



86 86 AND
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86 WOMEN LEADERS IN
THE 11TH PARLIAMENT

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Acronyms

AFC	- Agricultural Finance Corporation
AMWIK	- Association of Media Women in Kenya
APK	- Alliance Party of Kenya
CDF	- Constituency Development Fund
CORD	- Coalition for Reforms and Democracy
CSO	- Civil Society Organization
ECK	- Electoral Commission of Kenya
FGM	- Female Genital Mutilation
FORD	- Forum for Restoration of Democracy
GGP	- Gender & Governance Programme
GJLOS	- Governance, Justice, Law and Order Sector Reform Programme
GTZ	- German Technical Cooperation
IUCN	- World Conservation Union
JKUAT	- Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology
KANU	- Kenya African National Union
KBC	- Kenya Broadcasting Corporation
KEWOPA	- Kenya Women Parliamentary Association
KICC	- Kenyatta International Conference Centre
KNCHR	- Kenya National Commission on Human Rights
KNUT	- Kenya National Union of Teachers
LEGCO	- Legislative Council
MP	- Member of Parliament
NGO	- Non-governmental Organisation
ODM	- Orange Democratic Movement
ODM-K	- Orange Democratic Party of Kenya
PNU	- Party of National Unity
RMS	- Royal Media Service
SONU	- Students Organisation of Nairobi University
TNA	- The National Alliance Party
UDF	- United Democratic Forum
UN Women	- United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
UoN	- University of Nairobi
URP	- United Republican Party



CONTENTS

COUNTY MPS

Aisha Katana, Kilifi	01	Hellen Chepkwony, Kericho	33	Reginalda Wanyonyi, Bungoma	65
Alice Chae, Nyamira	03	Jane Machira, Laikipia	35	Rose Mitaru, Embu	67
Annah Gatheca, Kiambu	05	Janet Nangabo, Trans Nzoia	37	Rose Museo, Makueni	69
Beatrice Nyaga, Tharaka Nithi	07	Joyce Emanikor, Turkana	39	Rose Ogendo, Kisumu	71
Cecilia Ngetich, Bomet	09	Joyce Lay ,Taita Taveta	41	Roselinda Soipan, Narok	73
Christine Ombaka, Siaya	11	Maison Leshoomo, Samburu	43	Sabina Chege, Murang'a	75
Dennitah Ghati, Migori	13	Mary Mbugua, Nakuru	45	Shakila Mohammed, Lamu	77
Dorcas Kedogo, Vihiga	15	Mary Keraa, Kisii	47	Shukran Gure, Garissa	79
Eusilah Ngeny, Uasin Gishu	17	Mary Seneta, Kajiado	49	Susan Chebet, Marakwet	81
Fathia Mahbub, Mandera	19	Mishi Juma, Mombasa	51	Susan Musyoka, Machakos	83
Fatuma Ibrahim, Wajir	21	Nasra Ibren, Marsabit	53	Tiyah Galgalo, Isiolo	85
Florence Kajuju, Meru	23	Nyiva Mwendwa, Kitui	55	Wanjiku Muhia, Nyandarua	87
Florence Mutua, Busia	25	Priscilla Nyokabi, Nyeri	57	Winnie Njuguna, Kirinyaga	89
Gladys Wanga, Homabay	27	Rachel Ameso, Kakamega	59	Zainab Chidzuga, Kwale	91
Grace Kiptui, Baringo	29	Rachel Shebesh, Nairobi	61	Zipporah Kering, Nandi	93
Halima Duri, Tana River	31	Regina Nyeris, West Pokot	63		

CONSTITUENCY AND NOMINATED MPS

Alice Ng'ang'a, Thika Town	95	Hellen Sambili, Mogotio	109	Naomi Shaban, Taveta	123	Agnes Zani	137	Halima Abdille	155
Alice Wahome, Kandara	97	Janet Teiyaa, Nominated	110	Peris Tobiko, Kajiado East	125	Beth Mugo	139	Janet Ongera	157
Amina Abdalla, Nominated	99	Jessica Mbalu, Kibwezi East	113	Rachel Nyamai, Kitui South	127	Catherine Mukiite	141	Joy Gwendo	159
Cecily Mbarire, Runyenjes	101	Joyce Laboso, Sotik	115	Regina Nthambi, Kilome	129	Daisy Kanainza	143	Judith Sijeny	161
Esther Gathogo, Ruiru	103	Mary Emaase, Teso South	117	Sara Korere, Nominated	131	Elachi, Beatrice	145	Liz Chelule	163
Esther Murugi, Nyeri Town	105	Mary Wambui, Othaya	119	Sunjeev Birdi, Nominated	133	Elizabeth Ongoro	147	Martha Wangari	165
Grace Kipchoim, Baringo South	107	Millie Odhiambo, Mbita	121	Zuleikha Juma, Nominated	135	Emma Mbura	149	Mvita Mshenga	167
						Fatuma Dullo	151	Naisula Lesuuda	169
						Godliver Omondi	153	Zipporah Kittony	171

SENATORS (NOMINATED)

Foreword



Out of the eleven elections that have been held in Kenya since independence, the 2013 election will remain significant in Kenya's electoral history. The Constitution of Kenya 2010 set the legal framework for promoting gender equality, which has seen a record eighty six woman elected and nominated to the eleventh Parliament. This number surpasses the total number of women representatives in the fifty years of independence combined. In the last ten parliaments, Kenya has had a total of seventy five women, fifty of them elected while the other 25 were

nominated. With an increase from 9.8% to 19% representation, Kenya is now ranked 76th of the top 100 countries in the World Classification of Women in National Parliaments. The marked progress, a result of years of hard work by different stakeholders in the women's movement, deserves celebration.

As we applaud this noble achievement, it is important to note that the struggle for gender equality is still far from over. The number of women in Parliament remains inconsequential in comparison to 81% of men at the National Assembly and 73% at Senate. The 19% representation of women therefore remains below the Constitutional bare minimum of 33% provided by the Constitution of Kenya 2010. The enforcement of the legal provisions and gains that were hard-won by the women's movement remains an uphill task that all players must address in order to realize fairness in political representation.

The sweeping changes in political opportunities for women over the past 50 years are mirrored through the individual stories of the eighty six women parliamentarians. *86 and Counting: Women Leaders in the 11th Parliament*, documents the stories, challenges and opportunities of women in leadership. A

compilation of AMWIK, this book provides an opportunity for women legislators to gain national and international visibility and support. It is a unique opportunity to document the journeys of the women to leadership as well as their contribution to Kenyan politics, and the development of the country. This work enriches our understanding of the challenges and complexities that women face as they find their space within the realm of leadership that is predominantly male. We believe that these inspiring stories will spur more women to the center of political leadership.

AMWIK is grateful to all the women who selflessly shared their lives with us. We also appreciate the support from UN Women, DIAKONIA and Heinrich Böll Stiftung in promoting the visibility of women leaders at the local and national levels. We look forward to enhanced collaboration among the women political leaders, grassroots women civil society organizations, the media and development partners in a sustained vigilance that will guarantee gender-based results in the 11th Parliament and more women leaders in the coming election.

Helen Mudora Obande
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86 AND COUNTING

WOMEN LEADERS IN THE 11TH PARLIAMENT

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1 | COUNTY MPS

As a young girl, Kilifi County MP, Aisha Katana enjoyed watching her father compose songs, perform and dance his heart out while campaigning for the area councilor. Years later her father was elected the chairman of the local land adjudication scheme and Aisha could tell that he had power and influence on matters of development. Only 22 years old then, Aisha decided that the only place from which she could make a lasting impact on her society was from a position of power. She decided to work towards becoming a political leader. "I searched for and found a place at the Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology (JKUAT) where I studied for a certificate course in county governance," she recalls.

