least 50% of people who belong to religious groups indicated that they do not know how these group were formed. It is not surprising that most people do not know how social groups were established. This is because it is clear how some of these groups should be registered. For example, while the constitution does not state that religious groups should be registered, the Registrar General's Department (RGD) classifies religious groups under company limited by guarantee (RGD, 2019). Similarly, some religious groups have been registered as company limited by guarantee as indicated by 28.6% of respondents.

Some 4% said they do not need formal registration. Association and trust have also been mentioned by some respondents.

Gender dynamics in social associations

It is interesting to note that with social groups gender dynamics are minimal with close margins. For example, in the leadership of religious groups, a little above half of office holders, 53%, were male while a little below half, 47%, were female. Similarly, in School Associations Parent/Teacher groups, 54^ were male and 46% female. However, with Alumni groups, the difference is wider. Male office holders were 61%, and female office holders were 39%.

How social associations are organized - leadership structures and processes

For religious groups, an overwhelming majority of these groups, 86%, appoint their leaders, only 4% elect their leaders. For about 1% of religious groups, the leaders volunteered to lead. Some 10% of people who belong to religious groups could not tell how their leader was selected.

The case in the School Associations Parent/Teacher groups is different. A large majority of respondents who belong to these groups, 72.40%, indicated that their leaders were elected. Some leaders were also appointed, while others volunteered to lead, as 13.79% said their group leaders were appointed and another 13.79 also said their leaders volunteered to lead. Similarly, in Alumni Associations, almost all respondents, 92.30%, said their leaders were elected. Only 7.70% said their leaders were appointed.

Ways and frequency of interaction in social associations

A vast majority, 88%, noted that they met or engaged weekly for the religious groups. This is also because most churches and mosques have regular weekly services. Some 11% said they engaged daily, and this is attributed to the use of online platforms. Generally, a significant majority of religious groups use a combination of face-to-face and online platforms to interact. This was confirmed by 92% of respondents. Most of these religious groups have WhatsApp platforms where members engage daily. However, an insignificant 1% said they met or interacted monthly.

In the School Association or Parent/Teacher groups, a little more than half of the members, 57%, engaged daily. This is because the groups have online platforms, such as WhatsApp, which enabled members to interact on the go. About one-tenth (11%) of members interacted weekly, and these groups have online platforms. A quarter (25%) of members interacted monthly, and this refers to physical meetings. Few respondents, 7%, said they met or engaged annually.

Alumni groups have more active and regular interaction among members. Almost all members (96%) engage with each other daily through online or new media platforms such as WhatsApp and Facebook. It also suggests that people continue to have close ties with their schoolmates, after school.

Benefits of belonging to and levels of satisfaction with social associations

Table 10 below summarizes responses to the benefits of belonging

to religious groups. Spiritual support is the most important benefit to people who belong to religious groups, as cited by almost all respondents (99.15%) in religious groups. Receiving welfare support is the second most important benefit for religious groups, as confirmed by 54.11% of respondents. Sense of belonging comes in third place with 19.26%. Networking is the fourth most important benefit for religious groups, as confirmed by 18.41% of respondents. Physical wellbeing is also another benefit for joining religious groups, with 17.28% confirmation by respondents. Other benefits include entertainment in the form of singing, exposure to new ideas, and improved voice in engaging stakeholders.

Table 10: Benefits of belonging to religious groups

Benefits Derived	Responses	
	No.	%
Collective Security	11	3.12
Entertainment	16	4.53
Organizing receiving welfare	2191	54.11
Improved voice in engaging with office holders	12	3.40
Exposure to new concepts or ideas	14	3.97
Physical Wellbeing	61	17.28
Sense of belonging	68	19.26
Spiritual Support	350	99.15
Networking	65	18.41
Other	0	0.00

On satisfaction with religious groups, all the respondents were either fully satisfied or partially satisfied. A large majority (71.67%) of people who belong to religious groups rated their level of satisfaction as medium. In other words, there are some benefits, but they are not fully satisfied. However, some 28.33% of respondents are highly satisfied as they say they derive significant benefits from belonging to their religious groups. The level of satisfaction with religious groups is summarized table 11 below

Table 11: Level of satisfaction with religious groups

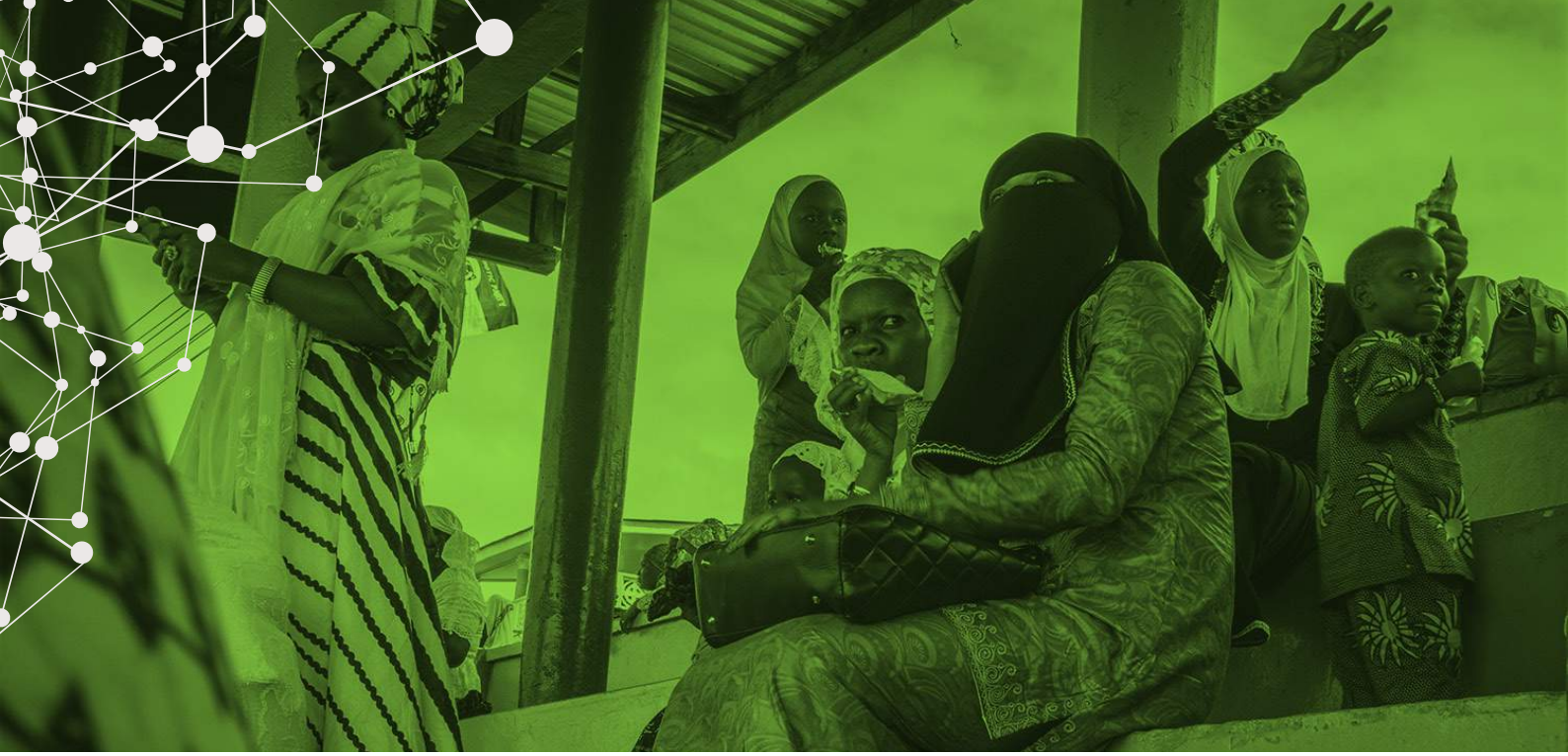
	High - I derive significant benefit from being a member	Medium - There are some benefits from being a member	Low - There are no benefits whatsoever	Total	Weighted Average
Fellowship Group/ Religious Group (temples, churches, mosques, shrine, etc)	28.33% 100	71.76% 253	0.00% 0	353	1.72

Types of problems that need fixing within social associations

In religious groups, funding is the main problem that needs fixing. This is confirmed by a large majority (73.09%) of the respondents. Religious groups appear to have many projects for which they are also seeking funds. Low levels of participation in activities of religious groups by their members are the second most important challenge. This is confirmed by 34.56% of respondents. Corruption comes in third, with 11.33% of respondents confirming. Leadership, weak governance procedures, meeting government regulations and issues of formal registration are the other problems facing religious groups. In table 12, below is a breakdown of the issues that need to be fixed in religious groups.

Table 12: Issues that need to be fixed in religious groups

ISSUES	RESPONSES	
None of the above	15.01%	53
Gender based discrimination	1.42%	5
Low levels of participation	34.56%	122
Weak governance procedures	6.52%	23
Leadership	9.92%	35
Corruption	11.33%	40
Formal registration	3.12%	11
Meeting government regulatory requirements e.g., tax compliance	3.40%	12
Funding	73.09%	258
Total Respondents: 353		



Inclusion and discrimination in social associations

There were very few cases of discrimination in social groups. Only 5.6% of respondents who belong to social groups mentioned that they had been discriminated against. Also, all these people, 95% were in religious groups, and 74% were discriminated against on the basis of defined religious boundaries. Fewer people were discriminated against on tribal basis (10.5%), language barrier (10.5%), age (10.5%), and cost of fees (5.3%).

Assets within social associations

The level of asset ownership within religious groups is summarised in table 13 below. Strangely, the majority of religious groups, 68.27%, do not have assets; however, about one-third (31.73%) of religious groups in Ghana have assets. These assets are mainly in buildings or places of worship (87%) and land (56%).

Table 13: Level of Asset ownership within religious groups

Does the Religious Group Own Assets	Responses	
Yes	31.73%	112
No	68.27%	241
TOTAL	**353**	

5. Conclusion

For the past twenty-nine years, Ghana has had stable multiparty politics with eight successive elections with relatively peaceful outcomes. Based on this, Ghana has been referred to as a beacon of democracy in Africa. However, democracy and good governance have been reduced to mean free and fair elections. Globally, much work has been done on elections and other democracy-related themes.

After three decades of the 'so-called' democracy, the country has features of a developing country and has only managed to climb onto the league of lower-level middle-income countries. Ghana's debt to GDP is 76.1% (World Bank, 2021). According to the World Bank (2021) Ghana is at a high risk of debt distress. For many it is just in name not in practice (Gordon, 2017), the poor public services, regular increases in taxes, and the daily increases in prices coupled with increasing unemployment rate and breakdown in the rule of law which has become synonymous with the daily experience of Ghanaians cannot be progress.

Daily, citizens are engaged in the public arena solving problems. They do these in their communities, churches, credit unions, cooperatives, schools' associations, among many other civic groups. Yet, these production and co-creation roles, which are the engines that drive our communities, have been overlooked due to a narrow definition of democracy to mean regular free and fair elections.

Using a combination of a desktop-based analysis of literature and field-based research, this paper has documented and shown what citizens in Ghana do together or among themselves to solve their common problems and also shape their lives. Social groups are the most dominant groups in Ghana. An overwhelming proportion of the respondents, 86%, belonged to various social groups, few people, 15.5%, identified themselves with political groups and fewer people still, 5% belong to economic groups. Among the social group, the vast majority of the respondents, 85.15%, belonged to religious or fellowship groups such as temples, churches, mosques, shrines. The rest are School Association Parent/

Teacher Group with 7.03% and Alumni Association with 6.30%.

Aside from registering and turning up to vote in presidential elections (98.3%) and presidential elections (97.3%), most Ghanaians do not belong to political groups. The few that do are scattered thinly across various political groups. The largest political group that respondents belonged to is the Political Parties. Out of the 15.5% of respondents that belong to political groups, 6.54% belonged to political parties. The second-largest political group was youth groups, with 5.81%. Women groups came in third with 2.66% of respondents. Residents Association was the fourth with 2.18% of respondents. Online Civic Based Coalition was fifth with 0.97% of respondents. Campaign group was sixth with 0.73% of respondents. Social movement, Joint Public Petition, and Local Peace Committee all had the lowest proportion of respondents with 0.24% each. The high turnout for elections but little or no interest in the political groups confirm that for most people, democracy means elections and not what they do among themselves.

There is a very low level of belonging to economic focused groups. Only 5% of respondents belonged to these groups, with 3% from the 5% belonging to Savings and loans groups. Business Advocacy/ Lobby Group, and Business Mentorship/Training Group had 1% each.

Development is embedded in collaboration and cooperation among citizens in the communities, schools, churches, credit unions, and the various public arenas within which citizens are engaged daily (Mathew 2014; Putnam, 1995; Fukuyama, 1995). These civic spaces nurture production, co-production, problem-solving roles, social capital, and citizens' togetherness. The key to democratic consolidation and social and economic development lies in understanding what citizens do among themselves.

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Voices of Democracy: The Citizens' Role in Kenyan Democratic Spaces

James Marwa Mwita

1. Introduction

Towards the last quarter of the 20th century, it was becoming clear that good governance could not be achieved without the active engagement of citizens and civil society actors (World Bank 1994). As a result of this many development partners e.g. donors, financial institutions and Non-governmental Organisations (NGOs) started supporting what the World Bank then termed as "participatory governance", "social accountability" or "demand for good governance" programs. This was geared towards the promotion of active involvement of citizens/Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) in public decision-making and holding governments accountable.

This has evolved and expanded. Currently, on top of civic participation, citizens are increasingly engaging among themselves in all their aspects of life. They are doing this by realizing that there are things that can only be done by the citizens themselves in order to counter what Mathews (2014) terms as systematic problems of democracy. From the surface, this can be seen as personal endeavors to make ends meet but in essence, deeper within it, the engagement brings the public back in the public's business—democracy. By the government giving citizens room to engage among themselves and with the government (meaning not clamping down on the citizens' rights), the citizens feel empowered and ready to be part of the government.

Understanding the role of citizen participation, their voice and ways of engagement helps to give a more comprehensive understanding of development and democracy. Potentially this can also contribute towards a more accountable and responsive governance systems. It is this understanding that has made citizen participation and engagement part of the mainstream development activities (World Bank, 1994). Further, due to this, the approach of supporting the citizenry has become attractive in the whole good governance scheme (UN, 2008).

Engagement among citizens themselves and with civil societies comes in different ways. In this study, the type of engagements we sought were those that were done through citizen associations.

Different scholars have studied different subjects related to how citizens engage and documented explicit measurable outcomes of such participation. Our study, however, did not intend to measure the degree of association but was rather shaped by the need to understand contexts, dynamics, meanings and the nature of engagement. The nature of engagement was broadly grouped into political, social and economic. African Citizenship Index (ACI) project's main area of focus was to develop a better understanding of citizens and the relationships they forge with processes of development and democracy.

ACI was a five-country study covering Cameroon, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi and Zimbabwe. This initial study was carried out in the capital cities of these countries i.e. Nairobi (Kenya), Lilongwe (Malawi), Yaoundé (Cameroon), Accra (Ghana) and Harare (Zimbabwe). This is the report for Kenya. The study, through a combination of a desktop-based analysis of literature and field-based research tools, sought to contribute knowledge on citizens' practices across Africa by specifically focusing on what we are referring to as 'people areas.' Specifically, the study sought to;

i. understand how citizens organize themselves,

ii. identify ways in which citizens practice influence self-governance,

iii. analyze initiatives and formations of collaboration that they establish with each other,

iv. identify ways in which citizens relate with formal processes of governance and engage with official processes (protest and cooperation).

The data for this study was collected primarily through a structured questionnaire hosted on an online platform, Survey Monkey. Through the questionnaire, citizens' responses were gathered. Responses were collected from 421 respondents. Six (6) research assistants spread across the Nairobi metropolitan region were responsible for data collection. Data was collected between March 22 and 26, 2021. We collected qualitative data through case studies in the months of April and May as a way of augmenting quantitative data. These two types of data are both presented in here. The data was presented in such a way that it resounded to the research objectives highlighted above.

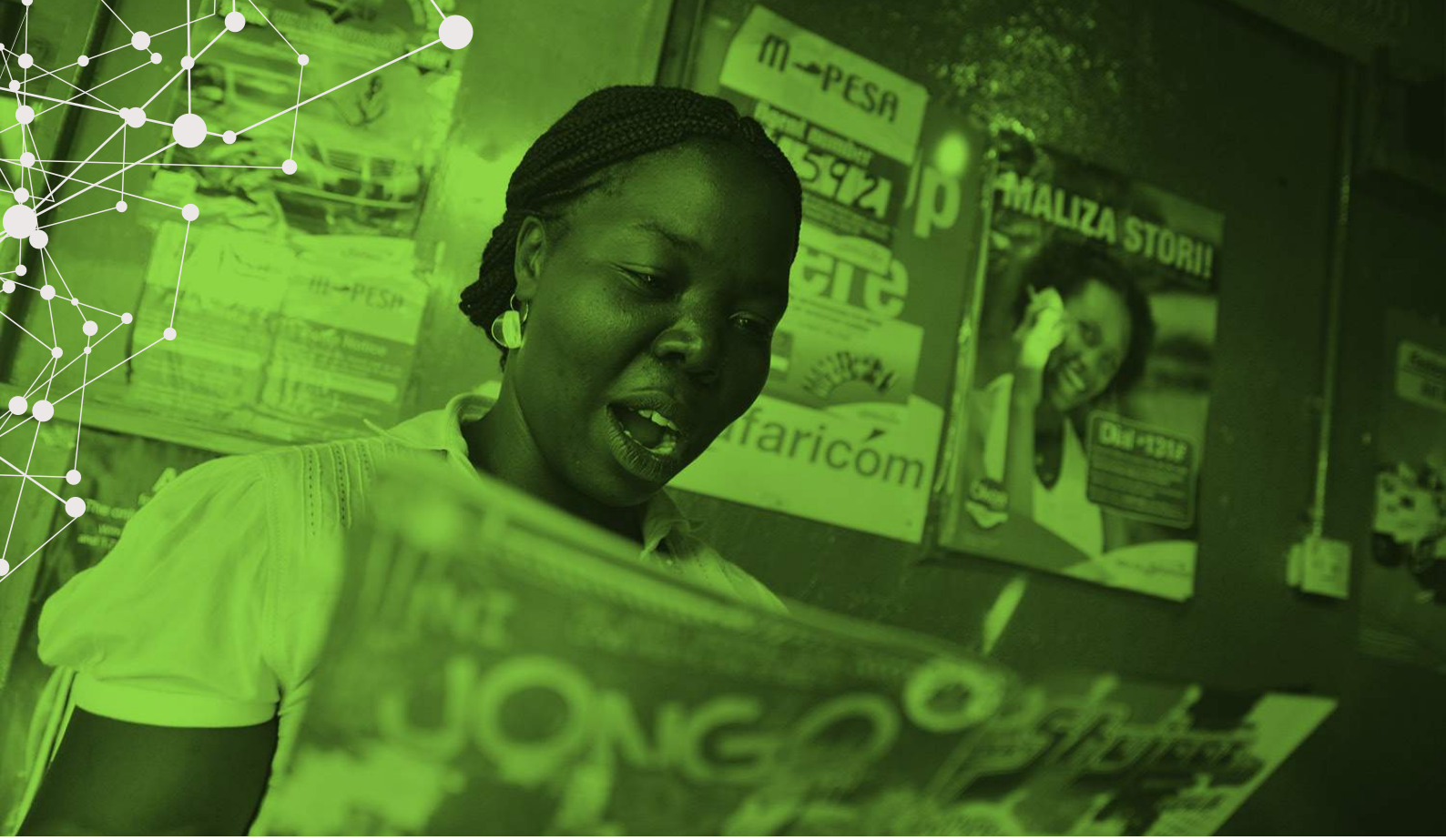
2. Background to Citizen-Led Formations in Kenya

Most theories of citizens and democracy show the vital role an informed and aware citizenry who can participate in democratic life, hold in the state. They hold the state to account and exercise their rights and responsibilities effectively. For many democratic theorists, such as Mansbridge (1997) and Pateman (1970), one important role of citizen participation is that it helps to build and strengthen citizens themselves, elevating their feelings of political worth and their political and democratic knowledge. In return, the assumption is that more informed and efficient citizens will ultimately benefit the larger society by anchoring it in a citizenry clearer about its interests and responsive to the claims of justice and the common will.

> **In many of the societies in which we live, citizens may be unaware of their rights, may lack the knowledge or permission to engage, or not deem themselves as citizens with the support and power to act.**

Learning about or gaining citizenship, therefore, is not only a legal process of being defined as a citizen but involves the development of citizens as actors capable of claiming rights and acting for themselves (Nyamu-Musembi, 2002). Yet, as we know, in many of the societies in which we live, citizens may be unaware of their rights, may lack the knowledge or permission to engage, or not deem themselves as citizens with the support and power to act. These wrong assumptions may make these citizens not to be citizens. Thus, to get the citizens back to their rightful place, there is need to understand where they sit currently i.e., their positions in democracy, their citizenship positions.

Although the concept of democracy is common amongst citizens, it is a commonly misunderstood word especially in the time when dictatorial or oppressive governments, regimes and leaders, single powerful parties, military leaders, and coup d'états etc. take the leadership positions. Democracy is a word derived from two terms, first 'demos' which means 'the people' basically refers to government where the supreme law and power are vested on the people (Lincoln, 1860), and the second 'kratia' which means 'power' or 'rule'. Therefore, in a democracy the people should exercise their



power by engaging among themselves. In this form, democracy can be exercised directly in large communities or indirectly through representatives. Democracy, therefore, can be described as the government of the people, by the people and for the people (ibid.).

Through this perspective, there is active and meaningful participation in public affairs by the citizens which is a clear indication of democratic societies. Citizen participation in public affairs has shown a steady increase within Kenya and Africa at large (Treier and Jackman, 2008) as there are developments in the supportive laws. These have improved the citizens' confidence with their governments since democracy indicates to what extend people believe in various perspectives (Treier and Jackman, 2008). Democracy is more than just a set of principles or institutions. It rests upon very clear attitudes, values, beliefs and practices that may take various dimensions and expressions among cultures and societies of the world (Sonoiya, 2018).

Democracy can be viewed as both a promise and a challenge. It is a promise because it is based on a cooperative and free society. In democracy, people tend to work together aiming to achieve their aspirations for personal rights, freedom, economic, social, political, and even environmental endeavours.

Moreover, by togetherness, they will achieve social justice. Democracy becomes a challenge where it rests upon the citizens and not any other institution or association (Beetham, 1994). A stronger democracy is one which citizens engage with one another in different associations and societies.

However, we have to note here that sovereignty cannot protect against self-mistakes or guarantee economic prosperity of a society. It cannot defend the social development of its own people. However, it's the participation of pressure groups and the involvement of the general public that will create opportunities and correct the mistakes that may be made in the process of democracy. It is this input by the public that will ensure happiness in the society. It is, therefore, essential for partnership building efforts to encourage pressure groups and the general public on how to bargain and compromise with the governments in full realization of opportunities within the society (Cheeseman, 2003). A society based on democratic constitutionalism is where there is compromise of ideas, research, individual opinions and recommendations and institutional interest among others. Democracies are never rigid. They take ideas and various recommendations and solutions and test them before afterwards applying them in the right order.

Sovereignty cannot protect against self-mistakes or guarantee economic prosperity of a society. It cannot defend the social development of its own people.

Since the repealing of section 2A of the Kenyan constitution in 1991, there have been numerous pressure groups and individual ideas that have been accepted in the system. Opposition leaders and activists like Mr. Odinga have been on the limelight most often to correct the ruling government (Gichuki, 2016).

As mentioned before, democracy focuses on accepted values, rules by the people on managing conflicts and their affairs. Democracy majorly aims at ending conflicts and maintenance of peace, cooperation, and social order. At the same time during conflict management, it must be done with lot of certainty, with a lot of consensus, agreements, and compromises with both sides in the arrangement (Treier and Jackman, 2008). This system of democracy therefore should not be used by one party in the society as a medium to exert pressure or block the voices of the minorities, otherwise the society is in trouble. Mostly, there is no easy solution to the conflict – consensus

equation. Democracy has no sense when it runs alone. It only picks from determination of the citizen and extreme tolerance and inserted principles by the people. This therefore concludes that various wars in a democratic society may not be as a result of the 'don'ts' and the 'wrongs' but in different interpretations of the democratic laws and rights (Treier and Jackman, 2008).

Political parties, interest groups, NGOs and democracy

For democracy to be strong, citizen's action in the participation on political process is required. The right of individuals to participate freely and organize themselves in the way which they deem fit to their socio-political aspirations is very fundamental to the process of democracy. There are different citizen formations in Kenya as discussed in the next section including political parties and different interest groups. These are the building blocks of democracy and good governance.

The right of individuals to participate freely and organize themselves in the way which they deem fit to their socio-political aspirations is very fundamental to the process of democracy

Political parties formulate policies that they identify as gaps in the societies. They then recruit, nominate and campaign for public elections based on their ideologies. In areas where they form the majority, they implement policies in the government. Political parties are also responsible for civic education of their citizens on current affairs. They also support and motivate their candidates. In most political parties, there are rules regulating their conduct.

Party organization and elections vary greatly in regard to the rules and accepted principles. In a Democratic Party elections are elaborate and generally time consuming. This should not stop parties from holding them, though, since fair and transparent elections give citizens an opportunity to elect leaders of their choice and also boosts the confidence of citizens in their party (Muigai, 2004).

There have been numerous interest groups and NGOs that have attempted to influence public policy and persuade public officials of their views. In a democratic society, a citizen may be a member of several NGOs and interest groups. They recognize that almost if not all this group is aiming at is advocating for human rights and influence of public opinion. Numerous groups have been formed around economic issues,

labour groups, business groups still have greater influence since that is the sole interest zone of citizen (Munck, 2002).

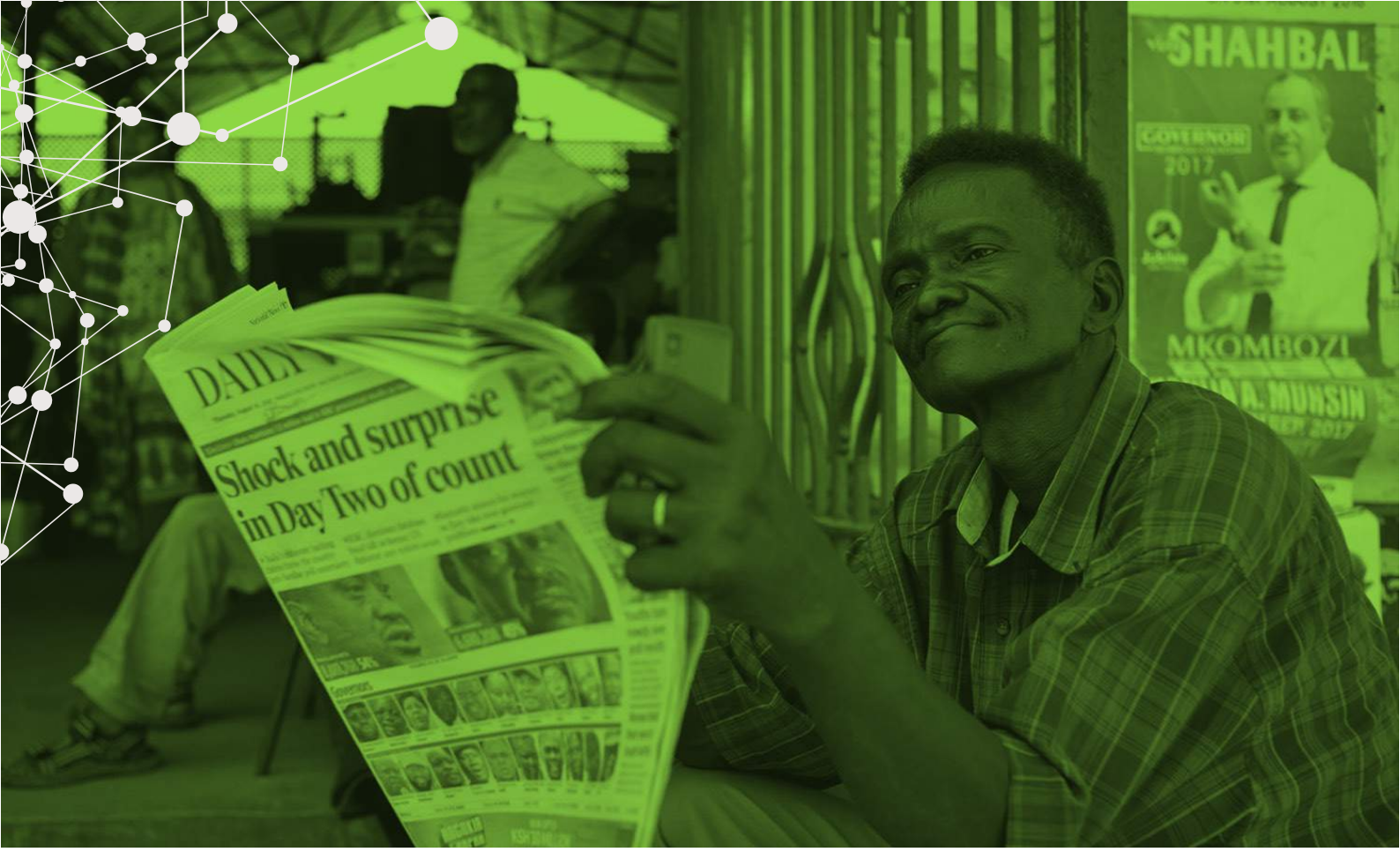
In our data we found out that there are as many associations as there are people's interests. This means that interest groups change with change in the interest of citizens. They are dynamic. They change with new citizen's aspirations. In frequent cases, NGOs and governments work as partners that help the fulfilment of the aspirations of different interest groups. They provide ground for implementation of public policy and also expertise and personal support. These NGOs, however, operate under minimal government supervision. The major striking development in recent years has been as a result of the emergence of international and regional organizations and pressure groups. In their pursuit to serve the community, nation and global arena at large, they supplement, and in some cases, change the face of government (Ndulo, 2003). It is important to note that in the recent past, Kenyans have seen a steady rise in the number of NGOs in their societies; mostly for economic development and protection of freedom and rights of citizens and they have heavily supplemented government work (ibid.).

