

The
Oslo
Center



The Oslo Center Annual Report, 2025

Democracy at the Center

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A Message from our Chair

In 2025, The Oslo Center (TOC) continued its mission to protect and strengthen democratic values during a time of increasing global complexity. Our work this year was defined by a shift from simple participation to active influence, as we supported citizens in moving from the sidelines of governance to the center of decision-making.

Our impact was most visible at the grassroots level, where we provided the tools and platforms for marginalized groups to directly shape the policies that affect their daily lives. In Kenya, our Youth Assemblies moved beyond dialogue to deliver concrete results, including restoring education access for thousands of students in Lamu and facilitating essential identification documents for thousands more in Kwale. Through the PIER-K program, we directly engaged 949 stakeholders to turn past lessons into a clear roadmap for more credible and transparent future elections.

These successes on the ground provided the foundation for our broader global initiatives. In October 2025, our Board and staff convened in Geneva to finalize the 2026 – 2028 Strategy, a roadmap built on the belief that democracy must be organically developed to meet the unique vision of each nation. This new strategic direction focuses on expanding our global footprint. A new TOC Policy Handbook was also approved to continue strengthening our internal governance and procedures, including the launch of TOC Whistleblowing function.

While we remain focused on local action, we also convened global leaders to address shared challenges. Our Words Matter! conference in Oslo tackled the threat of AI driven disinformation, and the Africa Women's Forum in Nairobi established a permanent mentorship pipeline for women leaders.

Global democracy still faces significant headwinds, from rising authoritarianism to systemic exclusion. However, the progress we have seen in 2025 – driven by resilient youth, empowered women, and dedicated partners – gives us reason for optimism. As we look toward the future, we remain committed to building inclusive leadership and ensuring that every voice has a place in the democratic process.

Thank you for your continued partnership. Together, we are building a more representative and stable political future.

*Finn Jarle Rode,
The Oslo Center Chair of the Board*



Some key outcomes in 2025

In 2025, The Oslo Center's programs reached new milestones in democratic participation by supporting citizens, particularly youth and women, as they took on leading roles in their local and national governance.

Through the Youth Assemblies, Empowering Women in Politics, and PIER-K initiatives, communities moved beyond basic engagement to secure tangible policy wins. In Kenya, this included the direct restoration of county bursaries for thousands of students and the successful facilitation of essential identification documents for marginalized youth. At the same time, our work with institutions like the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (IEBC), the Office of the Registrar of Political Parties (ORPP) and the Political Parties Liaison Committee (PPLC) turned high level reform dialogues into a clear, actionable roadmap for Kenya's 2027 General Election.

These efforts prove that democracy is strongest when citizens have the tools, knowledge, and spaces to contribute to public life. By providing these essentials, we helped Youth Assemblies connect grassroots voices to county governments, enabled women leaders to increase their visibility in political spaces, and brought government officials and political parties together to ensure voting processes remain fair and trusted.

The results from 2025 prove that meaningful participation can transform how communities interact with governance systems. By influencing local development and securing essential services, these activities demonstrate that democracy is most effective when it is local, accessible, and inclusive.



1,294 young people engaged in governance platforms

Directly contributing to facilitating access to critical services, including issuance of national identify documents, birth certificates, and digital access opportunities for thousands of young people at the community level.

244 political party members trained

By reducing political participation barriers through internal training within women and youth leagues, embedding capacity building directly into party systems and ensuring women and youth are equipped with the skills, confidence and tools to engage in leadership spaces.





60 women received political leadership training

By reducing barriers to women's political participation, TOC training equipped women with the skills to become active leaders, strengthened gender inclusion and shifted political parties towards more equitable representation.

123 women established the East African Regional Women's Caucus

Launched during the Africa Women's Forum in August 2025, this initiative created a **cross-border alliance of leaders from more than 15 political parties across Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda**, ensuring that women's leadership is built into the official regional political structure.