With knowledge in governance, Aisha sharpened her leadership skills while running Kaseru Enterprises, a construction company based in Kilifi. She also joined KANU as a youth leader. She was elected twice the councilor for Takaungu Ward and served between 1997 and 2007. "I only lost the seat in 2007 due to the ODM euphoria that had swept the country," she states with confidence. Joining politics young has sharpened the skills of the 38-year-old politician, and she confidently says that she vied for the Kilifi County MP seat assured of victory.

In preparation for the 2013 election, Aisha surveyed the political situation in the country, and her county well. "Once beaten twice shy," she admits the



AISHA KATANA
KILIFI

reason she joined and vied on the ODM Party platform. From a crowded field of eleven candidates, she captured the Kilifi County Women Representative seat with a whopping 36,705 votes. Her closest challenger got 14,589 votes. "Experience has helped me identify mistakes that I must never make in politics," she reveals.

Apart from choosing the right party,

the MP's development track record also played a significant role in getting her to Parliament. During her three-year term as the chairperson of Kilifi Town Council, between 2005 and 2007, Aisha initiated many projects, as well as completing many others that had stalled for many years. She is remembered for completing the Kilifi Car Park, numerous stalled

water projects as well as renovating many rural access roads. Recognising the importance of empowering local people through education, she also improved Vuma Primary School. She also initiated the construction of Takangu Dispensary, which she later ensured was operational.

Aisha's passion for children's rights runs parallel with that of politics. She does not miss an opportunity to advise parents in her county to ensure that all their children get an education. "It is a shame for a bright child to stay at home for lack of school fees and other basic requirements needed for their education. Parents and teachers in Kilifi County should bring out these bright children to ensure they get the necessary support from the county government," she says. Aisha has noted that a high number of bright children fail to further their education in the county, despite performing well in national examinations, and appeals to parents, teachers and other guardians to help leaders address education challenges in the county.

The abovementioned achievements do not mean she got the seat on a silver platter. "Political parties have owners and campaigns need finances," she shares of her financial need during the campaign. "I depleted my savings during the campaign, but I'm grateful

that ODM built its name in the county and made it easy to sell to the people," she notes. The MP recalls being insulted, called many unkind names, and being physically manhandled, especially in her opponents' stronghold. "Politics is not for the faint hearted, the fiasco during party nomination wore me out," she adds, citing mudslinging, voter buying and back stabbing as big impediments to women vying for political office. Contrary to her expectation, Aisha discovered that her supporters were mainly the youth and men.

It is a shame for a bright child to stay at home for lack of school fees and other basic requirements needed for their education.



Aisha promised to empower the rural woman and girl child in Kilifi County, if voted into Parliament, and has kept her word. She has helped women and youth register new development groups through which she avails to them professional advice. She has also initiated a program to educate the youth and women on the application process of the Uwezo Fund and the Women Enterprise Fund, and how to utilize it for their development.

Kilifi County is home to the seven Mijikenda Communities - Rabai, Ribe, Kambe, Jibana, Kauma, Chonyi and Giriama. Although the county is endowed with vast resources, ranging from arable land to mineral deposits and world-class beaches for the lucrative tourism industry, the county is saddled with many problems, among them landlessness, high rates of poverty and lack of water for domestic and agricultural use. Aisha knows that residents of the county look up to her and fellow leaders in the 11th Parliament to steer them out of those many problems.

Hon Aisha Katana who is a member of KEWOPA, the Environment and Natural Resources Committee, as well as the Labour and Social Welfare Committee, attended Takangu Primary School and later Ganze Secondary School and Nyali Senior School, before joining JKUAT for her certificate course.



ALICE CHAE

NYAMIRA

When she was 10 years old, Alice Nyanchoka Chae promised her parents that she would buy them a television on which they would watch her read the news. She now laughs at the joke that

turned out to be an accomplished dream. Hon Chae did buy them a television set, but they don't watch her read the news; they watch her make the news.

Born in Riang'ombe Village of Borabu District in Nyamira County in 1968, Hon Chae is among the youthful politicians expected to sustain the onslaught of pushing the level of women representation in elective politics higher, amid the socio-

cultural challenges that hold them back.

The MP traces her beginnings into leadership to her student days in Nyanchwa Primary School and Kereri Girls' High School. Fellow learners loved and always confided in her when they had personal problems that needed the school administration's attention.

In 1997, she joined the national broadcaster, KBC, as a volunteer in the radio section. She rose through the ranks to become the head of the Ekegusii sub-service station.

Nine years later, in 2006, she accepted a position at Royal Media Services' Egesa FM, which broadcasts in Ekegusii. "Making the move from the national broadcaster to Egesa FM was difficult because I feared taking risks," she confides.

Alice credits radio for "making her" who she is today. She says, "I was the voice of the Kisii people for a long time. I am who I am because of radio, and will always remain faithful and grateful to all those who gave me the opportunity to grow," says Hon Chae, who also served as a board member of the Association of Media Women in Kenya (AMWIK).

As the head of Egesa FM, she translated news from English to Kisii and aired the current Kenyan Constitution in its draft form, for audiences. The aim was to ensure that the listeners understood all the provisions, especially the gains for women, in the new Constitution.

It is this work around the Constitution that triggered her interest in politics. Before that, getting into politics had never crossed her mind, considering that no woman from her Kisii community had

ever been elected into political office. "When I announced my intention to vie for a political position, men started calling me derogatory names. They said that women who join politics are untameable," she says.

By the time she joined Egesa FM, Alice had already made up her mind, and she was determined to become a politician. The many hours she spent on air engaging with audiences helped her personalise relationships with listeners, and understand what their needs were. She addressed issues that were pertinent to women, encouraging them to speak out.

The outspoken politician believes in "saying it as it is, especially when it affects people".

The communication skills honed during her time as a radio presenter helped her win over the Nyamira electorate, who describe her as a down to earth person, ready to listen and who takes time to offer practical solutions. She contested her seat on an ODM Party ticket.

Due to high population, most youth in Nyamira County are jobless and the former broadcaster hopes to empower them to create self-sustainable economic projects. She would also like to see improved infrastructure, clean water and better returns for local farmers through training on how to add value to their produce. She plans to focus on revamping the agricultural sector since the county is endowed with fertile soil and hard-working people who toil on land yet get very low returns.

Hon Chae hopes to use her term in Parliament to engage women and the

youth in productive activities, and work with other elected leaders to alleviate the high level of poverty in the county. She plans to rally all leaders (winners and losers) through the common agenda of supporting women.

Alice has a lot of admiration for Hon Lina Jebii Kilimo, because of her effort to end female genital mutilation (FGM). "I could identify with every cause Hon Kilimo champions because I was a victim of the same," she states. Alice has been verbally abused and called names for publicly speaking against FGM, but says, "men hardly talk about it because they have alternatives."

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She lauds AMWIK for preparing her and other female political aspirants for the political leadership. "Thanks to AMWIK's capacity building initiatives, I gained courage to move from KBC to Egesa FM, and to make the bold step to join the male dominated politics," she says. Alice is a member of the Parliamentary Accounts Committee (PAC), chaired by Budalangi MP Ababu Namwamba. She also sits in the Joint Parliamentary Broadcasting and Library Committee and is a member of KEWOPA. The MP promises to use her position in those committees to safeguard the interests of women and her colleagues in the broadcasting industry.