To ensure unbiased news and information, media is needed, and to ensure intelligent and critical thinking, more as well as timely information about public policy is needed

Free and independent media and democracy

In all the citizens' engagements and activities, there should exist a free public space aided by free media. In this endeavour, the media in the form of newspapers, radio, magazines, print media and the internet has ensured increased growth in communication and public debate among the citizens. Media has a role in educating and informing the public. To ensure unbiased news and information, media is needed. Moreover, to ensure intelligent and critical thinking, more and timely information about public policy is needed. Media also plays a role in advocating, even without pretence of objectivity. Citizens benefit when there is a wide range of viewpoints. In the time for elections, for example, it is impossible for all citizens to access the candidates; therefore, some will gain their views about these candidates from the media (Transparency International, 2007).

Media also acts as a watchdog over government and its institutions in the society. By holding independent and objective views, the



public can get to confirm whether the claims of the government are true and make the public officials accountable for their actions. This gives media an active role in initiating debates and also influencing public opinion through current affairs reporting. This, in turn, keeps the government on toes in the implementation of policies.

Moreover, since the media cannot report all of the government works, the media must, therefore, choose the most important aspects to dwell on. This concept is called 'agenda setting' of the media. Unlike countries where news is manipulated and fully controlled by the government, media in democratic societies cannot be manipulated to simply overlook important issues. In such systems, ideas and opinions of people are expressed freely and truth often wins over falsehoods. In his own words, writer E.B White wrote 'the press in democratic states is not useful because of its good character but because of its great diversity, as long as there are many owners, each pursuing its own brand of truth. We the people have the ability to arrive at the truth and dwell in the light.'

3. Description of Sample

3.1 Age

The respondents' ages ranged from 18 years old to above 65. Their distribution is as shown in Table 1 below:

Table 1: Age of Respondents

AGE IN YEARS	RESPONSES	
18 – 25	21.38%	90
26 – 35	23.28%	98
36 – 45	25.89%	109
46 – 55	19.00%	80
56 – 65	7.13%	30
65+	3.33%	14
Total		**421**

The majority of the respondents were between ages 36 and 45 representing 25.89%. This was followed by the age range 26 to 35 representing 23.28%. People above 65 years old had the least representation at 3.33%.

3.2 Gender and Marital Status

Table 2: Gender of Respondents

GENDER	RESPONSES	
Male	54.16%	228
Female	45.84%	193
Total		**421**

Out of the 421 respondents, there were 228 (54.16%) males and 193 (45.84%) were females. On marital status, there were 119 (28.27%) single respondents, 255 (60.57%) married ones, 27 (6.41%) divorcees, and 20 (4.75%) widows. Married respondents were the majority.

3.3 Educational levels of the respondents

In terms of education, 40 (9.50%) had primary school education, 181 (42.99%) had secondary school education, 193 (45.84%) had tertiary level education, and 7 (1.66%) had no formal education. Of all the 421 respondents, 403 (95.72%) could read and write against 18 (4.28%) respondent who could not read and write. This high literacy level could be attributed to the city context.

3.4 Household income

The highest earner among the respondents earned between USD$3,001 and USD$5,000 while the lowest earned Under USD$250.00. Table 3 below summarizes the respondents' household incomes.

Table 3: Average Monthly Household Income of the Respondents

Income	Responses	
Under USD$250.00	56.06%	236
Between USD$251 and USD500	29.69%	125
Between USD$501 and USD$1,000	10.45%	44
Between USD$1,001 and USD$3,000	3.56%	15
Between USD$3,001 and USD$5,000	0.24%	1
Above USD$5,001		0
Total		**421**

3.5 Sources of income

The 421 respondents earned their income through the following sources:

Table 4: Sources of Income of the Respondents

SOURCE	RESPONSES	
Formal employment (provides payslip and pays formal taxes)	18.29%	77
Formal business (registered and pays formal taxes)	15.44%	65
Informal employment (no payslip, unregistered, the business belongs to someone else)	26.84%	113
Informal business (unregistered and belongs to you)	23.52%	99
Pension	3.09%	13
Remittances (Monetary gifts)	1.19%	5
Property Investments (sales and rentals of immovable and movable assets)	4.28%	18
Farming	7.36%	13
Total		**421**

Most respondents 26.84% earned their regular income from informal employment where they did note receive payslips, their businesses were unregistered, or the business belonged to somebody else.

3.6 Participation in the Electoral Process

The majority 362 (85.99%) of the respondents are registered voters. A small proportion of 59 (14.01%) were yet to register as voters. Asked if they had voted in the last election, the respondents responded as shown in Table 5 below:

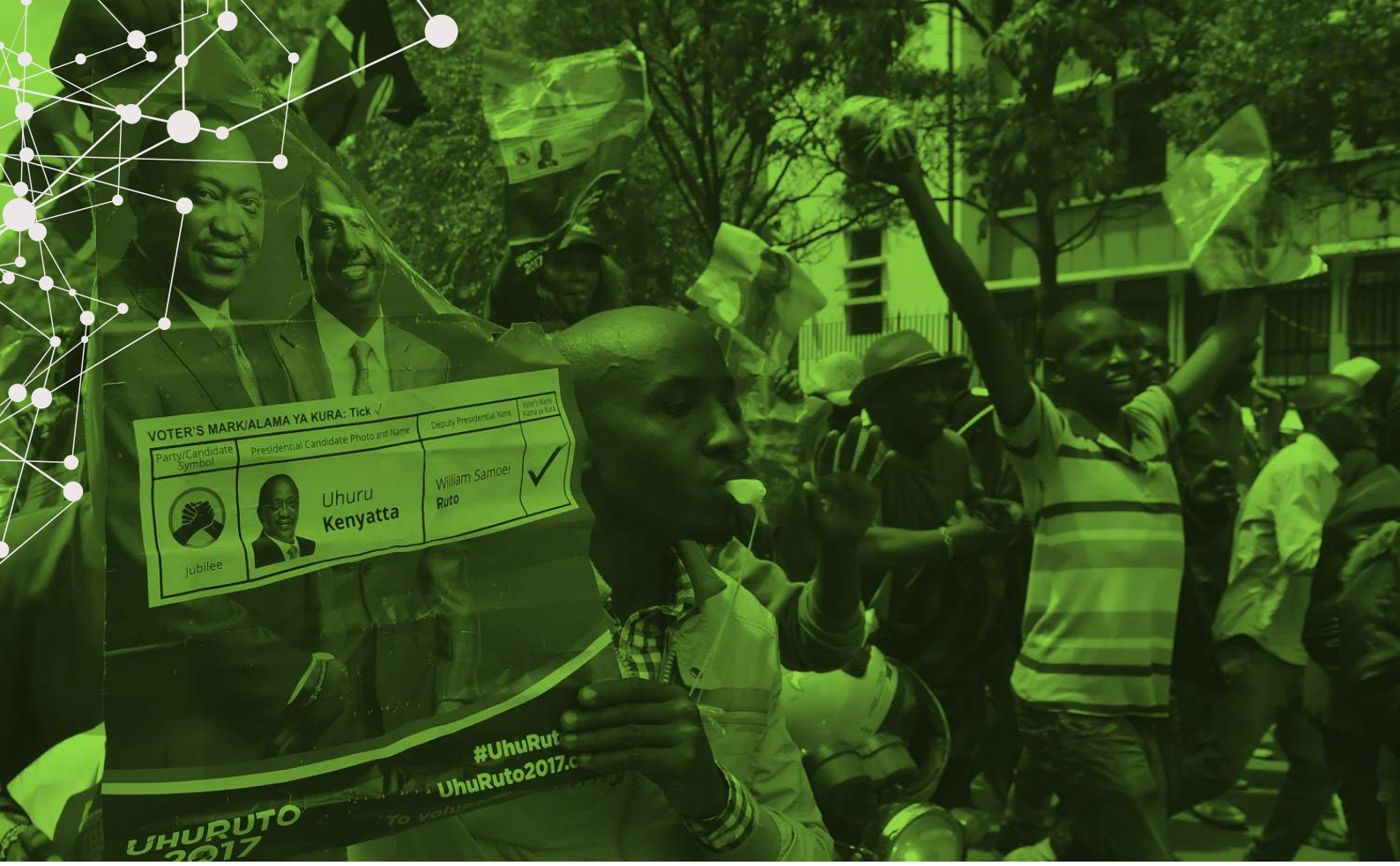


Table 5: Level of Participation in the Electoral Process of the Respondents

Status/Response	Yes (Registered & Voted)	No (Registered but Decided not to Vote)	No (Did not register to vote)	No (Could not find polling Station)	No (Name did not appear on registration poll	No (was prevented from voting)	No (Was too Young -under 18)	N/A
Local Gov't/ County Elections	n=123 78.15%	n= 20 4.75%	n=29 6.89%	n=2 0.48%	n=4 0.95%	n=2 0.48%	n=19 4.51%	n=16 3.80%
Provisional Elections	n=484 43.71%	n=12 2.85%	n=20 4.75%	n=1 0.24%	n=3 0.71%	n=0 0.00%	n=9 2.14%	n=192 45.61%
Parliamentary Elections	n=329 78.15%	n=19 4.51%	n=29 6.89%	n=1 0.24%	n=4 0.95%	n=1 0.24%	n=19 4.51%	n=19 4.51%
Presidential Elections	n=334 79.33%	n=20 4.75%	n=27 6.41%	n=1 0.24%	n=4 0.95%	n=1 0.24%	n=19 4.51%	n=15 3.56%

Some of the regions of the Nairobi Metropolis are rural in nature. Thus, 347 (82.42%) respondents were from the urban areas and 74 (17.58%) were from the Rural area.

4. Mapping of Citizen's Initiatives in Kenya

4.1 Citizens and the Economy

The following is the analysis of the different ways in which citizens demonstrate solidarity with each other to achieve economic goals:

Respondents belonged to thirteen (13) different categories of associations under the economic focused groups as discusses below:

Savings and Lending Groups

Savings and Lending Groups had the highest representation where 160 (38.00%) respondents belong to Savings and Lending Groups (commonly referred to as chama). In these groups, people pool money together for a specific purpose. In order that the group's money grows, they lend to members at an interest which is lower than what the banks and major lending institutions would charge. This way they afford credit facilities to those who have been excluded by the banks especial those in informal employment such as mama mboga (market women), motorbike taxi drivers, housewives and generally those people without any payslip that can enable them secure a loan from a bank.

Table 6: Economic Focused Associations

ASSOCIATION	FREQUENCY	
	Number#	%
Savings and Lending Group	160	38.00
Labour Pooling Group	17	4.04
Production Cooperative	25	5.94
Buying Clubs (e.g., collective group to buy groceries)	28	6.65
Marketing Cooperative (involved in jointly selling commodities)	19	4.51
Common Property Group (natural resources)	19	4.51
Asset Pooling Group	12	2.85
Market Group/Platform (a place or network where members sell goods/services to each other)	21	4.99
Business Promotion Council	12	2.85
Business Advocacy/Lobby Group	9	2.14
Business Mentorship/Training Group	44	10.45
Housing Cooperative	8	1.90
Multi-level marketing schemes (e.g. Avon, Tablecharm, Tupperware)	11	2.61

Concerning the formation of savings and lending groups, 159 (38.00%) respondents answered the question. Of these, 37 (23.27%) said their group was established through trust, 34 (21.38%) said through constitution, 8 (5.03%) said by Company Limited by Guarantee, 46 (28.93%) said through association, 14 (8.81%) said their group had no formal registration, and 20 (12.58%) said they "did not know" how it was formed as that help people gain business skills in the society.

Table 7: Method of Establishment Savings and Lending Groups

METHOD	RESPONSES	
Trust	23.27%	37
Constitution	21.38%	34
Company Limited by Guarantee	5.03%	8
Association	28.93%	46
No formal registration	8.81%	14
I do not know	12.58%	20

There seems to be a balance of gender in leadership of savings and lending groups. Respondents reported that 501 (49.75%) office holders were male and 506 (50.25%) were female. Out of the 159 (38.00%) respondents on the question how leaders are selected in the saving and lending group, 107 (67.30%) said leaders are selected through Elections, 39 (24.53%) through Appointment, 2 (1.26%) through inheritance, 7 (4.40%) through Voluntary basis and 3 (1.89%) respondents responded that they did not know how the leaders were selected.

Table 8: Ways of Selecting Leaders among Savings and Lending Groups

WAY	RESPONSES	
Elections	67.30%	107
Appointed	24.53%	39
Hereditary	1.26%	2
Voluntary	4.40%	7
I do not know	1.89%	3
Other (please specify)	0.63%	1
Total		158

For savings and lending group, meetings are regularly held. 101 (63.52%) of respondents said they have regular face to face meetings. Six (3.77%) of the respondents said they use Digital Online Platforms (e.g. Zoom, Skype, WhatsApp, Telegram, Facebook) whereas 52 (32.70%) said their meetings a combination

of both face to face and digital online platforms. The members draw different benefits from this type of association.

Table 9: How Savings and Lending Associations Meet

MODE of MEETING	RESPONSES	
Regular Face to Face Meetings	63.52%	101
Digital Online Platforms (e.g. Zoom, Skype, WhatsApp, Telegram, Facebook)	3.77%	6
Combination of both face to face and digital online platforms	32.70%	52

The benefits of membership in these groups include: collective security 21 (13.21%), improved access to financing 50 (31.45%), pooling together assets/savings 89 (55.97%), exchange information about market opportunities 48 (30.19%), organizing welfare support 51 (32.08%), improved voice in engaging with officeholders 14 (8.81%), exposure to new concept or ideas 84 (52.83%), collective ownership of assets 27 (16.98%), skills exchange 39 (24.53%), and income 21 (13.21%).

Table 10: Benefits of Being Part of Savings and Lending Groups

BENEFIT	RESPONSES	
Collective security	13.21%	21
Improved access to financing	31.45%	50
Pooling together assets/savings	55.97%	89
Exchange information about market opportunities	30.19%	48
Organising welfare support	32.08%	51
Improved voice in engaging with officeholders	8.81%	14
Exposure to new concept or ideas	52.83%	84
Collective ownership of assets	16.98%	27
Skills exchange	24.53%	39
Additional Income	13.21%	21

The respondents raised concerns about some issues affecting their associations. Some of the common problems affecting associations are highlighted in Table 11 below:

Table 11: Problems Facing Savings and Lending Groups

METHOD	RESPONSES	
Gender based discrimination	5.03%	8
Low levels of participation	15.72%	25
Weak governance procedures	10.06%	16
Leadership	18.24%	29
Corruption	13.84%	22
Formal registration	11.95%	19
Meeting government regulatory requirements e.g., tax compliance	42.14%	67
Funding	40.25%	64
Other (please specify)	0.63%	1

From the data, the biggest problem facing savings and lending groups is meeting government regulatory requirements e.g., tax compliance with a representation of 67 (42.14%) respondents followed by funding with 64 (40.25%) respondents. Leadership was also identified by 29 (18.24%) respondents as a big problem. It is worth noting that gender discrimination is not a major problem as only 8 (5.03%) respondents identified it as a problem.

When asked if their associations owned assets in common, 65 (41.14%) of the 159 respondents in this category responded in the affirmative. Property that respondents said they owned in common included land 50 (75.76%), Minerals 1 (1.52%), Water body (Dam) 13 (19.70%), Tourist Attraction points 3 (4.55%), Grazing Lands 18 (27.27%), and Buildings 21 (31.82%) respondents.

Business Mentorship/Training Group

Business Mentorship/Training Group had 44 (10.45%) respondents. Of these, 6 (13.64%) said their group was established through trust, 6 (13.64%) said through constitution, 3 (6.82%) said Company Limited by Guarantee 11 (25.00%) said through association, 12 (27.27%) said their group had no formal registration, and 6 (13.64%) said they did not know how it was formed.

Table 12: Methods of Establishment of Business Mentorship/Training Group

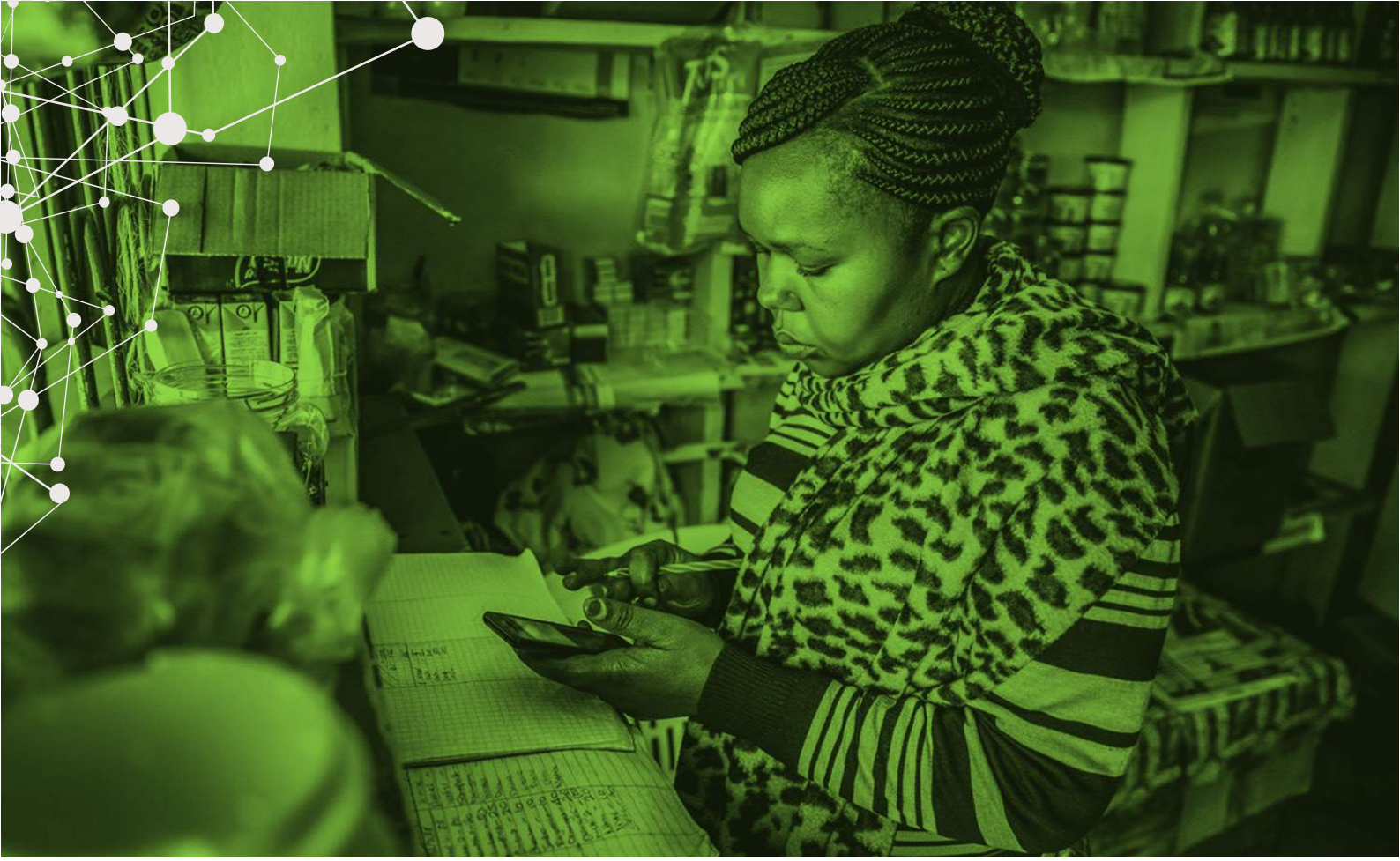
METHOD	RESPONSES	
Trust	13.64%	6
Constitution	13.64%	6
Company Limited by Guarantee	6.82%	3
Association	25.00%	11
No formal registration	27.27%	12
I do not know	13.64%	6
Total	**44**	

There is gender balance in leadership of business groups. Respondents reported that cumulatively 140 (50.00%) office holders were male and 140 (50.00%) were female. Among the 44 respondents who answered the question on how leaders are selected in the business mentorship group, 21 (47.73%) said leaders are selected through Elections, 16 (36.36%) through Appointment, 2 (4.55%) through inheritance, 2 (4.55%) through Voluntary basis, and 3 (6.82%) respondents responded that they did not know how the leaders were selected.

Table 13: Ways of Selecting Leaders in Business Mentorship Groups

WAY	RESPONSES	
Elections	47.73%	21
Appointed	36.36%	16
Hereditary	4.55%	2
Voluntary	4.55%	2
I do not know	6.82%	3
Total	44	

The benefits gotten had the following responses: Collective security 3 (6.82%), Improved access to financing 12 (27.27%), Pooling together assets/savings 5 (11.36%), Exchange information about market



opportunities 13 (29.55%), Organizing welfare support 7 (15.91%), Improved voice in engaging with officeholders 6 (13.64%), Exposure to new concept or ideas 26 (59.09%), Collective ownership of assets 7 (15.91%), Skills exchange 23 (52.27%), and Income 10 (22.73%).

Table 14: Benefits Gotten from Business Mentorship Groups

BENEFIT	RESPONSES	
Collective security	6.82%	3
Improved access to financing	27.27%	12
Pooling together assets/savings	11.36%	5
Exchange information about market opportunities	29.55%	13
Organising welfare support	15.91%	7
Improved voice in engaging with officeholders	13.64%	6
Exposure to new concept or ideas	59.09%	26
Collective ownership of assets	15.91%	7
Skills exchange	52.27%	23
Additional Income	22.73%	10
Total	**44**	

4.2 Citizens and Politics

The following table shows the analysis of citizen and politics in Kenya:

Table 15: Politically Focused Associations

ASSOCIATION	FREQUENCY	
	Number#	%
Campaign Group	31	7.56%
Political Party	86	20.98%
Social Movement	23	5.61%
Joint Public Petition	5	1.22%
Local Peace Committee	11	2.68%
Residents Association	12	2.93%
Online Based Civic Coalition	9	2.20%
Women's Group	47	11.46%
Youth Group	55	13.41%
Total	**410**	

Most respondents in politically focused groups belong to political parties with a representation of 86 (20.98%) respondents. Youth group was second with 55 (13.41%) which was followed by women's group represented by 47 (11.46%) respondents. Other associations in this category included 23 (5.61%) members in social movements, 31 (7.56%) members in campaign groups, 5 (1.22%) members in joint public petition, 11 (2.68%) members in peace committees, while online based civic coalition had 9 (2.20%) respondents and resident associations, 12 (2.93%) respondents. Politically focused groups attracted 279 respondents in total. Joint public petition as seen above had the least representation. This is because this is a new concept and not commonly practiced.

Political Party

Members of political parties were 86 (20.98%). Among these, 1 (1.16%) said their group was established through trust, 48 (55.81%) through constitution, 1 (1.16%) company limited by guarantee, 16 (18.60%) association and 20 (23.26%) did not know how their organization was formed.

Table 16: Methods of Establishment of Political Parties

METHOD	RESPONSES	
Trust	1.16%	1
Constitution	55.81%	48
Company Limited by Guarantee	1.16%	1
Association	18.60%	16
No formal registration	0.00%	0
I do not know	23.26%	20

Proportionally, officeholders were substantial standing at 13 (15.12%). Gender dynamics in the positions of decision making are indicated in the table below:

Table 17: Males and Females in Decision Making Positions of Political Parties

POSITION	MALE	FEMALE	N/A	TOTAL
Chairperson	95.35% 82	4.65% 4	0.00% 0	86
Vice Chairperson	79.76% 67	20.24% 17	0.00% 0	84
Secretary	69.77% 60	30.23% 26	0.00% 0	86
Treasurer	61.18% 52	37.65% 32	1.18% 1	85
Committee Member 1	60.71% 51	35.71% 30	3.57% 3	84
Committee Member 2	43.37% 36	45.78% 38	10.84% 9	83
Committee Member 3	39.76% 33	44.58% 37	15.66% 13	83

There was no balance in the gender leadership in political parties as most important positions were held by men as seen above. In regard to how the officeholders select within their association, 66 (76.74%) said their officeholders are selected through elections, 6 (6.98%) said they are appointed, 1 (1.16%) said the positions are hereditary, 2 (2.33%) voluntary and 11 (12.79%) did not know how the association selected the leaders.

Concerning interactions within the parties, 2 (2.35%) respondents said they interact daily, 3 (3.53%) said it's conducted weekly 26 (30.59%) mentioned monthly, while a staggering majority of 54 (63.53%) said their interaction was annual.

Table 18: Frequency of Interactions among Political Parties

FREQUENCY OF INTERACTION	RESPONSES	
Daily	2.35%	2
Weekly	3.53%	3
Monthly	30.59%	26
Annually	63.53%	54

When it comes to modes of meetings, 33 (38.37%) said their meetings are regular face to face meeting, 5 (5.81%) mentioned digital online platform e.g. Zoom, Skype, Telegram, WhatsApp, Facebook) while 48 (55.81%) said their meetings use a combination of both face to face and digital online platforms.

Table 19: Modes of Meetings of Political Parties

MODE	RESPONSES	
Regular Face to Face Meetings	38.37%	33
Digital Online Platforms (e.g Zoom, Skype, WhatsApp, Telegram, Facebook)	5.81%	5
Combination of both face to face and Digital Online Platforms	55.81%	48

The benefits received by the 86 respondents were, 3 (3.49%) Collective security, 5 (5.81%) organizing/ receiving welfare support, 13 (15.12%) improved voice in engaging with officeholders, 33 (38.37%) exposure to new concepts/ideas, 24 (27.91%) defence of rights, 21

(24.42%) change of government, 30 (34.88%) better social order.

Table 20: Benefits Gotten from being Members of Political Parties

BENEFIT	RESPONSES	
Collective Security	3.49%	3
Organising/receiving welfare support	3.49%	3
Improved voice in engaging with officeholders	5.81%	5
Exposure to new concept or ideas	15.12%	13
Sense of belonging	38.37%	33
Defence of rights	27.91%	24
Changes/Reforms within community	24.42%	21
Change of government	60.47%	52
Better social order	34.88%	30

The respondents also raised issues that affect their operations where 8 (9.30%) mentioned gender based discrimination, 12 (13.95%) cited Low level of participation, 8 (9.30%) noted weak governance procedures, 39 (45.35%) said Leadership had problems, 39 (45.35%) cited corruption, 8 (9.30%) were concerned that their association had no formal registration, 3 (3.49%) highlighted difficulty in meeting government regulatory requirements e.g. Tax compliance, and 41 (47.67%) named funding as problem.

Table 21: Problems Facing Members of Political Parties

PROBLEM	RESPONSES	
Gender based discrimination	9.30%	8
Low levels of participation	13.95%	12
Weak governance procedures	9.30%	8
Leadership	45.35%	39
Corruption	45.35%	39
Formal registration	9.30%	8
Meeting government regulatory requirements e.g., tax compliance	3.49%	3
Funding	47.67%	41

As it can be seen in the table above, funding is the biggest problem that requires fixing in political parties as attested by 41 (47.67%) respondents. Asked if they had faced any discrimination, 7 (8.14%) respondents said they had been discriminated against at some point where 1 (14.29%) faced prohibited membership, 6 (85.71%) defined tribal/ethnic boundaries, 2 (28.57%) respondents had faced age discrimination (too young or too old).