949 community members influenced electoral reform

By facilitating formal policy engagements with Kenya's Parliament and governance institutions, community members were able to **contribute to ongoing legislative discussions and reform processes, including inputs into electoral laws and political party regulations.**



Investing in change

Budgeting for global impact and local presence

The Oslo Center funding is based on its policies and ethical guidelines for donor funding. In the TOC Policy Handbook a specific section (section 4.4) describes criteria for donor funding, including:

- Acceptance of funds shall not compromise TOC's independence, integrity, or ability to act in accordance with its mandate;
- Donor conditions that interfere with programmatic independence will not be accepted; and
- All donors and funders are vetted through a due diligence process, and donations and programs are implemented based on TOC's own conditions.

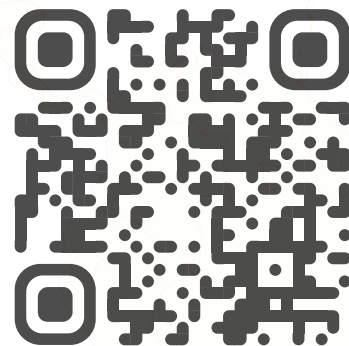
TOC receives two types of funding:

- 1 **Earmarked** to support the implementation of programs based on program agreements and plans with the donor.
- 2 **Unrestricted** funds which are used to support the operation of TOC, program development and TOC seminars and conferences.

In 2025, The Oslo Center received financial support from the following governmental donors, foundations and organizations: Earmarked funding from the European Union Delegation in Kenya, Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA) through the Christian Democratic International Center (Sweden) and Left International Forum (Sweden), DANIDA through Uraia Trust, European Partnership for Democracy (EPD)/EU WYDE, European Network of Political Foundations (ENOP)/EU WYDE; and unrestricted funding from The Muslim World League.

All donations must comply with Norwegian law and relevant international regulations (when applicable), such as the EU Anti-Money Laundering Directives and the OECD Anti-Bribery Convention.

At the time of printing this report the 2025 financial audit was not completed. The financial report and audit report will be uploaded to TOC webpage when completed.



[Download the TOC Policy Handbook](#)

Our global footprint

Current and developing programs

Throughout 2025, The Oslo Center focused on laying the foundations for its planned growth. While we strengthened our core initiatives in East Africa and Norway, we also developed the operational frameworks and local partnerships needed to expand into West and Southern Africa, Asia, and Eastern Europe.



The 2026 – 2028 strategy

Advancing democratic resilience through localized global action

As global challenges to democratic values rise, The Oslo Center has launched a refined strategic direction for 2026–2028. This roadmap is built on the belief that democracy cannot be imposed from the outside. Instead, it should be organically developed to meet the unique vision of each nation. Our core priority for this period is to support democratic actors and strengthen institutions so every citizen can participate in transparent, accountable political processes.

A sharper, more global focus

Building on the foundations laid in 2025, our new strategy moves towards a more targeted and expansive international presence. We are shifting from broad consultation to shared authority. This ensures that marginalized voices, particularly young people and women, have a permanent seat at the decision-making table.

Our strategic direction is defined by three core pillars:

- 1 Sharper thematic focus:** We have narrowed our scope to enable deeper engagement and richer insights into the specific legal and social hurdles facing modern democracies.
- 2 Expanded global footprint:** We are scaling our proven models across new contexts, establishing programs in Somalia, Tanzania, South Africa, Senegal, Afghanistan, and Ukraine.
- 3 Enhanced organizational resilience:** To support this growth, we are strengthening the Center through digitized operations and a diversified funding base. Central to this is the new **TOC Policy Handbook**, which establishes the formal legal and operational framework for our global work.

Global collaboration: The TOC Board meeting

In October 2025, The Oslo Center’s Board of Directors and key staff convened in Geneva to officially review our new strategic phase. Through collaborative workshops, the team finalized the operational pillars of the 2026–2028 roadmap. This collaboration unified our mission, ensuring our expansion into new regions is driven by a shared, practical commitment to innovation and locally led democratic growth.



Mission

To promote and strengthen democratic practices through good governance, resilient institutions, and vibrant civic spaces.

Vision

We envision a world where democratic systems are responsive to citizens' needs, uphold human rights, and ensure meaningful participation and dignity.