Recognising the strength in collaboration, Alice is working closely with colleagues in the 11th Parliament to bring Motions and Bills that will enhance the women's constituency. The prayerful legislator encourages all leaders to pursue their dreams. She reckons every leader worth their name "must have a vision that drives them." She recommends incorporating former MPs into KEWOPA to mentor new legislators, as it would give them the opportunity to learn from past mistakes, mend broken bridges and build future strategies together.

Currently a student of Communication and Public Relations at the University of Nairobi, Hon Chae holds a Diploma in Television Production from the Kenya Institute of Mass Communication (KIMC). When she is not legislating, she composes gospel songs.

Her first single "Naom omosomba o nyasae" was released in 2009. She is working on a Kiswahili one that should be released soon.

After her election as Kiambu County Women Representative, Hon Annah Nyokabi offered her salary for the first three months to feed needy families within her county. This benevolent gesture benefitted the physically challenged, orphaned and vulnerable children and the elderly.

Explaining why she donated her salaries to her electorate, the MP says, "I reasoned that I would feed them for the first three months and thereafter teach them how to tap business opportunities in ways, however small." Her goal, she says, was to encourage these families to start small businesses like poultry and rabbit keeping as well as selling vegetables in the local markets and to each other in their neighborhoods.

Niece to the first president of Kenya, the late Mzee Jomo Kenyatta, Annah won the Kiambu seat on a TNA Party ticket with over 400,000 votes. She says that her party choice was automatic. "It had to be TNA because it was the dominant party in Kiambu," and she wanted to support her cousin, then presidential candidate, Uhuru Kenyatta.

Annah says that she owes her achievements mostly to the youth who spent months campaigning for her. "I can't repay them for the great support they gave me during my campaign," she says. Her promise to her supporters was that she would enhance avenues of employment and access to marketing opportunities. Though other aspirants used abusive language to intimidate her,



ANNAH GATHECA
KIAMBU

she had advised her supporters not to retaliate. "I opted to speak about myself and my manifesto for the Kiambu people," she discloses.

Born in the 60s, Annah is the second born in a family of six. Her father was a district officer. She made a name for herself in the neighbourhood because of her hospitality. "Even before I joined school, I could serve tea to visitors and

make them feel at home when no adult was at home," she remembers. As a student at Loreto High School in Limuru, young Annah was an active member of the United Nations Debating Club. She then proceeded to the York University in Canada for a Bachelor of Arts Degree, followed by post-graduate studies in International Business Management at the Seneca College, also in Canada.

Today, the Kiambu Women Representative prides herself in having started the Kiambu Women Sacco that has attracted over 5000 members. She believes that her background in finance will bolster her efforts to revive the almost lost industrious glory in Kiambu, a county renowned for its great agricultural produce. She has laid plans to help women groups embark on cattle, poultry and vegetable farming with an eye for international market. She observes that farming is a lucrative business despite the high number of competitors. "I always tell women groups in my county to be ahead of their competitors and hold on to their idea until a project is fully hatched," she reveals. Her major objective is to create avenues for employment and a money saving culture especially for women and the youth.

A qualified life-skills and counselling expert, Annah has taken her time to educate the youth on life skills as a measure to put a stop to drug abuse and criminal activities among them. This, she has successfully done as most young people have already started earning honest living from their small scale farming and other productive activities. Quoting the Bible, the staunch Catholic

advises that people should never despise a humble beginning. "It is from this small scale farming that we are going to get international," she observes. Annah believes that the main reason the electorate sent her to Parliament was for her to be their voice. "I speak my views gently yet very firmly," she notes.

Her orientation in Parliament was not easy. Learning the parliamentary language and its general setting, she says, was one of her greatest challenges. "In a new place, one is bound to feel lost and confused," she laughs at herself. She however is grateful to the Center for Rights Education and Awareness and the Regional Women Assembly for the grounding they gave her before she

I always tell women groups in my county to be ahead of their competitors and hold on to their idea until a project is fully hatched," she reveals.



became a parliamentarian. Although a lot of resources have been poured into enhancing women's leadership, there is a lot that needs to be done to ensure more women are represented in Parliament, she observes.

The MP is a member of the Defense and Foreign Relations Committee, which deals with regional integration and development of relations within Africa, thanks to her training in the field. She was very vocal and supportive of the Marriage Bill, which was enacted in May 2014. "The Bill protects the entire family. I strongly believe that there are no illegitimate children but parents can be illegitimate thus the more reason all marriages should be registered for the benefit of the children," the wife and mother of three reiterates. She says that children should not be victims of their parents' actions, adding that with the registration of every marriage, children as well as women will be protected.

Annah advises women who aspire for political seats that they should start early and be involved in political issues long before they go public on their intentions. "This will improve their popularity and win them more supporters ahead of the elections," she concludes.

Until 2012, Beatrice Nyaga was a career civil servant. For 30 years, she had worked at the Government Press section, Office of the President. She retired early to plunge into politics, determined to exploit the new opportunity for women - the Women Representative position. "Mr Francis Kimemia, my PS (permanent secretary) then, was surprised that I could take such a decision. He only wished me well," she recalls.

Competition for the seat was stiff. "One of my fiercest opponents, a former councillor, was more experienced in elective politics," recalls Beatrice. That notwithstanding, she emerged victorious as the Tharaka Nithi County Women Representative. Today she sits at the top of women's politics in the county, having overcome deep-seated sub-tribe suspicions and village politics that characterised the voting pattern in the county. Soft-spoken, Beatrice knows that her leadership skills, which she puts to work for the service of the electorate, will determine her chances in the next election, and does them with a passion.

Born in 1957, Beatrice is the first born in a family of nine children. She had few mentors growing up. "My childhood ambition was to become a secretary. I admired those who worked in offices," she narrates. After completing secondary education at Kangeta Girls' School, she pursued a secretarial course and was hired on a temporary assignment at the



BEATRICE NYAGA
THARAKA NITHI

East African Standard. "Maybe if I had real examples of people in better careers, I would have done better," she says. Because of the humble circumstances of her family, Beatrice swapped her dream to pursue higher education with seeking employment in order to educate her siblings. "It was about those at the top giving space to those at the bottom," she remembers.

After her stint at the Standard, Beatrice got a job at the Government Press, where she rose up the ladder to the post of deputy Government printer. She is the first woman to hold the position. From 1989 to 1991 she received training in printing administration in the United Kingdom. Two years later, she went to the United States for an advanced course in security printing technology. Beatrice

also pursued several management courses at the Kenya School of Government (then Kenya Institute of Administration). In 2005, then President of Kenya, Mwai Kibaki, decorated her with the Head of State Commendation (HSC) medal.

On the campaign trail, Beatrice mobilised the support of women of Maara, a region where she had initiated more than 25 women groups to do table banking. The women pool their money as a group and subsequently give each other loans at a low and affordable interest rate. "It is a simple but sure way to empower rural women. Anyone able to contribute something can access a loan from among her peers," she explains.

She plans to extend this to the whole of Tharaka Nithi Constituency. "My projection is to have 30 such groups in each of the three constituencies. I have embarked on the programme and by the end of my term, I will have achieved it," she says confidently.

Beatrice hopes to improve access to water for her constituents. This, she acknowledges, will be possible through

collaboration with other area leaders "Paradoxically, Tharaka Nithi has more than 10 rivers running across it yet it has one of the hugest water problems in Eastern Kenya. We are working on reducing the agony endured by women in the county once and for all," says the MP. She has a special heart for the youth. "I am planning to revive at least two polytechnics in every constituency so that the youth can be trained on vocational skills." She is pained to see some foreign contractors importing labour on claims that they cannot find semi-skilled workers in Kenya.