Table 22: Forms of Discrimination Faced by Members of Political Parties

FORM	RESPONSES	
Language Barriers	0.00%	0
Prohibitive Membership Costs/Fees	14.29%	1
Defined geographical boundaries	0.00%	0
Membership defined by gender (for e.g., women's only group)	0.00%	0
Defined religious boundaries	0.00%	0
Defined tribal/ethnic boundaries	85.71%	6
Age (too young or too old)	28.57%	2
Disability	0.00%	0
Legal (not having national registration/ID documents)	0.00%	0

When asked if the association had commonly owned assets, 26 (30.23%) said yes. Among these, 18 (69.23%) said the association commonly owned land, while 25 (96.15%) mentioned building.

Youth Group

On answering how Youth groups were established 55 respondents participated and among these 4 (7.27%) said their group was established through Trust, 7 (12.73%) said their group was established through Constitution, 1 (1.82%) company Limited by Guarantee, 25 (45.45%) association, 11 (20.00%) claimed theirs has no formal registration and 7 (12.73%) did not know how their organization was formed.

Table 23: Methods of Establishment of Youth Groups

METHOD	RESPONSES	
Trust	7.27%	4
Constitution	12.73%	7
Company Limited by Guarantee	1.82%	1
Association	45.45%	25
No formal registration	20.00%	11
I do not know	12.73%	7
Total		**55**

Among the 55 respondents, 21 (38.18%) were officeholders. Gender in the positions of decision making is distributed as follows:

Table 24: Gender Distribution in Leadership Positions in Youth Groups

POSITION	MALE	FEMALE	N/A	TOTAL
Chairperson	81.82% 45	18.18% 10	0.00% 0	55
Vice Chairperson	36.36% 20	56.36% 31	7.27% 4	55
Secretary	30.91% 17	69.09% 38	0.00% 0	55
Treasurer	45.45% 25	49.09% 27	5.45% 3	55
Committee Member 1	58.18% 32	18.18% 10	23.64% 13	55
Committee Member 2	36.36% 20	32.73% 18	30.91% 17	55
Committee Member 3	22.64% 12	39.62% 21	37.74% 20	53

Regarding the selection of officeholders, 31 (56.36%) respondents said their officeholders are selected through elections, 17 (30.91%) said they are appointed, 5 (9.09%) take position on voluntary basis, 2 (3.64%) did not know how the selection is done.

Table 25: Ways of Selecting Leaders among Youth Groups

WAY	RESPONSES	
Elections	56.36%	31
Appointed	30.91%	17
Hereditary	0.00%	0
Voluntary	9.09%	5
I do not know	3.64%	2
Total	**55**	

From the above table, it is evident that youth groups prefer elections as a way of selecting their officeholders/leaders as attested by 31 (56.36%) respondents. There were 17 (30.91%) who said that their leaders are appointed though it is unclear who the appointing authority is in this case.

On the frequency of their meetings, 17 (30.91%) respondents said meetings are conducted weekly, 34 (61.82%) mentioned monthly, 4 (7.27%) claimed they meet annually. Most of these meetings are through a combination of both face to face and digital online platforms as attested by 29 (53.70%). 22 (40.74%) respondents said their meeting are regular face to face meeting, while 3 (5.56%) mentioned the use of Digital Online Platforms (e.g. Zoom, Skype, WhatsApp, Telegram, and Facebook).

Table 26: Modes of Interaction among the Youth Groups

MODE	RESPONSES	
Regular Face to Face Meetings	40.74%	22
Digital Online Platforms (e.g Zoom, Skype, WhatsApp, Telegram, Facebook)	5.56%	3
Combination of both face to face and Digital Online Platforms	53.70%	29

The benefits attained by the 55 responds were: 8 (14.55%) Collective security, 12 (21.82%) organization receiving welfare support, 4 (7.27%) improved voice in engaging with officeholders, 23 (41.82%) exposure to new concepts/ideas, 28 (50.91%) Sense of belonging, 18 (32.73%) Defence of Rights, 16 (29.09%) Change/ Reforms within community, 1 (1.82%) Change of Government, 23 (41.82%) Better social order, and 1 (1.82%) did not specify.

Table 27: Benefits Drawn from Youth Groups

BENEFIT	RESPONSES	
Collective Security	14.55%	8
Organising/receiving welfare support	21.82%	12
Improved voice in engaging with officeholders	7.27%	4
Exposure to new concept or ideas	41.82%	23
Sense of belonging	50.91%	28
Defence of rights	32.73%	18
Changes/Reforms within community	29.09%	16
Change of government	1.82%	1
Better social order	41.82%	23
Unity	1.82%	1
Total		**55**

On problems affecting their association, 7 (12.73%) respondents said gender based discrimination afflicted their associations, 14 (25.45%) cited low level of participation, 4 (7.27%) mentioned weak governance procedures, 15 (27.27%) claimed leadership was a problem, 11 (20.00%) blamed corruption, 10 (18.18%) said their association was affected for lacking formal registration, 8 (14.55%) said they didn't meet governmental regulatory e.g. tax compliance while 35 (63.64%) felt funding was an issue. These are shown in the table below:

Table 28: Problems Affecting Youth groups

PROBLEM	RESPONSES	
Gender based discrimination	12.73%	7
Low levels of participation	25.45%	14
Weak governance procedures	7.27%	4
Leadership	27.27%	15
Corruption	20.00%	11
Formal registration	18.18%	10
Meeting government regulatory requirements e.g., tax compliance	14.55%	8
Funding	63.64%	35
Total		55

It should be noted that in most associations, not only the youth associations, funding emerged as one of the major problems affecting them.

When the 55 youth were asked if they had experienced any form of discrimination in their association, 2 (3.64%) answered in the affirmative where; prohibitive membership costs/Fees had been experienced by 1 (50.00%) resident, 1 (50.00%) was not comfortable with defined religious boundaries, while at the same time faced age restrictions (too young or too old).

When asked if the association had commonly owned property, 7 (12.73%) said there is something owned in common by the association where 5 (71.43%) said land was commonly owned, 1 (14.29%) mentioned a water body (dam), and 3 (42.86%) cited buildings.

Table 29: Commonly Accessed Assets among Youth Groups

ASSET	RESPONSES	
Land	71.43%	5
Minerals	0.00%	0
Water body (Dam)	14.29%	1
Tourist Attraction	0.00%	0
Grazing Lands	0.00%	0
Buildings	42.86%	3
Total		7

4.2 Citizens and Social Support

The following is the analysis of citizen and social support in Kenya:

Table 30: Socially Focused Associations

ASSOCIATION	FREQUENCY	
	Number#	%
Fellowship Group /Religious Group (temples, churches, mosques, shrine etc)	220	53.66%
Burial Societies	35	8.54%
Sporting Association	19	4.63%
Entertainment Group (dance, choir etc)	22	5.37%
School Association Parent/Teacher Group	20	4.88%
Alumni Association	29	7.07%
Book/Reading Club	7	1.71%
Community Development Association	10	2.44%
Service Organisation or Club (e.g., Lions Club; Rotary International)	2	0.48%
Neighbourhood Watch Committee	5	1.19%
Communal Granary	4	0.95%
Community Feeding Group	5	1.19%
Community Foundation	8	1.90%

There were 13 categories in social support associations. Most respondents, 220 (53.66%), belong to fellowship group / religious group. Burial societies had a representation of 35 (8.54%) which was the second highest representation in the social support group. The third was alumni association which attracted 29 (7.07%) respondents. Below is the analysis:

Fellowship Group/Religious Group

A total of 218 respondents answered that they were members of fellowship group /religious group. Concerning the methods of establishment, 15 (6.88%) respondents said their group was established through trust, 86 (39.45%) cited through constitution, 2 (0.92%) mentioned company limited by guarantee, 29 (13.30%) said through association, 11 (5.05%) said their group had no formal registration, and 74 (33.94%) said they did not know how it was formed.

Table 31: Methods of Establishment among Fellowship Groups

METHOD	RESPONSES	
Trust	6.88%	15
Constitution	39.45%	86
Company Limited by Guarantee	0.92%	2
Association	13.30%	29
No formal registration	5.05%	11
I do not know	33.94%	74

Among these members, 32 (14.61%) were officeholders. 67 (30.73%) respondents said their leaders are selected through Elections, 123 (56.42%) through Appointment, 1 (0.46%) through inheritance, 9 (4.13%) through Voluntary basis and 18 (8.26%) respondents responded that they did not know how their leaders were selected.

Table 32: Methods of Selecting Leaders in Fellowship Group

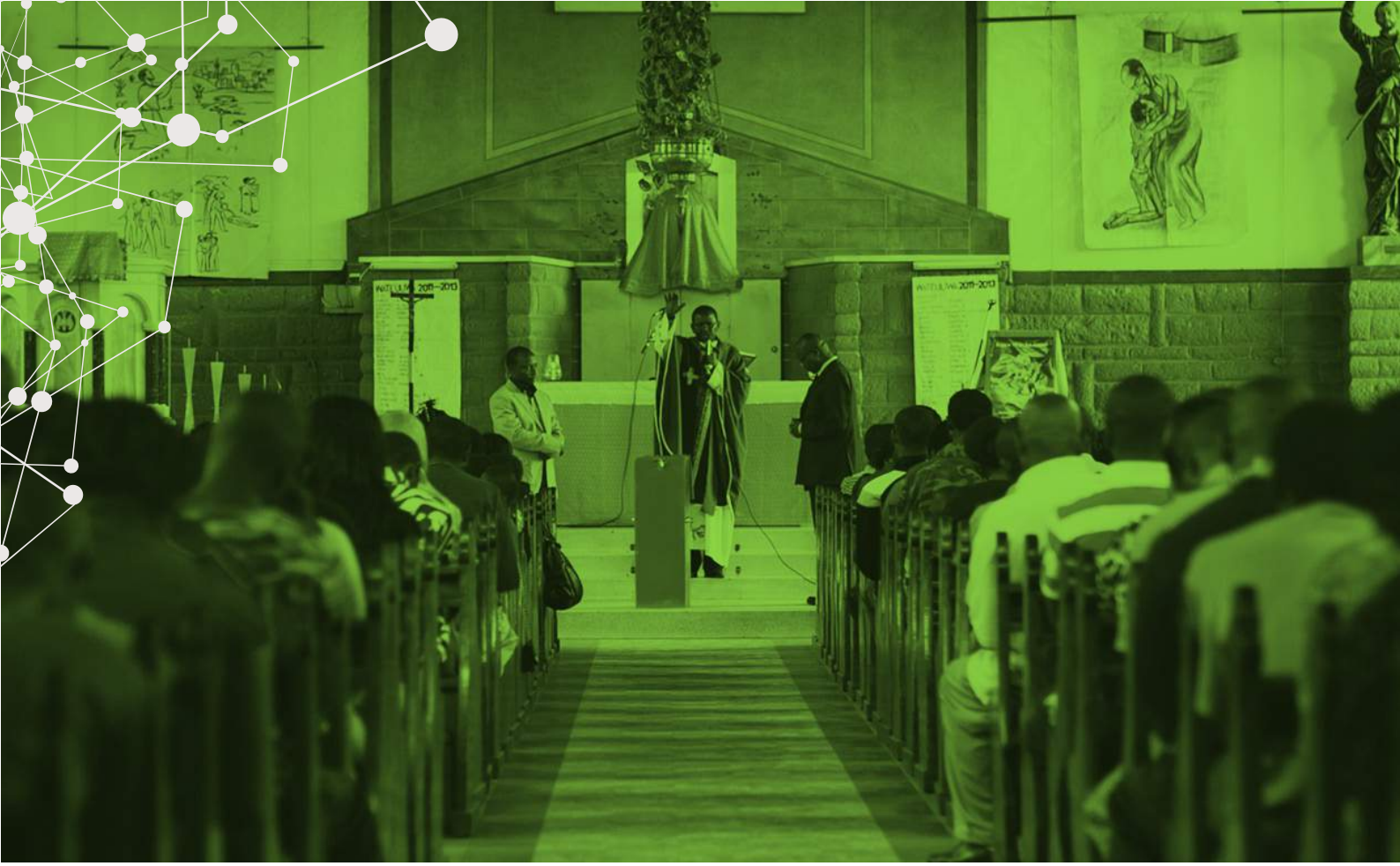
METHOD	RESPONSES	
Elections	30.73%	67
Appointed	56.42%	123
Hereditary	0.46%	1
Voluntary	4.13%	9
I do not know	8.26%	18

As it can be seen in the table above, leaders are mostly appointed into leadership positions as attested by 123 (56.42%) of the respondents. Election was cited by only 67 (30.73%) of the respondents. A sizeable number of respondents, 18 (8.26%) did not know how their leaders are chosen.

There were different aspects of gender that was researched. For instance, we wanted to know how gender is distributed in positions of decision making. Gender in the positions of decision making is distributed as follows:

Table 33: Gender Distribution in Leadership Positions in Religious Groups

POSITION	MALE	FEMALE	N/A	TOTAL
Chairperson	88.13% 193	10.96% 24	0.91% 2	219
Vice Chairperson	48.17% 105	50.00% 109	1.83% 4	218
Secretary	35.16% 77	64.38% 141	0.46% 1	219
Treasurer	53.67% 117	45.87% 100	0.46% 1	218
Committee Member 1	51.21% 106	42.03% 87	6.76% 14	207
Committee Member 2	50.72% 105	39.61% 82	9.66% 20	
Committee Member 3	41.06% 85	46.38% 96	12.56% 26	



As it can be seen in the above table, the position of chairperson is dominated by males having 193 (88.13%) respondents as opposed to females who were only 24 (10.96%).

Meetings are regularly held in fellowship- groups. 113 (51.60%) of respondents said they have regular face to face meetings, 3 (1.37%) of the respondents said they use digital online platforms (e.g. Zoom, Skype, WhatsApp, Telegram, Facebook) whereas 103 (47.03%) said their meetings use a Combination of both face to face and digital online platforms.

Table 34: Frequency of Meetings among Fellowship Groups

FREQUENCY OF MEETINGS	RESPONSES	
Daily	0.00%	0
Weekly	63.13%	137
Monthly	20.28%	44
Annually	16.59%	36

The members draw different benefits from this type of association (see the table below). The benefits driven from the group received the following responses: collective security 8 (3.65%), entertainment benefits 6 (2.74%), organization/ welfare support 52 (23.74%), improved voice in engaging with officeholders 15 (6.85%), exposure to new concepts/ideas stood at 35 (15.98%), physical wellbeing 49 (22.37%), sense of belonging at 74 (33.79%), spiritual support 191 (87.21%) and 43 (19.63%) benefitted by networking.

Table 35: Benefits Drawn from Fellowship Groups

BENEFIT	RESPONSES	
Collective Security	3.65%	8
Entertainment	2.74%	6
Organising/receiving welfare support	23.74%	52
Improved voice in engaging with officeholders	6.85%	15
Exposure to new concept or ideas	15.98%	35
Physical wellbeing	22.37%	49
Sense of belonging	33.79%	74
Spiritual support	87.21%	191
Networking	19.63%	43
Total Respondents:		**219**

The respondents expressed concerns for issues affecting their associations. Some of these problems are Gender based discrimination which was expressed by 6 (2.74%) respondents, Low levels of participation 33 (15.07%), Weak governance procedures 10 (4.57%) Leadership 45 (20.55%), Corruption 10 (4.57%) Formal registration 5 (2.28%), Meeting government regulatory requirements e.g., tax compliance 7 (3.20%), Funding 72 (32.88%) and 92 (42.01%) respondent mentioned other problems not on the list but did not specify.

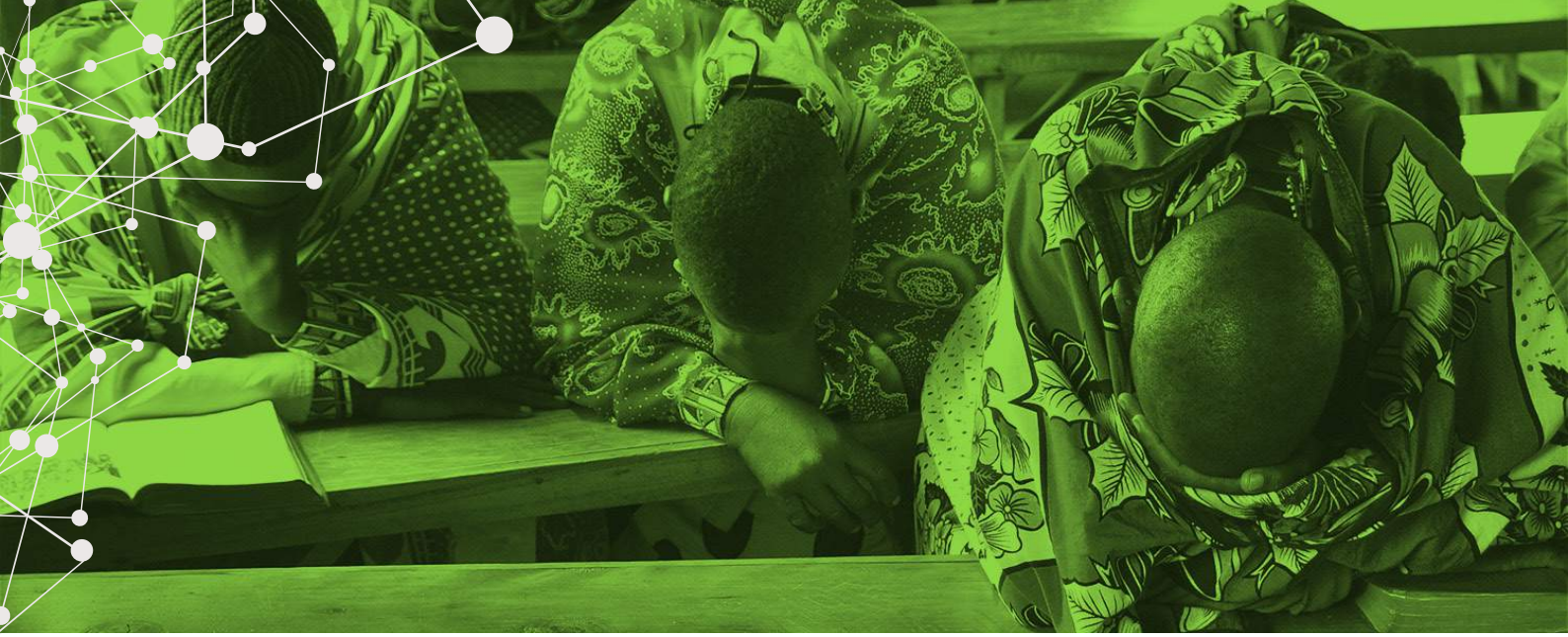
Table 36: Problems Affecting Fellowship Groups

PROBLEM	RESPONSES	
None of the above	42.01%	92
Gender based discrimination	2.74%	6
Low levels of participation	15.07%	33
Weak governance procedures	4.57%	10
Leadership	20.55%	45
Corruption	4.57%	10
Formal registration	2.28%	5
Meeting government regulatory requirements e.g., tax compliance	3.20%	7
Funding	32.88%	72

Among the 219 respondents who are members of fellowship groups, 12 (5.48%) said they had been discriminated against in one way or another of whom 6 (50.00%) of the respondents had faced Language Barriers, 1 (8.33%) faced rigid religious boundaries, 2 (16.67%) faced Defined tribal/ethnic boundaries, 1 (8.33%) was discriminated against on the basis of Age (too young or too old), and 1 (8.33%) faced Legal hurdles (not having national registration/Identity Documents). One person mentioned other forms of discrimination.

Table 37: Forms of Discrimination among Fellowship Groups

FORM	RESPONSES	
Language Barriers	50.00%	6
Prohibitive Membership Costs/Fees	0.00%	0
Defined geographical boundaries	0.00%	0
Membership defined by gender (for e.g., women's only group)	8.33%	1
Defined religious boundaries	8.33%	1
Defined tribal/ethnic boundaries	16.67%	2
Age (too young or too old)	8.33%	1
Disability	0.00%	0
Legal (not having national registration/ID documents)	0.00%	0
Other (please specify)	8.33%	1
Total respondents		**12**



When asked if their associations owned assets in common, 71 (32.27%) of the 220 respondents in this category responded in the affirmative. Property that respondents said they owned in common included land 61 (85.92%), Water body (Dam) 2 (2.82%), Tourist Attraction points, Grazing Lands 1 (1.41%), and Buildings 43 (60.56%) respondents.

Table 38: Assets Held in Common among Fellowship Groups

ASSET	RESPONSES	
Land	85.92%	61
Minerals	0.00%	0
Water body (Dam)	2.82%	2
Tourist Attraction	0.00%	0
Grazing Lands	1.41%	1
Buildings	60.56%	43
Total Participants		**71**

Burial Societies

Burial societies are normally organised in neighbourhoods. They come together to support financially, socially and materially any bereaved households among its members. This category had 35 respondents. Of these, 1 (2.86%) said their group was established through constitution, 1 (2.86) company limited by guarantee, 12 (34.29%) association, 4 (11.43%) claimed theirs had no formal registration and 17 (48.57%) did not know how their organizations were formed.

Table 39: Methods of Establishment of Burial Society

METHOD	RESPONSES	
Trust	0.00%	0
Constitution	2.86%	1
Company Limited by Guarantee	2.86%	1
Association	34.29%	12
No formal registration	11.43%	4
I do not know	48.57%	17
Total		**35**

When asked how their leaders were selected, 22(62.86%) said their officeholders are selected through elections, 11 (31.43%) are appointed, 1 (2.86%) are hereditary, 1 (2.86%) are voluntary.

The table below shows the gender equation in positions of decision making:

Table 40: Gender Distribution in Leadership Positions in Burial Societies

POSITION	MALE	FEMALE	N/A	TOTAL
Chairperson	94.29% 33	2.86% 1	2.86% 1	35
Vice Chairperson	20.00% 7	60.00% 21	20.00% 7	
Secretary	20.00% 7	80.00% 28	0.00% 0	
Treasurer	88.57% 31	11.43% 4	0.00% 0	
Committee Member 1	28.13% 9	40.63% 13	31.25% 10	32
Committee Member 2	36.36% 12	27.27% 9	36.36% 12	33
Committee Member 3	30.30% 10	30.30% 10	39.39% 13	

Regarding the frequencies of interactions 3 (8.57%) respondents said their meetings are conducted weekly, 11 (31.43%) monthly, and 21 (60.00%) said annually. Ways of holding meetings varied. 31 (88.57%) respondents said their meeting are regular face to face meetings, while 4 (11.43%) said they used a combination of both face to face and digital online

Table 41: Frequency of Interaction among Burial Societies

FREQUENCY	RESPONSES	
Daily	0.00%	0
Weekly	8.57%	3
Monthly	31.43%	11
Annually	60.00%	21
Total		**35**

While responding to the question of benefits gotten by being members of this society, 1 (2.86%) cited Collective security, 1 (2.86%) entertainment, 27 (77.14%) organization receiving welfare support, 3 (8.57%) improved voice in engaging with officeholders, 8 (22.86%) exposure to new concepts/ideas, 18 (51.43%) physical wellbeing, 6 (17.14%) sense of belonging, 2 (5.71%) received spiritual nourishment and 2 (5.71%) benefited by networking.

Table 42: Benefits Drawn from Burial Society

BENEFIT	RESPONSES	
Collective Security	2.86%	1
Entertainment	2.86%	1
Organising/receiving welfare support	77.14%	27
Improved voice in engaging with officeholders	8.57%	3
Exposure to new concept or ideas	22.86%	8
Physical wellbeing	51.43%	18
Sense of belonging	17.14%	6
Spiritual support	5.71%	2
Networking	5.71%	2
Total		**35**

Burial societies are mainly formed to offer welfare support from the members as attested by 27 (77.14%) members. also highly mentioned was physical wellbeing which received 18 responses (51.43%) responses.

5. Conclusion

Governance cannot be achieved without the active engagement of citizens and civil society actors. This survey sought to map those things that citizen do in the society especially among themselves. The research was conducted in the Nairobi metropolitan region.

The survey focused on three major categories of citizen initiative: economic, political and social initiatives. These are initiatives that governance and democracy cannot flourish without and in which the citizenry play a critical role.

Under economic initiatives, we surveyed several citizen associations. These association were savings and lending group, labour pooling group, production cooperative, buying clubs (e.g., collective group to buy groceries), marketing cooperative (involved in jointly selling commodities), common property group (natural resources), asset pooling group, market group/platform (a place or network where members sell goods/services to each other), business promotion council, business advocacy/lobby group, business mentorship/ training group, housing cooperative, and multi-level marketing schemes (e.g. Avon, Tablecharm, Tupperware), Among these, the savings and lending group had the highest reorientation.

Regarding political citizen initiatives, we surveyed the following: campaign group, political party, social movement, joint public petition, local peace committee, residents' association, online based civic coalition, women's group, and youth group. Among these groups, political parties had the highest representation among the respondents.

Last we had the social support focused groups. These included: fellowship group /religious group (temples, churches, mosques, shrine etc.), burial societies, sporting association, entertainment group (dance, choir etc.), school association parent/teacher group, alumni association, book/reading club, community development association, service organization or club (e.g. Lions Club; Rotary International), neighbourhood watch committee, communal

granary, community feeding group, and community foundation. Fellowship/religious group had the largest number of respondents at 220 which represented 53.66% of the study sample.

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Exploring Citizenship: The lived realities around associational life in Zimbabwe

Daniel Mususa

1. Introduction

Zimbabwe is a land-locked country of 399,757 square kilometres (Government of Zimbabwe, 2020) , a population of 13 572 560 people with an average household size of 4.2 persons/household, dominated by people of African ethnic origin who make up 99.7% of the population (Zimbabwe Inter-Censal Demographic Survey, 2017). The country gained independence from Britain in 1980 following the Second Chimurenga armed liberation war in which the African nationalist movement played a critical role of mobilising the black majority to take up arms and fight the colonial master. Mandaza (1986), Bhebhe and Ranger (1991), Kriger (1992) and Bhebhe (1999) highlight the role played by citizen-led formations and religious movements during the Chimurenga era. These were seminal citizen-led formations that were active in the liberation war, however, the Chimurenga era is not in the ambit of this current study. Rather, the study looks at more contemporary citizen-led formations, affiliations, groups and activities that citizens do with, and for each other.

The attainment of independence heralded the rulership of the Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front (ZANU PF). ZANU PF took over the reins from the colonial government which exercised its control through racially exclusive institutions that repudiated the political and economic rights of Africans (Brett, 2006). The "euphoria and expectations of independence" (Murisa, 2015:2) and hopes for prosperity and equitable development were dulled by the violence caused by political differences between ZANU PF and Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU) party that took place in the Matabeleland and Midlands provinces (Taundi, 2010) and dampened further by the Economic Structural Adjustment Programs (ESAP) (Mudimu and Kurima, 2018). ESAP was a 5–year market-based approach prescribed by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to reform the public sector, liberalise trade, reduce trade deficits and create a favourable climate for economic growth (Sachikonye, 2003 as cited in Murisa, 2015:5). Following ESAP, the country experienced rising unemployment, rising poverty and an economic crisis that has been deepening since the early 2000s (Lee and Colvard, 2003; Sachikonye, 2007;

Taundi, 2010), political tensions (Murisa, 2015) and an unresolved political crisis which is recursively implicated in Zimbabwe's two decades-long socio-economic impasse (Karekwaivanane and Msonza, 2021). These and other factors, continue to shape the democracy and development landscape in Zimbabwe as well as how citizens interact with each other, the forms of groupings, associational formations and activities in which they participate.