Strategic direction 2026–2028

- 1 Sharper thematic focus:** Thematic scope is narrowed to enable deeper engagement and richer insights.
- 2 Expanded global footprint:** Geographical reach is increased by establishing new programs across Africa, Asia, and Eastern Europe.
- 3 Enhanced organizational resilience:** The center is strengthened through digitized operations and a diversified, sustainable funding base.

Strategic priorities



Innovative and responsive programming: Inclusive platforms and technology are used to connect state actors, civil society, and marginalized groups.



Strengthened institutions and participation: Cooperation with political and legal institutions safeguards democratic spaces and empowers citizens to influence



Visibility, partnership, and advocacy: Strategic relationships and storytelling are used to raise awareness and shape the global discourse on democracy.

Reviving democracy in an age of authoritarianism: 2025 Oslo breakfast seminar

In May 2025, The Oslo Center hosted a high-level gathering of global development leaders, politicians, and diplomats in Oslo to address the urgent need for reviving and strengthening democratic systems.

Led by The Oslo Center's Chairman Finn Jarle Rode, Program Director John Løvdal, and Country Director for Kenya and Somalia Phoebe Mungai, the event served as a platform to share strategic insights and practical solutions for navigating an increasingly complex political landscape. The discussions focused on moving from past lessons to a "code for the future", exploring how democracy assistance can remain effective and resilient even in an age of rising authoritarianism.

A central theme of the forum was the creation of inclusive political spaces, with a particular emphasis on the "African Spring" and the pivotal role of youth as drivers of democratic change. Participants explored innovative strategies to support institutions crucial for democratic contestation, such as political parties and free elections, while showcasing successful initiatives that empower young leaders to shape public policy. By bridging the gap between high-level governance and grassroots activism, the event reaffirmed a shared commitment to build transparent, accountable institutions that reflect the voices of all citizens.





Photo credit: CMD-Kenya

Building inclusive political leadership: African Inter-Party Dialogue Network roundtable

The Oslo Center supported and participated in the African Inter-Party Dialogue Network (AIPDN) roundtable discussions held in Nairobi on 2 and 3 December 2025.

The regional roundtable discussions focused on the roles of political parties in inter-party dialogue and brought together more than 50 delegates representing political parties, Civil Society Organizations, academia and policy think tanks from Eastern, Western and Southern Africa. The Oslo Center facilitated a session on inter-party dialogue mechanisms by looking at existing dialogue platforms across Africa, in particular Kenya, Uganda and Ghana.

Key outcome from the roundtable discussion in Nairobi included:

- 1 Institutionalise inter-party dialogue platforms
- 2 Promote cross-generational dialogue
- 3 Modernise political parties
- 4 Strengthen hybrid engagement systems
- 5 Bridge trust deficit
- 6 Inclusion beyond tokenism

Adapting democracy support for a changing world: Party Peer Network (PPPN) conference

On 7 and 8 October 2025, The Oslo Center joined more than 100 participants to examine how democracy assistance programs can remain effective in an evolving global landscape. Despite a significant decline in international funding for governance initiatives, the Party Peer Network (PPPN) conference highlighted that support for democratic values and practices has never been more critical.

The conference identified key policy directions important for governments, political parties and international development partners for democratic renewal, including emphasizing stronger institutions, protecting civic space, transparent political financing, responsible technology governance, inclusive participation, and broader national and international coalitions to defend democratic values.



Strengthening national partnerships in Somalia: Mogadishu meetings

From 4 to 6 October, The Oslo Center's Incoming CEO, John Løvdal, and Country Director for Kenya and Somalia, Phoebe Mungai, held several meetings in Mogadishu, the capital of Somalia, with Civil Society Organizations, the Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Justice, the Office of The Prime Minister and the National Independent Election and Boundaries Commission.

Discussions explored practical ways to support Somalia's governance and help strengthen its national institutions. These meetings provided a space to exchange ideas on democratic practices and identify how TOC's expertise can best align with the country's evolving priorities and legal frameworks.

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Program reports

Youth Assemblies

The Youth Assemblies program is a grassroots governance initiative in Kenya designed to move marginalized women and youth from political sidelines into active leadership roles. Managed by The Oslo Center, in partnership with the Left International Forum, the program addresses the gap between Kenya's constitutional mandates for youth participation and the social barriers that often exclude them from decision making.