In Parliament, Hon Nyaga is a member of the Public Investments Committee and Defence and Foreign Relations Committee. She has received a lot of moral support from members of KEWOPA. "Our bigger sisters (women MPs who have served previous terms in Parliament) have been mentoring us. They are showing us the way and we are learning quickly," she says.

One interesting observation she has made is that MPs have a cordial

I am planning to revive at least two polytechnics in every constituency so that the youth can be trained on vocational skills.



relationship between them irrespective of their party affiliation. "Out there, the public thinks some do not see eye to eye with each other, yet they mingle very freely here. In fact, differences only occur on the floor of the house," she says. As an MP, she now understands why some elected leaders do not fulfil all their promises. "The government is very bureaucratic. Some of the things we promise the public can take eternity to implement," she explains.



CECILIA NGETICH

BOMET

She held multiple positions in the education sector before venturing into politics: she served as a principal in various schools and teachers' training colleges, including the Narok Teachers' Training College, Mogotio High School, Moi Forces Academy, Lanet and Kaplong

Girls' Secondary schools. In 2004, the Kenya National Examination Council honoured her for quality hospitality service, and in August 2009, the Nairobi-based Centre for Mathematics, Science and Technology Education in Africa (CEMASTEA) appointed her the director.

Hon Cecilia Ngetich, the Bomet County Women Representative, is an accomplished educationist who says

that she admires and is inspired by the British Royal Family, especially the rule of Her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth II. This, she says, is what motivated her to join politics. "The Royal Family is of course a powerful family and I was impressed by the power it wielded. I wanted to rise to the challenge and be in a position of leadership," she says.

To win the Bomet County MP's seat, she chose the United Republican Party (URP) as her political vehicle, going by its grass-root popularity not only in the county, but also in the expansive Rift Valley Province. "Apart from the party's popularity, URP leaders and the Jubilee coalition leaders also came down to campaign for me, boosting my chances," she explains. Fellow teachers and former students from across the county also provided her with immense support that led to her victory.

Because the position of County Women Representative was a new elective post during the 2013 general election, many of her constituents did not understand what it entailed, causing Cecilia to step up and provide civic education even as she campaigned for the seat. "This proved to be a challenge as I had to move through all the five constituencies of Sotik, Konoin, Bomet Central, Bomet East and Chepalungu," adds the accomplished teacher.

Her good oratory skills, honed over years of addressing many meetings, helped her to communicate effectively with the different constituents. "It was not difficult to drive my messages home and convince voters that I was best suited to be their first representative for the new position in Parliament," she says.

According to Cedcilia, most of her supporters were women and the youth. "Women were keen because they want empowerment while the youth want employment." Among the promises she made to the Bomet electorate were to improve education standards, support the girl-child against female circumcision and early marriages, as well as empowering women to gain economic stability. "I want to help women to establish an enterprise fund through collective capacity building, help the youth to form cooperative savings and credit societies and make the right career choices. My background in education will come in handy," adds the MP.

Emerging as an active debater in Parliament, Cecilia has contributed to several Bills and Motions, in addition to her maiden speech and contribution on the presidential speech. "We expect tougher debates and I am equal to the task when it comes to articulating issues of relevance to those who elected me and Kenyans in general," states Cecilia. She is a member of three Parliamentary committees: the House Business Committee, the Education Committee, and the Regional Integration Committee. "As a member of these committees, I

believe it's a challenge bestowed on me to give the best, both in the House and in committee sittings, for the benefit of the country," she says.

She calls on women to be ready for political competition, given that their representation in elective politics is still low. "We are not near the one-third minimum gender provision when it comes to representation in the National Assembly. Women should go for all elective positions, whether in the Senate, Parliament, or becoming governors in years to come. Self-drive is going to be our greatest weapon," notes Cecilia.

Women should go for all elective positions, whether in the Senate, Parliament, or becoming governors in years to come. Self-drive is going to be our greatest weapon.

Associations such as KEWOPA, according to the MP, should play a lead role in mentorship to boost the number of women in political leadership. "In Parliament, we have a cordial working relationship with our male counterparts but we are fighting the 'women representative' tag. We want to be referred to as MPs just like others. We have no clear roles as women MPs and therefore require defined roles. My personal view is that we should reduce the number of constituencies and double the number of women elected in each county from one to two to boost the number of women and come closer to the required one third gender representation in Parliament," she explains.

On her vision for Bomet County, the legislator says: "I want to serve Bomet for the next five years, seek another term in 2017 before retiring from politics. My vision for Bomet is to initiate table banking where women can pool resources and provide loans amongst themselves at lower interest rates," she notes. The MP adds that her greatest joy at retirement after her envisaged two terms in the National Assembly would be to leave the women and the youth in Bomet enlightened and economically empowered.

An award winning poet, accomplished social scientist, university lecturer and author of various publications: a few exemplary accolades of Dr Christine Ombaka, the Siaya County Women's Representative. She is credited with the achievements as a lecturer at the Maseno University before she made the move to pursue and win the seat. She modestly describes herself as a self-made social scientist with vast experience in research and gender issues.

As a young girl growing up in Gem in Siaya, Dr Ombaka admired her teachers and wanted to become one when she grew up. "I remember teaching children in my village under a tree," she says. Christine attended Highlands High School (today Moi Girls' School Eldoret). Our headmistress, Mrs Robinson, had a habit of wearing her graduation gown every Friday during the morning assembly. I always admired her outfit and told myself that one day I would wear a graduation gown just like her."

At the University of Nairobi she realised her dream to become a teacher, when she completed an undergraduate degree in education. "I have always been passionate about teaching and as a teacher I rose through the ranks to become a principal at Sinyolo Girls' Secondary School in Kisumu."

Dr Ombaka equates being a teacher to being a leader because students see teachers as role models. Teachers shape students in many ways. Her vision and mission was to serve and inspire students just like Mrs Robinson had done many years ago. In 1990, after teaching in



CHRISTINE OMBAKA
SIAYA

several schools, she received a scholarship to study for a Master of Arts Degree in Linguistics and Communication from Lancaster University, in the United Kingdom. "After obtaining the degree, I joined Moi University as a lecturer. Later I moved to Maseno University as a senior lecturer and was head of Communication and Media Department," she explains. As a lecturer, Dr Ombaka did a lot of

consultancy work. She conducted many activities in the Nyanza region, aimed at stemming the spread of HIV/AIDS. She would go to schools and give motivational talks to students to keep off drugs and irresponsible sexual behaviour. She has a PhD in Linguistics and Communication from Irish International University.

In September 2012, she made the bold move and resigned from Maseno

University to vie for the Siaya Women's Representative post. "The nomination process had its fair share of challenges," she reveals. After winning the ODM Party ticket, her nomination certificate mysteriously disappeared. She travelled to Nairobi to trace it. "Joining the political contest has been the biggest challenge in my life. I had resigned from my job and did not have a salary, in case one loses the contest that means its back to square one."

On the campaign trail, Dr Ombaka received overwhelming support from both men and women. "Women voters were not always reliable and they criticised me too much compared to men. The men were interested in knowing what my plans were for the people of Siaya. I learnt that it was easier to convince men by relating with history and visualising for them what I would achieve. I would remind them that Nyanza region elected the first woman in Parliament and history had indicated women were good leaders," she says.