2. Background to Citizen Led Formations in Zimbabwe

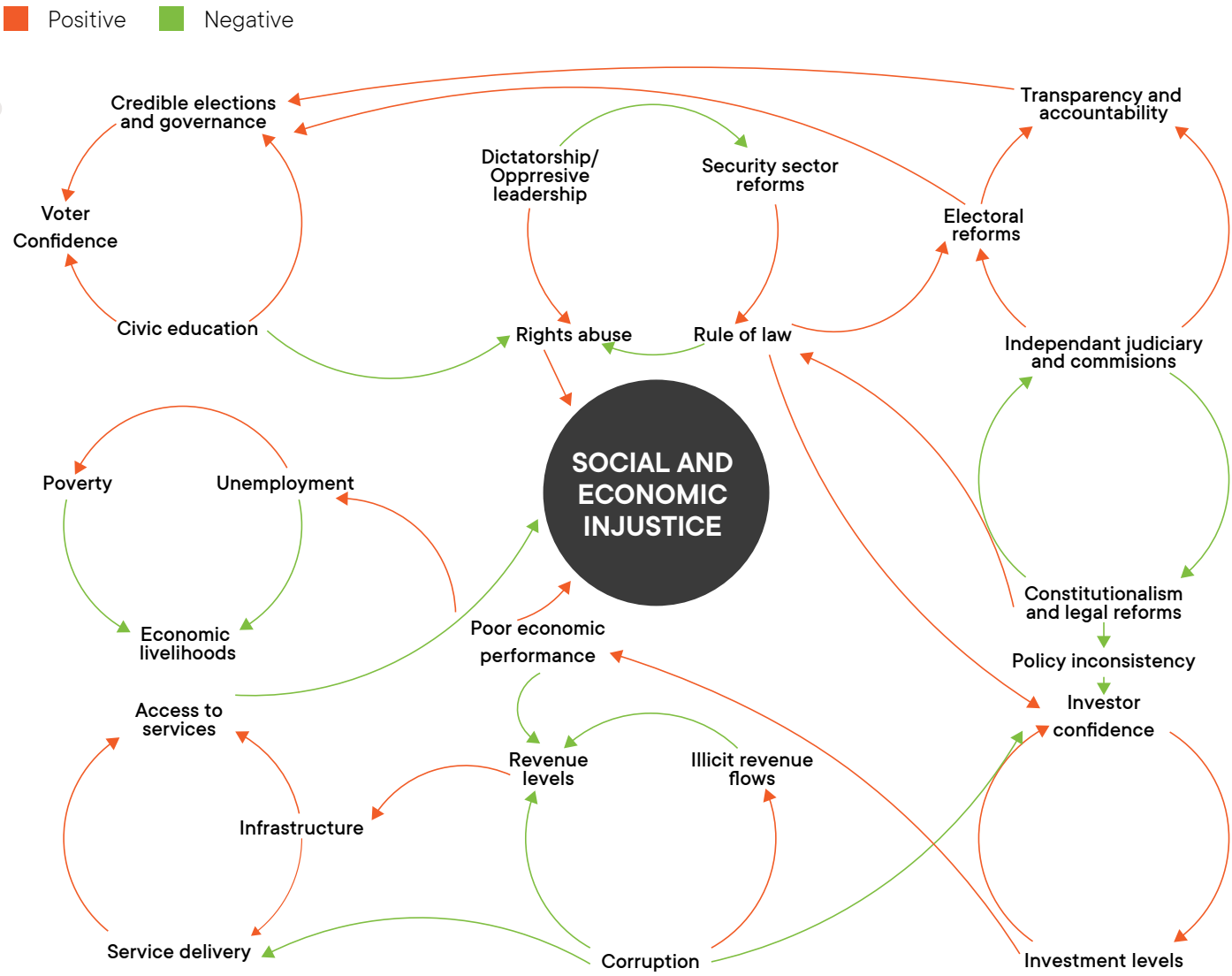
Citizen formations are manifestations of inspiration from and responses to different factors such as cultural modernisation and new forms of dispossession (Harvey, 2003), need for redress of poverty, lack of assets and inequitable socio-economic relationships (Bebbington, 2006), grievances around identity issues, and the emergence of new charismatic and visionary leaders (Bebbington, 2010:2). The next section (2.1) looks at citizen-led formations as responses to political factors. The subsequent section (2.2) looks at different forms of associations citizen take part in response to economic factors.

2.1 Citizen-led associational formations as responses to political factors

Citizen formations can also be driven by socio-economic issues such as cultural modernisation and new forms of politically-driven dispossession (Harvey, 2003), the need for redress of inequitable socio-economic relationships (Bebbington, 2006), grievances around identity issues, and the emergence of new charismatic and visionary leaders (Bebbington, 2010:2). They also emerge from the "shifting boundaries of community" due to transnational migration, local autonomy movements and claims of citizenship rights (Marston and Mitchell, 2004:93). Other factors include Zimbabwe's history of violence and trauma from the liberation war (Reeler et al, 2009; Machakanja, 2010; Sachikonye, 2011) the Gukurahundi (Rwodzi, 2018; and Mpofu, 2021), electoral violence (Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation, 2009; Masunungure, 2011; and RAU, 2021) and citizens' fear of the State (Ngwenya and Harris, 2015), real and perceived attempts at creating a one-party state by the ZANU PF government (Gregory, 1986; Shaw, 1986; The Independent, 2021). Musarurwa

(2016) posits that youth-led activist formations are mainly borne out of Zimbabwe's complex web of socio-economic and political conflict which he terms the "causal loop of Zimbabwe's Conflict"

Figure 1: The causal loop in Zimbabwe's conflict



Source: Musarurwa, 2016:2

Karekwaivanane and Msonza (2021) argue that restrictive legislation, suppression of civic expression of dissent and persecution of human rights activists have resulted in the shrinking civil space in Zimbabwe and this has given rise to particular forms of citizen-led formations that seek to express the muted voices of the voiceless citizenry.

Table 1: A Broad timeline of events around the shrinking of civic space from the mid-1990s

Year	Shift	Implication
1997–99	Emergence of a civil society coalition under the National Constitutional Assembly	Opening of civic space and formation if the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC)
2000–08	All-out-effort by Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU-PF) to hold on to power	Rapid shrinking civic space and targeting of civil society and opposition activists
2008–13	Government of National Unity	Expansion of civic space and adoption of new constitution
2013–late2017	ZANU-PF's shock defeat of opposition MDC	Renewed shrinking of civic space and repression of citizen-led protest campaigns
November 2017 – July 2018	Following a military coup, a new government led by Emmerson Mnangagwa takes office	Broadening civic space and increased freedom of speech, assembly, and association
August 2018 – present	Post-election killings usher in a return to overt oppression	Closing of civic space, and carrot-and-stick approach towards opposition politicians, civil society activists and unionists

Source: Karekwaivanane and Msonza 2021:49 Zimbabwe Digital Rights Landscape Report

While Karekwaivanane and Msonza's timeline does not detail the changes in the laws, it brings to the fore some key epochs and their implications. These shifts and implications are central in how people express themselves in public and which associations and activities they participate in, especially when it comes to issues to do with democracy and participation in governance.

Women of Zimbabwe Arise (WOZA) was formed in 2003 as a non-violent feminist organisation comprising ordinary poor mothers who want to be "a litmus test proving that the power of love can conquer the love of power" (Taundi, 2010:9). WOZA views women's consciousness as that of collective beings rather than subjective ideas. WOZA has also reached out to men and formed Men of Zimbabwe Arise (MOZA), reflecting its quest to be non-sexist in approach and to be open to anyone sharing in its ideals of mobilising its members to fight for better governance and social justice including demanding space for women to participate in developmental political, economic and social issues affecting their lives (Mapuva, 2003). WOZA's principal objective is to impart knowledge and skills enabling women to make informed decisions, build the strength of character that demonstrates courage and leadership qualities, increase participation in governance,

act as human rights defenders and facilitate the networking of expertise and skills between women towards elevating the standing of women in society (WOZA, 2008). The National Constitutional Assembly (NCA) was formed in December 1987 when the Zimbabwe Council of Churches (ZCC), labour, human rights groups, students, youth and women's groups came together to form a civic coalition with a mandate of campaigning for the drafting and adoption of a new people-driven constitution in Zimbabwe (Taundi, 2010; Murisa, 2015). It was envisaged that the new constitution would define issues such as presidential terms, land reform, human rights, the rule of law and other issues (Moyo, 2019) and would replace the 1979 Lancaster House Agreement. In the run-up to the February 2000 Constitutional referendum, the NCA mobilised against the Constitution Commission's Draft as being elite-driven, partisan, and repressive and further centralising power in the presidency by repealing private property rights. As such, the Constitution Commission Draft was rejected in a referendum in February 2000 (Dzinesa, 2012).

As a result of increased access to the internet by the masses, digital spaces have become a viable arena for the expression of views that are contrary to hegemonic discourses.

Mare (2014) highlights the emergence of social media as "protest drums" avenues and spaces for the expression of protest for the suppressed citizens' views on governance. As a result of increased access to the internet by the masses, digital spaces have become a viable arena for the expression of views that are contrary to hegemonic discourses. Musarurwa (2016) concurs with Mare's view on the importance of the internet and posits that increased citizen' access to the internet in the context of shrinking space for physical activism on the streets explains the boon in internet-based citizen-led youth formations such as Occupy Africa Unity Square (OAUS), #ThisFlag and Tajamuka/Sesjikile. OAUS was founded in 2014 by the activist Itai Dzamara and identifies itself as pursuing a non-violent and constitutional fight to liberate the country from corruption and mismanagement, carrying on with the same mandate that was started by those that fought the war of liberation. The movement uses the Africa Unity Square in the central business district of Harare just across the Parliament of Zimbabwe building, as their main space for protests (Musarurwa, 2016 and Chitanana, 2020). The #ThisFlag movement was founded by a local Pastor who posted online videos of himself expressing his concerns at what he viewed as the government's departure from the founding ideals of the nation. He then posed his questions, highlighting how he

was not sure if the country was still on the path of development and democratic government and values which the colours of the flag represent (Chitanana and Mutsvairo, 2019; Nenjerama, 2019, Dendere, 2020). These are mainly urban-based formations.

2.2 Citizen-led associational formations as responses to socio-economic and cultural factors

In the rural areas as Bratton (1986:358) cited by Murisa (2009:127) asserts, "Zimbabwe's countryside has historically been made up of a mosaic of associational forms including loose unstructured mutual networks such as faith-based groups, credit associations, women's groups, labour sharing groups, and the more structured peasant organisations which are either localised or national". We can therefore observe that citizen-led formations are modulated by a diverse set of issues including economic and livelihood factors, factors relating to political injustices, and others, by social considerations including Durkheim's organic and mechanical solidarity where people are joined together in their communities by a moralistic pull in the form of collective conscience, common beliefs and sentiments as well as functional/utilitarian need for each other. This is expressed in such formations as Zunde raMambo, for example. As citizens act in response to these different factors, they exercise agency and produce and reproduce and sustain citizen-led initiatives and associations. Shared ethnocultural identities and mutual concerns over food security are also pivotal in the concept and practice of Zunde raMambo/Isiphala senkosi among various ethnic groups in Zimbabwe (Mararike, 2001; Lunga and Musarurwa, 2016) and has been practiced "since the 1800s or earlier" (Sithole, 2020:117). Zunde raMambo is a critical social security system that provided informal safety nets against food shortages to vulnerable families and alleviated drought or flood-induced food insecurity (Stathers et al, 2000; Lunga and Musarurwa, 2016).

> **Zunde raMambo is an informal, in-built social, economic, and political mechanism where a chief designated a piece of land for cultivation by his subjects**

From its literal meaning, "Zunde" means a large gathering of people participating in a common activity and may also refer to the grain jointly stored for future use by people in a community (Mararike,

2001). In practicality, Zunde raMambo is an informal, in-built social, economic, and political mechanism where a chief designated a piece of land for cultivation by his subjects (Mararike, 2001), or by the village headmen for farming by the community (Stathers et. al, 2000) for the mutually beneficial purpose of harvesting and storing grain for use in times of hardships. The practice was not solely centred on crop production as it was also used as a social, economic and political rallying mechanism and an assertion of unity and oneness which also connoted social and moral obligations.

Cooperatives have been operational in Zimbabwe since the pre-independence period and have enjoyed state support for example, through the Co-operative Act (Chapter 193) of 1956. Under this Act any group of at least 10 adults sharing a common purpose and having specified their motivation for the inception of a co-operative and its activities were eligible for registration as a cooperative(UN-Habitat, 1989:174). Zimbabwe legally recognises housing cooperatives, fishing cooperatives, manufacturing, arts and crafts, agriculture, services, savings and credit co-operatives and mining cooperatives as the seven categories of cooperatives. Table 2 below shows a breakdown of the number of registered cooperatives in Zimbabwe in 2016 according to their sector of operation.

Table 2: Type of cooperatives in Zimbabwe

Type of cooperative	Number of cooperatives
Fishing	127
Manufacturing	–
Arts and Crafts	57
Transport	19
Agriculture	194
Mining	92
Savings and Credit Cooperatives (SACCOs)	254

Source: Ministerial Statement on the state of cooperatives in Zimbabwe, 2016

Mhembwe and Dube (2017) looked at the role played by six agricultural cooperatives in sustaining the livelihoods of rural communities and established that cooperatives helped to generate employment for people in the rural communities and boosted food production. Mhembwe and Dube assert that while cooperatives face constraints including financial support, lack of access to lucrative markets for their produce as well as poor management, they empowered the marginalised, especially women. As World Bank (1989) points out that through the Ministry of Community and Cooperative Development and Women's Affairs (MCCW), the government of Zimbabwe promoted collective cooperatives mainly in agriculture as part of the resettlement of ex-combatants and landless families in the early post-independence period (World Bank, 1989: 10). More recently, the government of Zimbabwe supports cooperatives by providing pre- registration and post registration training and support as well as observing the International Co-operative Day in July of each year (Ministerial Statement on the state of cooperatives in Zimbabwe, 2016)

"As a consequence of the adoption of the Economic Structural Adjustment Program (ESAP) there was a sharp decline in the government's financial support for housing"

In the period just after independence Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) also actively promoted these cooperatives as a vehicle for introducing new farming and marketing practices to rural farmers and providing them with more accessible and low-cost extension services (Mhembwe and Dube, 2017). Other imperatives that drive the formation of cooperatives include failure by the market to provide goods and services at affordable prices, acceptable quality (The National Cooperative Business Association, 2005, as cited by Mhembwe and Dube, 2017) as well as the need for better bargaining powers, creating and maintaining access to market opportunities (Barton, 2000 as cited by Mhembwe and Dube, 2017).

Housing cooperatives are a form of citizen-led association necessitated by the government's failure to provide housing, an increasing demand for low-cost housing and secure tenure in urban and peri-urban areas in Zimbabwe (Chirisa et al, 2014). As a consequence of the adoption of the Economic Structural Adjustment Program (ESAP) there was a sharp decline in the government's financial support for housing and this was exacerbated by the "stringent...cumbersome and bureaucratic" (Chirisa et al, 2014:39) formal channels and procedures for

accessing public housing. The government of Zimbabwe's socialist approach to the provision of housing meant that the State was the provider of housing to the poor but this approach failed due to resource handicaps (Chirisa et al, 2014). Chirisa and Paradza (2017) indicate that Zimbabwe's National Housing Policy (NHP) of 2000 showed a growth in the housing stock deficit from 20 000 to 100 000 units between 1995 to 1999. In response, low-earning residents of peri-urban and urban areas resorted to housing cooperatives as a key tool for overcoming challenges with the traditional housing development model which required councils to provide full infrastructure and services such as roads, electricity and water before housing construction and habitation. In housing cooperatives, the members pool their resources together as a way of dealing with their individual financial challenges.

Some forms of citizen associations emerge as a response to "shifting boundaries of community" due to co-acting factors such as transnational migration, local autonomy movements and claims of citizenship rights (Marston and Mitchell, 2004:93). Following Marston and Mitchell's and Bebington's (2006)'s line

of ideas, burial societies can be seen as one form of citizen-led formations that arose out of transnational migration and the need to cope with inequitable socio-economic relationships. Kalima (2013) highlights the emergence of burial societies in Zimbabwe as citizen-led movements rooted in mutualism among foreign immigrant workers during the colonial era, and these served as safety nets for marginalised workers by providing economic and logistical support to members during times of bereavement. These burial societies were mainly located in high-density residential areas, farms, and mines during colonial times. The burial societies' membership was mainly drawn along ethnic lines and served as a coping strategy for the "detribalised" and "deculturalised" early working classes in the colonial times. Hall (1987) asserts that burial societies are local organisations that provide mutual help and assistance to members in the event of death and illness in "a strange hostile environment" (Hall,1987:49). Chigara and Mutesasira (2001) found that burial societies also assist members in accessing informal loans and savings with high flexibility, lower transaction costs and these services are more accessible than formalised ones due to low barriers of entry and being generally framed around mutuality and a socio-cultural framework of shared ethnocultural identities which stimulate reciprocity.

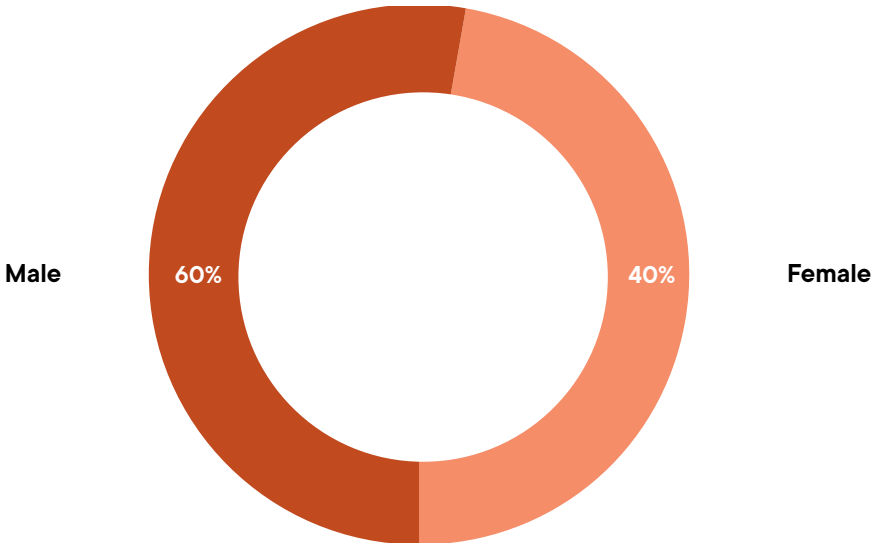
3. Description of Sample

Data was collected in Harare, Zimbabwe's capital city and is one of the country's 10 provinces. Harare is one of Zimbabwe's two metropolitan provinces and is made up of Harare City Council, Chitungwiza Municipal Authority, Epworth Local Board and Ruwa Town Council (Government of Zimbabwe Portal). Harare is perpetually experiencing high urbanisation due to the rural-urban migration and influx of people in search of employment and better economic opportunities (Tibaijuka, 2005, and Potts, 2011). According to the last national census for Zimbabwe held in 2012, Harare had a population of 2 123 132 with were 1 025 596 males and 1 097 536 females with 34.00% of the population below 15 years and 2.00% above 65 years of age (Zimbabwe 2012 Census Harare Provincial Report). In total 446 people responded to the survey.

3.1 Respondents Age and Gender

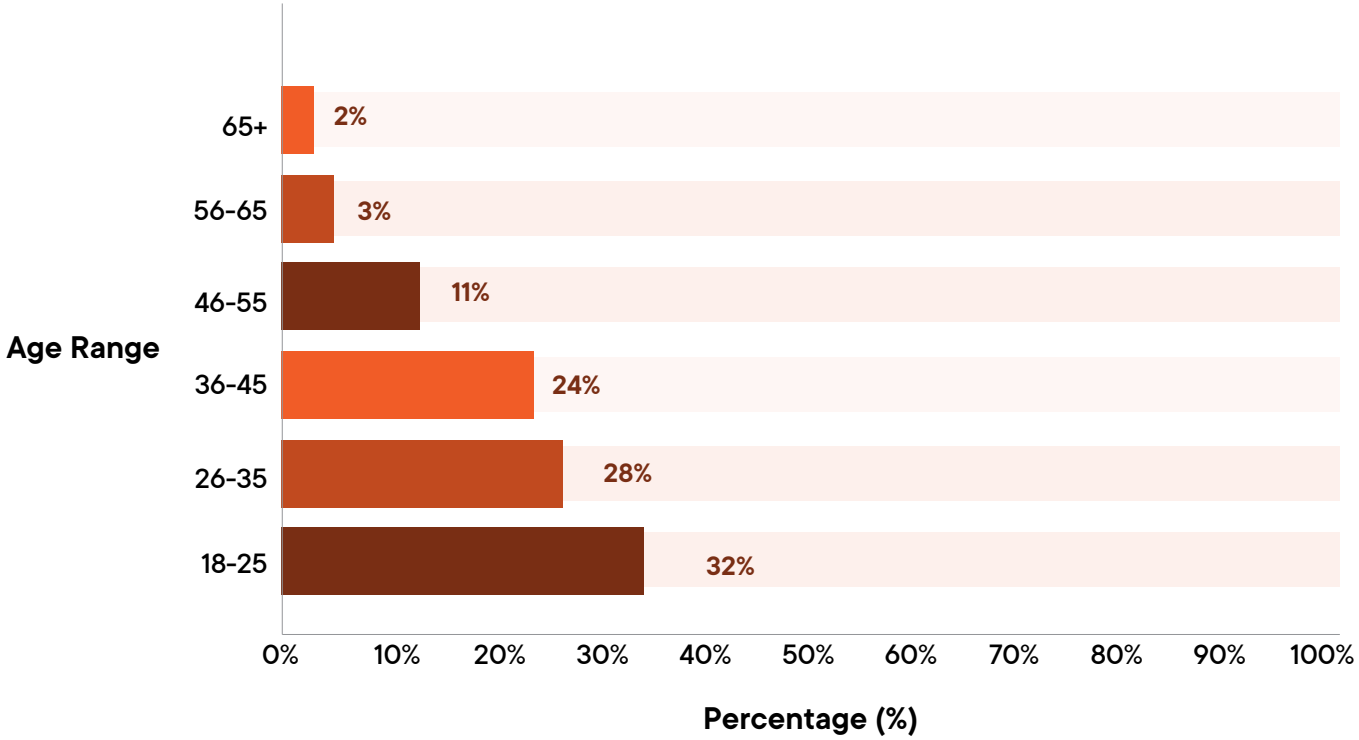
From the sample of 446 respondents male respondents constituted 60.00% of the sample while female respondents made up 40.00% as shown in Figure 2 below

Figure 2: Respondents by Gender



The 18–25 years age cohort had the highest contribution to the sample, making up 32.00% followed by the 26–35 age group (28.00%), the 36–45 (24.00%) and 46–55 (11.00%) while the 56–65 and 65+ contributed 3.00% and 2.00% respectively.

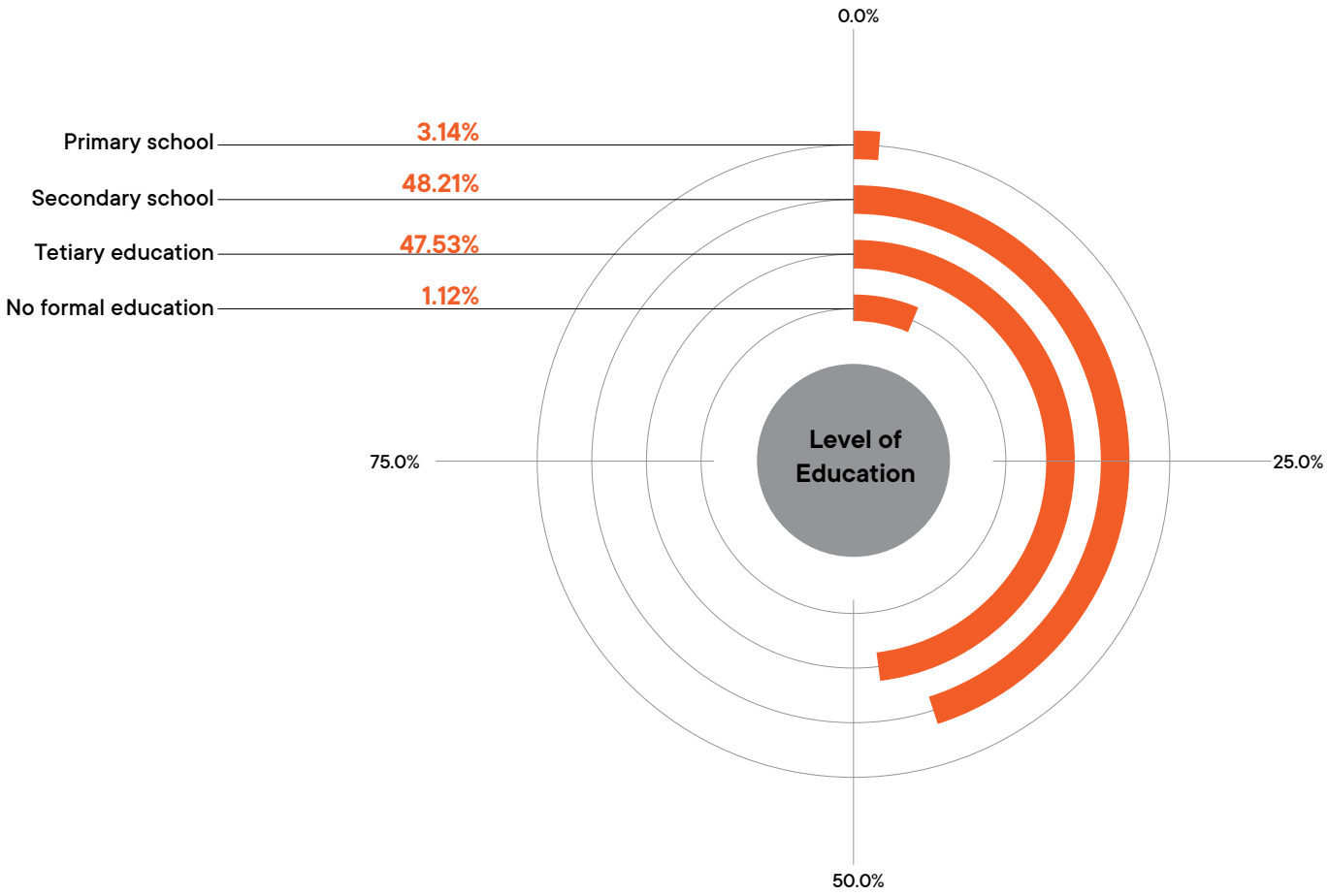
Figure 3: Respondents Gender and Age Distribution



3.2 Literacy, Education and Monthly Income Levels

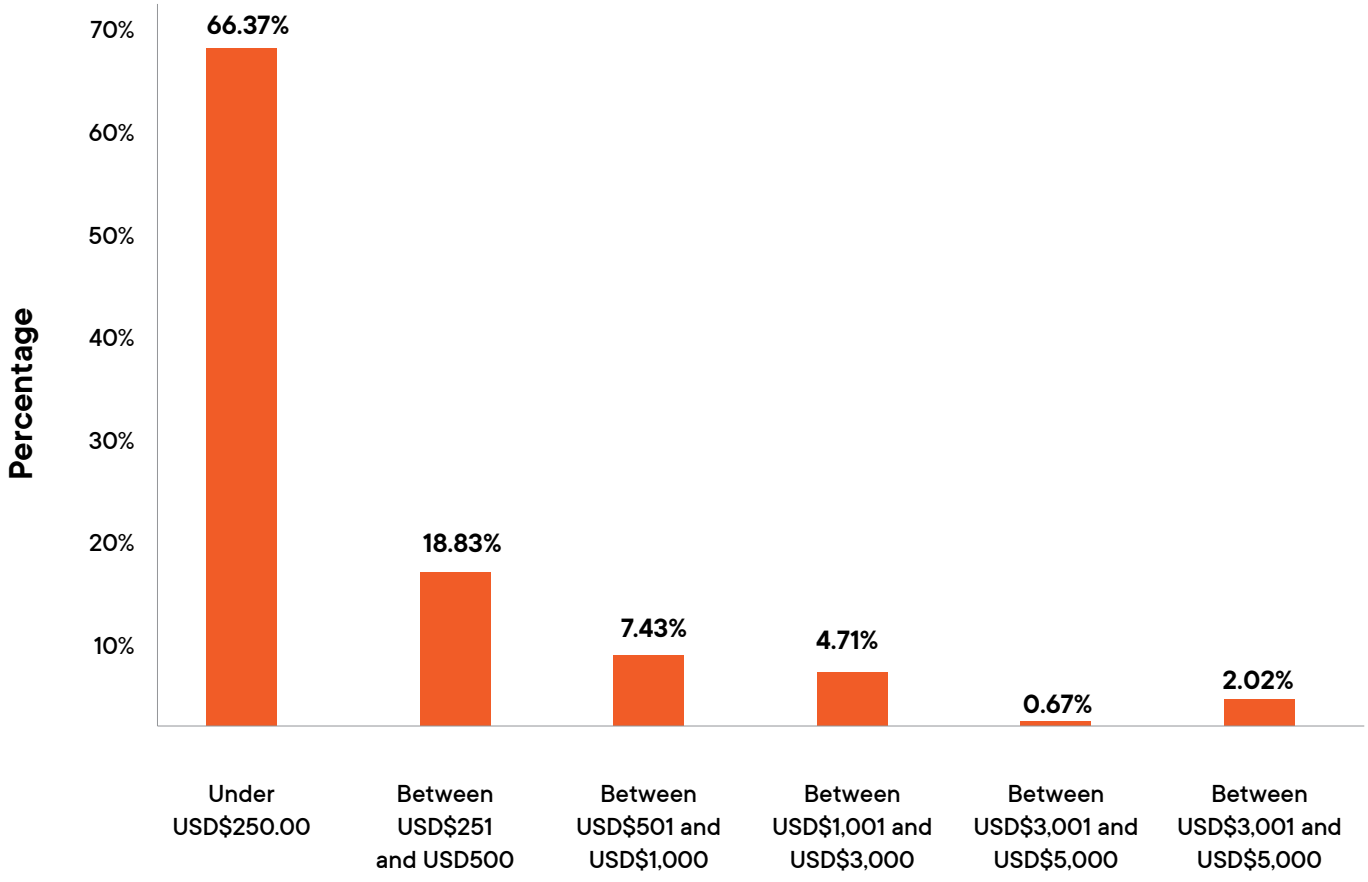
In terms of literacy, 98.88% of 'the study's 446 respondents indicated they could read and write whilst only 1.12% said they were not able to. In terms of level of education, there was an almost equal split in respondents who completed secondary school (48.21%) and those who completed tertiary education (47.53%). Figure 4 belows shows study participants' level of education.

