

FES Tanzania and Omuka Hub
June 2025

Advancing Women's Political Participation

*Evidence from the 2024 Local Elections in
Bukoba Urban, Kagera, Tanzania*

Imprint

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List of Abbreviations

CCM – Chama cha Mapinduzi

CSOs – Civil Society Organizations

FES – Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung

FGDs – Focus Group Discussions

LGAs – Local Government Authorities

NEC – National Electoral Commission

NDI – National Democratic Institute

ORPP – Office of the Registrar of Political Parties

PO-RALG – President’s Minister’s Office - Regional Administration and Local Government

UWT – Umoja wa Wanawake Tanzania

VAWE – Violence Against Women in Elections

WILDAF (Tanzania)-Women in Law and Development in Africa - Tanzania

Acknowledgement

This report was made possible through the collective efforts, expertise, and commitment of numerous institutions and individuals who supported the assessment process. Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES) Tanzania began implementing to support women in politics in 2020, during which a study analyzing the challenges affecting women's participation in politics was conducted. The findings revealed that existing legal and institutional frameworks significantly impact women. As a result, FES and its partners initiated sustained advocacy for legal and institutional reforms. In early 2024, several laws were amended in favor of women, notably criminalizing Gender Based Violence against women during elections.

FES, in partnership collaboration with Omuka Hub, supported by the CCM Women's Wing, *Umoja wa Wanawake Tanzania (UWT)* subsequently conducted activities to evaluate the implementation of these new laws during the 2024 local government elections in Bukoba Urban. We recognize the commitment of the project and coordination teams from FES Tanzania and Omuka Hub, whose dedication to advancing gender equality and inclusive governance was central to the successful completion of this work.

We further acknowledge the valuable contributions of the Office of the Registrar of Political Parties, whose participation in evaluation meetings offered critical insights into the application of the 2024 legal reforms.

We also recognize the Bukoba Urban regional and district leadership, Local Government Authorities, UWT Regional, District, Ward leadership and community leaders for their cooperation and active engagement throughout all phases of data collection.

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We express our deep gratitude to the women, men, and youth aspirants, candidates, and community leaders from Bukoba who shared their experiences, challenges, and aspirations with honesty and courage. Their voices form the foundation of this report.

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Executive Summary

This report evaluates the implementation of the 2024 legal reforms, including the Political Parties Act (2024) and the Presidential, Parliamentary, and Councillors Elections Act (2024), in promoting women's participation in the 2024 Local Government Elections in Bukoba Urban. The study focuses on the role of the ruling party, *Chama cha Mapinduzi (CCM)*, and its women's wing, *Umoja wa Wanawake Tanzania (UWT)*, in facilitating women's political engagement in the 2024 Local Government Elections in line with the legal reforms. It also identifies successes, challenges, and offers recommendations for creating a conducive environment for women's participation in future elections.

FES-Tanzania, in partnership with Omuka Hub and support from UWT, selected Bukoba Urban due to its remoteness and limited accessibility, which historically hindered women's engagement in politics. The study adopted a rights-based and election cycle approach, analyzing how women participated as candidates, and were protected from electoral violence. Data collection was conducted in three phases: the pre-nomination phase (October 2024), where women aspirants were trained on electoral laws and party nomination strategies; the post-nomination phase (November 2024), which assessed women's experiences in CCM primaries and identified challenges they faced; and the post-election phase (November 2024), which evaluated campaign strategies and obstacles faced by women candidates and gathered recommendations for improving electoral processes for women in future elections.

Findings indicate increased women's participation as both voters and candidates in the 2024 Local Government Elections compared to previous electoral cycles. While significant progress was observed, particularly in the number of women elected to local government leadership positions, the majority were elected through reserved seats. Fewer women secured competitive positions such as chairperson or mixed-member roles.

The report identifies enabling factors, including capacity-building programs, institutional support, and political will, alongside persistent barriers such as gender-based violence, entrenched stereotypes, and financial constraints. These findings inform the report's concluding section, which offers actionable recommendations to a wide range of stakeholders, including the Office of the Registrar of Political Parties, political parties, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), donors, civil society organizations, the media, and women themselves.

The findings of the report were presented to the National Council of CCM Women's Wing, Umoja wa Wanawake Tanzania (UWT) in April 2025. The recommendations received have been incorporated in this report.

The recommendations aim to support ongoing efforts to promote inclusive political participation and strengthen institutional mechanisms for gender equality in future elections.

1. Introduction and Methodology

1.1 Introduction

This report assesses the implementation of recent legal reforms, including the Political Parties Act (2024) and the Presidential, Parliamentary, and Councillors Elections Act (2024) in promoting women's participation in the electoral process. It specifically examines the involvement of women in *Chama cha Mapinduzi (CCM)* during the 2024 Local Government Elections in Bukoba Urban, highlighting both successes and challenges. The report concludes with recommendations directed to strategic stakeholders aimed at strengthening women's engagement in future elections.

1.2 About the 2024 Legal Reforms

The Friedrich-Ebert Stiftung (FES) Tanzania in partnership with OMUKA Hub with support from UWT have continued their commitment to influencing the enabling legal environment for women's political participation in Tanzania. Following the 2020 general elections, FES, in collaboration with organizations such as the *Umoja wa Wanawake Tanzania (UWT)*, the National Democratic Institute (NDI), the Women in Law and Development (WILDAF), the Office of the Registrar of Political Parties (ORPP), the National Electoral Commission (NEC), political parties, Omuka Hub, the women's political participation parliamentary champions and other like-minded organisations played a central role in the amendment of several key laws, including the Political Parties Act of 2024 and the Presidential, Parliamentary and Councillors Elections Act (2024). Key legal victories achieved through these legal reforms include: -

1. The criminalization of gender-based violence in elections.
2. The requirement for political parties to establish gender policies and gender desks.
3. The need for political parties to implement capacity-building programs to advance the participation of women, youth, and persons with disabilities in political processes.

After the passage of these reforms, FES Tanzania continued its partnership with Omuka Hub with support from UWT to raise awareness about the legal changes and to monitor their implementation. Bukoba Urban was selected to be the focus area of this engagement due to:

1. Its remoteness and the fact that, traditionally, most efforts to enhance women's political participation tend to concentrate in urban areas.
2. As a less urbanized region, Bukoba faces challenges in terms of accessibility, resulting in fewer initiatives aimed at enhancing women's political engagement.