Christine was also the subject of verbal abuse. "My opponents tried to intimidate me. Others spread unfounded propaganda and rumours about me, organising people to heckle me whenever I addressed a public gathering. It was very disappointing but I chose to soldier on," she recalls.

"I am grateful to my family who supported me financially, and my friends who also contributed to the campaign kitty," she says. The MP thanks her former students who voluntarily gave her ideas on production of campaign materials like posters and t-shirts. The students actively campaigned for her and gave her free coverage in the Maseno University newspaper. Her elder sister gave her tips on how to dress, and the public image to

portray as a politician, while her sister-in-law came from the USA to help her review her campaign strategy. "I owe it to my family and friends for being dependable and I would not have done it without them," she says.

The positive media coverage she received was a major boost for her campaign. "One of the national dailies did an elaborate profile about me. I was also interviewed several times by Mayienga FM and during the radio shows I had the opportunity to talk about my agenda," she explains. Her focus areas were education, economic empowerment and health, especially maternal and HIV and AIDS. "Siaya has very high rates of infant mortality and I am working to see those numbers reduce," she says.

Her experience in Parliament, she says, has been very exciting. "I found myself in a new world where people speak their mind without supporting evidence. Being an academician I always speak based on facts and statistics, so it is interesting to see legislators debate motions without evidence," Dr Ombaka regrets. "I would like to see constant leadership training because there are emerging issues in the country, for instance, concerns on

conflict and insecurity. It is imperative that members of Parliament make laws that will benefit Kenyans and not politicians' selfish interests. We also need to bridge the gap on affirmative action with not just numbers but also quality leadership," she notes.

Dr Ombaka serves in the Education, Research and Technology Committee and the Justice and Legal Affairs Committee. "I am also the treasurer of KEWOPA, which played a key role in inducting women MPs on how to participate in Parliament and how to come up with Motions, contribute in debates and general conduct."

Away from politics, Dr Ombaka is the founder of 'Nyako Ber Foundation', which means 'a girl is valuable'. "I am currently educating 30 students by paying their school fees and also following up on their studies to ensure that they excel," says the MP. She has also introduced table-banking projects in Siaya, which has empowered many women and their families. She is keen to look for funds to rehabilitate primary schools whose classrooms are falling apart. "I am in talks with MPs of the areas where the schools are located," she reveals. Improving the education standards will translate into an empowered community and society, the parliamentarian says.

For those who want to vie in the 2017 general election, Hon Ombaka advises that they should start preparing early. "Be strategic when choosing the position to vie for, and the political party to run with." Her role model is Winnie Mandela who did a lot in liberating South Africa from apartheid. She also admires former presidential candidate, Martha Karua, educationist, Eddah Gachukia, and veteran politician, Phoebe Asiyo.

Be strategic when choosing the position to vie for, and the political party to run with.





DENNITAH GHATI

MIGORI

Dennitah Ghati, the no nonsense 34-year-old Migori County Women Representative, won the coveted seat following what she calls intense but well organised campaigns in a largely Luo dominated county. An ardent supporter and "life

member of ODM", the MP is from the Kuria community, a minority group in the county. She believes that she won the hearts of the people largely due to her ideology. "I respect the people and they respect me too. They saw a lot of hope and trust in me," she says.

Dennitah won the seat with 189,457 votes against her closest challenger's 58,976 votes.

The patron of Kuria Women for Raila, a lobby group she set up to campaign for Raila Odinga's presidential bid, Dennitah says that she could not have chosen any other party.

"ODM was and still is my political vehicle of choice for my political ambition because of its strength in the county and its ideologies. It also captured the aspirations of the people in my county."

The secretary general of ODM Mashinani – Migori branch, explains that for women in politics, the choice to belong in a political party is important, as it is difficult to sail through as an independent candidate. "For any serious contender, being in a political party propels you."

The county MP has long fought for the rights of women and the girl child in Kuria region, and by extension, South Nyanza region. She has campaigned against FGM and child marriages, and has been a strong defender of the girl child's education. The MP does this through the Education Centre for the Advancement of Women (ECAW), a women's rights NGO based in her county, which she founded and chairs. It also promotes women's economic rights and empowerment. To her, ECAW was the realisation of her vision for the rural girl and woman.

Dennitah is driven by a desire to defend and promote the wellbeing of women and girls in her community through providing safe spaces for their development and also empowering young women to take their rightful place at the decision-making table.

She believes that for any meaningful development to occur, women must be at the centre.

As an elected member of parliament, Dennitah says that she will continue articulating issues relating to the girl child and women's welfare not only in her county but also nationally. "I know my election to Parliament comes with expanded responsibilities which I am ready to perform to the best of my ability," notes the MP. She looks forward to the continued support of organisations such as KEWOPA, to which she is a member, to realise her goal effectively.

The legislator talks of the need for strong mentorship programmes in regions where negative cultures have chained women to poverty and suffering. "There is much that needs to be done to put women and men on an equal footing in political and socio-economic spheres. As an elected woman MP, I will remain in the forefront of championing mentorship programmes for our sisters who have constrained ambitions for elective leadership," she notes.

The priorities of the youthful MP for Migori County include the promotion of women's economic empowerment by improving access to loans and grants. She pledges to help women of Migori establish development groups that can be used to seek financial assistance to boost their welfare. She will also promote education (especially girl child education) by advocating for the improvement of schools and polytechnics, as well as addressing barriers that hinder girls' access to education. She also plans to improve access to water, lamenting that no woman should have to walk for over five kilometres in search of water.

A strong believer in youth

empowerment, Dennitah says that she will seek to alleviate poverty among the youth by creating employment, and lobbying for affirmative action in the employment of young people and women in the county government. She also wants to ensure that 30 per cent of tenders and contracts in the county go to the youth and women-led companies, in accordance with the Constitution. "Young people leaving colleges but remaining jobless should be assisted to be useful members of society instead of being ruined by alcoholism and drug abuse. As a leader in the county, I have to find a lasting solution to the problem of unemployment among the youth who make up 75 per cent of Migori County's population," he states.

In a highly cosmopolitan county like Migori, unity and peace are key to development. "For us leaders to succeed, there should be unity in the county, and that is what I am advocating for. We have to join forces to transform the lives of our people. I will partner with like-minded organisations to promote peace in Migori. We need to appreciate the diversity of our cultures to be able to move forward," she adds.

The legislator, who describes herself as an extremely ambitious no nonsense woman, is active both in and outside Parliament in articulating development issues. In the National Assembly, Dennitah sits in the House Business Committee that sets the Agenda for the House. She also sits in the Defence and Foreign Relations Committee, and is a member of the Committee on Implementation, that is responsible for scrutinising resolutions

of the House, petitions and undertakings given by the Executive.

Hon Ghati holds a Master of Science Degree in Social Work and International Affairs from the prestigious Columbia University, New York, USA, courtesy of a scholarship from the Ford Foundation's International Fellowship Program. She also has a Bachelor's Degree in Sociology from Kenyatta University, and a Diploma in Mass Communication from the Kenya Institute of Mass Communication. She is an alumnus of the African Women's Leadership Institute and a member of AMWIK.

The trained journalist has written and published several articles in the Kenyan media with special attention to women and girls. She has also published a book: Girl Centred Program Design: A toolkit to Develop, strengthen, and expand adolescent girls' programs.

There is much that needs to be done to put women and men on an equal footing in political and socio-economic spheres. I will remain in the forefront of championing mentorship programmes for our sisters who have constrained ambitions for elective leadership.