Figure 4: Level of education



Just 3.14% indicated primary school as their highest level of education and 1.12% had not had any formal education. To further understand the socio-economic characteristics of the sample, the study explored the participants'average monthly income and these are shown in Figure 5 below.

Figure 5: Monthly income ranges

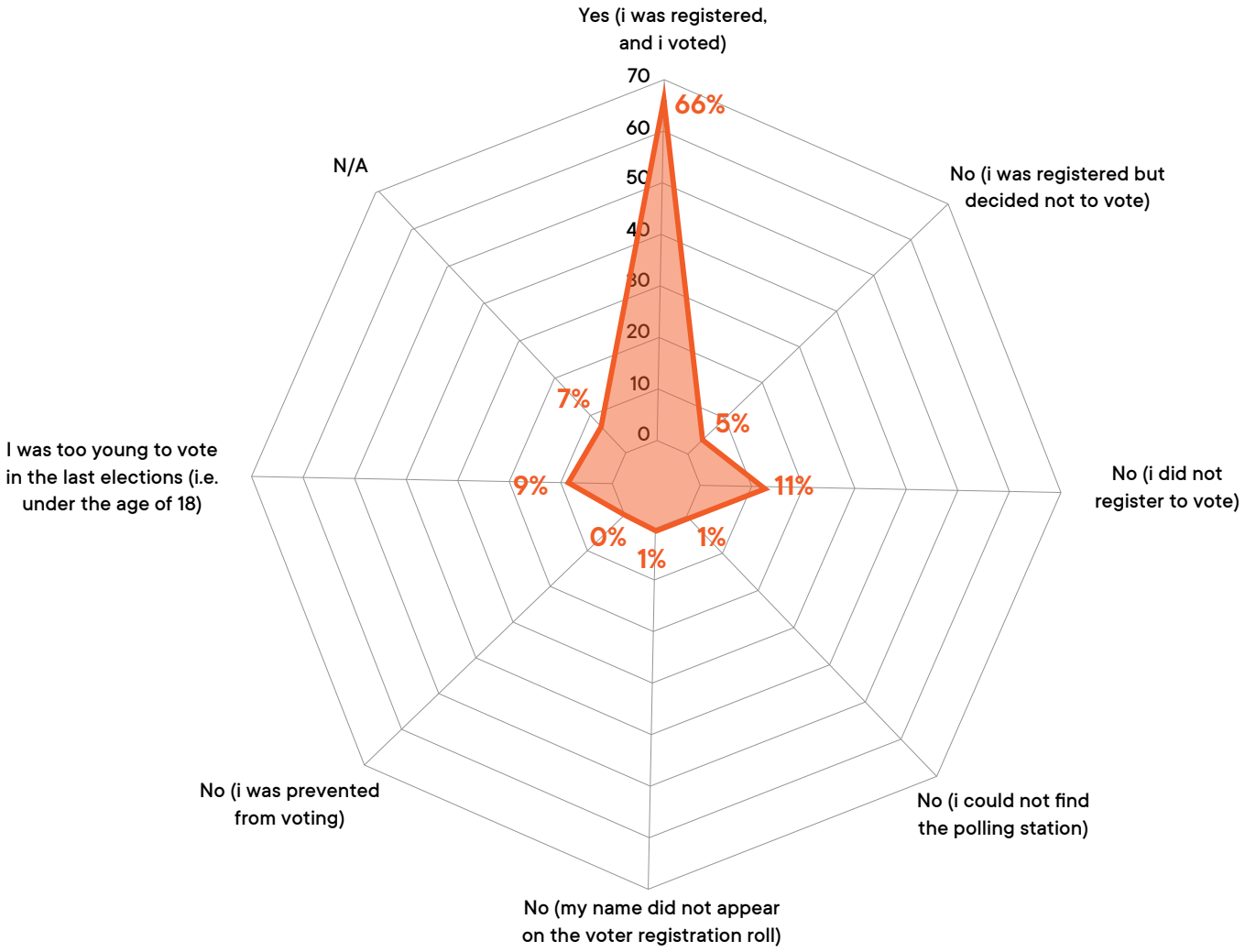


Most participants (66.37%) had a monthly income of below USD 250.00 followed by 18.83% who earned between USD 251 and USD 500. The two highest income brackets of earners between USD 3001 and USD 5,000 and above USD 3001 had just 0.67% and 2.02% respectively.

3.3 Participation in Electoral Processes

Respondents were asked if they were registered voters and if they participated in electoral processes. Figure 6 below shows the responses.

Figure 6: Voting in presidential elections



More than half of the respondents (66.00%) were registered voters and voted in the last presidential elections. A combined total of 34.00% did not because of various reasons with 11% just indicating they did not vote because they did not register to vote, 9.00% were under the age of 18 and therefore too young to vote in the last elections, 5.00% were registered voters but did not cast a vote on the day of the election. A smaller number 1.00% failed to vote because they could not find the polling station and another 1.00% also failed to vote because their names did not appear on the voter registration roll. None of the respondents was prevented from voting.

4. Mapping of Citizen's initiatives in Zimbabwe

The study focused on three broad categories of spheres where citizen initiatives can be scrutinised and there are: (i) citizens and the economy, (ii) citizens and politics, then (iii) citizens and social support. A total of 49.00% of respondents indicated that they were members of social support associations, 40.00% and 33.00% belonged to economic and political associations respectively. The formation, features and functions of the various initiatives as established by the study, are highlighted in the ensuing discussion.

4.1 Citizens and the Economy

4.1.1 Membership to economic associations

Study participants were asked to indicate the different forms of economic associations to which they belonged and when these associations were established. A total of 14.13% belonged to a Market Group/Platform. (a place or network where members sell goods/services to each other) and 11.11% of such market groups/platforms were established between 1990 and 2000. A total of 11.21% belonged to a Housing Cooperative with most (56.00%) indicating that the cooperative they were part of had been been established between 2001 and 2010. The next category of economic association with most members was Savings and Lending Group with 10.54% respondents indicating their membership to this category and 23.40% reporting that their group was established between 1990–2000.

Table 3 below summarises the main economic associations. On the lower end, 0.45% of study participants belonged to a Business Advocacy/Lobby and 50.00% of these groups were established between 1990 and 2000. A further 1.79% belonged to a Business Promotion Council and 37.50% of these were also established between 1990 and 2000. A lesser number (1.79%) also belonged to Common Property Group (natural resources) and another 1.79% belonged to an Asset Pooling Group with 62.50%

of these associations having been formed between 1990 and 2000. Most (41.67%) multi-level marketing schemes such as Avon, Table Charm and Tupperware and Business Promotion Councils (25.00%) were established recently between 2010 and 2000).

Table 3: Membership to economic associations

Economic association classification	Year of establishment			
	Percentage of members	1990 - 2000	2001 - 2010	2010 - 2020
Savings and Lending Group	10.54%	23.40%	8.51%	14.89%
Labour pooling group	2.47%	54.55%	9.09%	18.18%
Production Cooperative	4.71%	33.33%	23.81%	4.76%
Buying Clubs (e.g., collective group to buy groceries)	8.52%	13.16%	5.26%	5.26%
Marketing Cooperative (involved in jointly selling commodities)	2.69%	33.33%	16.67%	16.67%
Common Property Group (natural resources)	1.79%	62.50%	25.00%	12.50%
Asset Pooling Group	1.79%	62.50%	0.00%	12.50%
Market Group/Platform (a place or network where members sell goods/services to each other)	14.13%	11.11%	7.94%	7.94%
Business Promotion Council	1.79%	37.50%	12.50%	25.00%
Business Advocacy/Lobby Group	0.45%	50.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Business Mentorship/Training Group	2.02%	11.11%	0.00%	11.11%
Housing Cooperative	11.21%	18.00%	56.00%	4.00%
Multi-level marketing schemes (e.g. Avon, Tablecharm, Tupperware)	8.07%	22.22%	16.67%	41.67%

Savings and Lending Groups are informal citizen-organised associations where citizens raise capital through mutual funds generated from the weekly or monthly deposits/subscriptions by members/Members' pool money via these periodic payments to the group thereby creating a fund from which they borrow and repay at low-interest rates. These interests are ploughed back into the pooled money to generate return on those savings for the benefit of the members (Ncube, Undated). Labour pooling groups can also be referred to as nhimbe a practice traditionally used by the Shona people in Zimbabwe whereby an individual family invites fellow villagers to help the family, especially in their

subsistence agriculture fields to perform specific tasks such as tilling, planting, weeding or harvesting and then later they commune over the traditional brew and a meal prepared by the family (Mararike, 2001; Tavuyanago et al, 2010:5–6; Chibango, 2017).

4.1.2 Establishment of economic associations

Central to membership in economic associations is the manner of their establishment which frequently has a bearing on the ease of joining specific associations. Table 4 below presents survey responses on how their economic associations were established.

Organisations with no formal registration dominate the economic associations with 73.68% of buying clubs, 67.19% of Market Groups/ Platform and Savings and 57.45% of Lending Group not having any formal registration. Several respondents indicated they did not know how their economic associations were established and these included members of the Labour pooling group (54.55%), Multi-level marketing schemes (52.78%), Business Mentorship/ Training Group (44.44%) and Business Promotion Council (37.50%).

Table 4: Methods of the establishment of economic associations

Association Classification	Methods of establishment of economic associations						
	Trust	Constitution	Company Limited by Guarantee	Association	No formal Registration	I do not know	Other (Specified)
Savings and Lending Group	10.64%	10.64%	4.26%	6.38%	57.45%	8.51%	2.13%
Labour pooling group	9.09%	0.00%	18.18%	0.00%	18.18%	54.55%	0.00%
Production Cooperative	19.05%	0.00%	9.52%	23.81%	28.57%	19.05%	0.00%
Buying Clubs	5.26%	2.63%	0.00%	10.53%	73.68%	2.63%	5.26%
Marketing Cooperative	25.00%	8.33%	8.33%	16.67%	25.00%	16.67%	0.00%
Common Property Group	37.50%	0.00%	25.00%	12.50%	0.00%	25.00%	0.00%
Asset Pooling Group	25.00%	0.00%	12.50%	25.00%	25.00%	12.50%	0.00%
Market Group/Platform	6.25%	0.00%	1.56%	6.25%	67.19%	15.63%	3.13%
Business Promotion Council	0.00%	0.00%	12.50%	25.00%	25.00%	37.50%	0.00%
Business Advocacy/Lobby Group	50.00%	0.00%	0.00%	50.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Business Mentorship/ Training Group	11.11%	0.00%	11.11%	0.00%	33.33%	44.44%	0.00%
Housing Cooperative	8.00%	64.00%	4.00%	4.00%	6.00%	14.00%	0.00%
Multi-level marketing schemes	11.11%	0.00%	33.33%	0.00%	2.78%	52.78%	0.00%

50.00% of Business Advocacy/Lobby Group and 37.50% of Common Property Groups were established by Trust as reported by study respondents. Establishment by Constitution is the least identified method of establishment among Labour pooling group, Production Cooperative, Common Property Group, Asset Pooling Group, Market Group/Platform, Business Promotion Council, Business Advocacy, /Lobby Group, Business Mentorship/ Training Group and Multi-level marketing schemes. None of the respondents indicated that the associations they were part of were being established in this manner.

4.1.3 Gender dynamics in economic associations

Issues of gender inclusivity and equity are vital in the different associational forms of interactions in which citizens participate. In exploring the gender dynamics in associations, respondents were asked to indicate the gender of office-holders in their associations. Table 5 below shows the summary of responses.

Among all the 13 economic associations Buying Clubs had the highest percentage of female leaders (78.92%) followed by Savings and Lendings Groups (67.23%) and Multi-level marketing schemes (62.77%). Business Promotion Council had 60.53% male leaders while Asset Pooling Group (65.96%), Housing Cooperative (62.31%). Business Advocacy/Lobby Group (56.25%) and Labour pooling group (57.53%) also had more male than female leaders.

Table 5: Distribution of office holders by Gender in economic associations

Association Classification	Gender of Office Holders	
	Male Office Holders	Female Office Holders
Savings and Lending Group	32.77%	67.23%
Labour pooling group	57.53%	42.47%
Production Cooperative	52.35%	47.65%
Buying Clubs	21.08%	78.92%
Marketing Cooperative	46.75%	53.25%
Common Property Group	56.90%	43.10%
Asset Pooling Group	65.96%	34.04%
Market Group/Platform	47.79%	52.21%
Business Promotion Council	60.53%	39.47%
Business Advocacy/Lobby Group	56.25%	43.75%
Business Mentorship/Training Group	36.36%	63.64%
Housing Cooperative	62.31%	37.69%
Multi-level marketing schemes	37.23%	62.77%

4.1.4 Democracy withing economic associations

Leadership is a core determinant of how associations function and respondents were asked to indicate how their associations organise themselves, their leadership structures, and the processes through which they select leaders. Survey data shows that in Housing Cooperatives leaders are elected (69.39%) and this was the highest among the economic associations, followed by Savings and Lending Group (38.30%), Production Cooperative (33.33%), Labour Pooling Group (27.27%), Asset Pooling Group (25.00%), Buying Clubs (18.42%), Marketing

Table 6: Democracy within economic associations

Association	Elections	Appointed	Hereditary	Voluntary	I do not know	Other (please specify)
Savings and Lending Group	38.30%	27.66%	6.38%	17.02%	2.13%	8.51%
Labour pooling group	27.27%	63.64%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	9.09%
Production Cooperative	33.33%	42.86%	4.76%	14.29%	4.76%	0.00%
Buying Clubs	18.42%	18.42%	0.00%	47.37%	13.16%	2.63%
Marketing Cooperative	16.67%	25.00%	8.33%	41.67%	8.33%	0.00%
Common Property Group	12.50%	87.50%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Asset Pooling Group	25.00%	37.50%	12.50%	25.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Market Group/Platform	4.76%	19.05%	0.00%	46.03%	15.87%	14.29%
Business Promotion Council	12.50%	37.50%	0.00%	12.50%	37.50%	0.00%
Business Advocacy/Lobby Group	0.00%	100.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Business Mentorship/Training Group	0.00%	55.56%	0.00%	11.11%	33.33%	0.00%
Housing Cooperative	69.39%	22.45%	0.00%	4.08%	2.04%	2.04%
Multi-level marketing schemes	13.89%	16.67%	5.56%	2.78%	61.11%	0.00%

Cooperative (16.67%), Common Property Group and Business Promotion Council (both tied at 12.50%) and Market Group/Platform (4.76%). Business Advocacy/Lobby Group and Business Mentorship/Training Group do not hold elections to select leaders. Table 6 above shows the full range of responses given by study participants.

Appointment was the next favoured method of ascension into leadership. In Business Advocacy /Lobby Groups 100.00% of the leaders were appointed, in Common Property Group 87.00% were appointed, 63.64% in Labour Pooliing group were appointed and 55.56% wer appointed in Business Promotion Council. A total of 47.37% in Buying Clubs and 46.03% of leaders in Market Group/ Platform were voluntary. The survey data thus, shows that elections and apointment are the dominant method of selection of leaders in economic associations among the surveyed population.

4.1.4 Modes and frequency of interaction in Economic Associations

The modes of interaction between members and the platforms/ tools for interaction are important when it comes to the actual operations of the associations. Table 7 belows shows the modes and frequency of interaction within economic associations.

Table 7: Modes and frequency of interaction for Economic Associations

Association Classification	Frequency of interaction		Modes of interaction		
	Daily	Weekly	Face to Face Meetings	Digital Online Platforms	Combination of both face to face and digital online platforms
Savings and Lending Group	19%	17%	40%	21%	38%
Labour pooling group	9%	55%	45%	36%	18%
Production Cooperative	19%	38%	43%	29%	29%
Buying Clubs	0%	0%	37%	21%	42%
Marketing Cooperative	42%	17%	42%	25%	33%
Common Property Group	13%	50%	13%	63%	25%
Asset Pooling Group	25%	25%	13%	38%	50%
Market Group/Platform	73%	14%	8%	75%	17%
Business Promotion Council	25%	38%	25%	50%	25%
Business Advocacy/Lobby Group	50%	50%	0%	100%	0%
Business Mentorship/Training Group	0%	56%	11%	22%	67%
Housing Cooperative	4%	26%	58%	14%	28%
Multi-level marketing schemes	28%	44%	6%	56%	39%

A total of 50% of respondents who indicated that they were part of Business Advocacy/Lobby Group met daily and weekly, meeting exclusively on Digital Online Platforms (e.g. Zoom, Skype, WhatsApp, Telegram, Facebook. 73% of respondents who were part of a Market Group/Platform met daily and mostly (75%) met on Digital Online Platforms along with Multi-Level marketing schemes where 44% of the members indicated they met weekly and 56% reported that their interactions were also on Digital Online Platforms.

Regular face to face meetings are popular among Housing Cooperatives (58%) with 26% meeting weekly, Labour pooling group (45%) with 55% meeting weekly, Production Cooperative (43%) with 43% meeting weekly and Savings and Lending Group (40%) with 19% of the members interacting daily. Buying Clubs' meeting intervals were beyond the two categories of "Daily" and "Weekly" as no respondent chose either of these two options. The modes of interaction for Buying Clubs were varied with 37% using regular face to face meetings, 21% interacting over Digital Online Platforms and 42% combining face to face and Digital Online Platforms.

4.1.6 Benefits of membership in Economic Associations

Respondents were asked to identify the main benefits they derived from their economic associations. The data highlights that the two main benefits for members of the Savings and Lending Group were pooling together assets/savings (59.57%) and improved access to financing (55.32%). For members of a Labour Pooling Group, the two main benefits were improved access to financing (45.45%) and improved voice in engaging with officeholders (36.36%). For members of Production Cooperatives there was an equal split between 7 benefits namely, improved access to financing, pooling assets/savings, exchange information about market opportunities, exposure to new concepts or ideas, collective ownership of assets, skills exchange, and additional income (all at 42.86%). The main benefits highlighted by members of Marketing Cooperative were exchange information about market opportunities (75.00%) and Additional income (58.33%).

Most participants in Common Property Groups (natural resources) highlighted exchange information about market opportunities (62.50%) and Improved access to financing (50.00%) as the key benefits. The data shows that 73.02% of members in Market Group/Platform indicated Exchange information about market opportunities and Exposure to new concept or ideas (60.32%) as their main benefits. Among members of the Business Advocacy/Lobby Group Collective Security, Exchange information about market opportunities and Organising Welfare Support were selected by 100% of the respondents.

The main priority for joining Market Group/Platforms is to Exchange information about market opportunities (73.02%) and get Exposure to new concepts or ideas (60.32%). The Market Group/ Platforms offered less in terms of Improved Voice in engaging with stakeholders (7.94%), Improved Access to financing (6.35%), Pooling together assets/savings (6.35%), Collective ownership of assets (4.76%), Collective security (3.17%) and Organising Welfare Support (3.17%). This is similar to the benefits derived from Business Mentorship/Training Groups where participants mainly sought and got ideas and information in the form of Exposure to new concepts or ideas (88.89%), room to Exchange information about market opportunities (77.78%) and Skills exchange (55.56%), and none (0.00%) seeking or getting Collective ownership of assets as a benefit and Pooling together assets/ savings (11.11%). Table 8 below shows in full, the responses given.

Table 8: Benefits realised from economic associations

Economic Association Classification	Collective security	Improved access to financing	Pooling together assets / savings	Exchange information about market opportunities	Organising welfare support	Improved voice in engaging with officeholders	Exposure to new concept or ideas	Collective ownership of assets	Skills exchange	Additional Income	Other (please specify)
Savings and Lending Group	27.66%	55.32%	59.57%	21.28%	10.64%	8.51%	23.40%	8.51%	25.53%	51.06%	2.13%
Labour pooling group	9.09%	45.45%	27.27%	27.27%	27.27%	36.36%	36.36%	18.18%	27.27%	0.00%	0.00%
Production Cooperative	14.29%	42.86%	42.86%	42.86%	19.05%	19.05%	42.86%	42.86%	42.86%	42.86%	0.00%
Buying Clubs	21.05%	26.32%	65.79%	36.84%	28.95%	2.63%	31.58%	13.16%	26.32%	18.42%	0.00%
Marketing Cooperative	33.33%	33.33%	25.00%	75.00%	8.33%	16.67%	33.33%	41.67%	16.67%	58.33%	0.00%
Common Property Group	0.00%	50.00%	12.50%	62.50%	12.50%	25.00%	50.00%	0.00%	25.00%	12.50%	0.00%
Asset Pooling Group	25.00%	50.00%	50.00%	25.00%	12.50%	25.00%	25.00%	25.00%	12.50%	25.00%	0.00%
Market Group / Platform	3.17%	6.35%	6.35%	73.02%	3.17%	7.94%	60.32%	4.76%	28.57%	49.21%	1.59%
Business Promotion Council	0.00%	25.00%	25.00%	62.50%	12.50%	0.00%	50.00%	37.50%	25.00%	25.00%	0.00%
Business Advocacy /Lobby Group	100.00%	50.00%	50.00%	100.00%	100.00%	50.00%	50.00%	50.00%	50.00%	50.00%	0.00%
Business Mentorship / Training Group	33.33%	33.33%	11.11%	77.78%	11.11%	33.33%	88.89%	0.00%	55.56%	0.00%	0.00%
Housing Cooperative	14.00%	10.00%	54.00%	6.00%	14.00%	18.00%	14.00%	62.00%	12.00%	2.00%	0.00%
Multi-level marketing schemes	5.56%	19.44%	8.33%	58.33%	8.33%	5.56%	47.22%	19.44%	33.33%	77.78%	2.78%

4.1.7 Types of problems that need to be addressed within economic associations

Closely linked to the notion of benefits realised is the reality of problems needing to be addressed in the economic associations. Business Advocacy/Lobby Group category faced four key problems in the form of Gender-Based discrimination , Low Levels of participation, Weak governance procedures and Leadership (all at 50.00%). Leadership was also identified as a key challenge by Housing Cooperatives (50.00%) and Labour pooling group (45.45%). The most pressing challenge faced by Business Promotion Council was Low Levels of participation (50.00%). Funding was the biggest challenge or joint biggest challenge for 6 economic association types namely Business mentorship/training group (55.56%), Savings and lending group (52.17%), Buying clubs (42.11%), Marketing cooperative (41.11%), Common property group (37.50%) and Production Cooperative (28.57%). Table 9 below highlights the survey evidence on problems faced within the economic associations.

Table 9: Types of problems faced by economic associations

Association Classification	Gender-based discrimination	Low levels of participation	Weak governance procedures	Leadership	Corruption	Formal registration	Meeting government regulatory requirements	Funding	Other (specified)
Savings and Lending Group	10.87%	17.39%	13.04%	23.91%	17.39%	26.09%	4.35%	52.17%	4.35%
Labour pooling group	27.27%	9.09%	18.18%	45.45%	36.36%	9.09%	18.18%	18.18%	0.00%
Production Cooperative	28.57%	14.29%	19.05%	9.52%	23.81%	23.81%	9.52%	28.57%	9.52%
Buying Clubs	13.16%	15.79%	10.53%	23.68%	18.42%	21.05%	7.89%	42.11%	5.26%
Marketing Cooperative	16.67%	25.00%	16.67%	25.00%	33.33%	33.33%	16.67%	41.67%	0.00%
Common Property Group	12.50%	25.00%	25.00%	37.50%	12.50%	25.00%	0.00%	37.50%	12.50%
Asset Pooling Group	37.50%	25.00%	50.00%	25.00%	12.50%	0.00%	25.00%	25.00%	0.00%
Market Group/Platform	1.61%	17.74%	12.90%	11.29%	3.23%	14.52%	12.90%	14.52%	40.32%
Business Promotion Council	12.50%	50.00%	12.50%	25.00%	0.00%	12.50%	0.00%	25.00%	25.00%
Business Advocacy/Lobby Group	50.00%	50.00%	50.00%	50.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Business Mentorship/ Training Group	22.22%	22.22%	11.11%	33.33%	0.00%	22.22%	0.00%	55.56%	0.00%
Housing Cooperative	6.00%	36.00%	36.00%	50.00%	42.00%	8.00%	6.00%	22.00%	0.00%
Multi-level marketing schemes	11.43%	22.86%	14.29%	11.43%	2.86%	5.71%	8.57%	17.14%	25.71%

4.1.8 Discrimination and inclusion in economic associations

Different issues such as geographical location and focus of an association may act as barriers for entry and participation in specific associations. Being too young or too old was the basis of discrimination experienced in Multi-level marketing schemes (75.22%), Marketing Cooperative, Business Promotion Council, Business Advocacy/Lobby Group (all at 67.00%), in Asset pooling groups and Market group/platform (all 50.00%). The 18–25 years age group (32.00%) contributed the most number to the sample, followed by the 26–35 years group (28.00%). Prohibitive membership costs/fees were cited in Business Advocacy/Lobby Group 67%), Labour pooling group and Multi-level marketing schemes (50%). Table 10 summarises the key forms of discrimination experienced.

Table 10: Forms of discrimination in economic associations

Economic Association	Language Barriers	Prohibitive Membership Costs/Fees	Defined geographical boundaries	Membership defined by gender	Defined religious boundaries	Defined tribal/ethnic boundaries	Age	Disability	Legal	Other (please specify)
Savings and Lending Group	17%	25%	25%	0%	13%	29%	33%	0%	25%	4%
Labour pooling group	50%	50%	0%	0%	0%	50%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Production Cooperative	0%	33%	11%	11%	22%	44%	22%	0%	11%	0%
Buying Clubs	25%	25%	0%	50%	0%	25%	25%	0%	25%	0%
Marketing Cooperative	0%	33%	0%	0%	0%	33%	67%	0%	0%	33%
Common Property Group	17%	33%	17%	17%	0%	17%	17%	0%	17%	17%
Asset Pooling Group	0%	0%	0%	50%	0%	0%	50%	0%	0%	0%
Market Group/Platform	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	50%	0%	0%	50%
Business Promotion Council	33%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	67%	0%	0%	0%
Business Advocacy/Lobby Group	33%	67%	0%	0%	33%	0%	67%	0%	0%	0%
Business Mentorship/Training Group	0%	29%	0%	14%	14%	14%	29%	14%	0%	14%
Housing Cooperative	50%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	50%
Multi-level marketing schemes	0%	50%	0%	0%	0%	0%	75%	0%	25%	0%

Disability was the least basis of discrimination by participants across all economic association types being highlighted only by 14% in Business Mentorship/Training Groups. Defined geographical boundaries were barriers in just three association types of Savings and Lending Group (25%) Common Property Group (17%) and Production Cooperative (11%). Defined religious boundaries were pointed out in 4 association groups namely Business Advocacy/ Lobby Group (33%), Production Cooperative (22%), Business Mentorship/Training Group (14%) and in Business Mentorship/ Training Group (14%). Legal issues such as not having national registration/ID documents were the basis for discrimination experienced by 25% of respondents in Savings and Lending Group, Buying Clubs and Multi-level marketing schemes, 17% in Common Property Groups and 11% in Production Cooperatives.

4.1.9 Assets within economic associations

Economic associations have assets in various forms and the survey established which ones were held by each association as shown in Table 11 below.