In continuation of these efforts, in August 2024, FES-Tanzania, in collaboration with Omuka Hub and with the support from UWT Kagera, hosted Women in Politics Legislation Awareness Workshops in Bukoba. These workshops engaged political party leaders and decision-makers from 14 wards of Bukoba Urban. Community women leaders, aspiring women candidates, and community influencers were also involved. During these workshops, and as a result of recommendations from CCM secretaries, a *Youth and Women in Politics Participation Campaign* was launched to enhance women and youth participation in the 2024 local elections through raising awareness on the new laws.

1.3 Methodology

The report aims to shed light on the implementation of the new laws and how they were implemented by CCM and UWT to facilitate the participation of women in local elections in Bukoba Urban, providing a deeper understanding of the drivers and the barriers for women's involvement in 2024 local elections as well as lessons for future elections.

1. **A rights-based and election cycle approach** is used to examine how the legal reforms and its implementation during elections allowed women to exercise their election-related rights, including how women registered as voters, stood as candidates, and how they were protected from violence during elections.
2. The data collection exercise in Bukoba Urban was strategically positioned to occur during pre-nomination, nomination phase and post-election phases:-
 - a. **A Pre-Nomination Workshop**, held in October 2024 in Bukoba, trained women aspirants from 14 wards, along with UWT national leaders, Local Government Authorities (LGAs), and CCM regional and district leaders. Participants learned about local election laws and the election calendar. Additionally, Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with women from three wards explored women's expectations and concerns,

while key informant interviews with CCM leaders provided insights into the party's strategies for supporting women's candidacies. CCM and community leaders were urged to support women not just as voters and campaigners but also as candidates.

- b. The Post-Nomination Phase:** Held on 10th November 2024 in Bukoba, the workshop focused on how women registered as voters and assessed the performance of women aspirants during CCM's party primaries, highlighting successful strategies and challenges. The workshop also aimed to develop actionable recommendations for improving future nomination processes within CCM. The target group included women candidates, UWT national leadership, LGAs representatives, and CCM leaders at the regional and district levels. FGDs with both successful and unsuccessful women aspirants provided insights into their experiences and challenges.
- c. The Post-Election Workshop:** Held on 30th November 2024 in Bukoba, this workshop aimed to assess the strategies used by women candidates and the challenges they faced. It also focused on formulating recommendations for improving electoral processes for women in future elections. The final workshop was attended by the elected Street Chairs, Street Executive Officers, Bukoba Urban Government Representatives, CCM Regional and Bukoba Representatives, and media representatives. The National Assistant Registrar of Political Parties and FES Country Director were also in attendance.

1.4 Scope and Limitation

The report focuses on the implementation of new laws by CCM and UWT to facilitate the participation of women in the 2024 Local Government Elections in Bukoba Urban. Therefore, the study specifically and only examines the actions of CCM and UWT, on how the 2024 legal reforms and their implementation enabled women to exercise their election-related rights, including voter registration, candidacy, and protection from violence during the elections.

1.5 Structure of the Report

The report is organized into four sections. Section One covers Introduction and Methodology. Section Two outlines the context of women's political participation in Tanzania, including the governance of local elections. Section Three examines how the 2024 legal reforms facilitated women's involvement in the 2024 local elections, focusing on their roles as voters and candidates, acts of violence during elections, as well as the factors contributing to women's success and challenges faced. Section Four offers recommendations for improving women's political participation in the forthcoming elections for various stakeholders.

2. A Contextual Analysis of Women's Participation in Elections in Tanzania

2.1 Introduction

The United Republic of Tanzania is governed by both central and local government authorities. Public offices are held by civil servants, appointed officials, and elected representatives. These elected individuals are chosen through general and local government elections, which occur every five years, with local government elections happening a year before the general elections. Local government authorities include villages, streets, wards, districts, and regions. However, local government elections primarily focus on electing leaders at the village, street, and hamlet levels. Other elected officials, such as ward councilors, are elected alongside members of parliament and the president during the general elections. While the national elections are managed by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), the local elections are managed by the Presidents Minister's Office - Regional Administration and Local Government (PO-RALG). This may change in the elections after 2025, as the new Independent National Electoral Commission Act, 2024 highlights the supervision of local government elections as one of its responsibilities.

2.2 Importance of Women's Participation in Elections

Leadership, both at national and local levels, is essential and crucial for both men and women to have a stake. Local government authorities, for example, are responsible for transferring power to the people, ensuring increased citizen participation in planning, budgeting, implementation, and monitoring of development projects and budgets. They also provide social services, promote democracy and good governance, and uphold the rule of law, safety, and security. Including women in local government structures is crucial for:

1. Ensuring that women's perspectives are integrated into addressing the daily challenges communities face, thereby promoting gender equality and a more diverse decision-making process.
2. Women often advocate for gender-sensitive policies, promoting equal opportunities in the workforce, addressing gender-based violence, and improving access to justice for women and marginalized communities. Tanzanian female parliamentarians are praised for advocating for gender-progressive provisions in the Sexual Of-

fences Special Provisions Act, the Land Act, the Village Land Act, Family Law, Education Act, Health Act, and more recently, the Presidential, Parliamentary and Councillors Elections Act and Political Parties Act. Women in local government structures bring unique insights on social issues such as healthcare, access to water, education, and waste management, just to name a few.

3. Women's participation strengthens democracy, builds trust in local governance, and inspires other women and girls to pursue leadership roles, thereby transforming the gender norms rooted in traditional beliefs that women belong in domestic spheres. Most young girls look at the first female president, President Samia Suluhu Hassan and other female leaders as role models and with anticipation that they could also take part in political role.

2.3 The Status of Women's Participation in Elections in Tanzania

Significant progress has been made regarding women's participation in political and decision-making processes in Tanzania since the reintroduction of multiparty politics in 1992.