The warm and gentle mien of Hon Dorcas Kedogo, the Women Representative for Vihiga County, has endeared her to her electorate. In fact, the electorate had keenly followed her involvement in development activities even before she thought of joining elective politics, so they virtually pushed her into vying for the seat. "I had hit 50, the age at which I had planned to retire to do my own things. Getting into politics wasn't even a remote part of my plans," she says, with amusement.

But the Vihiga County parliamentary seat was not the first leadership position the soft-spoken Dorcas had been pushed into. In 2000, she found herself holding the post of Women Representative of the Kenya National Union of Teachers (KNUT) for the then Vihiga District. She held this position for three consecutive terms till August 2012, when she retired from teaching.

"Friends encouraged me to seek KNUT leadership - that's how I ended up there. They told me that they'd identified leadership qualities in me, yet I was refusing to lead them," recalls the former Mathematics teacher. To avoid the KNUT election, she not only skipped the first meeting, but also did not campaign for the seat. In the end, and against her wishes, she was voted in overwhelmingly, as well as in the subsequent elections. She served the teachers well during those terms.

Overwhelmingly again describes how she got voted into her parliamentary position. Dorcas won by over 12,000 votes. "I owe my post to the teachers of Vihiga County. They made me to be where I am today. They campaigned seriously



DORCAS KEDOGO
VIHIGA

and volunteered their services whenever they identified a need," she says with appreciation. She also appreciates the awe-inspiring support of the people of Vihiga, where she is married, and was a teacher in many schools. "Long before the new Constitution was put in place, the people told me that I'd one day be their MP; of course I always laughed it off," she recalls.

While many women confess to having campaigned for their positions with little

money, Dorcas says that she campaigned with none. Ironically, some of her opponents were already well-established politicians who had "loads of money". A few times she got so discouraged that she wanted to give up. "God had favour on me. I didn't have money, and I started my campaign on boda boda (public transport motorcycles)," she recalls.

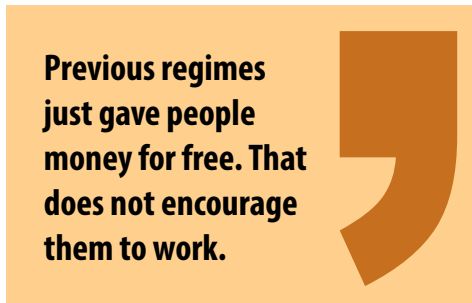
It was the teachers and members of her community who took over the campaigns. "One of them offered me a small car. But the

car kept breaking down, and I'd often just leave it on the road being fixed and trek to wherever I was headed to campaign," she laughs. Looking back, Dorcas thanks God for her personality and character, which have made her likeable. "I'm social and have a passion for people. I always do my stuff with others. That's how I've left a mark wherever I go; and found favour to get into this career that I never even dreamt of," she discloses humbly.

Described as down to earth by those who know her, Dorcas is also very hard working. She has initiated many development projects in Vihiga. Apart from helping to uplift the performance standards in schools where she has taught, Dorcas has also initiated a tissue culture banana cultivating projects that has quickly spread across Vihiga County. Together with her late husband (also a teacher who passed on in 2004) they started an education project that has seen many children from poor families acquire education. "I have assisted many children through school, if I called them together they'd fill a school," discloses the legislator.

Dorcas continues with the same projects indiscriminately. "I don't work with women alone, or the youth alone, but I work with everyone willing to embrace development," she says. The MP has devised creative ways to work without funds; believing that the people have to learn to work for whatever little they receive. "Previous regimes just gave people money for free. That does not encourage them to work, they have to do something," says Dorcas. She has also initiated a rabbit rearing project, as well as a project for women who make "beautiful" bathroom mats.

The MP, who is the younger sister of



Vihiga Governor Moses Akaranga, talks passionately about her apparent love for the people of Vihiga. She has the same love for fellow teachers. "I do tell colleagues in Parliament that teachers earn peanuts. Even with my peanuts, I was still one of the better off in the profession," says Dorcas. She preferred to serve as a senior teacher, and not principal, for most of her later career. She appreciates the people of Vihiga for welcoming her and giving her full support even in the absence of her late husband. "Vihiga Constituency gave me 100 per cent of their votes!" she acknowledges.

When she got into 'real' politics, Dorcas realised that the KNUT politics had made her strong. She had underrated processes like choice of a party. "Remember, I didn't have a political past, and I wasn't even prepared for the new Constitution!" she notes. "The preliminaries were hectic, and at some point I wondered if God really wanted me to vie for the seat," recalls the staunch Christian.

She settled in ODM two weeks to party nominations, with no big team to back her up, and not having campaigned. But she won the nomination. After that, getting the nomination certificate became another challenge. "I got it after three weeks of shuffling from one office to the other," she

states. It only happened after the teachers, her supporters, threatened not to vote for ODM in Vihiga.

One would imagine that having a politically established elder brother would make the process easier, but according to Dorcas, "When you're together in politics, each one of you has a campaign to run. What kept me going was faith, and the backing of the voters," she states. Her supporters had promised to vote for her from any party. Some Vihiga County MPs also supported her during the campaign and election.

The mother of four boys and a girl was born in Sabatia in May 1962, and grew up in a polygamous family. She started her education in Juja, now Thiririka Primary School till standard six when she transferred to Munugi Primary School in her hometown. She did her secondary education at Our Lady of Mercy Secondary School in Kisii, and Equator High School, Thika. The celebrated maths teacher graduated from Mosoriot Teachers' Training College with a P1 certificate in 1984, a year before she got married. In 2011, she graduated with a degree in Education from the University of Nairobi.

The former teacher sits in the Education, Research and Technology Committee, as well as the Budget Committee. She is reluctant to disclose plans for her political future, but is sure she still wants to work with the people of Vihiga.

While training from UN-DEF helped her a lot in her campaign, Dorcas is also glad that she had politically accomplished women like Hon Charity Ngilu, to learn from. The member of KEWOPA appreciates the association's work, but challenges it to do more to train the new entrants on some tangible skills like fundraising.



EUSILAH NGENY

UASIN GISHU

Youthful Eusilah Ngeny made a dramatic rise in the last general election from an elected councillor in Eldoret Municipality to becoming the Uasin Gishu County MP. She previously represented Hospital Ward in Eldoret town, also serving as the deputy mayor.

The MP, who says that the sky is the limit for her, aims at transforming livelihoods of the electorate. "As one of the role models in leadership and development in Uasin Gishu, I will use the experience in leadership to further my development agenda in the county," she says.

As the deputy mayor of Eldoret, one of the fastest growing towns in the country, Eusilah actively worked for the general

development and provision of services for the residents of the town. "We established links with other cities, including Minneapolis in the United States, which enabled Eldoret municipality to acquire modern fire-fighting facilities and an ambulance for our local health facilities," she says. At one time while serving in the position in 2011, an ambitious Eusilah wanted to be elected mayor arguing that it was time for the Town Hall to get its first woman mayor. She lost the race by only four votes. "It would have been a big achievement in the history of the council," she says.

In her new position of County MP, Eusilah plans to empower women and the youth, and ensure that all children access education. "Empowering women will bring general development in the county. They will educate their children for better livelihoods and reduce insecurity in society. This is our rightful time to provide participatory leadership. As young people, we have the energy to deliver the services we pledged during campaigns," she says.

Born in 1974, Eusilah attended Immaculate Juniorate Heart High School in Uasin Gishu, and got married soon after. She attributes her early marriage to the excitement that comes after completing high school. Despite coming from a family of high achievers, with some of her siblings having advanced degrees from universities abroad, the MP did not seem to have any career prospects. It was therefore a great joy when at 34 years she not only became a councillor, but also served as a deputy mayor of Eldoret Town Council. That was a great leap for the

mother of four, who had been a housewife before the 2007 general election. “I just love politics, and realised that I still had a chance to pursue my dreams,” she says.