In 2025, the program focused on three key areas:

- 1 Establishing a new youth platform in Isiolo in Kenya's upper eastern region while strengthening existing ones in Kwale and Lamu.
- 2 Training young people in Kwale and Lamu to directly influence local policy and county budgets.
- 3 Working with political parties to make them more responsive to the needs of marginalized youth and women.

By bridging the gap between high-level policy and grassroots reality, the Youth Assemblies program is doing more than just improving technical processes. It is building a political environment where all Kenyans, regardless of their background, can trust that their voice is heard and their vote matters. This work ensures that democracy remains a stable, inclusive, and lived experience for all.

Empowering marginalized women and youth for political participation through Youth Assemblies 2025 objectives:

In 2025, the Youth Assemblies program successfully expanded its reach by establishing new platforms for constructive engagement in Isiolo and Lamu, while further strengthening the existing assembly in Kwale. These forums provided the necessary infrastructure for underrepresented groups to transition from passive observers to influential stakeholders in their local political landscape.

A major focus of the year was building the practical skills of young people in Kwale and Lamu. By providing training on how local government works, the program enabled these individuals to collectively influence policy decisions and have a direct say in how county budgets were spent. At the same time, the initiative worked to strengthen political parties and governance structures. This ensured that these institutions became more responsive and accountable to the needs of the women and youth they serve.





Driving local impact through Youth Assemblies

In 2025, the program empowered marginalized women and youth by expanding platforms for political participation. This included establishing a new youth assembly in Isiolo while strengthening existing forums in Lamu and Kwale. Beyond creating these spaces, the initiative trained young people to directly influence local policy and county budget-making processes. This work was supported by efforts to make political parties more responsive to the needs of youth and women.

The program's success relied on a "bottom-up" approach rooted in local ownership. Throughout the year, Youth Assembly members collaborated with security agencies, civil society, and government departments to ensure policy design remained a shared effort.

This engagement reached 1,374 young people directly across the three counties. The program's influence also extended digitally, reaching hundreds of thousands more. In Kwale, the Youth Assembly's Facebook outreach exceeded 430,000 users. Similarly, the Lamu Youth Assembly saw strong monthly engagement across Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok. These platforms proved essential for mobilizing inclusive and meaningful dialogue throughout the year.

2025 success stories: Turning advocacy into action

In 2025, the Youth Assemblies moved from discussion to delivering tangible results. Across Kwale, Lamu, and Isiolo, the program focused on improving how young people understand and participate in local governance. While we consolidated existing assemblies in Kwale and Lamu, we also launched the Isiolo Youth Assembly, bringing together representatives from every ward to build a new foundation for youth-led leadership.

The impact of this work was felt directly in the community. In Lamu, persistent advocacy led to the reinstatement of the county bursary program, restoring education support for thousands of students. In Kwale, youth-led mobilization helped thousands of residents overcome the primary barriers to employment and education by facilitating access to national IDs and birth certificates. By bridging the gap between grassroots concerns and formal government processes, these assemblies are ensuring that young citizens are no longer just spectators in their own governance.



Case study: From silent participant to budget champion: **Furaha Nyuki's journey in Kwale**

When Furaha Nyuki first attended a public participation meeting in Ramisi Ward in Kwale County, she sat quietly in the audience. Like many young people, she was concerned about access to bursaries and vocational training opportunities but did not understand how county budgets were developed or how citizens could influence decisions. Her journey changed when she joined the Kwale Youth Assembly.

Through Youth Assembly trainings, committee discussions and plenary sessions, Furaha gained practical knowledge about governance processes and how community priorities can be translated into policy proposals. With growing confidence, she began actively contributing to policy discussions and helped develop a memorandum highlighting gaps in bursary access and youth vocational training opportunities.



From presence to power: The 2025 youth inclusion roadmap

While young people are often the face of political campaigns, they rarely have a hand in the actual steering of the ship. This reality is the focus of The Oslo Center’s report ‘A Research Report on Youth Political Accountability in Kenya’, which was published following the Youth Inclusion Forum in February 2025. This initiative was a collaborative effort between The Oslo Center, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark, the Uraia Trust, and the European Union.