2.3.1 Key Successes

1. Two arms of the State headed by women: President Samia Suluhu Hassan, the head of the executive, and Dr. Tulia Ackson, the second female Speaker of the National Parliament. Samia Suluhu became the first female Vice President in 2015-2021 and the first female President on March 19, 2021, following the untimely demise of President John Magufuli. The National Assembly obtained its first female Chairperson, Honorable Anna Makinda, in 2000, who later became the first female Deputy Speaker in 2005 and eventually became the first female Speaker in 2010. Dr. Tulia served as Deputy Speaker from 2015-2021 and became Speaker of Parliament in February 2022. She also serves as the President of Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU). Women have occupied key ministries, including Finance, Foreign Affairs, Defense, Lands, Industries, and Communication. They have also served as Ministers in the Ministries of Education, Health, Industry and Trade, and the President's Office – Regional Administration and Local Government (PO-RALG).
2. There is also a specific Ministry for Community Develop-

ment, Gender, and Vulnerable Groups having separated from the Ministry of Ministry of Health, Community Development, Gender, Elderly and Children (MoHCDGEC) in 2021. This separation reflects a growing recognition of the need for targeted institutional focus and resource allocation to address gender equality and the rights of vulnerable populations more effectively.

2.3.2 Areas of Concerns

Notwithstanding these successes, since Tanzania’s independence in 1961 and the reintroduction of multiparty democracy in 1992, women have faced significant challenges in political participation.

1. At the national level, following the 2020 general elections, women make up 37.4% of parliamentarians, but only 10% (27) are elected. Although this marks an increase of 19 more elected women from 8 in 1995 to 27 in 2020 and an increase of 21% (from 16% in 1995 to 37.4% after the 2020 general elections), the speed has been slow.

Table One: Trend of the Number of Women in Parliament 1985-2021

Year	Women who won in constituencies	Women Special Seats	Total Number of Parliamentarians	Total Percentage of Women in the Parliament
2020	27	113	393	37.4
2015	25	113	393	37.2
2010	26	102	257	35.85
2005	17	75	307	30.03
2000	12	48	279	21.51
1995	8	37	269	16.73
1990	2	19	242	8.68
1985	1	22	239	9.62

Source: The Parliament of Tanzania and Reports from National Electoral Commission

2. At local level, only 6% of the elected councilors are women. While data for other local elections have been missing, data from the 2019 local elections revealed that women held 2.1%, 6.7%, and 12% of elected village, hamlet, and street chairperson positions, respectively.

2.4 The Challenges Facing Women’s Participation in Elections

The challenges that hinder women’s access to elected positions in Tanzania are numerous and stem from socio-cultural, institutional, and individual factors.

1. **Socio-cultural factors:** While women’s roles as voters and candidates are becoming more accepted in Tanzania, gender stereotypes still limit their participation. Women are often expected to focus on domestic duties and carry the heavy burden of undertaking care responsibilities. Cultural beliefs and social norms discourage women from being assertive or involved in politics. Fam-

ily pressures, particularly from the need for permission from husbands or male family figures, further restrict their political engagement. Community perceptions often label politically active women negatively.

2. **Institutional factors:** The electoral system in Tanzania, particularly the First-Past-the-Post system, poses challenges for women. Male-dominated party nomination teams are hesitant to nominate women candidates due to the belief that voters prefer men. Also, although the constitution includes reserved seats for women, issues such as corruption, nepotism, the absence of term limits, and a lack of uniform procedures to guide political parties nomination of women for reserved seats hinder its effectiveness. There are concerns that political parties push women toward reserved seats and discourage them from running for competitive seats. It is also worth noting that the current electoral laws in Tanzania do not permit independent candidates to run for office. This severely restricts the ability of women to contest elections without the backing of a political party, limiting their alternative entry to political seats. On the other hand,

there are no gender quotas in political parties' internal leadership and candidates for local and national elections, and women's political wings within parties are underfunded and less autonomous. Additionally, while the law that addresses violence in elections was passed in 2024, violence in politics, including online gender-based violence, remains a growing concern. Access to media and visibility platforms also remain a challenge.

- 3. Individual factors:** Many women view themselves as unfit for politics, lack confidence in supporting fellow women, and fear electoral violence, leading them to choose to remain apolitical. Financial constraints, including limited access to funding and resources, also hinder women's political engagement.

2.5 Measures to Enhance Women's Participation in Elections in Tanzania

To facilitate women's access to power, Tanzania has established quotas for women at different levels.

- At national level, at least 30% of the parliament and councils must be women, nominated by their parties after the general elections. The parliamentary women's special seats system, which was first set at 15% in 1985 has been increased to 20%, 30%, and 40% in 2000, 2005, and 2015, respectively.
- At the local level, one-third of the villages and streets must also elect women alongside the chairpersons and members of mixed groups.

As noted under Section One, in 2023, changes were made in the Political Parties Act of 2019, and the new Presidential, Parliamentary and Councillors Elections Act was passed, providing favorable stipulations to increase women's participation in politics. Overall, these laws require:

1. Political parties to establish gender and social inclusion policies.
2. Political parties to set up gender desks and implement clear capacity-building programs for women, youth, and persons with disabilities.
3. The new law stipulates that violence in elections is an electoral offense.

These changes contributed to shaping the Local Government Elections Regulations of 2024 and political parties are currently making efforts to implement these new legal requirements. The ruling party, Chama Cha Mapinduzi (CCM), is finalizing its Gender Policy and is in the process of establishing the gender desks. There are also programs to capacitate women to take part in politics, some of which are happening in the regions and districts in collaboration with development partners and civil society. For example, OMOKA Hub has been working with the CCM's women

wing, *Umoja wa Wanawake Tanzania (UWT)* branch in Bukoba Urban to capacitate women to participate in political and electoral processes as it will be explained in detailed in the next section.

2.6 The 2024 Local Government Elections

Following the 2024 law reforms, Tanzania held its seventh local government elections in 2024. These elections involved 12,319 village councils, 64,384 hamlets, and 4,263 streets. In addition to the national laws, and through the authority granted by the Local Government (Urban Authorities) Act, 1982 and the Local Government (District Authorities) Act, 1982, the 2024 local elections were governed by specific regulations, including:

1. The Election of Street Chairpersons and Members of the Street Committee in Urban Authorities Regulations, Government Notice No. 574 of 12th July 2024.
2. The Regulation for the Election of Hamlet Chairpersons in Township Authorities, Government Notice No. 572 of 12th July 2024.
3. The Regulations for the Election of Village Chairpersons, Village Council Members, and Hamlet Chairpersons in District Authorities, Government Notice No. 571 of 12th July 2024.
4. The Regulations for the Election of Village Chairpersons, Village Council Members, and Hamlet Chairpersons in Urban Authorities, Government Notice No. 573 of 12th July 2024.