Table 11: Assets within economic associations

Economic Association	Land	Minerals	Water body (Dam)	Tourist Attraction	Grazing Lands	Buildings
Savings and Lending Group	83%	17%	17%	17%	8%	92%
Labour pooling group	75%	0%	13%	0%	0%	100%
Production Cooperative	79%	7%	21%	7%	0%	93%
Buying Clubs	83%	33%	50%	0%	17%	67%
Marketing Cooperative	88%	13%	25%	0%	0%	75%
Common Property Group	67%	17%	33%	17%	0%	33%
Asset Pooling Group	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%	100%
Market Group/Platform	100%	17%	0%	0%	17%	83%
Business Promotion Council	75%	0%	0%	0%	0%	100%
Business Advocacy/Lobby Group	50%	50%	0%	0%	50%	50%
Business Mentorship/Training Group	100%	0	0	0	0	0
Housing Cooperative	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%	49%
Multi-level marketing schemes	56%	0%	0%	0%	0%	100%

Land and buildings are the main assets held within economic associations. One hundred per cent of the members of Asset Pooling Groups, Market Group/Platform, Business Advocacy/ Lobby Groups and Housing Cooperatives reported that their association owned land. Additionally, 100% of Labour Pooling Groups, Asset Pooling Groups, Business Promotion Council and Multi-level marketing schemes owned buildings. Tourist attractions were among the least owned assets among Savings and lending groups (17%). It is noteworthy that members of the Savings and Lending Groups also indicated that their associations owned buildings (92%) and land (83%). Common Property Groups had 67% members indicating the association owned land.

4.2 Citizens and Politics

4.2.1 Membership in political associations

As established earlier in the background, citizens participate in multiple spaces including in politics and they often do so with varying motivations. Perhaps reflecting Zimbabweans' general awareness and engagement with political issues and events, 20.24% of the respondents indicated they were members of a political party and these were formed between 1990 and 2000. Survey data also shows that Joint Public Petition (100%), Local Peace Committee (100%) were formed in this period. In terms of year of establishment there is a similar trend between Social Movements (30.77%) between 1990–2000, and 23.08% between 2001–2010), Online Based Civic Coalition (33.33%) between 1990–2000 and 33.33% between 2001 and 2010. Table 12 below shows the political associations and the associations' year of establishment.

Table 12: Membership to, and Year of establishment of political associations

Political Association	Percentage of members	Year of establishment of political association			
		1990 - 2000	2001- 2010	2011- 2020	Other (Unspecified)
Campaign Group	2.62%	63.64%	9.09%	27.27%	0.00%
Political Party	20.24%	55.29%	2.35%	0.00%	42.35%
Social Movement	3.10%	30.77%	23.08%	23.08%	23.08%
Joint Public Petition	0.95%	100.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Local Peace Committee	0.95%	100.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Residents Association	5.24%	18.18%	18.18%	40.91%	22.73%
Online Based Civic Coalition	0.71%	33.33%	33.33%	33.33%	0.00%
Women's Group	8.57%	19.44%	16.67%	52.78%	11.11%
Youth Group	7.62%	28.13%	15.63%	40.63%	15.63%

The period 2011–2020 also has a high number of political formations established in this time with Women's Group (52.78%), Youth Group (40.63%) and Residents' Association (40.91%).

4.2.2 Methods of establishment of political associations

Social Movements (38.46%) are the highest number of political associations that were established by means of Trust and the highest (23.08%) among those established by Association, while Political Parties (60.00%) have the most number among those established by means of a Constitution. Online based civic coalitions (33.37%) are the highest among associations established as a Company Limited by Guarantee. Residents Association (40.91%),

Table 13: Methods of establishment of political associations

Political Association	Manner of establishment						
	Trust	Constitution	Company Limited by Guarantee	Association	No formal registration	I do not know	Other (specified)
Campaign Group	33.33%	16.67%	16.67%	16.67%	8.33%	8.33%	0.00%
Political Party	3.53%	60.00%	1.18%	3.53%	2.35%	29.41%	0.00%
Social Movement	38.46%	15.38%	7.69%	23.08%	7.69%	7.69%	0.00%
Joint Public Petition	25.00%	25.00%	25.00%	0.00%	0.00%	25.00%	0.00%
Local Peace Committee	25.00%	0.00%	25.00%	0.00%	0.00%	50.00%	0.00%
Residents Association	9.09%	18.18%	0.00%	9.09%	40.91%	22.73%	0.00%
Online Based Civic Coalition	0.00%	33.33%	33.33%	0.00%	0.00%	33.33%	0.00%
Women's Group	8.57%	8.57%	5.71%	11.43%	42.86%	20.00%	2.86%
Youth Group	15.63%	18.75%	0.00%	21.88%	40.63%	3.13%	0.00%

Women's Group (42.86%) and Youth Group (40.63%) have no major differences among associations with no formal registration. Local Peace Committees (50.00%) dominate the organisations which have members that "Do not know" how they were established followed by Online Civic Coalitions (33.33%).These are shown in Table 13 above.

4.2.3 Gender dynamics within political associations

Political associations are arenas of internal and external contestations (Maiyo, 2008). Gender and power differences are central in political parties (see for example International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, 2013; Mlambo and Kapingura, 2019). Male office holders dominate in Political Parties (64.94%), Residents Associations (63.89%), Youth Groups (57.34%) and Campaign Group (57.14%) while women dominate in Women's Groups (90.87%), Online Based Civic Coalitions (70.83%), Local Peace Committee (61.76%) and Joint Public Petition (57.89%). Table 14 below shows the distribution of office holders by gender.

Table 14: Gender of Office Holders in Political Associations

Political Association	Gender of office holders	
	Male Office Holders	Female Office Holders
Campaign Group	57.14%	42.86%
Political Party	64.64%	35.36%
Social Movement	53.92%	46.08%
Joint Public Petition	42.11%	57.89%
Local Peace Committee	38.24%	61.76%
Residents Association	63.89%	36.11%
Online Based Civic Coalition	29.17%	70.83%
Women's Group	9.13%	90.87%
Youth Group	57.34%	42.66%

In terms of selection of leaders, all the categories of political associations covered in the survey used elections except Online Based Civic Coalitions

4.2.4 Modes and frequency of interaction within political associations

The survey also sought to establish the main modes of interaction between members of the political associations as well as the frequency of that interaction.

Table 15: Modes and frequency of interaction in political associations

Political Association	Frequency of meeting/ interaction		Mode of interaction		
	Daily	Weekly	Regular Face to Face Meetings	Digital Online Platforms	Combination of both face to face and digital online platforms
Campaign Group	17%	50%	33%	25%	42%
Political Party	15%	4%	41%	15%	44%
Social Movement	15%	38%	31%	31%	38%
Joint Public Petition	25%	25%	50%	25%	25%
Local Peace Committee	0%	75%	25%	50%	25%
Residents Association	43%	10%	9%	50%	41%
Online Based Civic Coalition	0%	67%	33%	0%	67%
Women's Group	14%	25%	47%	17%	36%
Youth Group	13%	52%	22%	19%	59%

The data largely points to a balance between regular face to face meetings and digital online platforms. Weekly meetings are used more than daily meetings in terms of frequency of interaction. In terms of frequency of interaction, 75.00% of respondents indicated that were part of Local Peace Committees indicated that they met weekly, 67.00% of Online Based Civic Coalitions and 52.00% also meet weekly. Joint Public Petition has the highest value (50.00%) in terms of regular face to face meetings followed by Women's Group (47.00%), Political party (41.00%) and Campaign Group and Online Based Civic Coalition (all at 33.00%). Residents Association and Local Peace Committee are the joint highest (50.00%) in terms of interaction on digital online platforms. Online Based Civic Coalition is also highest (67.00%) in combining regular face to face meetings and combining digital online platforms, followed by Youth Group (59.00%), Political Party (44.00%), Campaign Group (42.00%) and Residents Association (41.00%). The choice of mode of interaction is also shaped by the nature of the association's focus, the legal framework, the State's response to political associations' activities and the space which they seek to influence.

4.2.5 Assets held within Political Associations

Political associations mainly owned land with Online Based Civic Coalition (100.00%), Residents Association (100.00%), Joint Public Petition (100.00%), Youth Group (83.00%), Political Party (68.00%), Local Peace Committee (67.00) owning land. The political associations also own buildings with Women's Group (100.00%), Political Party (93.00%), Social Movement (83.00%) and Campaign Group (80.00%) owning buildings. Table 16 below shows the summary of the assets held within political associations.

Table 16: Assets held within political association

Political Association	Assets held within political associations					
	Land	Minerals	Water body (Dam)	Tourist Attraction	Grazing Lands	Buildings
Campaign Group	40%	0%	20%	0%	0%	80%
Political Party	68%	25%	18%	18%	16%	93%
Social Movement	33%	17%	17%	0%	0%	83%
Joint Public Petition	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%	67%
Local Peace Committee	67%	33%	0%	33%	0%	67%
Residents Association	100%	33%	33%	33%	0%	33%
Online Based Civic Coalition	100%	0%	0%	0%	33%	67%
Women's Group	44%	22%	11%	11%	0%	100%
Youth Group	83%	0%	33%	17%	33%	67%

4.2.6 Benefits of political association membership

The Campaign group draws the most (75.00%) benefit in terms of improved voice in engaging with stakeholders followed by Political party (48.24%) and Social Movement (46.15%).

Political party members saw the most (72.94%) benefit in terms of the defence of their rights followed by Social Movement (61.54%). Members of Political Parties also indicated that they enjoyed other benefits such as Change of government (63.53%) and Better Social Order (54.12%) due to their membership in political parties. Table 17 below summarises the benefits across political associations.

Table 17: Benefits from Political Associations

Political Association	Benefits of membership									
	Collective Security	Organising /receiving welfare support	Improved voice in engaging with officeholders	Exposure to new concept or ideas	Sense of belonging	Defence of rights	Changes / Reforms within community	Change of government	Better social order	Other (please specify)
Campaign Group	33.33%	25.00%	75.00%	41.67%	16.67%	25.00%	25.00%	25.00%	33.33%	0.00%
Political Party	21.18%	36.47%	48.24%	20.00%	47.06%	72.94%	35.29%	63.53%	54.12%	0.00%
Social Movement	7.69%	53.85%	46.15%	53.85%	46.15%	61.54%	30.77%	0.00%	61.54%	0.00%
Joint Public Petition	25.00%	25.00%	25.00%	50.00%	25.00%	25.00%	25.00%	0.00%	25.00%	0.00%
Local Peace Committee	0.00%	0.00%	25.00%	25.00%	25.00%	25.00%	50.00%	50.00%	25.00%	0.00%
Residents Association	54.55%	13.64%	45.45%	27.27%	40.91%	18.18%	31.82%	0.00%	31.82%	4.55%
Online Based Civic Coalition	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	66.67%	33.33%	0.00%	66.67%	0.00%	33.33%	0.00%
Women's Group	13.89%	52.78%	27.78%	61.11%	86.11%	30.56%	27.78%	5.56%	55.56%	0.00%
Youth Group	6.25%	43.75%	31.25%	71.88%	71.88%	28.13%	31.25%	6.25%	59.38%	0.00%

Social Movements helped members to defend rights (61.54%), contributed to Better social order (61.54%) organising/receiving welfare support and exposing members to new concepts or ideas (both 53.85%). Local Peace Committees are viewed as contributing to changes/reforms within the community (50.00%), change in government (50.00%) and less in terms of the establishment of a better social order, providing a sense of belonging and defending rights (25.00%) yet, these are some of the areas in which local peace committees are expected to be key. 54.55% of members of Residents associations find collective security as the key benefit of their membership in this category of political associations and they see the residents associations improving engagement with office holders (45.45%), and they also viewed Residents Association giving them a sense of belonging (40.91%) which is more than what they see the association doing in terms of helping towards a better social order (33.33%), bringing about changes/reforms within the community (31.82%) and defending rights (18.18%).

Online Based Civic Coalitions were viewed mainly as exposing members to new concepts or ideas and helping bring about changes /Reforms within community (both 66.67%) whilst Women's Groups were viewed by most of their members (86.11%) as providing them with a Sense of belonging, helping deliver Better Social Order (55.56%) and Organising /receiving welfare support (52.78%) for members. Youth Groups were lauded for giving the youth exposure to new concepts or ideas and a Sense of belonging (both 71.88%).

4.2.7 Types of problems that need fixing within political associations

Campaign Groups were most affected by Corruption (50.00%), Low levels of Participation, Weak Governance Procedures and Leadership (all 41.67%) while the biggest handicap for Political Parties was Leadership (61.08%) and Social Movements were mostly challenged by Low levels of Participation (53.85%). Weak Governance Procedures and Leadership (50.00%) were pointed out as the biggest challenges faced by Joint Public Petitions.

Gender based discrimination (50.00%) and Weak governance procedures (50.00%) were also flagged as Local Peace Committees' most pressing challenges. Residents Associations

were blighted by an assortment of challenges which coalesced around Funding (36.36%), Weak Governance Procedures (36.36%), Low levels of Participation (31.82%) and the lack of formal registration for the associations (27.27%). The data shows that Funding was a key problem within Women's Groups (50.00%) and Youth Groups (59.38%).

Table 18: Types of problems within political associations

Political Association	Gender based discrimination	Low levels of participation	Weak governance procedures	Leadership	Corruption	Formal registration	Meeting government regulatory requirements	Funding
Campaign Group	33.33%	41.67%	41.67%	41.67%	50.00%	16.67%	16.67%	25.00%
Political Party	14.12%	27.06%	41.18%	61.18%	32.94%	1.18%	2.35%	54.12%
Social Movement	30.77%	53.85%	38.46%	38.46%	7.69%	23.08%	7.69%	46.15%
Joint Public Petition	25.00%	0.00%	50.00%	50.00%	25.00%	25.00%	25.00%	0.00%
Local Peace Committee	50.00%	0.00%	50.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	25.00%
Residents Association	13.64%	31.82%	36.36%	13.64%	13.64%	27.27%	4.55%	36.36%
Online Based Civic Coalition	0.00%	33.33%	0.00%	33.33%	0.00%	33.33%	33.33%	33.33%
Women's Group	5.56%	41.67%	22.22%	16.67%	11.11%	8.33%	8.33%	50.00%
Youth Group	21.88%	31.25%	12.50%	15.63%	12.50%	6.25%	6.25%	59.38%

4.2.8 Discrimination and inclusion in political associations

Members of political associations reported experiencing different forms of discriminatory practices. Age was cited by 100% of respondents who experienced discrimination in Local Peace Committees while as much as 85.71% experienced age-based discrimination in Women's Groups. Defined tribal and ethnic boundaries were the dominant basis of discrimination in Campaign Groups as reported by 54.55% of the participants. Some Youth Groups (50.00%) had Defined Religious boundaries. Other factors such as Language Barriers were cited once (36.36%) in Campaign Groups. Defined Geographical Boundaries (36.36%) in Campaign Groups as well and Membership defined by gender (14.29%) in Women's Groups. It is noteworthy that in these political groups disability and legal factors were never cited as the basis for discrimination experienced by members.

66.67% of people experiencing discrimination in Online Based Civic Coalitions did not specify the reason or form of that discrimination. Table 19 shows the range of discriminatory practices and factors as reported by study participants.

Table 19: Forms of discrimination faced in political associations

Political Association	Forms of discrimination faced in political associations									
	Language Barriers	Prohibitive Membership Costs/Fees	Defined geographical boundaries	Membership defined by gender	Defined religious boundaries	Defined tribal /ethnic boundaries	Age	Disability	Legal	Other (please specify)
Campaign Group	36.36%	18.18%	36.36%	0.00%	0.00%	54.55%	27.27%	0.00%	27.27%	0.00%
Political Party	0.00%	14.29%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	85.71%	28.57%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Social Movement	0.00%	33.33%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	33.33%	33.33%	0.00%	0.00%	33.33%
Joint Public Petition	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Local Peace Committee	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	100.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Residents Association	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	50.00%	50.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Online Based Civic Coalition	0.00%	33.33%	0.00%	0.00%	33.33%	33.33%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	66.67%
Women's Group	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	14.29%	14.29%	0.00%	85.71%	0.00%	0.00%	14.29%
Youth Group	0.00%	50.00%	0.00%	0.00%	50.00%	0.00%	50.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%

4.3 Citizens and Social Support

Besides the economic and political organisations that have been highlighted in the foregoing discussion, citizens also belong to and participate in Social Support organisations. These organisations are mainly aimed at providing mutual support to each other and frequently do so in times of financial or emotional strain, including bereavement, in the case of burial societies.

4.3.1 Membership to, and Year of establishment of Social Support Organisations

Fellowship/Religious Groups (38.33%) dominate in terms of study participants' membership in Social Support Organisations. Most (38.51%) Fellowship/Religious Groups were established between 1990 and 2000 and 16.77% established between 2001 and 2010. School Association Parent-Teacher Associations (6.19%) are the next social support association category with most participants according to the survey data followed by Entertainment Group (5.71%), Burial Societies (5.48%) and Alumni Association (5.24%). The period 1990 to 2000 dominates in terms of associations formed, when compared to 2000 to 2010 and 2011 to 2020. Table 20 below shows the period of formation and membership of the Social Support Associations.

Table 20: Membership and years of establishment of Social Support Organisations

Social Support Association	Percentage of members	Year of establishment			
		1990 - 2000	2001- 2010	2011- 2020	Other (Unspecified)
Fellowship Group / Religious Group	38.33%	38.51%	16.77%	8.70%	36.02%
Burial Societies	5.48%	30.43%	8.70%	13.04%	47.83%
Sporting Association	5.00%	38.10%	9.52%	47.62%	4.76%
Entertainment Group	5.71%	20.83%	29.17%	45.83%	4.17%
School Association Parent/Teacher Group	6.19%	42.31%	7.69%	30.77%	19.23%
Alumni Association	5.24%	22.73%	0.00%	40.91%	36.36%
Book/Reading Club	2.86%	50.00%	0.00%	50.00%	0.00%
Community Development Association	1.67%	57.14%	14.29%	14.29%	14.29%
Service Organisation/ Club	1.79%	62.50%	0.00%	37.50%	0.00%
Neighbourhood Watch Committee	3.36%	33.33%	13.33%	33.33%	20.00%
Communal Granary	1.12%	80.00%	0.00%	20.00%	0.00%
Community Feeding Group	2.24%	50.00%	10.00%	40.00%	0.00%
Community Foundation	0.90%	25.00%	50.00%	25.00%	0.00%

4.3.2 Method of establishment for Social Support Associations

Since they serve a wide constituency of people with varying needs and socio-economic statuses, Social Support Associations are formed and established differently. The survey established the methods of establishment for the 13 types of social support associations which this section (4.3) looks at. Table 21 below summarises these different methods of establishment.

Table 21: Method of establishment of Social Support Associations

Social Support Association	Method of establishment of Social Support Associations					
	Trust	Constitution	Company Limited by Guarantee	Association	No formal registration	I do not know
Fellowship Group /Religious Group	19.88%	27.33%	0.62%	4.97%	11.80%	34.16%
Burial Societies	0.00%	13.64%	31.82%	27.27%	4.55%	22.73%
Sporting Association	9.52%	0.00%	4.76%	28.57%	38.10%	19.05%
Entertainment Group	16.67%	0.00%	8.33%	8.33%	54.17%	12.50%
School Association Parent/Teacher Group	11.54%	15.38%	0.00%	26.92%	7.69%	38.46%
Alumni Association	14.29%	4.76%	0.00%	38.10%	23.81%	14.29%
Book/Reading Club	8.33%	16.67%	8.33%	25.00%	16.67%	25.00%
Community Development Association	0.00%	28.57%	0.00%	28.57%	0.00%	42.86%
Service Organisation or Club	25.00%	0.00%	12.50%	25.00%	0.00%	37.50%
Neighbourhood Watch Committee	13.33%	6.67%	0.00%	13.33%	26.67%	40.00%
Communal Granary	0.00%	40.00%	0.00%	20.00%	0.00%	40.00%
Community Feeding Group	30.00%	10.00%	20.00%	10.00%	10.00%	20.00%
Community Foundation	25.00%	0.00%	0.00%	50.00%	0.00%	25.00%

Most participants in Fellowship/Religious Groups do not know how the group was formed (34.16%) together with 42.86% of Community Development Associations, Neighbourhood Watch Committee (40.00) and Communal Granary (40.00%). 31.82% members of Burial Societies assert that their group was established as a Company Limited by Guarantee. The majority of Entertainment Groups (54.17%), Sporting Associations (38.10%) and Neighbourhood Watch Committees (26.67%) have no formal registration. It is noteworthy that 40.00% of Communal Granaries were established by Constitution according to the members who participated in the survey. The two options of either (a) Constitution, or (b) Company Limited by Guarantee as methods of establishing social support associations are the least favoured of the five options that were looked at in the survey. The route of Company Limited by Guarantee was not used by 6 of the associations with a negligible 0.62%

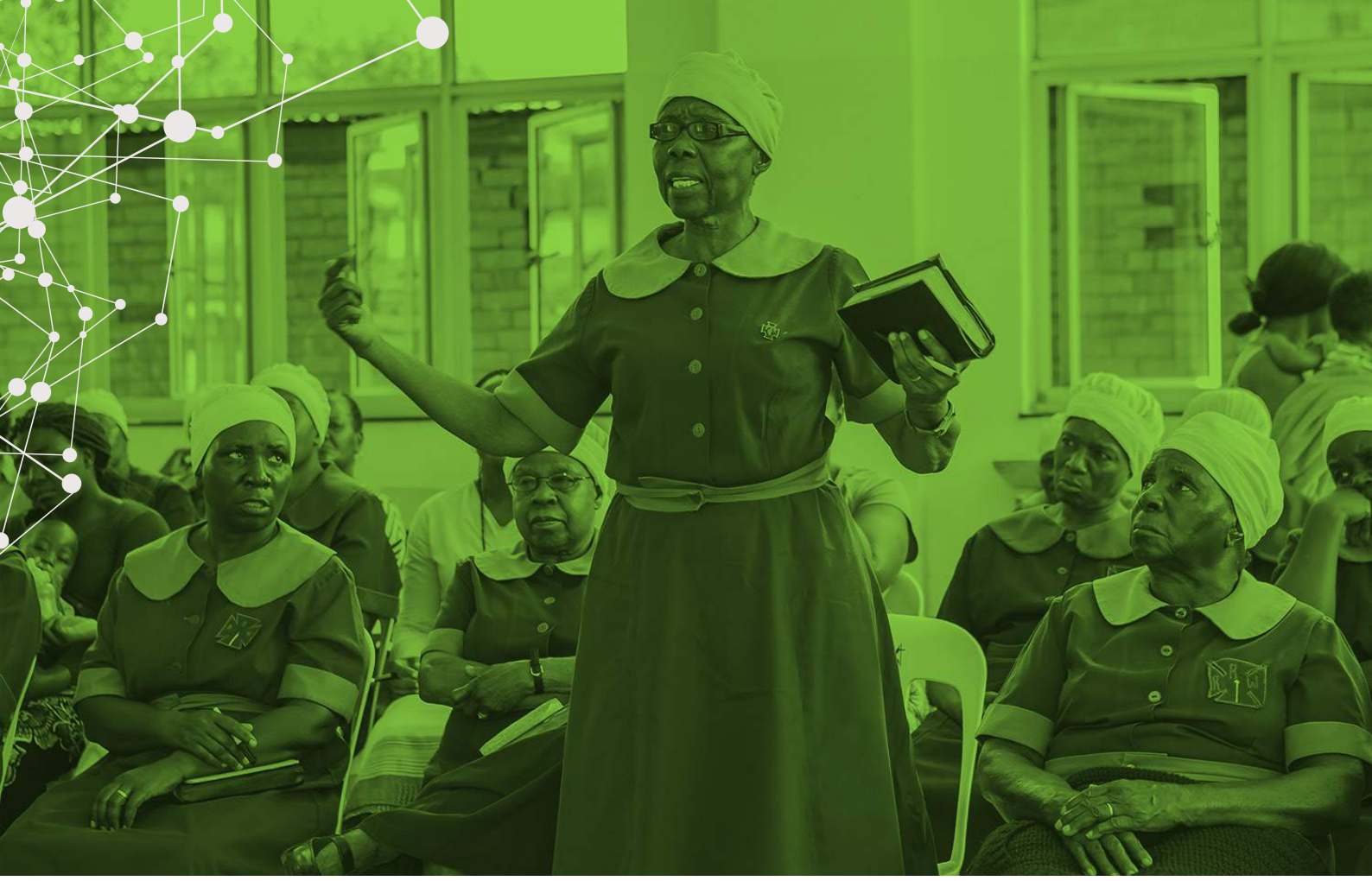
(Fellowship/Religious Group) using this method. The Constitution was not used by 4 of the 13 associations covered in the survey. In terms of leadership selection and organisation of the associations, most of associations covered by the survey selected leaders through elections, except Community Development Associations.

4.3.3 Modes and frequency of interaction/meeting in Social Support Associations

How members interact in social networks is pivotal in ensuring the success and strength of the network. The frequency and efficacy of the modes of interaction are also critical. To understand the manifestations of citizenship, the survey established the modes and frequency of interaction among participants in social support associations. These are presented in Table 22 below.

Table 22: Modes and frequency of interaction/meeting in Social Support Associations

Social Support Association	Frequency of meeting/ interaction		Mode of interaction		
	Daily	Weekly	Regular Face to Face Meetings	Digital Online Platforms	Combination of both face to face and digital online platforms
Fellowship Group /Religious Group	17%	66%	45%	11%	44%
Burial Societies	13%	13%	45%	27%	27%
Sporting Association	14%	33%	43%	14%	43%
Entertainment Group	13%	74%	38%	21%	42%
School Association Parent/Teacher Group	27%	23%	19%	42%	38%
Alumni Association	25%	20%	25%	55%	20%
Book/Reading Club	0%	50%	58%	8%	33%
Community Development Association	14%	29%	43%	43%	14%
Service Organisation or Club	13%	50%	63%	25%	13%
Neighbourhood Watch Committee	33%	40%	40%	20%	40%
Communal Granary	40%	60%	20%	80%	0%
Community Feeding Group	10%	50%	30%	50%	20%
Community Foundation	0%	50%	25%	25%	50%



Community Granary groups have the highest value (40.00%) among the associations that meet daily followed by Neighbourhood Watch Committee (33.00%). Among associations that meet weekly the School Association/Parent-Teacher Group meet the most (74.00%), followed by Fellowship/Religious Group (66.00%), Communal Granary (60.00%) then Book/Reading Club (50.00%), Service Organisation Club (50.00%), Community Feeding Club (50.00%) and also Community Foundation (50.00%).

In terms of the modes of interaction, respondents were given three options of Regular face to face meetings, Digital Online Platforms and then a Combination of Regular face to face meetings and Digital Online Platforms. Community foundations are the group that most utilised the combination of face to face meetings and digital online platforms (50.00%). They are followed by Fellowship/Religious Group (44.00%), Sporting Association (43.00%) and Entertainment Group (42.00%). Regular face to face meetings have a slight edge over digital online platforms with 7 of the 13 associations preferring regular face to face interaction over digital online platforms. The Community Development Association is the only one with an equal preference for Regular face to face meetings (43.00%) and

Digital Online Platforms (43.00%). The survey findings on modes and frequency of interaction have an outlier where the Communal Granary-which is traditional and rural based association- has 80% of the meetings/interactions taking place on online digital platforms.

4.3.4 The benefits of membership in Social Support Associations

Most social support associations have a hybrid form and structure framed by a combination of some rules and regulations and strong underlying values of reciprocity and mutuality. Fellowship Group / Religious Group members mostly cited spiritual support (85.71%) and Sense of belonging (85.71%) while Sense of belonging was also cited by 80.00% of the members in Communal Granary associations, 75.00% of Entertainment Group and 75.00% of the participants in Alumni Association as a key benefit. Membership in Community Foundation helped 100.00% with their physical wellbeing and 75.00% with Exposure to new concept or ideas which was also a key benefit for 70.00% of Community Feeding Group. The benefits of Book/Reading Clubs included Sense of belonging (58.33%), Exposure to new concept or ideas (50.00%), Physical well-being (50.00%) while the two main benefits for members of Community Development Association were Exposure to new concepts or ideas (71.43%) and Improved voice in engaging with officeholders (57.14%) and Service Organisation or Club members mainly (75.00%) got exposure to new concept or ideas. Table 23 below shows the summary of benefits of membership in social support associations.