By working with the **youth leagues of ten major political parties**, and surveying 428 young people across all 47 counties, TOC and its partners identified the structural barriers that keep new leaders on the sidelines. These include the high cost of entering politics, opaque nomination processes, and party hierarchies that prioritize the status quo.

To move from symbolic participation to genuine leadership, the report calls for several key shifts:

- **Enforcing quotas:** Call for political parties to move beyond simple inclusion by enforcing legal quotas and giving young leaders real votes within National Executive Committees.
- **Structured mentorship:** Call for the creation of programs to support seasoned policymakers and technocrats in mentoring upcoming leaders in high level decision making and party management.
- **Lowering financial barriers:** Call to urgently cap nomination fees and create dedicated campaign funds to ensure that leadership is not reserved for the wealthy.
- **Closing the digital divide:** Call for digital registration and engagement tools to reach rural and marginalized youth to ensure no one is left out of democratic conversations.



Promoting Inclusive Electoral Reforms in Kenya (PIER-K)

Supported by the European Union, the Promoting Inclusive Electoral Reforms in Kenya (PIER-K) program was created to ensure that Kenya’s electoral reforms are not just decided behind closed doors, but are shaped by the people they affect most. By bringing together government institutions, political parties, and local communities, PIER-K works to make the path to Kenya’s 2027 General Election more transparent, inclusive, and fair.

A major milestone for PIER-K in 2025 was the Implementation of Recommendations Conference, where electoral institutions and civil society turned past lessons into a clear roadmap for more credible future voting.

This collaboration included parliamentary roundtables and capacity-building sessions that directly engaged 949 key stakeholders. To ensure the reform process is truly representative, the program prioritized the inclusion of 548 men, 341 women, and 472 youth of both genders. By providing the Office of the Registrar of Political Parties (ORPP) and the Political Parties Liaison Committee (PPLC) with better tools and training, the program has strengthened the oversight of democratic rules and party transparency.

To ensure reforms benefit the whole country, the program is breaking down barriers for those often left out of the conversation. This involves helping parties strengthen their youth leagues, encouraging women leaders to collaborate on making politics safer, and working with parties to remove obstacles for persons with disabilities. At the same time, PIER-K supports Democracy Schools in training young leaders in the practical skills needed to shape public policy.

Through community forums and digital conversations, PIER-K helps people understand how election rules work so they can move from being spectators to active participants. By bridging the gap between high-level policy and grassroots reality, PIER-K ensures that stakeholder voices directly inform the electoral reforms needed ahead of the 2027 General Election.

2025 PIER-K impact at a glance

- **949 stakeholders** directly engaged in reform dialogues.
- **341 women and 472 youth** actively involved in shaping the reform agenda.
- **Institutional growth** for the ORPP and PPLC to better monitor democratic rules.
- **Policy submissions** delivered to Parliament and governance institutions to strengthen electoral laws.



Empowering Women in Politics (EWIP)

While women make up half the population in Kenya, their influence within the internal structures of political parties often remains limited. The Empowering Women in Politics (EWIP) program was created to change this by working directly with women leaders to navigate the complexities of party hierarchies and election cycles.

In 2025, the program focused on providing women with a safe environment to build the professional skills needed for high-level decision-making. By creating these dedicated spaces, women leaders from various backgrounds were able to share experiences and develop joint strategies for increasing female representation in leadership roles.

The work goes beyond simple training sessions. It focuses on changing the culture within political parties so that women are not just members, but also are actively involved in drafting party manifestos and overseeing nomination processes. This ensures that the priorities of women become integral into the party's long-term agenda.

Moving the needle on representation

The EWIP program has delivered clear, practical results for women entering the political arena. Key achievements from the 2025 cycle include:

- **Training and mentorship:** 137 women leaders were trained across the region, focusing on campaign management, public speaking, and internal party negotiations.
- **Legislative influence:** 47 women who participated in the program successfully moved into leadership positions within their respective party branches.
- **Networking for safety:** The program established a regional support network that allows women to share safety protocols and resources for navigating high-pressure election environments.