2.6.1 Key Provisions of the 2024 Local Elections Regulations

These regulations guarantee the following:

1. The right to register as candidates.
2. The right to vote.
3. Prohibition of violence in elections, including the establishment of ethics committees to address electoral malpractices, including electoral violence.
4. Establishment of a one-third gender quota rule for villages and streets.

2.6.2 Gender Representation in Village Councils

According to the 2024 Local Elections Regulations, the village councils which is made up of 25 members, one-third must be women. The positions include:

- One chairperson
- Five Hamlet Chairpersons

→ Eleven mixed-gender members

→ Eight women members (representing one-third)

While women often make up one-third of the village councils, their representation remains largely within the women's quota, therefore men continue to dominate the positions of village chairpersons. For example, following the 2019 local government elections, men occupied 97.9% of elected village chairperson positions, while women held just 2.1% of these positions.

2.6.3 Gender Representation for Hamlet Chairpersons

Hamlets, which are subdivisions of villages, elect their own chairpersons. However, there are no gender quotas at this level, which results in very few women holding the positions of hamlet chairperson. In the 2019 local elections, men held 93.3% of hamlet chairperson positions, while women held just 6.7%.

2.6.4 Gender Representation in Street Committees

In urban areas, street committees consist of six members, two must be women as per the 2024 Local Government Elections Regulations. The positions in the street committees include:

→ One chairperson

→ Three mixed-gender members

→ Two women members (representing one-third)

Women in street committees largely occupy positions from the women's quota. However, the positions of street chairpersons remain predominantly held by men. After the 2019 elections, men occupied 87.4% of street chairperson positions, while women represented only 12.6%.

2.7 Conclusion

This section provided a snapshot of the context of women's political participation in Tanzania, including the governance of local elections. Section Three examines how the 2024 legal reforms facilitated women's involvement in the 2024 local government elections, focusing on their roles as voters and candidates, acts of gender-based violence during elections, and the factors contributing to their success as well as the challenges they faced.

3. Women as Voters and Candidates in Bukoba Urban

3.1 Introduction

As noted in the preceding section, the 2024 changes in the Political Parties Act and the Presidential, Parliamentary, and Councilor Elections Act of 2024 introduced several favorable stipulations aimed at increasing women’s participation in politics. These laws mandated political parties to establish gender and social inclusion policies, set up gender desks, and implement clear capacity-building programs for women and youth. Additionally, the laws explicitly stated that violence in elections would be considered an electoral offense, creating a more supportive and secure environment for women to engage in the political process.

In response to these law reforms, CCM is in the process of finalizing its Gender Policy and plans are underway to establish gender desks within the party. Furthermore, during the 2024 local government elections in Bukoba Urban, CCM and its women’s wing, UWT, employed capacity-building programs to encourage greater participation from women and young people in the electoral process. Consequently, although it was not possible to authenticate data from previous elections is missing, there is consensus that the 2024 local government elections in Bukoba Urban saw significant participation from women both as voters and as candidates, compared to previous local elections in 1994, 1999, 2004, 2009, 2014, and 2019. While the participation of women as voters and candidates showed notable enthusiasm, challenges in some areas reflected the ongoing hurdles to women’s full engagement in the political process, as discussed below.

3.2 Women as Voters in the 2024 Local Elections - Bukoba Urban

As CCM and UWT undertook initiatives to raise awareness on voter registration in line with the new legal framework, Bukoba Urban recorded strong participation from women

in the 2024 local government election registration process, though levels varied across areas. In some communities, where initial turnout among women was relatively lower, partly due to limited understanding of the distinction between local and national election registration, local leaders played a vital role in enhancing awareness. Ten cell leaders were particularly instrumental in clarifying the process and encouraging participation. Their proactive community engagement helped improve overall female voter registration rates.

3.3 Women as Candidates in the 2024 Local Elections in Bukoba Urban

The ruling party, CCM, and its women’s wing, UWT, made concerted efforts to mobilize women in Bukoba Urban to run for local election seats through public addresses, house-to-house mobilization, and distributing informational leaflets. It was highlighted that if any woman was denied a nomination form, the top leadership at the party and UWT level intervened to correct the situation.

3.3.1 Women Vying for Street Chair Positions in CCM

Bukoba Urban has 66 streets. Out of the 205 candidate forms distributed for the chairperson’s positions, 72% were taken by men, and 28% by women. Of the 183 forms returned, only 19% were by women, while 81% were returned by men. Among those who successfully won their internal primaries, 66 candidates emerged victorious, of whom only 13 (20%) were women, a significant decrease, despite being only 13.

Table 1: Nomination Data for Street Chair Positions

Sex	Took Candidate Forms	Returned Candidate Forms	Led Votes in Party Primaries
Male	148 (72%)	148 (81%)	53 (80%)
Female	57 (28%)	35 (19%)	13 (20%)
Total	205	183	66

Note: These are preliminary statistics, subject to final report by PO RALG

3.3.2 Women Vying for Mixed-Gender Positions

A larger number of candidates vied for mixed-gender positions, with 570 candidates picking up nomination forms, 52% of whom were women. Of the 570, 457 forms were returned, including 55% from women. However, only 75 (23%) of the 330 candidates who won the internal CCM primaries

were women, which represents a small percentage given the high number of women who returned the nomination forms. Despite this, it was noted that the capacity building programs empowered women to vie for the mixed-gender positions, which were historically left for men, whilst all women vied for the special seats positions.

Table 2: Nomination Data for Mixed Gender Positions

Sex	Took Candidate Forms	Returned Candidate Forms	Led Votes in Party Primaries
Male	275 (48%)	204 (45%)	123 (37%)
Female	295 (52%)	253 (55%)	75 (23%)
Total	570	457	330

Note: These are preliminary statistics, subject to final report by PO RALG.

3.3.3 Women Vying for Special Seats Only

132 women competed for special seats reserved for women in the local elections, competing primarily against other women from opposition parties.

positions, 295 women took the forms, but only 253 (86%) returned them, and 75 (29%) won in the primaries and ultimately won the elections. The higher return rate for forms (86%) suggests greater engagement compared to the Street Chair positions. However, the win rate (29%) is still a relatively low percentage of those who returned the forms.

3.4 General Observations

The data suggests that while a significant number of women initially showed interest in running for office, their success rate in the party primaries was relatively low.