Table 23: The benefits of membership in Social Support Associations

Social Support Association	Benefits of membership										
	Collective Security	Entertainment	Organising /receiving welfare support	Improved voice in engaging with officeholders	Exposure to new concepts or ideas	Physical wellbeing	Sense of belonging	Spiritual support	Networking	Improved education outcome / quality of education	Other (please specify)
Fellowship Group /Religious Group	10.56%	8.70%	24.84%	15.53%	22.36%	26.09%	60.25%	85.71%	37.27%	0.00%	0.00%
Burial Societies	39.13%	4.35%	30.43%	21.74%	8.70%	17.39%	43.48%	17.39%	8.70%	0.00%	21.74%
Sporting Association	14.29%	47.62%	9.52%	23.81%	28.57%	47.62%	28.57%	9.52%	38.10%	0.00%	4.76%
Entertainment Group	0.00%	75.00%	29.17%	12.50%	29.17%	45.83%	75.00%	29.17%	33.33%	0.00%	4.17%
School Association Parent/ Teacher Group	19.23%	11.54%	19.23%	38.46%	23.08%	15.38%	26.92%	3.85%	15.38%	57.69%	3.85%
Alumni Association	4.76%	4.76%	14.29%	23.81%	52.38%	14.29%	66.67%	9.52%	47.62%	0.00%	9.52%
Book/Reading Club	0.00%	33.33%	16.67%	0.00%	50.00%	50.00%	58.33%	8.33%	8.33%	0.00%	8.33%
Community Development Association	42.86%	0.00%	14.29%	57.14%	71.43%	28.57%	42.86%	14.29%	42.86%	0.00%	0.00%
Service Organisation or Club	0.00%	25.00%	37.50%	25.00%	75.00%	50.00%	37.50%	0.00%	12.50%	0.00%	0.00%
Neighbourhood Watch Committee	53.33%	20.00%	13.33%	26.67%	13.33%	26.67%	46.67%	0.00%	13.33%	0.00%	0.00%
Communal Granary	0.00%	20.00%	40.00%	20.00%	60.00%	80.00%	80.00%	20.00%	20.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Community Feeding Group	20.00%	0.00%	50.00%	50.00%	70.00%	30.00%	40.00%	30.00%	10.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Community Foundation	50.00%	25.00%	25.00%	50.00%	75.00%	100.00%	50.00%	25.00%	50.00%	0.00%	0.00%

4.3.5 Assets held within Social Support Associations

Some of the social support associations in which citizens participate acquire different kinds of assets for various reasons including logistical use or as investments to earn some income for the associations. The study also established the assets held in common by the 13 social support association groups. Table 24 shows a breakdown of these assets as per study evidence

Table 24: Assets held within Social Support Associations

Social Support Association	Assets					
	Land	Minerals	Water body (Dam)	Tourist Attraction	Grazing Lands	Buildings
Fellowship Group /Religious Group	77%	1%	6%	2%	4%	85%
Burial Societies	44%	0%	33%	11%	0%	89%
Sporting Association	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%	100%
Entertainment Group	89%	0%	11%	0%	22%	78%
School Association Parent/Teacher Group	83%	0%	17%	17%	0%	100%
Alumni Association	67%	0%	0%	0%	0%	100%
Book/Reading Club	60%	0%	0%	0%	0%	100%
Community Development Association	46%	11%	11%	7%	11%	86%
Service Organisation or Club	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%	80%
Neighbourhood Watch Committee	75%	0%	0%	0%	0%	75%
Communal Granary	100%	20%	40%	20%	0%	60%
Community Feeding Group	80%	20%	20%	0%	20%	80%
Community Foundation	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%	100%

Land and buildings dominate the assets that are commonly held by social support associations. An overwhelming 100% of members in Sporting Associations, Service Organisation/Club and Community Foundations indicated that their associations owned land. Sporting Associations and Community Foundations also had 100% respondents indicating the associations owned buildings. One hundred per cent (100%) of members of School Association Parent/Teacher Group, Alumni Association and Book/

Reading Club also had Buildings. Reflecting their operational and thematic focus, other associations such as Communal Granary had a Water Body (dam)(40.00%) and a Tourist Attraction (20.00%) while Community Development Association held Minerals (11.00%) and Grazing Lands (11.00%) together with land (46.00%).

4.3.6 Problems faced within Social Support Associations

The survey explored the challenges faced by the social support associations and these are presented below in Table 25.

Table 25: Challenges faced within Social Support Associations

Social Support Association	Challenges faced within Social Support Associations								
	Gender based discrimination	Low levels of participation	Weak governance procedures	Leadership	Corruption	Formal registration	Meeting government regulatory requirements	Funding	None of the above
Fellowship Group /Religious Group	12.58%	11.32%	9.43%	25.79%	12.58%	4.40%	2.52%	30.19%	38.36%
Burial Societies	4.35%	4.35%	8.70%	4.35%	8.70%	4.35%	4.35%	8.70%	69.57%
Sporting Association	9.52%	9.52%	9.52%	23.81%	9.52%	14.29%	0.00%	47.62%	19.05%
Entertainment Group	12.50%	12.50%	8.33%	20.83%	20.83%	20.83%	12.50%	20.83%	33.33%
School Association Parent/ Teacher Group	15.38%	30.77%	15.38%	26.92%	19.23%	11.54%	7.69%	26.92%	19.23%
Alumni Association	0.00%	33.33%	0.00%	14.29%	4.76%	14.29%	4.76%	33.33%	38.10%
Book/Reading Club	0.00%	27.27%	9.09%	9.09%	9.09%	18.18%	0.00%	9.09%	45.45%
Community Development Association	0.00%	28.57%	0.00%	14.29%	14.29%	28.57%	14.29%	28.57%	28.57%
Service Organisation or Club	12.50%	25.00%	0.00%	12.50%	0.00%	12.50%	12.50%	25.00%	37.50%
Neighbourhood Watch Committee	6.67%	33.33%	6.67%	20.00%	6.67%	13.33%	0.00%	6.67%	33.33%
Communal Granary	40.00%	20.00%	40.00%	40.00%	20.00%	80.00%	20.00%	20.00%	0.00%
Community Feeding Group	20.00%	0.00%	20.00%	20.00%	20.00%	10.00%	10.00%	50.00%	10.00%
Community Foundation	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	25.00%	25.00%	0.00%	0.00%	25.00%	75.00%

Formal registration was singled out by 80.00% of participants in Communal Granary type of association as a major challenge. Other challenges faced by Communal Granary type of association include Gender Based discrimination (40.00%), Weak Governance Procedures (40.00%) and Leadership related issues. The issue of low levels of participation was highlighted as the key challenge in Neighbourhood Watch Committee (33.33%), Alumni Association (33.33%), Community Development Association (28.57%), School Association Parent/Teacher Group (30.77%), Book/Reading Club (27.27%) and Service Organisation or Club (25.00%).

4.3.7 Inclusion and discrimination within Social Support Associations

As established earlier in the background section in this discussion, some citizen-led initiatives and formations emerge out of experiences with exclusion from the economy and an array of other spaces where there is competition for resources or other valued material or intangible items. Consequently, the survey also sought to investigate the forms of discrimination experienced by participants/members of the social support associations. The findings are displayed below in Table 26.

Table 26: Forms of discrimination faced in Social Support Associations

Social Support Association	Forms of discrimination faced									
	Language Barriers	Prohibitive Membership Costs/Fees	Defined geographical boundaries	Membership defined by gender	Defined religious boundaries	Defined tribal /ethnic boundaries	Age	Disability	Legal	Other (please specify)
Fellowship Group /Religious Group	50.00%	0.00%	0.00%	8.33%	8.33%	16.67%	8.33%	0.00%	0.00%	16.67%
Burial Societies	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Sporting Association	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	25.00%	50.00%	25.00%	50.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Entertainment Group	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
School Association Parent/ Teacher Group	25.00%	25.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	50.00%
Alumni Association	42.86%	0.00%	14.29%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	57.14%	14.29%	0.00%	0.00%
Book/Reading Club	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	100.00%
Community Development Association	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	100.00%	0.00%	100.00%	0.00%
Service Organisation/Club	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Neighbourhood Watch Committee	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Communal Granary	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Community Feeding Group	0.00%	100.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	100.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Community Foundation	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%

The survey evidence highlights that social support associations are very inclusive and quite accommodative of socio-economic differences, and they also have few barriers to entry and participation. Community Feeding Groups were hamstrung by Prohibitive Membership Costs/Fees, Defined tribal /ethnic boundaries as shown by each of these challenges being pointed out by 100% of members of Community Feeding Groups. Age (100.00%) and Legal challenges (100.00%) were pointed out as major challenges experienced by participants in Community Development Associations. Language Barriers (42.86%) and Age (57.14%) were pointed out as problems needing to be addressed within the Alumni Associations.

5. Conclusion

Evidence from the study indicates that the citizens in Harare participate in a wide range of citizen-led formations and they do so with a plethora of driving motivations including exposure to new ideas and concepts, and improved voice in engaging with officeholders and a sense of belonging. These associations hold different forms of assets mainly land and buildings but in their operations, the associations are hindered by some challenges such as low levels of participation, corruption and difficulties with leadership. Social support associations are more inclusive but participants that experienced discrimination within the social support associations are mainly discriminated against on the basis of Prohibitive Membership Costs/Fees, Defined tribal /ethnic boundaries and age. Defined tribal/ ethnic boundaries and prohibitive membership costs/fees account for the majority of incidences of discrimination experienced by participants in economic associations. The economic associations are drawn back by a myriad of challenges such as low levels of participation, funding, weak governance procedures, leaderships issues, lack of formal registration and concerns with meeting government regulatory requirements.

The study also established that citizens in Harare participate in multiple forms of political associations. They join these formations with the hope securing improved voice in engaging with officeholders, exposure to new concepts and ideas, defence of rights and effecting and benefiting from changes and reforms within community, the participants are often discriminated against in these associations on the basis of age and the associations having rigid religious boundaries and defined tribal ethnic boundaries. These serve as barriers to entry and participation in some political associations. Embracing technology and adapting to the political environment, political associations meet regularly using both face to face meetings and digital online platforms.

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Participation, Democracy and Citizenship in Malawi

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1. Introduction

It is widely acknowledged in literature and it is also the notion that is at the heart of this study that democracy and development cannot be adequately discussed without considering civil society and participation (Malamulo, 2012, Chirwa et al 2021). The importance of an active and open civil society space has brought about progressive societies around the world where citizens have the space to participate on issues that affect their lives and livelihoods. A number of formalized organisations working within the civil society space have carved a niche as an alternative to an ineffective and corrupt state and a rapacious business sector and have positioned themselves as the unelected and legitimised voice of the citizens. They have not necessarily invested in developing the voices of the poor and bonds of trust that can be used to unleash community participation in local and national processes outside of the framework of the scope of a defined project. This study did an assessment of selected civil society institutions to understand some of the issues that citizens do in the political, economic and social space besides voting in a general election. Most of the institutions that facilitate citizens' engagement have various challenges that need attention. However, as this study has noted, the presence of these institutions is pivotal to any thriving democracy.

The study in Malawi was done with a group of randomly selected individuals who were selected in the streets of Lilongwe and we hope this provides an overview of what citizens engage in within the country.

2. Context and Background

Malawi became an independent African country on the 6th July 1964 with Dr Hastings Kamuzu Banda as the first president. During the earlier years of his reign as the president of Malawi, he initiated a number of populist interventions that were aimed at changing what was perceived as colonial oppressive institutions against the black Africans (MacCraken, 2012; Newbury, 2014). However, after Dr. Banda had consolidated power and had gained patrimonial authority, he declared himself the president for life in 1971 following the abolition of multipartyism in Malawi (Chinigo, 2015; Green 2011; Kayuni and Tambulasi, 2010). This left his Malawi Congress Party as the sole political party in Malawi and Dr Banda as its sole leader. Dr Banda's political party had total control of the economy and the affairs of the state. He instituted one of the most repressive, corrupt, predatory and violent political system in Africa. (Hodder-William, 1994; Ihonvbere, 1997). Furthermore, this oppressive regime maintained itself through a combination of bribery, intimidation, election malpractices, and the suffocation of civil society. Banda not only closed all democratic openings inherited at independence in 1964 like multiparty politics, but also erected the structures of a corrupt and highly repressive one-person and one-party state. During the 30 years of his reign from 1964 to 1994, there was hardly a separation between public and private funds as Dr. Banda himself owned almost half the economy. The civil society space was controlled and the civil and political rights were denied the citizens. The stifling of the civic space did not only end on the civic and political institutions but also the social and economic associations. For instance, much of the struggle for independence in Malawi was championed by native Association, trade unions and cooperatives, however, after independence was gained, there were a number of institutional changes and directives outlawing groupings that were deemed as fertile grounds for the growth of political dissent. One such landmark institutional change was the directive that put a ban on the existence of agricultural cooperatives in Malawi. During the early, 1970s cooperatives found themselves to be at loggerheads with the prevailing political situation as the principles

Much of the struggle for independence in Malawi was championed by native Association, trade unions and cooperatives

of cooperative management requires that democracy and ownership of the institution should prevail. Additionally, the farmers in the cooperatives were becoming economically empowered, something that posed a threat to the prevailing political institution. Any grouping, be it social or economic, were being viewed with suspicion, which led to a lot of conspiracies against the cooperative movement leading to its outlawing in favour of loose farmers' clubs that the political establishment could easily exploit.

However, in much of the early 1990s there was a shift in the political landscape in most Southern African countries including Malawi, towards multi-party politics that led to popular participation in governance systems. Despite the repressive regime that was in place in Malawi, the ground was set for a shift towards multiparty politics. A number of issues played together to bring about this change. Firstly, the economy was in a deep quagmire with indicators like inflation around 22% at the end of 1993 leading to unemployment, crime and hunger and these had reaching unprecedented proportions (Ihonvbere, 1997). The drought of 1992 and the withholding of donor aid that was imposed by the western countries on Malawi, made matters worse as displaced peasants migrated to the urban centres (Chirwa, 1997, Chirwa et al, 2005).

The introduction of the IMF- and World Bank-supervised Structural Adjustment Programme in 1980 unintentionally facilitated the march to multiparty democracy through the unequal distribution of the pains and costs of adjustment (Kydd et al, 1986, Harrigan and El Said, 2000). The second point was to do with the position especially the Catholic Church took, which played a major role in forcing Banda to recognise the pressures for change. On Sunday 8 March 1992, the then country' s eight Catholic bishops released a pastoral letter entitled Living Our Faith in which they denounced the corruption, indiscipline and repressive policies of Dr Banda. This pastoral letter ignited the confidence of the local opposition force leading to several strike actions to protest at human rights abuses. Additionally, when the Catholic bishops released their pastoral letter criticising human rights abuses and repression in Malawi, the students at the University of Malawi led open riots and demonstrations against the government

The introduction of the IMF- and World Bank-supervised Structural Adjustment Programme in 1980 unintentionally facilitated the march to multiparty democracy

This pressure on Dr. Banda led him to declare a national referendum on whether the country should return to multiparty democracy. A referendum was held in 1993 and the people of Malawi voted overwhelmingly for multiparty democracy. A new republican constitution was drafted, which among others provided for the right of association and the reestablishment of the civil rights for the citizens. The spirit of cooperatives and association was revived after 1994 with the coming in programs like the Sustainable Agribusiness Development Program (SADP) which led to the formation of the National Smallholder Farmers Association of Malawi (NASFAM). Following this, a number of commodity-based associations and cooperatives have been established in Malawi. In response to this, the government also came up with a Cooperative Development Policy in 1992 that was followed by the Cooperative Act in 1997.

3. The Civic Space in Malawi

The civic space can be broadly understood as the space between the state and individual citizens, inhabited by all sorts of socio-politico-economic organisations working to realize all sorts of interests and aspirations for all sorts of constituencies in society (Chingaipe, 2021). The civil society is a cardinal element of any democratic political system. Its status, at any point in time, indicates the health status of democracy in the polity (Chingaipe, 2020, Dulani, 2005).

Malawi's civic space opened up in the early 1990s as part of the wave of democratization that saw the one-party state unravel.

As pointed out earlier, the Malawi's civic space opened up in the early 1990s as part of the wave of democratization that saw the one-party state unravel. Supported by a progressive constitution containing a bill of individual and collective rights adopted in 1995, civic actors (both individuals and organisations in all forms and shapes) mushroomed to participate in and/or support ordinary citizens to engage in public life demanding and supporting inclusive, accountable and responsive governance and service delivery (Kopecky and Mudde (2003), Chandhoke, 2007). The present study looks at some of the roles that citizens play within the civic space in between the elections as facilitated by the civil society institutions. Generally, civil society organisations as noted by this study performs, inter alia, the following functions:

- Complementing government in service delivery, especially the NGOs in health, education, agriculture and environmental conservation among many other sectors;
- Sharing or disseminating information on laws, policies and other information on governance to the public and educating them on civil rights and duties in various domains of life;
- Promoting participation in governance at all levels by making relevant information available to citizens and empowering them with skills for engaging duty bearers to ensure inclusive, accountable and responsive governance and service delivery;

- Demanding accountability by checking the exercise of state power and privilege through a range of methods including public protests to check impunity perpetrated by public duty bearers and political executives;
- Monitoring the performance of the public sector and private sector institutions and advocating for reforms to ensure compliance with laws and improve functionality and quality of service delivery to citizens;
- Bringing governance and policy issues to the attention of policy makers and sustaining the position of the issues on the Government's agenda for resolution;
- Aggregating and promoting the interests of ordinary people in a way that political parties do not and carrying out advocacy work to inform policy analysis and adoption at sectoral and national levels;
- Mitigating social and political conflicts as part of alternative dispute resolution mechanisms at various levels

A defining characteristic of democratic political systems is that citizens have the opportunity to freely voice out and express their policy preferences and to participate in the policy-making process.

In Malawi, the civil society organisations have played a crucial role in consolidating democracy and facilitating the people's engagement in the public space. A defining characteristic of democratic political systems is that citizens have the opportunity to freely voice out and express their policy preferences and to participate in the policy-making process. Mass political participation is traditionally considered a crucial element of any well-functioning democracy. (Hickey and Mohan, 2003). This also involves participation in social, cultural and economic activities that determines people's livelihoods.

Benjamin Barber (2014) and Gaventa (1999) are among the contemporary authors who have most strongly defended the importance of participation. According to Barber, "strong democracy" should be based on the assumption that citizens can participate in numerous ways in political, economic and social decision-making and that in practice they will also do this in a routine manner, thus reviving the republican ideal of citizens who are actively involved in the politics of their society. Typically, citizens have different means at their disposal to participate. By far the most widespread act of political participation is voting in elections. In systems of representative democracy, citizens use their vote to select the political personnel who will be responsible

for day-to-day political decisions. Empirical research, however, shows strong differences with regard to voter turnout, both between individuals with specific background characteristics and between political systems. Citizens also have numerous other ways to express their preferences, like taking part in demonstrations, joining political action groups, or other forms of protest behaviour (Gaventa, 2019). Although these acts are performed less frequently, they allow citizens to voice their preferences in a very clear and sometimes highly effective manner. As this study is also interested in understanding the citizens economic and social undertakings especially in the inter-elections period, it has to be noted that the social and economic activities are very much influenced by the political stability and the general political economy.

While there is a strong consensus about the importance of political participation, other questions remain open and are hotly debated in the political science literature. There is obviously a clear normative preference for “high” levels of participation, but there is no agreement on how high this level should be, nor of the precise impact of varying participation levels on the functioning of democratic politics. Elevated levels of political participation might equally indicate satisfaction or the occurrence of widespread discontent about the political regime. Conflicting demands from public opinion might also imply that political decision-making becomes more difficult as politicians are confronted with an overload of demands from society (Dalton, 2008). Nor will all authors agree that taking part in elections is the first and foremost form of political participation. Tambulasi (2010) argues that during elections, citizens only have a limited set of options to voice their

preferences, while in non-electoral forms of politics the options on timing, scope, and intensity can be much wider. We also know that in many democracies, the frequency of election-related participation has been declining, while non-electoral forms of participation are on the rise. We do not know, however, whether this implies that citizens are better able to prevail in the decision-making process. While there are some well-known examples of how demonstrations like the Arab spring and also, closer to home, those led by the Human Rights Defenders Coalition (HRDC) in Malawi and strikes in general have toppled regimes that looked quite solid, we also know that most demonstrations do not have all that much effect on policy.

“Democracy should no longer be judged only on the basis of how elections are conducted but more importantly on the extent to which citizens, through participatory processes and platforms shape the public agenda and also on how citizen-needs are addressed.”

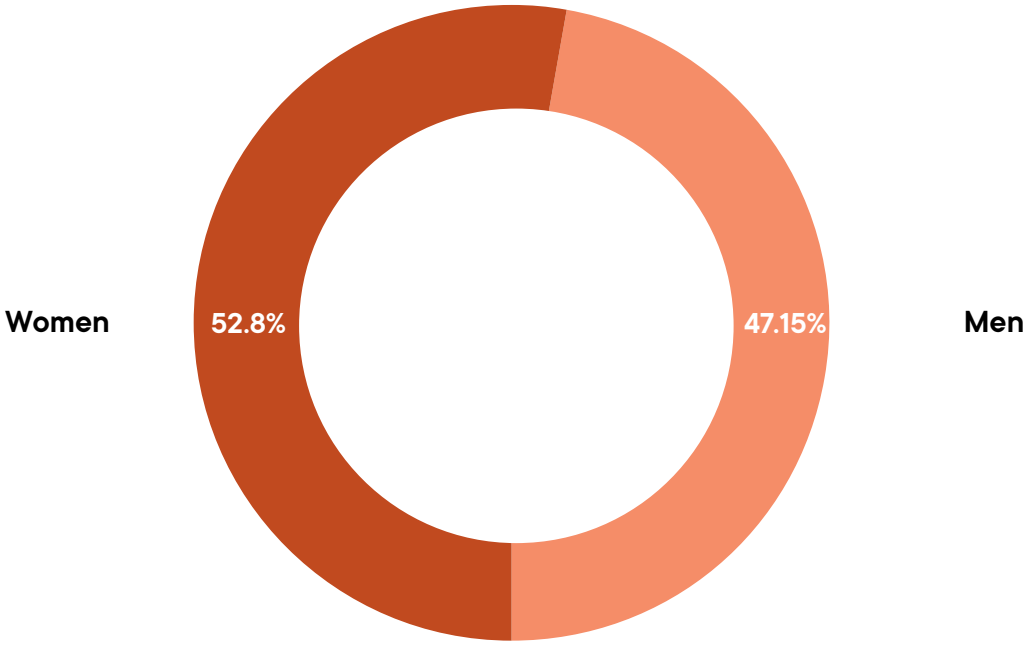
Continuous mass demonstrations clearly played a role in the downfall of Arab autocracies in 2011, but a vast majority of all demonstrations are not even picked up by the radar of mass media, let alone by political decision makers. An additional question is whether it makes sense to continue to broaden the definition of political participation (Dalton, 2008). In the 1950s, the focus of empirical research was on electoral forms of participation, but in more recent work, non-institutionalized forms of participation have increasingly received attention. Political consumerism—that is, the buying or boycotting of products for political reasons is now also routinely included in definitions and operationalizations of political participation. But scholars disagree whether various acts of what has been called life-style politics also should be included in the standard definition of political participation. While these activities might have a clear political relevance, it is less clear whether they are actually meant to influence political decision-making.

This study therefore believes that democracy should no longer be judged only on the basis of how elections are conducted but more importantly on the extent to which citizens, through participatory processes and platforms shape the public agenda and also on how citizen-needs are addressed. The study explores the role and potential of citizen formations in enhancing/nurturing new forms of civic agency and how they respond to official processes of democracy and development. It explores what initiatives, whether social or economic do citizens get involved in during the inter-elections periods that keeps them engaged.

4. Description of the Sample

The study was carried out via a survey instrument. We collected responses from 403 respondents mainly drawn from the city of Lilongwe of which 52.8% were female and 47.15% were male.

Figure 1: Distribution of respondents by gender



The majority of the respondents were within the age range of 26–35 years, constituting 34.24% of the respondents, and the second largest group are those within the age range of 36–45 years

Table 1: Distribution of respondents by age

Age range	Responses (%)	Number of respondents
18–25	19.35	78
26–35	34.24	138
36–45	27.54	111
46–55	13.90	56
56–65	3.97	16
65+	0.99	4
Total		**403**

Furthermore, the study also noted that 56.58% of the respondents indicated as being married, 31.02% as being single, 7.69% indicated as being divorced and 4.71% as being widowed.

Table 2: Distribution of respondents by marital status

Marital status	Responses (%)	Number of respondents
Single	31.02	125
Married	56.58	228
Divorced	7.69	31
Widowed	4.71	19
Total		**403**

As regards the level of literacy of the respondents, 94.54% indicated as being literate with 56.33% attending tertiary education, 38.46% reaching secondary school while 3.72% attended only primary school. 1.49% had no formal education.

Table 3: Distribution of respondents by level of literacy

Literate	Responses (%)	Number of respondents
Yes	94.54	381
No	5.46	22
Total		**403**

Table 4: Distribution of respondents by level of school attainment

School attainment	Responses (%)	Number of Respondents
Primary School	3.72	15
Secondary School	38.46	155
Tertiary School	56.33	227
No formal education	1.49	6
Total		**403**

It has also to be pointed out that much of the study was done in Lilongwe urban as 94.04% indicated themselves as being town dwellers while 5.96% indicated as being rural. These dynamics are crucial as they determine the level and the extent of participation and the influence people may have in the civic engagements.

In terms of income levels. A large number of the respondents at 39.95% indicated that they were within the income levels of under USD250.00 per month and 34.49% indicated that they were within the range USD251 - USD500. The highest earners of the group earning above USD 5000 were only 1.9%. As regards the sources of income, 35.48% indicated that they were in formal employment while 16.13% are engaged in a formal business. 7.69% are in informal business while 7.69% are in informal employment.

Table 5: Income level of respondents

Income levels	Responses	Number of respondents
Under USD$250.00	39.95	161
Between USD$251 and USD$500	34.49	139
Between USD$501 andUSD$1,000	14.14	57
Between USD$1,001 and USD$3,000	7.94	32
Between USD$3001 and USD$5,000	1.49	6
Above USD$5,001	1.99	8
Total		**403**

As regards participation in formal voting process, the majority, 83%, indicated that they are registered voters while 17% are not. Out of those that voted 75.43% voted in a local government election, 3.72% were registered but chose not to vote in the local government election. For the parliamentary, 76.43% were registered and they voted while 3.76% were registered but did not vote and for presidential election 78.16% were registered and voted while 3.23% were registered but chose not to vote.

5. Mapping of Citizen's Initiative in Malawi

The study found that almost all the respondents that took part, belong to some form of an association or some sort of a grouping, be it economic, political or social. These groupings are what makes most of the people occupied and politically engaged in between the political process of casting the ballots to vote for the President, Members of Parliament or Ward Councillors. In as much as casting a vote is probably the single most important engagement in any political process by the citizens, what happens in between these elections are cumulatively more important as they have a direct impact on people's livelihood and the fulfilment of what was put forward during the election process.

Listed below are some of the dynamics that exist in some of the economic, political and social institutions that brings people together and facilitate their involvement in civic space in between the general elections.

5.1 Citizens and the Economy

5.1.1 Levels of belonging

The community economic institutions that the study assessed are as listed in Table 6: below. As regards the level of belonging within these groups, the study found that a large number of the respondents (42.18%) belong to a Buying Club. These are usually women's groups that pull their resources together over a certain period of time to have joint procurement of items, especially groceries although construction materials like cement have been bought by some groups. The second most favourite group listed was the Savings and Lending group at 41.44%. These are groups locally known as 'banki m'khonde' have become one of the popular groups that supports women with resources, especially capital for small business.

However, there is one issue that needs to be noted in these groups as it corresponds to the gender categories and sample that was used in this study. As noted earlier, most of the people that participate in these kinds of organised economic groupings are women and at time these groups have multiple functions where one group could be doing lending and savings and also collective buying of groceries. This probably suggest that the responses of most respondents were based on the functions of the groups and not necessarily the kind of a group.

Table 6: Level of belonging of the citizens to selected economic associations

Association	Yes		Total
	#	%	
1. Savings and Lending Group	167	41.44%	
2. Labour pooling group	29	7.20%	
3. Production Cooperative	55	13.65%	
4. Buying Clubs (e.g., collective group to buy groceries)	170	42.18%	
5. Marketing Cooperative (involved in jointly selling commodities)	69	17.12%	
6. Common Property Group (natural resources)	26	6.45%	
7. Asset Pooling Group	27	6.70%	403
8. Market Group/Platform (a place or network where members sell goods/services to each other)	65	16.13%	
9. Business Promotion Council	28	6.95%	
10. Business Advocacy/Lobby Group	20	4.96%	
11. Business Mentorship/Training Group	56	13.90%	
12. Housing Cooperative	21	5.21%	
13. Multi-level marketing schemes (e.g. Avon, Tablecharm, Tupperware)	12	2.98%	

Above all, every person that the study interacted with, indicated to have been part of some sort of an economic undertaking whether in a group or not.