- **Policy contributions:** Participants developed 12 specific policy recommendations focused on gender-responsive budgeting and inclusive party governance.
- **Direct political gains:** Following the training, 15 participants were officially nominated for senior legislative and executive roles, demonstrating a direct path from capacity building to active leadership.

In their own words:

"Before EWIP, I used to struggle with public speaking and expressing my ideas in party meetings. The training gave me the confidence to stand my ground, and recently, I was able to successfully lobby for a new youth engagement strategy within my branch."

– Political Leader

"The program taught me that leadership isn't just about holding a title; it's about understanding the rules of the game. I now feel equipped to sit at the table where nomination decisions are made, ensuring that other women aren't overlooked."

– Political Party Women's League Member

"Being part of this regional network changed everything for me. Knowing that I have sisters in Uganda and Tanzania facing similar challenges makes me feel less isolated. We are now sharing strategies on how to keep our teams safe during busy election cycles."

– EWIP Alumna

"I used to think that party manifestos were written by 'experts' behind closed doors. Now, I am one of those people in the room, making sure that gender-responsive budgeting is a priority, not an afterthought."

– County-level Leader

African Women's Forum 2025:

Breaking barriers to political leadership

On 5 September 2025, **The Oslo Center**, the **European Network of Political Foundations** (ENoP), and the **Christian Democratic International Center** (KIC) hosted the Africa Women's Forum in Nairobi. Under the theme *"From Policy to Action: Accelerating Women Leadership in Africa,"* the event brought together leaders from Kenya, Uganda, and Tanzania to move beyond symbolic participation toward actual influence in government.

Supported by the **Women and Youth in Democracy** (WYDE) Political Parties program, the forum targeted the specific "paper to practice" gap, the divide between having inclusive laws and actually seeing them enforced. This work involved a direct challenge to the high costs of running for office and the male-dominated structures within political parties that often prevent women from advancing.

The power of mentorship and the leadership pipeline

A key outcome was the creation of a permanent mentorship pipeline to support the next generation of East African leaders. By establishing the East African Regional Women's Caucus, the program allows senior leaders to share strategic guidance and political capital across borders. This collaborative approach, supported by "Male Champions" who advocate for fair funding and inclusive reform, ensures that leadership across the region is more representative and effective.

Through the East African Regional Women's Caucus, senior leaders will provide emerging women politicians with the practical tools and visibility needed to handle high-level decision-making. This ensures that progress made in one country, such as Kenya, can directly support efforts in Uganda or Tanzania. This strategic investment helps create a more stable and connected political landscape across the entire region.



Key outcomes from the forum:

- **Creation of a permanent mentorship pipeline:** The forum established a long-term system designed to support the next generation of East African women leaders through strategic guidance and political capital.
- **Establishment of the East African Regional Women's Caucus:** This new cross-border platform allows women leaders from Kenya, Uganda, and Tanzania to share direct political experiences and provide emerging politicians with the tools needed for high-level decision-making.
- **Engagement of "Male Champions":** The initiative successfully integrated men as allies to advocate for fair funding models and inclusive reforms, shifting the responsibility of gender equity toward a shared leadership model.
- **Strategic regional connectivity:** By fostering collaboration across borders, the forum ensured that progress in one country can directly support and inform leadership efforts in neighbouring nations.



Words Matter! 2025 conference

On 1 July 2025, The Oslo Center hosted Words Matter! 2025, one of Europe's leading democracy events, which took place in Oslo, Norway. More than 200 delegates and 20 international speakers came together to tackle the growing threat of hate speech and its impact on democracy, human rights, and youth radicalization.

As the second annual "Words Matter!" conference, Words Matter! 2025 focused on confronting hate speech, AI-driven manipulation, and the erosion of democratic trust, under the theme "*Rebuilding Trust in the Age of Disinformation.*"

The conference featured more than 20 global speakers, including senior political leaders, technology experts, faith leaders, civil society practitioners, and youth representatives. These discussions informed the Words Matter! 2025 Summary Report, which outlines the need to strengthen trust in democratic institutions, advance digital literacy, enhance platform accountability, and promote coordinated international action to safeguard democratic discourse.