While many women showed interest in participating in the elections, as evidenced by the large number who initially took candidate forms, a significant portion did not proceed to the primaries, especially for the Street Chair positions. This suggests that women faced considerable challenges during CCM's party primaries. However, it is noteworthy that women had a 23-25% chance of winning if they returned nomination forms. **For the first time in history, out of the 396 Bukoba Local Government Leadership seats, 220 are held by women and 176 by men.** Although this is a significant achievement, most women secured their seats through the women's reserved seats rather than competitive chairperson or mixed-member positions. 13 women (20%) and 53 men (80%) were elected as street chairpersons. Additionally, 75 women (23%) and 123 men (76%) were elected as members of mixed-gender groups. The majority of women, 132 in total, were elected through reserved women's quotas.

- i. **Street Chair Positions:** Of the 57 women who took the nomination forms, 37 (65%) returned them, and 13 (35%) were successful in the primaries and went on to win the elections. This indicates that while a substantial portion of women who took the forms proceeded with the process, a significant drop-off occurred between form submission and success in the primaries due to deep-rooted structural, cultural, and political barriers, including fear of electoral gender-based violence, entrenched gender stereotypes, financial constraints, resistance from male incumbents and absence of active follow-up from the party.

- ii. **Mixed Group Positions:** Similarly, for the Mixed Group

Table 3: Preliminary Statistics on Representation of Men and Women in Bukoba Urban after the 2024 Local Elections

Sex	Took Candidate Forms	Returned Candidate Forms	Led Votes in Party Primaries
Male	275 (48%)	204 (45%)	123 (37%)
Female	295 (52%)	253 (55%)	75 (23%)
Total	570	457	330

Note: These are preliminary statistics, subject to final report by PO RALG.

3.4 Factors that Enabled Women to be Nominated and Win

Several key factors contributed to the success of women in securing nominations and winning seats in the 2024 local elections in Bukoba Urban.

1. **Support from UWT and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs):** UWT and various CSOs played a vital role in empowering women. They organized seminars and training sessions on electoral laws and leadership skills, which equipped women with the knowledge and confidence to participate in the political process. During the workshop, one woman highlighted how these efforts had made a difference compared to previous elections: “The efforts by UWT and CSOs such as FES and OMU-KA Hub to build confidence in women have made a significant difference on how women came out to register as voters and vie for seats”
2. **Commitment from CCM:** CCM’s commitment to ensuring women’s participation was a significant factor. Party leadership made efforts to address any challenges women faced in the nomination process. During the workshop, one participant noted, “If a woman was denied a nomination form, party leadership stepped in to correct the issue.” Another stated, “CCM has shown us that they value women. The party makes sure that women have opportunities to compete.” CCM’s focus on merit-based nominations, ensuring that qualifications were prioritized over gender, was also seen as key in enhancing women’s chances of success in the elections. During an interview one aspirant noted that “In CCM, it’s not about gender; it’s about your capability. That gives us the confidence to run.”
3. **Access to Information:** Both CCM and UWT took deliberate steps to ensure women had access to essential information about the nomination process. As one participant noted, “We received the information, sensitized to take the forms, submitted them, and in the end, some of us were able to be nominated within the party.”
4. **Growing Influence of Female Leadership:** The increasing influence of female leadership, both locally and nationally, also played a role. “Patriarchy is decreasing. In my street, the chairperson is a woman... We are inspired by our first female president and also by the female speaker of parliament,” noted one participant. Many women felt motivated by calls from the president and UWT leadership urging them to run for political positions: “The president’s call was powerful. It made us believe that the time for women to lead is now.”

5. **Solidarity Among Women:** A growing sense of solidarity among women has encouraged political participation. Programs like “kapu la mama” (mama’s basket) and “sare ya vitenge” (matching traditional fabric) have been crucial in building a strong support network for women in politics. During the workshop, one participant stated, “When women support each other, we become unstoppable.”¹

3.5 Factors that Hindered Women from Getting Nominated

Despite the capacity-building efforts by CCM and UWT to prepare women to run as candidates, women who aspired to be nominated by CCM for various local election positions but ultimately failed pointed out several challenges that hindered their success. These challenges were deeply rooted in societal perceptions, gender biases, and structural barriers, reflecting both internal and external obstacles that women faced while seeking candidacy. Additionally, these challenges highlight the limitations of political party capacity-building efforts in advancing women’s political participation.

1. Electoral Gender-Based Violence:

One of the most alarming challenges faced by women candidates was electoral violence. Although electoral violence is illegal, incidences of violence were reported. During the workshop, one participant shared, “Capable women were discouraged, and they opted for special seats instead.” In some cases, materials promoting women’s participation, including advertisements and sensitization materials, were removed from certain areas, further hindering women’s political visibility. Interviewed women candidates reported experiencing verbal abuse, such as accusations that they would be too busy serving their husbands to support their citizens at night if elected. Men, too, faced some forms of violence, with one participant noting, “Unmarried men with political interest were harassed, one aspirant was asked... “if you don’t have a wife at home, how can they lead a street? Some had to quickly get married to contest for local elections.” This highlights the pervasive use of gender-based violence to undermine political participation.

2. Gendered Stereotypes

Gendered stereotypes about women’s behavior also hindered their political success. A common belief was that women, particularly those seen spending time in bars or engaging in behaviors deemed inappropriate, were less likely to be nominated. During the workshop, one participant stated, “Women who are loose; they can’t be nominated, they spend time in bars. They need to keep themselves as modest women to be able to lead others.” Such stereotypes not only undermined women’s credibil-

¹ “Kapu la mama” (literally “mama’s basket”) is a traditional practice in Tanzanian communities where women, especially mothers, are celebrated and supported during significant milestones, such as when their daughter or son marries. The mother is congratulated through collective gestures that may include gifting money, kanga or vitenge (traditional fabrics). This practice can also be leveraged in political settings and can be used to mobilize both financial and moral backing for female candidates.

ity as leaders but also reinforced traditional expectations of women's behavior. This made it harder for women to break through societal barriers and secure political positions.