Eusilah served as a civic leader while studying at Moi University from where she graduated with a Bachelor’s Degree in Business Management. Even then, she looked forward to becoming an MP. She has also taken several other courses at the Kenya Institute of Management (KIM).

The MP vied for her seat on a United Republican Party ticket. “URP was the most popular party and anyone who went against it did not stand a chance. Therefore, the real fight was at the nomination level as each serious candidate wanted to secure the party’s ticket,” points out the legislator. An active member of URP, she says: “Being without a party position does not mean I am not actively involved in URP’s activities. I make my contribution as an ordinary party member and on the basis of my status as an MP elected on its ticket.”

She represents one of the richest counties in the country, with an international airport, three public universities, and the country’s second national referral hospital, among other key facilities. However, despite these

key developments, unemployment in the county remains high, and it is one of the major challenges that will need the MP’s input. “I demonstrated my ability to deliver results when I served as a councillor and deputy mayor. It’s the same vigour I am going to maintain in the National Assembly,” she asserts.

Eusilah says that she has learnt to relate well with fellow legislators in the Parliament and that she expects to perform well in articulating issues in the House. “I live one day at a time. Someone can be your enemy today but your friend tomorrow, that’s how it is in politics,” she discloses. The MP sits in the Labour and Social Welfare Committee whose mandate is to deal with matters of labour, trade union relations, planning, national youth service, children’s welfare and national heritage, among others. She is also a member of the House Committee on Lands.

Hon Ng’eny says that being a woman leader is an asset. “Most of the people I see are women. Women find it easier to ask for help such as getting bursaries for their children and many other matters, so I am better placed to interact and empathise with them because I am a woman. Men find it difficult to ask for help, I think,”

she shares. Her advice to women who want to join politics: “Have an open mind, and give your best in whatever capacity you serve the community.” Serving as a political leader has been easier for Eusilah because of the support of her husband and children. “Anything is possible when you get support from people who are closest to you,” she says, emphasising that one can indeed enjoy the best of family and career.

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It was a grand entry into politics for Fathia Mahboub, the first woman from Mandera County to ever get elected to Parliament. "I am the first Muslim woman of Somali origin in Mandera County to make it to the August House," she says with satisfaction. Before venturing into politics, Fathia worked with the Gulf African Bank a banker for over 18 years.

Born and bred in Nairobi, Fathia studied in Mandera for secondary school education. It was through witnessing years of suffering of the people of the region through untold humanitarian crises and clan fights that she developed interest in politics. She told herself that she would be part of the solution by promoting peace and developing the county. "I wanted to help people back in Mandera, who have for years been destabilised by in-fighting, which has heavily retarded their development," she points out.

Ahead of the 2013 general election, Fathia, an avid debater, mesmerised her competitors by launching a monumental campaign, criss-crossing clan conflict zones to seek votes from county residents, regardless of their clan affiliation. She says that as a Muslim woman, she had the challenge of convincing men that she was ready to become their leader in Parliament. "I told imams and sheikhs that I wanted to be a leader and I am happy that they gave me a chance. I received votes from women, men and the youth. I enjoy the overwhelming support of the entire county," beams the MP.

Although one of her opponents moved



FATHIA MAHBUB
MANDERA

to court to challenge her election, Fathia says that she was never worried by the move as she had won fair and square. "I had over 31,000 votes above my closest rival and when the petition was filed, I said, 'let the court decide'. I am happy the petition was thrown out for lack of evidence," she adds.

Her choice of party, URP, brought her an added advantage. A large

number of the candidates who sought the party's nomination won easily during the election. The County MP is an asset to the Mandera electorate, especially women, who see her as a champion of their interests. Sadly, the incessant and generations-old clan conflicts in Mandera County have impacted negatively on her passion to be a role model for the region's young women. She has to actively fight off

existing stereotypes in order to make any invaluable contribution to the region's development.

Fathia, a Business Management graduate, however notes that nothing will stop her from championing for peace, which is a prerequisite for development, not only in Mandera but in the whole of Kenya. "There has to be unity between the people of Mandera, unity between leaders of the country, both elected and nominated, for any development to take place," she stresses. She would want to see the county attain the development level of other established counties such as Kiambu and Muranga, in the near future.

Among her key priorities are to financially empower vulnerable women and the youth to improve the road and education infrastructure and quality, and improve access to water for the people of Mandera and their livestock.

Hon Fathia Mahboub sits in the watchdog Public Accounts Committee and the Energy, Communication and Information Committee. She is a member

of KEWOPA and has benefited from its induction training programmes for women MPs and senators. However, she feels that women still have a long way to go to match their male counterparts in elective positions. "There is need for serious mentorship programmes to boost the number of women in both Houses. It is a challenge we should take up full-heartedly as women leaders in this country. We have to set the momentum to succeed," she stresses.

A mother of five, the legislator says that she is balancing her time well between family and politics and that each has adequate attention. "I have time for the National Assembly and other political engagements in Mandera. I also play my role effectively as a mother. In most cases, mothers are the last to sleep due to the heavy roles they play within their homes," she adds. The MP notes that family roles should not be used to hold back women aspiring for leadership, because what matters is proper planning and good time management.

There is need for serious mentorship programmes to boost the number of women in both Houses. It is a challenge we should take up full-heartedly as women leaders in this country.





FATUMA IBRAHIM

WAJIR

Growing up in a food insecure environment, Hon Fatuma Ibrahim believed that agriculture would alleviate poverty in her community. "I had no interest in political office at the time and to me, poverty would end once there was food in Wajir. That is why I chose to study agriculture."

The turning point in her life came in 2001 when she joined the United Nations Fund for women (now UN WOMEN) gender justice project. Fatuma attended the constitutional review conference as a delegate representing women's organizations. "This platform enlightened me to know how women are abused every day, both physically and mentally," she recalls.

Her political interest ignited, Fatuma needed a new platform to speak on behalf of women and protect those who were abused, disinherited or violated. "I took a bold step and resigned from UN WOMEN even before my contract ended," she says. Soon after in 2003, she was appointed a Commissioner to the Kenya National Commission on Human Rights (KNCHR). A committed advocate for the underserved and marginalised, in 2008 she released a report on behalf of the Commission faulting the government's Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) resettlement exercise, the "Operation Rudi Nyumbani". In the report Fatuma noted that the resettled IDPs were living in fear mainly due to the lack of well organised peace-building efforts with their "host" communities.

In 2012, ready to get into politics, Fatuma resigned from KNCHR to pursue the Wajir County Women Representative seat, on an ODM Party ticket, which had considerable popularity in the county. She won the seat.

Fatuma was born to illiterate parents in a polygamous home. They separated when she was a young girl and Fatuma and her two sisters were raised by their paternal grandmother. "Living in a pastoralist area meant that we rarely saw our father as he was mostly out looking for pasture, but grandma was a disciplinarian and played that role well," the 49-year-old mother of four recalls. To her, the separation was a blessing in disguise because it was under her grandmother's care that education came her way. A catholic nun used to go round the village enlisting young girls to join school and as luck

would have it, Fatuma was picked. With her grandmother's encouragement, she joined Wajir Primary School under a full scholarship from the Catholic Church. Religion was not the focus of the school. "The key thing, according to the nun, was education, and that I held dear," she recollects.