Key outcomes from Words Matter! 2025:

- Published a **strategic roadmap** for rebuilding trust.
- Established a **global cross-sector network** of leaders.
- Defined **ethical accountability standards for generative AI**.
- Integrated **youth-led civic resilience and education strategies** into the final Summary Report.

Key speakers including His Excellency Dr. Mohammad bin Abdulkarim Al-Issa, Secretary General of the Muslim World League; Helle Thorning-Schmidt, former Prime Minister of Denmark and Co-Chair of the Meta Oversight Board; Sir Nick Clegg, former UK Deputy Prime Minister; Sasha Havlicek, CEO of the Institute for Strategic Dialogue; and Kamzy Gunaratnam, Member of the Norwegian Parliament and former Deputy Mayor of Oslo.

Speakers and participants underscored that disinformation thrives where inequality, exclusion, and weak accountability persist. The conference also emphasized that responsibility to uphold truth rests heaviest on those with power, including governments, tech companies, and public leaders.

Discussions at the conference also highlighted the accelerating risks posed by generative AI, echo chambers, and the misuse of religious and moral narratives to spread hate and disinformation. Youth leaders also emphasized the need for long-term investment in education and civic resilience.



Upholding digital integrity: Regulating AI in Kenya's 2027 elections report

In May 2025, The Oslo Center released a comprehensive report titled '*AI Regulation in Elections: Combating Digital Disinformation in Kenya's 2027 Elections*'. The study examines how Artificial Intelligence, while capable of enhancing democratic engagement, has become a double-edged sword that was used to undermine public trust during the 2022 election cycle. By analyzing the rise of AI-generated deepfakes, automated bot networks, and micro-targeted misinformation, the report provides a roadmap for protecting the integrity of Kenya's upcoming 2027 elections.

The 2025 report highlights how these digital threats specifically target vulnerable groups to deepen social and political divides. In 2022, women candidates faced coordinated AI-driven harassment and gendered disinformation designed to damage their reputations. Looking towards 2027, the report identifies Gen Z (those born from 1997 to 2012) as a critical demographic. As a highly active online voting bloc, they are both the primary targets of these tactics and the most essential defenders in identifying and debunking synthetic media.

To safeguard the democratic process, the report argues that Kenya's 2025 - 2030 AI Strategy must be backed by robust, election-specific legal rules. The Oslo Center recommends several critical interventions:

Legislative action: Parliament should enact specific AI laws and update the Computer Misuse and Cybercrimes Act to explicitly address political disinformation.

Transparency mandates: Political parties should be required to disclose their AI-driven campaign strategies to ensure transparent competition.

Institutional fact-checking: Civil society and media regulators should use real-time tools to detect and flag deepfakes before they go viral.

Platform accountability: Tech companies must be held to Kenyan election laws to ensure the rapid removal of misleading content.

By bridging the gap between high-level policy and grassroots digital literacy, we can ensure that technology strengthens rather than erodes the Kenyan democratic experience. A stable and inclusive democracy in 2027 depends on the collective ability of government, citizens, and tech platforms to prioritize truth over automated influence.

Words Matter!
1 July | Oslo, Norway



Kikao Mashariki: East African youth dialogue platform

Kikao Mashariki is a youth-led initiative aimed at strengthening policy engagement across the eight East African Community (EAC) member states namely: Burundi, DR Congo, Kenya, Rwanda, Somalia, South Sudan, Tanzania, and Uganda. The platform applies a demand-supply model to bridge the gap between young people and state institutions, creating structured pathways for youth to present practical development ideas and receive formal responses from decision-makers.

Kikao Mashariki aims to prioritize grassroots engagement, particularly in border communities where the realities of EAC (East Africa Community) integration are most tangible. Through localized community forums (barazas), young people identify and deliberate on cross-border challenges and opportunities affecting livelihoods. These issues are then elevated through a structured, parliamentary-style process into policy proposals for engagement with national governments, the EAC Secretariat, and the East African Legislative Assembly (EALA)

A hybrid youth assembly which is currently operating virtually, provides a professional space for dialogue, collaboration, and policy formulation. The pilot phase focuses on Kenya, Uganda, and Tanzania, with a deliberate emphasis on the inclusion of women and marginalized groups.