3. Perceptions that Women Cannot Lead a Whole Street

Another significant barrier was the belief that a street could not be led entirely by women. During a workshop, one woman shared that: "If a street nominated a woman as chairperson, all the positions for the street committee, especially those of mixed members, went to men, with the justification that a street cannot be led by a committee composed entirely of women... this way, other qualified women were disqualified, but this was not the case in streets where men won nomination." This attitude reflects deep-seated bias against women in leadership roles, where women's abilities were often undermined by the assumption that male leadership was more effective. Such views not only limit women's opportunities to lead but also discourage other women from contesting for leadership positions.

4. Lack of Financial Support

The lack of financial support for campaigning was another significant challenge. During an interview, a female aspirant explained that although there was no formal campaigning during the party nomination process, candidates were still expected to provide refreshments like "soda and water" for party members. After winning, candidates were also expected to organize celebrations, including cooking and playing music for supporters. However, she noted, "The party doesn't provide any financial support." This financial burden placed additional pressure on women candidates, many of whom were not in a position to bear such costs without external support, limiting their ability to run effective campaigns.

5. Fear of Competing with Men

A significant hurdle for many women was the fear of competing with men for political power. This fear often led women to withdraw their nominations at the last moment. Many women believed they were less capable or that men were inherently more suited for leadership roles. As a result, many opted to run for special seats instead of higher-profile positions such as chairperson positions or mixed-member committee roles. During the workshop, one participant shared, "You don't have to fight with so many people if you vie in women-only seats, it's safe, even your husband can support you... sometimes it's the instruction from the party that you should run for women reserved seats." This reflects how the fear of direct competition with men led many women to seek positions they perceived as less contentious.

6. Resistance from Male Incumbents

Despite the mobilization efforts by UWT and CSOs, strong resistance was encountered, particularly from male incumbents who had held political power. These male leaders were often unwilling to relinquish their po-

sitions and threatened anyone who showed an intention to run for the position.

3.6 Conclusion

While CCM's compliance with the 2024 changes in the Political Parties Act and the Presidential, Parliamentary, and Councilor Elections Act facilitated the registration and nomination of women candidates. For the first time in history, out of the 396 Bukoba Local Government Leadership seats, 220 are held by women, and 176 by men (preliminary figures subject to final PO RALG report). While this marks a significant achievement, most women won through the women's reserved seats rather than in competitive chairperson or mixed-member positions. 13 women (20%) and 53 men (80%) were elected as street chairpersons. Additionally, 75 women (23%) and 123 men (76%) were elected as members of mixed groups. The majority of women, 132 in total, were elected through reserved women's quotas. The deeply rooted societal perceptions, gender biases, and structural barriers presented significant obstacles to the efforts of CCM and UWT in advancing women's candidacies.

4. Recommendations for Future Elections to Different Stakeholder Groups

4.1 Introduction

The findings of this study highlight that the legal reforms introduced in the 2024 changes to the Political Parties Act and the Presidential, Parliamentary, and Councilor Elections Act of 2024 have prompted the CCM to initiate the development of its Gender Policy. This includes setting up gender desks and implementing measures aimed at capacitating women to actively participate elections, including the 2024 local government elections. These efforts have enabled women in Bukoba Urban to register as voters and to contest for chairperson, mixed, and quota seats. For the first time in history, 220 out of the 396 Bukoba Local Government Leadership seats are held by women, while 176 are held by men (preliminary figures, subject to PORALG Report). While these efforts have led to a significant increase in the number of women elected to these positions compared to previous elections, most women have been elected through the reserved women's seats, rather than in competitive chairperson or mixed-member positions. 13 women (20%) and 53 men (80%) were elected as street chairpersons. Additionally, 75 women (23%) and 123 men (76%) were elected as members of mixed groups. The majority of women, 132 in total, were elected through reserved women's quotas. The deeply rooted societal perceptions, gender biases, and structural barriers presented significant obstacles to the efforts of CCM and UWT in advancing women's candidacies.

Through documentary review, discussions, interviews, and workshops, women in Bukoba Urban provided a series of strategies and recommendations to enhance their participation and increase their chances of success in future elections. These insights have been used to formulate recommendations that various stakeholders can act upon to ensure the effective participation of women in the forthcoming elections.

4.2 Recommendations to the Office of the Registrar of Political Parties

1. Monitor and ensure that all political parties have gender policies, gender desks, and programs to empower women and youth participation in politics in line with the 2019 Political Parties Amendment Act, as revised in 2024, and this should be a permanent agenda in the National Political Parties Council Meeting, where Political Parties submit implementation of the legislative require-

ments.

- 2. Mandate inclusion of marginalized groups:** Ensure political parties include women in the election of their leaders and the nomination of candidates. The ORPP should initiate further amendment of the Political Parties Amendment Act to:
- Introduce a specific gender quota (percentage) that political parties must observe for electing its leaders and nominating of candidates for publicly elected positions.
 - Require political parties to submit disaggregated data on members, leaders, and candidates, categorized by sex, age, location, level of education, disability, etc.
 - Put a requirement for political party subsidies to be used to support the participation of women, young people, and persons with disabilities in political processes. In Kenya, political parties are required to allocate 15% of the Political Parties Fund to support the participation of women, youth, and persons with disabilities in political activities. In contrast, while Tanzanian law allows political subsidies to be used for capacity-building, it does not mandate a specific percentage to be allocated for the inclusion of these groups.
 - Put in place effective monitoring mechanisms to ensure compliance with gender and social inclusion provisions in the Political Parties Amendment Act by political parties and enforcement by the Registrar of Political Parties.
- 3. Promote gender equality within the ORPP:** The ORPP should ensure gender equality within its own staff, capacitate its employees on gender and inclusion issues, and effectively guide, advise, and monitor political parties' compliance with gender-related provisions in the Political Parties Amendment Act.

4.3 Recommendations to the Political Parties

- In line with the Political Parties Amendment Act, political parties should work with CSOs and ORPP to develop and enforce gender policies and establish gender desks within party structures to ensure women's concerns are

addressed effectively.

2. Political parties should introduce and implement voluntary gender quotas for their internal leadership positions and electoral candidates. By mandating that a certain percentage of leadership roles and candidate positions be held by women, parties can promote gender equity and increase women's political participation in line with the Political Parties Amendment Act.
3. Political parties should invest in capacity-building programs that empower women with political skills, knowledge, and confidence, in line with the new law. This can also include training on electoral laws, leadership development, fundraising, public speaking, personal branding, safety and security and campaign strategies.
4. Political parties should make efforts for the Candidates Nomination Committees to be oriented to ensure that internal nomination processes and practices are transparent and free from discrimination, bias and violence.