5.1.2 Description of what economic focused associations do. (The case of Savings and Lending group)

The study was done with about thirteen different types of groups as shown in Table 6 above. Different individuals interviewed indicated that they belong to these groups for various reasons and they also derive different economic benefits. For instance, taking the case of a Savings and Lending Group, 29.94% of the respondents, indicated that these organisations are formed to provide collective economic security where individuals can get a loan easier than in the formal lending institutions. About 52.10% of the respondents indicated that these groups provide improved access to much easier financing apart from the credit that circulates within the group. Furthermore, these groups are at times used as collateral with some micro lending. A number of micro-lending institutions have made it a requirement that for someone to access loans they need to belong to an organised group. There are some (36.53%) within these groups that see them as providing an opportunity for exchange of information about market opportunities and also collective bargaining for goods they would want to sell as individuals but also as a group. These groups have also been used for advocacy. They aggregated their voices to rally around an issue requiring policy attention where as a group they have improved voice in engaging with officeholders (25.55%). Through these groups, about 45.51% of the respondents have also been exposed to new concepts or ideas while 43.11% benefited through skills exchange. These economic group generally provide a good social capital and organised welfare support.

Table 7: Benefits the people gets when belong to the groups (Lending and Savings group)

Benefits of belonging to a group	Responses (%)	frequency of responses
Collective security	29.94	50
Improved access to financing	52.10	87
Pooling together assets	27.25	43
Exchange information about market opportunities	36.53	61
Organising welfare support	34.13	57
Improved voice in engaging with officeholders	25.55	41
Exposure to new concepts of ideas	45.51	76
Collective ownership of assets	23.35	39
Skills exchange	43.11	72
Additional income	68.26	117
Others	0.60	1

5.1.3 When and how were the associations established?

The majority of the savings and lending groups (64.67%) and also buying clubs (74.71%) were established between 2011 and 2020. The concept of "banki m'khonde" as we know it today is relatively very new and has gained ground in the past decade. However, there has been a good spread over the years starting from 1990 to 2020 in terms of percentage growth of most of these groups ranging from of 0.00% for some groups that never existed then to 74.71% being highest number recorded. This indicates that almost every year, groupings were being established.

As regards the internal governance of these groups, it has been noted that most of them, (50.30%) had no formal registration. This corresponds well with the kind of groupings that have been

indicated above like the buying clubs which are very informal and do not need any registration. However, the savings and lending clubs are required to have formal registration as a Savings and Credit Cooperative (SACCO), but in practice some remain unregistered due to the mode of lending that usually happens in the groups. About 26.96% of the respondents indicated that they belong to an established association, meaning that they belong to a group that has some sort of formal registration, while 10.78% indicated that they are not aware of whether their grouping is registered or not. This demonstrates some governance and information flaws in these groups as the registration status of a group is supposed to be common knowledge for the group members.

Table 8: Year when most of the economic institutions were established

Association	1990 – 2000		2001 - 2010		2011 - 2020		Other (Unspecified)		Total
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	
1. Savings and Lending Group	15	8.98%	31	18.56%	108	64.67%	13	7.78%	167
2. Labour pooling group	3	10.34%	11	37.93%	14	48.28%	1	3.45%	29
3. Production Cooperative	15	27.27%	19	34.55%	15	27.27%	6	10.91%	55
4. Buying Clubs (e.g., collective group to buy groceries)	10	5.88%	25	14.71%	127	74.71%	8	4.71%	170
5. Marketing Cooperative (involved in jointly selling commodities)	10	14.49%	27	39.13%	32	46.38%	0	0.00%	69
6. Common Property Group (natural resources)	2	7.69%	12	46.15%	12	46.15%	0	0.00%	26
7. Asset Pooling Group	0	0.00%	15	55.56%	11	40.74%	1	3.70%	27
8. Market Group/Platform	8	12.31%	10	15.38%	42	64.62%	5	7.69%	65
9. Business Promotion Council	4	14.29%	11	39.29%	13	46.43%	0	0.00%	28
10. Business Advocacy/Lobby Group	4	20%	5	25.00%	11	55.00%	0	0.00%	20
11. Business Mentorship/Training Group	2	3.57%	14	25.00%	32	57.14%	8	14.29%	56
12. Housing Cooperative	2	9.52%	5	23.81%	13	61.90%	1	4.76%	21
13. Multi-level marketing schemes (e.g. Avon, Tablecharm, Tupperware)	0	0.00%	3	25.00%	6	50%	3	25.00%	12

In terms of office holding, the majority of the respondents, 62.05% indicated that they do not hold any position while 37.95% had been officer bearers. Most of the office holders (37.72%) in these associations are selected through a democratic process of elections. The second largest cohort (34.13%) indicated that they became leaders through appointment and 23.64% volunteered to be members.

In terms of formal meetings of the groups, most of these groupings (41.32%) meet on a weekly basis, while (40.12%) meet monthly, 17.37% meet daily while 1.2% meet annually. In many instances (57.49%) of this interaction is combination of a face to face interaction and using digital platforms like WhatsApp groups.

Table 9: General modality on how office bearers are selected

Selection Modality	Responses (%)	Number of Respondents
Elections	37.72	152
Appointed	34.13	137
Hereditary	0.00	0
Voluntary	23.64	95
I don't Know	4.51	19
Total		**403**

5.1.4 Gender dynamics within associations

Gender in leadership and governance structures is one of the growing important issues as the balance in gender representation helps to balance the concerns of the men and women as well in the groups. The study has noted that there is some sort of a balance in terms of gender categories holding office, where it was indicated that 45.40% of the groups are chaired by a male member while 43.56% are chaired by female. However, the trends changed as we further asked about the other offices like the vice chairperson, the secretary, treasure and the committee members. These positions are mainly being held by females in most of the group as 59.21%, 65.16%, 53.25%, 50.43% respectively.

Table 10: Level of office holding by gender categories

Economic Groups					
Association	Frequency of Male Office Holders		Frequency of Female Office Holders		Total
	#	%	#	%	
Savings and Lending Group	377	38.16%	611	61.84%	988
Labour pooling group	118	51.08%	113	48.92%	231
Production Cooperative	214	48.86%	224	51.14%	438
Buying Clubs (e.g., collective group to buy groceries)	353	32.90%	720	67.10%	1073
Marketing Cooperative (involved in jointly selling commodities)	269	50.19%	267	49.81%	536
Common Property Group (natural resources)	95	46.57%	109	53.43%	204
Asset Pooling Group	102	51.78%	95	48.22%	197
Market Group/Platform (a place or network where members sell goods/services to each other)	222	47.74%	243	52.26%	465
Business Promotion Council	99	45.00%	121	55.00%	220
Business Advocacy/Lobby Group	79	49.69%	80	50.31%	159
Business Mentorship/Training Group	204	51.26%	194	48.74%	398
Housing Cooperative	78	48.75%	82	51.25%	160
Multi-level marketing schemes (e.g. Avon, Tablecharm, Tupperware)	26	32.50%	54	67.50%	80

It should also be noted that most of the groups that were interviewed under the economic groups are predominantly women dominated groups. For instance, the savings and Lending groups and the Buying Clubs had 61.84% and 67.10% women chairperson leadership respectively.

5.1.5 Types of problems that need fixing within associations

The major problem in most of these organisations has to do with the registration. Most of these associations are still operating informally. This was indicated by 34.94% of the respondents. Furthermore, 33.13% of the respondents indicated that funding of these groupings is a huge challenge for them to maintain their operations and this is another issue that needs much attention. About a fifth

(20.48%) of the respondents indicated that leadership is a problem. Most of the leaders have been in office since the inception of the groups and in some of these groups they suffer from the 'founder's syndrome' where the study observe that group founders still yields power though out all of formal group leadership. Other challenges indicated include gender discriminations as indicated by 19.28%, Low levels of participation was indicated by 17.47% and corruption by 15.66%. Most of these associations do not have common assets. This was indicated by 88.02% but those who do, like in 11.98% of the respondents, 90% indicated that land was the commonly held asset.

5.2 Citizens and Politics

The second category of institutions that the study looked at were the political associations or platforms to which the respondents belong. The questions sought to understand the ways in which these associations and platforms contribute to the members' engagements in political processes. Table 11 below demonstrates that the majority (52.62%) of the respondents belong to a political party. However, this belongingness is mostly not formal but through a vote they casted for the candidate of that political party. Formal memberships through party cards or other forms of party formal identity is currently rare in Malawi as was the case during the one-party state era (Tambulasi, 2010). The study also found that 34.01% did not only belong to a party but took an active role in the campaign processes of some kind. These campaign groups have solely been either women groups as indicated by 25.87% of the respondents or as youth groups as indicated by 16.28% of the respondents.

Table 11: Belonging Across Political Associations

Association	Yes		Total
	#	%	
Campaign Group	117	34.01%	344
Political Party	181	52.62%	344
Social Movement	48	13.95%	344
Joint Public Petition	13	3.78%	344
Local Peace Committee	24	6.98%	344
Residents Association	20	5.81%	344
Online Based Civic Coalition	9	2.62%	344
Women's Group	89	25.87%	344
Youth Group	56	16.28%	344

Furthermore, 13.96% indicated that they belong to a social movement. The major social movement that had a huge impact on the political processes in Malawi was the Human Rights Defender Coalition (HRDC). This is a grouping that organised demonstrations, which led to the nullification of the 2019 Presidential vote. Most of the youth that took party in this study, participated in the demonstrations that were organised by the HRDC and this gave them a sense of belonging to a social movement.

5.2.1 Description of what political focused associations do

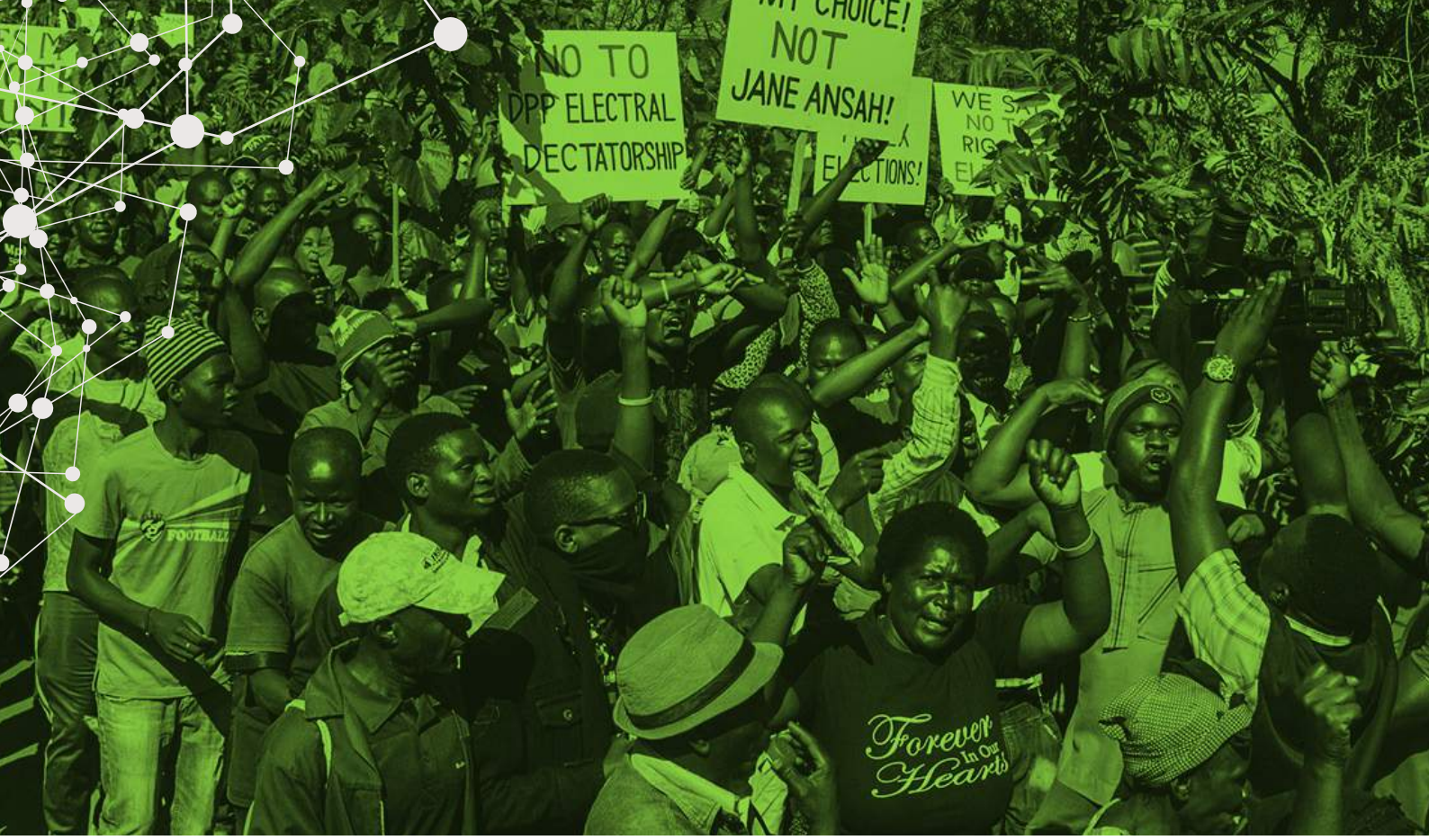
These political associations and groups help most of the people to have a sense of belonging in as far as political processes are concerned, these groups have helped in political mobilisation, fundraising, campaigning and bringing a common voice for the different categories of people.

5.2.2 When were the associations established?

Table 12: Year when political associations were established

Political Association	1990 - 2000		2001 - 2010		2011 - 2020		Other (Unspecified)		Total
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	
Campaign Group	18	15.38%	31	26.50%	55	47.01%	13	11.11%	117
Political Party	34	18.78%	46	25.41%	55	30.39%	46	25.41%	181
Social Movement	5	10.42%	12	25.00%	23	47.92%	8	16.67%	48
Joint Public Petition	1	7.69%	5	38.46%	7	53.85%	0	0.00%	13
Local Peace Committee	3	12.50%	8	33.33%	12	50.00%	1	4.17%	24
Residents Association	7	35.00%	4	20.00%	4	20.00%	5	25.00%	20
Online Based Civic Coalition	0	0.00%	2	22.22%	7	77.78%	0	0.00%	9
Women's Group	15	16.85%	11	12.36%	58	65.17%	5	5.62%	89
Youth Group	7	12.50%	13	23.21%	28	50.00%	8	14.29%	56

The study found out that most of these political associations are seasonal in nature, in the sense that they become active towards general elections when the political hype is high. As indicated earlier, most of these institutions are formed to help in political mobilisation and in most cases such a necessity comes closer to the general elections. However, the study also noted that apart from the political parties, most of these groups like the HRDC, formed in the past two years have been very active after the elections. Additionally, the coming in of social media channels like Facebook, WhatsApp and Twitter have also helped in creating platforms for political debates and participation in the inter-elections period. About 77.78% of respondents indicated that they have been part of an online political grouping formed in the past two years. Additionally, 65.17% of women groups and 50% of youth groups were all formed in the past two years mainly because of the 2019 general elections and 2020 presidents' fresh elections. These were initiatives of the political parties for political mobilisations. Furthermore, there had been an increase in joint public petitions between 2000 and 2020. The study noted an increase from 12.50% in 2000 to 53.85% in 2020.



These have also come with a corresponding increase in social movements that facilitate these public petitions from 10.42% in 2000 to 47.92% in 2020.

In terms of ownership of assets, 83.33% indicated that they do not own any joint assets with only 16.67% of the respondents indicated that they do. Most political parties indeed have assets in form of land, offices, vehicle and others.

5.2.3 Gender dynamics within politically focused associations

There is a balance in terms of gender dynamics within the political associations. There is also a balance in office holding in most campaign groups. The study indicated a 50 – 50 balance in office holding and participation patterns except for specially gender biased groups like women groups. Furthermore, for political parties, most offices are held by men who hold about 52.44% as opposed to 47.56% for women. Women leaders have also been predominant in social movements at 51.02%. As for resident associations, which may not necessarily be political in nature but can also at time play the role of a political institution, the study has shown that the leadership can vary, however at the time of the study, the majority of the leadership are males at 50.70% and females at 49.30%.

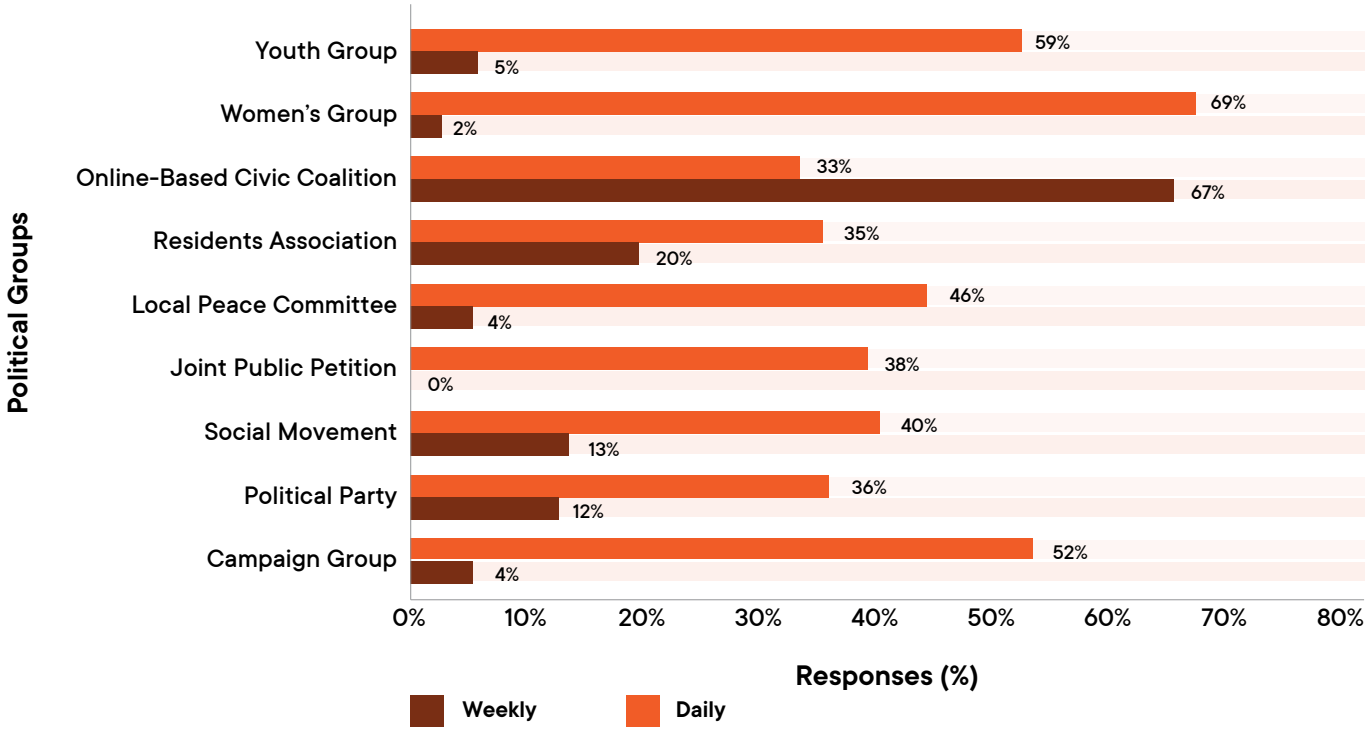
Table 13: Gender Dynamics in political associations' leadership

Political					
Association	Frequency of Male Office Holders		Frequency of Female Office Holders		Total
	#	%	#	%	
Campaign Group	573	50.00%	573	50.00%	1146
Political Party	818	52.44%	742	47.56%	1560
Social Movement	216	48.98%	225	51.02%	441
Joint Public Petition	73	56.15%	57	43.85%	130
Local Peace Committee	125	54.11%	106	45.89%	231
Residents Association	72	50.70%	70	49.30%	142
Online Based Civic Coalition	41	50.00%	41	50.00%	82
Women's Group	82	9.70%	763	90.30%	845
Youth Group	235	47.86%	256	52.14%	491

5.2.4 Ways and frequency of interaction

As regards the frequency of meetings for these institutions, most political groups indicated that they interact weekly. Women's group had the highest percentage indication of weekly interactions (69% of respondents indicated they met weekly) while online based civic coalition groups had the highest percentage of daily interaction (67% of respondents indicated they met daily. The high indication of daily interaction of online based civic coalition is attributed to the nature of the group and mode of interaction which is online thus it is convenient.

Figure 2: Frequency of meetings across political associations



The major benefits that accrue to them for belonging to these groups is that they provide them with the space for participating in political processes but also a sense of belonging and identity. Through these groups they can defend their political right through voting and petition but also to mobilise for the political parties and candidates who meet their political views, this was indicated by 47.01% of the respondents, while 39.32% indicated that they joined these groups because they wanted a change of government regardless of who will be in power afterwards and 32.48% wanted a change in social order and people's livelihood.

5.2.5 Types of problems that need fixing within associations,

The major challenges that needs to be fixed in the majority of these groups is leadership. This was indicated by 43.49% of the respondents, gender discrimination was indicated by 29.06% of the respondents and 23.08% indicated corruption as the main challenge. As regards the registration status of these groups, most of these institutions especially the political parties are duly registered organisations with a

constitution while most of the women and youth groups are just informal and are affiliates of these political parties.

5.3 Citizens and Social Institutions

Table 14: Distribution of how respondents belong to social institutions

Social Support			
Association	Yes		Total
	#	%	
Fellowship Group /Religious Group (temples, churches, mosques, shrine etc)	230	66.86%	344
Burial Societies	9	2.62%	
Sporting Association	39	11.34%	
Entertainment Group (dance, choir etc)	63	18.31%	
School Association Parent/Teacher Group	34	9.88%	
Alumni Association	16	4.65%	
Book/Reading Club	16	4.65%	
Community Development Association	20	5.81%	
Service Organisation or Club (e.g. Lions Club; Rotary Int'l)	15	3.72%	403
Neighbourhood Watch Committee	22	5.46%	
Communal Granary	2	0.50%	
Community Feeding Group	8	1.99%	
Community Foundation	4	0.99%	

The third category of associations that the study examined had to do with the creation of social solidarity. These are generally associations that support social cohesion in the communities and they range from religious groups, sports association, entertainment groups and others. These groups keep the community together as a social unit and strengthens the social capital of the individuals concerned. The majority (66.86%) belong to a religious group, 18.31% belong to an entertainment group while 11.34% belong to a sporting group. These are the three most popular

associations and are some of the major activities that keep people occupied apart from their participation in political activities.

5.3.1 Description of what social focused associations do

As noted, earlier on, these social associations help to build the social capital that is necessary for building up of communities. This social capital provides a collective security for the communities as indicated by 25.97% of the respondents, 22.65% belong to these groups for welfare support while for 51.93% of the respondents, these institutions give them a sense of belonging and identity. Approximately 57.46% of the respondent, feels that belonging to a group could easily help them defend their rights. In 49.17% of the times, these social institutions help in bringing social order to the communities.

5.3.2 When were the associations established?

Table 15: Year social institutions were established

Association	1990 - 2000		2001 - 2010		2011 – 2020		Other (Unspecified)		Total
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	
Fellowship Group /Religious Group (temples, churches, mosques, shrine etc)	65	28.26%	37	16.09%	74	32.17%	54	23.48%	230
Burial Societies	2	22.22%	5	55.56%	2	22.22%	0	0.00%	9
Sporting Association	14	35.90%	9	23.08%	13	33.33%	3	7.69%	39
Entertainment Group (dance, choir etc)	9	14.29%	12	19.05%	32	50.79%	10	15.87%	63
School Association Parent/Teacher Group	10	29.41%	6	17.65%	12	35.29%	6	17.65%	34
Alumni Association	4	25.00%	2	12.50%	7	43.75%	3	18.75%	16
Book/Reading Club	0	0.00%	3	18.75%	12	75.00%	1	6.25%	16
Community Development Association	5	25.00%	5	25.00%	9	45.00%	1	5.00%	20
Service Organisation or Club (e.g. Lions Club; Rotary)	3	20.00%	3	20.00%	4	26.67%	5	33.33%	15
Neighbourhood Watch Committee	2	8.33%	5	20.83%	9	37.50%	8	33.33%	24
Communal Granary	0	0.00%	2	100%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	2
Community Feeding Group	0	0.00%	4	50.00%	4	50.00%	0	0.00%	8
Community Foundation	0	0.00%	1	25.00%	3	75.00%	0	0.00%	4

Most of these institutions have been in existence for quite some time with the majority of those interviewed to have been formed in the past 20 years. For instance, 32.17% of the religious institutions were established in the locality of the respondents between 1990 and 2000, 16.09% between 2001 and 2010 while 32.17% between 2011 and 2020. For entertainment groups 14.29% were formed between 1990 and 2000, 23.08% between 2001 and 2010 while 50.79% were established between 2011 and 2020. Most of these organisations, like the churches are duly registered, with a constitution. Approximately 63.54% of respondents interviewed indicated that their associations have a constitution while 19.34 indicated that they are just a grouping of people without any formal registration.

5.3.3 How do they organise themselves?

As regards the gender categories of office holder in these institutions, the trend has been the same as is the case with the economic and the political institutions. There are more males who generally hold leadership positions except for predominantly women's groups. The first three social associations, which includes religious organisations, entertainment and sporting institutions have 52.30%, 48.28% and 48.25% males and 47.70%, 51.72% and 51.75% females in top leadership positions respectively. However, men dominate in other associations such as school associations, neighbourhood watch committees and community granary groups. For instance, the communal granary committee had 85% male with 15% females in the committees. In terms of modes of selection of office bearers most of the members are elected through a democratic process (42.29%) while 25.99% indicated that they were appointed to their positions and 20.26% volunteered to be in their positions.

As regards the level of engagement, most of them (75.44%) especially church fellowships meet every week, while 19.74% meet annually. These meetings are usually face to face as indicated by 53.28% of the respondents but also a combination of face to face and digital online platforms.

Table 16: Frequency of office holding by gender

Association	Frequency of Male Office Holders		Frequency of Female Office Holders		Total
	#	%	#	%	
Fellowship Group /Religious Group (temples, churches, mosques, shrine etc)	934	52.30%	852	47.70%	1786
Burial Societies	63	70.79%	26	29.21%	89
Sporting Association	152	48.25%	163	51.75%	315
Entertainment Group (dance, choir etc)	267	48.28%	286	51.72%	553
School Association Parent/Teacher Group	152	53.33%	133	46.67%	285
Alumni Association	67	48.55%	71	51.45%	138
Book/Reading Club	51	53.68%	44	46.32%	95
Community Development Association	93	51.96%	86	48.04%	179
Service Organisation or Club (e.g. Lions Club)	51	50.50%	50	49.50%	101
Neighbourhood Watch Committee	80	64.52%	44	35.48%	124
Communal Granary	17	85.00%	3	15.00%	20
Community Feeding Group	33	41.25%	47	58.75%	80
Community Foundation	21	52.50%	19	47.50%	40

5.3.4 Benefits of belonging to these groups

According to those that participated in the survey (As is the case with those belonging to Sporting associations), 56.41% indicated that these groups provide them entertainment and 61.54%, a sense of wellbeing. Approximately 43.59% indicated that these groups provide them with exposure to new ideas and additionally they are able to interact with the office bearers on a unified voice. Sports is a very important aspect of social cohesion in Malawi, as they have power to unifying of communities and people of different age groups.

5.3.5 Types of problems that need fixing within associations

According to 43.23% of the respondents in the study, the main problem facing most of the social grouping is the issue of

resources to manage these groups. About a quarter (25.58%) indicated that leadership is the main issues while 22.27% indicated that the levels of participation are too low for the success of these groupings. Yet 16.16% indicated the issues of gender-based discrimination and 10.48% indicated that corruption is the main challenge. A considerable number of the people, about 38.24% are further discouraged from participating in these group mainly due to prohibitive membership cost.

6. Conclusion

The Malawi political and civic space has enjoyed stability over the past thirty years as the laws of Malawi starting from the Republican Constitution and others like the NGO Act, guarantees freedom of association and of speech among others. However, it must be noted that despite these provisions in the law about it, citizen participation is about power and its exercise by different social actors in the spaces created for the interaction amongst citizens and with the local authorities. A recent study commissioned by the Council for Non-Governmental Organisations (CONGOMA) has shown that there has been an increasing threat that is trying to limit the level of citizens' participation in the civic space through the creation of the NGO Act that has put place conditions for participation in the civic space like imposition of exorbitant fees for registration of civil society organisation and at times revoking of registration of the CSOs which at times is influenced by politics. The findings of this present study have corroborated, the findings of the CONGOMA study, that in some cases, the control of the structure and processes for participation that includes defining spaces, actors, agendas, procedures are usually in the hands of state institutions and can become a barrier for effective involvement of citizens.

However, this study has revealed that despite these challenges, the level of participation and also the general interest of the citizens to participate in civic issues that affects their lives and livelihoods is very high. The study has assessed the economic, political and social institutions that facilitates various forms of participation, the challenges that these organisations face and the kind of dynamics that exists within these institutions. The study has found out that though voting in the general elections is one single most important political exercise by the citizens, there is much more that the citizens do in between the elections that influence the outcome of policy and also their livelihood.

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