Progress and Early Results (Pilot Phase)

- **Regional dialogue:** A cohort of 21 young leaders (11 male, 10 female) from Kenya, Uganda, and Tanzania is actively engaged in cross-country dialogue on governance and regional integration.
- **Institutional development:** Members have developed Standing Orders to guide a structured, parliamentary-style youth assembly modelled on formal legislative systems.
- **Peer learning and civic engagement:** Participants are exchanging experiences on youth-led civic action, including digital rights advocacy and electoral participation, strengthening regional solidarity.
- **Capacity strengthening:** Members have developed practical legislative and policy skills through a structured, hands-on process of jointly drafting Standing Orders via a representative committee of three members per country, followed by collective review and refinement by the full group.



The Mukuru initiative: Energy for democratic participation

Strengthening democratic practices requires stable spaces where citizens can gather, learn, and organize. In Nairobi's informal settlements, the Mukuru Slums Development Project serves as a vital civic hub for 700,000 residents. For a long time, persistent power outages and damaged infrastructure paralyzed the technical and vocational programs that prepare young people for active roles in their community's governance. By securing 24/7 power, The Oslo Center has helped in protecting this essential civic space and ensured that youth leadership programs are no longer stalled by external resource gaps.

In June 2025, The Oslo Center launched a hybrid solar initiative to address these infrastructure barriers. Made possible through a partnership with the Muslim World League and PowerAll Kenya, the system provides a steady source of clean power that fosters institutional self-sufficiency. This ensures that local organizations have the tools to remain operational and independent of failing infrastructure, allowing students to focus on economic and political empowerment without interruption.

The impact of this installation reaches beyond the classroom to promote social cohesion, a necessary foundation for any stable democracy. To foster community harmony, the project provides solar power to the neighboring mosque and church simultaneously. Lighting up these two faith institutions side by side creates a shared space for interfaith collaboration and strengthens the social fabric of the neighborhood.

This intervention illustrates a commitment to human-centered governance by empowering local institutions to deliver lasting change. By establishing a model for interfaith cooperation and supporting diverse community pillars equally, the initiative ensures that the progress made today will continue to benefit the people of Mukuru for years to come.



Board of Directors

In 2025, we are proud to welcome a diverse group of new and existing members to our Board, bringing fresh perspectives and expertise to guide our mission. Their contribution marks a significant step in our organizational growth, ensuring that our leadership remains as dynamic and globally connected as the programs we deliver.



Finn Jarle Rode
TOC Chair of the Board



Sturla Bang
TOC Board Member,
Norway



Anita Lekven
TOC Board Member,
Norway



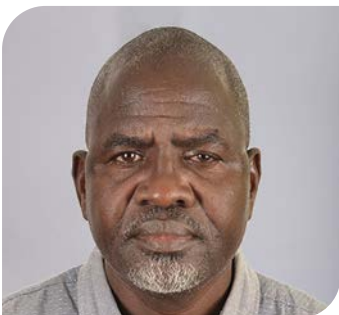
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Acknowledgements

We are grateful to our partners for their co-operation in 2025:

- Africa Child Projects – Tanzania
- Africa Inter-Party Dialogue Network (AIPDN)
- Elections Observation Group (ELOG)
- European Network of Political Foundations (ENOP)
- European Partnership for Democracy (EPD)
- Her Education Foundation – Tanzania
- Kofi Annan Foundation
- Kristdemokratiskt Internationellt Center (KIC)
- Muslim World League
- Mzalendo Trust
- PowerAll Limited
- Reach Out Tanzania
- Royal Danish Embassy, Kenya
- Royal Norwegian Embassy, Kenya
- Royal Norwegian Embassy, Tanzania
- Royal Swedish Embassy, Kenya
- SemaBOX
- The Consortium of Disabled Persons' Organizations in Kenya
- The Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy
- Uraia Trust
- Ushahidi
- Vänsterns Internationella Forum
- Westminster Foundation for Democracy





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