4.4 Recommendations to the Independent National Election Commission (INEC)

1. INEC should carry out civic education and media campaigns to mobilize women to register as voters, enabling them to vote and stand for election, without registering as voters, it is impossible to vote and seek nomination and candidacy.
2. INEC should ensure a participatory process in the creation and effective adherence to the Presidential, Parliamentary, and Councilors' Code of Ethics, 2025, ensuring that deterrent penalties are imposed for electoral offenses, including violence. This should be reinforced by implementing mechanisms to monitor political parties and candidates' adherence to the code of conduct, particularly regarding the treatment of female candidates.
3. INEC should provide targeted civic education and voter education for women especially in rural areas. Collaborating with civil society organizations (CSOs) can help with outreach programs.
4. INEC should strengthen civic education programs for security forces to improve their interactions with other election stakeholders and the delivery of peaceful elections and curb electoral violence.
5. While INEC did a commendable job in 2024 ensuring that voter education materials addressed the needs of women, youth, and persons with disabilities, the materials for the future elections should include sign language interpreters, subtitles, braille, tactile materials, and large fonts to ensure accessibility for all.
6. INEC should provide timely accreditation for women-led organizations to allow them to provide voter education

and observe elections at all stages.

7. The Independent National Election Commission Act should be amended to adopt affirmative action measures to ensure adequate representation of women in the leadership of the Commission, its staff, and across its temporary and permanent workforce.
8. INEC should implement the Electoral Code of Conduct to ensure the elections are free from all forms of electoral violence, including psychological, physical, and verbal abuse targeted at women candidates, voters, and supporters and apply the prescribed penalties, such as suspension of campaign activities, disqualification of candidates, or sanctions against political parties, pending investigation and resolution of complaints. INEC should also establish a transparent, survivor-sensitive reporting and response mechanism to handle electoral violence and ensure collaboration with law enforcement and judicial bodies for enforcement, and conduct nationwide voter education to raise awareness on rights and reporting pathways.

4.5 Recommendations to the Donors

1. Donors can allocate funds to civil society organizations (CSOs) so they can timely prepare women for elections. These funds can be used to provide training and resources aimed at enhancing women's political skills, confidence, and knowledge. This includes offering programs that help women understand the political landscape and the election cycle and can cover areas such as dynamics of voter registration, the role of political parties, campaign management, understanding of electoral cycle and laws, and strategies for running successful campaigns.
2. Donors can support initiatives that help timely identification and nurturing of female aspirants for political office. This includes creating mentorship programs where experienced political leaders or experts guide aspiring women candidates. Such initiatives help women gain the necessary skills, network, and support needed to run effective campaigns.
3. One of the challenges women face in political participation is securing the financial resources to run a campaign. Donors can provide training on fundraising strategies, budget management, and resource mobilization. This support is critical for leveling the playing field, as women often face additional barriers to campaign funding and political parties do not provide consistent financial support to candidates.
4. Public speaking and advocacy are essential skills for any politician. Donors can fund programs that provide women with the tools and confidence to speak effectively in public, address voters, and participate in debates or media interactions. These programs can also help women

advocate for their specific needs, concerns, and policies that resonate with their constituencies.

5. Donors can provide technical support to help women understand the legal frameworks and policies surrounding elections, including laws related to gender equality, quotas, and political rights. Supporting legal advocacy efforts that work towards the removal of discriminatory laws and practices that hinder women's political participation should be continued by donors. This includes advocating for more inclusive gender quotas, gender-sensitive policies, and legislative frameworks that ensure women have equal opportunities to participate in the political process.
6. Donors can fund programs aimed at educating the broader public on the importance of gender equality in politics, as well as informing women voters about their rights and the political process. These educational efforts can help reduce societal biases against female politicians and encourage more women to vote and run for office.
7. Donors can support the creation of women-led election observation and monitoring initiatives. By ensuring that women are actively involved in monitoring elections, donors contribute to greater transparency and fairness in the electoral process. Female election observers can also highlight gender-specific barriers that women face in the electoral system, including acts of violence against women in elections.
8. Donors can assist in creating networks and alliances including intergenerational dialogues for women in politics. These networks can provide platforms for women to share experiences, collaborate on common political agendas, and offer solidarity in what can often be a challenging and male-dominated space.

4.6 Recommendations to Civil Society Organizations (CSOs)

1. CSOs should collaborate with the ORPP and political parties to help political parties develop gender policies and establish gender desks, in accordance with the new laws.
2. CSOs should expand their work beyond urban centers and big cities, focusing on marginalized groups of women in rural and remote areas. This will help reduce elitism and ensure broader engagement in advancing women's political participation.
3. Support INEC to deliver credible elections including, be able to disaggregate electoral information aspirants, candidates, voters, voter educators, election observers, and other electoral candidates
4. Engage with the Political Parties' Candidates Nomina-

tion Committees (Kamati za Siasa), which are responsible for the nomination of candidates, and build their capacity on inclusion principles to promote the nomination of women candidates.

5. CSOs should be supported to provide timely capacity-building programs for women way ahead of elections, to ensure their full participation in the electoral process. CSOs should invest in timely training and mentoring programs to build the political and leadership skills of women, including through digital platforms. This will ensure that women are prepared well ahead of election periods.
6. CSOs should intensify campaigns aimed at challenging cultural perceptions and stereotypes about women in leadership. This can include media campaigns, workshops, and community outreach programs.
7. CSOs should provide targeted civic education and voter education for women in urban, semi-urban, and rural areas, ensuring that these programs address the unique needs of women in different contexts.
8. CSOs should monitor and document women's participation in all stages of the election cycle, from voter registration to post-election activities, including monitoring electoral violence.
9. CSOs should encourage qualified women to run for office and provide them with the necessary support and resources to ensure their success

4.7 Recommendations to Parliament

1. Parliamentarians should actively follow up on the implementation of all election-related laws. This can be done by requesting periodic updates from responsible government institutions and by posing formal questions in Parliament to assess the extent of implementation, timelines, and accountability mechanisms. Such oversight will help ensure that the legal reforms translate into practical improvements in democratic governance and inclusive political participation
2. Advocate to ensure that leaders and members of villages, hamlets, and streets committees receive salaries for their roles. Currently, women face challenges in engaging in leadership positions that require significant time commitments yet provide no financial compensation. This situation is particularly difficult for women who must balance leadership responsibilities with the need to support their families.

4.8 Recommendations to the Media

1. Media should educate the public about election processes and women's political rights. Airtime should be given to female candidates to increase their visibility, helping

citizens understand the importance of voting and women's participation in politics.

2. The media should spotlight the achievements of women leaders to build public trust in female candidates. Positive coverage will help challenge gender biases and inspire other women to engage in politics.
3. Media should avoid reinforcing gender stereotypes in political coverage. Reporting should focus on the capabilities, policies, and accomplishments of women candidates not about their personal lives, challenging societal biases about women's leadership potential.
4. The media must provide equal coverage to both male and female candidates. Equal representation ensures that voters are exposed to diverse political choices, promoting fairness and inclusiveness in political discussions.
5. Social media platforms should be used to amplify women candidates' voices and policy proposals. These platforms are effective in engaging younger voters and raising awareness. Social media campaigns can also help debunk myths and encourage public support for female leaders.
6. Media should tackle violence, including online gender-based violence (OGBV) in elections, targeting women candidates and voters. Collaborating with social media platforms to establish protocols for reporting and removing harmful content will help ensure a safer digital environment, encouraging women to engage in political discourse and leadership roles online.
7. Media should invest in gender-responsive reporting by ensuring balanced, inclusive, and stereotype-free coverage of women in politics to promote gender equality and amplify diverse voices.

4.9 Recommendations to Women Themselves

For women to succeed in future elections, women in Bukoba Urban shared important actions that must be taken at an individual level.

1. Women must ensure they meet the legal criteria for candidacy. As one participant put it, "Women must ensure they are citizens, of legal age of 21, engaged in economic activity, and are members of a political party to run for office."
2. In the same vein, thorough preparation was another point emphasized by participants. "We must prepare early so that we're not surprised by the election process... early preparation allows candidates to plan their campaigns effectively and tackle challenges head-on" said one participant. Preparation for the next election should begin for women as soon as one election ends.

3. Cultivating daring attitudes and building self-confidence were highlighted as necessary qualities for women to make headways in future elections. "Women need to be bold in their aspirations. We can't let fear hold us back," said a participant.
4. In addition, volunteering and taking on leadership roles within their political party was highlighted as an essential way for women to build credibility and visibility. "By engaging in party activities and leadership roles, women can gain the experience and networks necessary for running for office in future," noted one participant.
5. Mobilization and fundraising skills were also identified as crucial. "We need to mobilize women's groups and engage in fundraising activities to ensure we have the resources for campaigning because we don't get support from the party" said another participant.
6. Furthermore, making realistic promises during campaigns was seen as a key factor in building trust with voters. "Future women candidates should plan to only promise what they can deliver to the community. Realistic promises show integrity and responsibility and attracts trust," a participant stated.
7. Maintaining humility and avoiding arrogance was also stressed. "Being approachable is essential, and women must learn this. Candidates who are humble and listen to their constituents have a better chance of gaining support, win nomination and subsequently win election" said one woman.
8. Demonstrating competence while in public office was highlighted as crucial for breaking down negative stereotypes and gaining the public's trust. "CCM wants people who are sellable, a person whom we won't struggle to convince citizens to vote for, so once you have a seat work hard on it so as you don't struggle in next elections."
9. Finally, staying connected to citizens and demonstrating family leadership skills were seen as important attributes for future women candidates to cultivate. "Women who can balance family responsibilities and lead effectively in the community will be viewed as strong leaders when they come out to vie," a participant shared. Sacrificial leadership was another characteristic emphasized by participants. "Putting others' needs first and showing leadership through service will win the hearts of the people," one participant remarked.

About the authors

Dr Victoria Lihiru is a Senior Lecturer in Law at the Open University of Tanzania and a leading specialist in inclusive and democratic governance in Africa. She holds a PhD in Public Law from the University of Cape Town and completed a postdoctoral fellowship under the South African Research Chair in International Constitutional Law at the University of Pretoria (2023–2025). Dr Lihiru has published extensively in peer-reviewed journals and edited volumes. Her scholarship critically examines constitutional design and electoral governance in Africa, with a particular focus on political representation, participation, equality, and institutional accountability.

Hon. Neema K. Lugangira is a globally recognised policy leader and governance practitioner with extensive experience in democratic reform, political participation, and gender equality. She served as a Member of Parliament of the United Republic of Tanzania (2020–2025), where she led landmark legal and institutional reforms to strengthen women’s participation in politics. Notably, she initiated and championed legislation recognising gender-based violence in elections as an electoral offence, making Tanzania the first country in Africa to adopt such a reform. She is the Founder of Omuka Hub, a non-profit organisation through which she played an instrumental role in initiating this study, which was concluded in June 2025. Hon. Lugangira currently serves as Secretary-General of Women Political Leaders (WPL), the global network of women political leaders including Presidents, Prime Ministers, Cabinet Ministers, Members of Parliament, and Mayors focused on working to increase both the number and influence of women in political leadership worldwide, headquartered in Brussels, Belgium.

Advancing Women's Political Participation: Evidence from the 2024 Local Elections in Bukoba Urban, Kagera, Tanzania

This report examines Tanzania's 2024 legal reforms aimed at boosting women's political participation, with Bukoba Urban as a case study.

In the 2024 local elections, women won 220 of 396 leadership seats, surpassing men's 176. Women also made progress in competitive roles: 13 street chairpersons and 75 mixed-member seats, showing a shift from reliance on reserved quotas and increased ability to contest open seats despite deep-rooted gender norms. Nonetheless, challenges like electoral violence, discrimination, unpaid roles, financial issues, and flaws in the FPTP system hinder full participation, especially for women with limited resources.

The report urges coordinated efforts by institutions, parties, civil society, and media to promote inclusive governance through enforcing gender laws, strengthening gender desks, setting quotas, expanding civic education, preventing violence, and supporting grassroots leadership. Women are advised to prepare early and develop leadership skills.

Bukoba Urban's experience demonstrates that community capacity-building and legal enforcement can significantly improve women's political involvement, fostering agency and influence in male-dominated spaces. Sustained gender-responsive reforms rooted in social justice and democratic inclusion are essential for fair representation across Tanzania.

Further information on this topic can be found here:

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