Bright and determined to excel, she soon became the teachers "darling". Fatuma also quickly emerged as a leader among her peers. She was appointed a prefect and later head-girl and excelled in the debating club, representing her school in various competitions. Despite having this unique scholarship opportunity, many of the female students in her school did not go beyond class five. Some girls, she explains, were married off while others could not stand the school discipline.

Fatuma embraced education with open arms. She proceeded to North Eastern Girls' High School for ordinary level education, but was unable to pursue the advanced level education due to lack of school fees. "I went through a difficult financial period as a school girl," she says. "I remember my elder step-brother supported my education and even paid my school fees at some point." She joined Egerton College, Njoro, which was then fully sponsored by the government, and pursued a Diploma in Agriculture and Home Economics. Upon completing the diploma, she was posted to North Eastern Province as a technical officer in the Ministry of Agriculture. The MP immediately started empowering women in self-reliance. "Seeing a woman with a small kitchen garden in an area where

farming was almost alien would excite me," says the MP. She trained women on food security at the household level. "I watched with pride as women started addressing food security at the village level," she notes.

When she got married in 1989, her husband supported her fully in her quest to advocate for women. "One thing I vividly remember is that women in Wajir didn't know that they, too, had rights and were easily intimidated by men," she adds. Later, she was employed by the German Technical Cooperation Agency (GIZ) Rescue Project that was addressing rape in Daadab. In 1996, she left for the United Kingdom to pursue a Master's degree in Agriculture Extension at the University of Reading. "My aim was to study and come back to make a difference in Wajir County," she says.

During her campaign for the Wajir County Women Representative seat in 2012, Fatuma championed education and agriculture. Now as the MP, she has vowed to revive education for the girl-child, and enhance women's empowerment. "I have promised girls in Wajir that none of

them will lack education due to financial constraints," she says.

Fatuma believes that there is need for more women to understand the value of representation instead of vying for a seat whose value they barely understand. She lauds organisations that have taken time to educate women on leadership, but feels that more needs to be done to encourage more women to engage in active politics.

In Parliament, the legislator serves in the Parliamentary Committee on Justice and Legal Affairs, as well as the Budget and Appropriations Committee. She is remembered for presenting an adjournment motion on defilement and rape, and general abuse among women. She is a member of KEWOPA and the Pastoralist Women Legislators Caucus.

The MP hopes to vie for the same seat in the next general election to accomplish the mission she has started. "I see Wajir County as an agricultural area with blossoming education in the next ten years," she says with hope. For any woman aspiring to be a politician, her advice is: "Start early and make politics a commitment, involving every person who is close to you."

Seeing a woman with a small kitchen garden in an area where farming was almost alien would excite me . . . I watched with pride as women started addressing food security at the village level.



Convincing lawyers to elect her the Law Society of Kenya vice chairman was the launching pad that gave Florence Kajuju the courage and will power to traverse Meru County, one of the largest voting areas in Kenya, and emerge victorious. The battle for the Meru Women Representative seat was a delicate affair, politically speaking. It may not have attracted as much attention as the gubernatorial contest, but the contest between Florence and her businesswoman challenger was to be determined by pertinent local political dynamics. APK was deemed the homegrown party, and Kajuju, the TNA candidate, had to overcome well-oiled and organised campaign machinery rolled out by APK.

TNA operations were in limbo in the county, and while APK's dream team held meetings together and moved together, Kajuju was alone. "There was no harmony in our party campaign team. The other side had gained a lot of ground," Kajuju lamented during one of the media interviews in the run up to the elections. And true to her projections, it was a close shave as APK sailed through with the weighty governor and senatorial seats.

It is a keen review of the dynamics in Meru and her win with TNA against the strong APK wave that expressly point at the pragmatism of the 43-year-old lawyer. Her rise to political stardom has been a journey through the legal and justice system, working in Meru and getting to know the constituent's problems. From a



FLORENCE KAJUJU

MERU

young lawyer running FK Gitonga and Company Advocates in Meru Town more than fifteen years ago, her mobilisation skills would be aptly demonstrated when she was elected by lawyers to be the vice chairperson of the powerful LSK in 2009. Only three years earlier, she had cut her teeth in legal politics when she was elected LSK's council member. "I had

served as the chairperson of the Meru Bar Association and the secretary general of the Mt. Kenya Law Society. At least my colleagues knew what I was capable of," says Kajuju.

Having studied at CCM Mucuune Primary School, and later at Mikinduri Secondary School in Tigania East, Kajuju's background is humble. Becoming a lawyer

was a childhood ambition that goes miles to reveal just to what extent Kajuju can be committed to causes she believes in. “I used to love the Vioja Mahakamani programme on KBC TV, and I liked the drama and the intrigues,” she explains the origin of her love for law. After a successful stint at Moi Girls School for A-levels, Kajuju’s future began to take shape when she joined the University of Nairobi to study law. Current LSK chairman, Eric Mutua, was her classmate. Kajuju was admitted to the Bar in 1995 after attending the mandatory one-year training at the Kenya School of Law. It is however the pro bono cases she took over for the last eighteen years she has been in Meru, plus her desire to aid the poor and the downtrodden, that gave her the impetus to seek a platform to represent the people at a more influential level.

The MP wanted to be able to make laws from Parliament, and to see the effect of such laws trickle down to the people directly. Her road to Parliament was not smooth. Meru County, one of the largest in the country, has nine constituencies, and Florence’s ability to consolidate votes in populous constituencies seems to have given her an edge over her main rival. Her strategy worked. She garnered more than 193,000 votes, giving her rival a gap of more than 91,000 votes.

Soon after joining Parliament, Kajuju quickly realised that an MP’s work was not just a talk shop. “There is this notion by members of the public that MPs do not have a lot to do. I can tell you that we are very busy,” she says. Kajuju explains that the 11th Parliament could be different

due to constitutional requirements that have deadlines and as such, the in-trays of MPs who now conduct more business in committees are full. “The three roles of legislation, oversight and representation have gained new and challenging meaning, more so during this era of devolution,” she notes.

Her ambitious spirit did not just die with her election. In Parliament she became a member of the powerful Justice and Legal Affairs Committee, and managed to clinch the chairmanship of the Regional Integration Committee that is involved in matters of the East African Community and all that impacts on regional peace, trade and integration.

Kajuju has not lost sight of the social economic impact she wants to see at the grassroots. Together with fellow Women Representatives, she has been key in the crafting of the County Social Economic Development Bill that if approved, will see creation of another grassroots fund that will be under the office of the Women Representative. “It will adopt the Constituency Development Fund (CDF) model, but will have a bottom

up representation where we shall have ward, constituencies and finally county representatives,” she explains.

Hon Florence Kajuju has joined hands with fellow Meru County leaders to introduce a Motion that could see a task force established to look at issues affecting miraa growing in Kenya. The MP says that the crop is largely misunderstood by people who do not know its economic impact on the Meru people. “We shall be fighting to have it recognised as a cash crop. Recognition by the government will make it to be managed better and if there are any side effects on its growth and consumption, then recommendations will be made,” she explains.

By the end of her first year in office, the mother of two wants to have cemented her working relationship with the Youth Development Enterprise Fund and the Women Enterprise Fund that she is already working with. The MP says that the two funds, with the Ksh6 billion boosts from the government, have the potential to have tangible impact at the grassroots.

There is this notion by members of the public that MPs do not have a lot to do. I can tell you that we are very busy.





FLORENCE MUTUA

BUSIA

As a young girl, Florence Mutua dreamt of becoming a leader. Raised by her maternal grandmother, Florence's desire was to walk in the footsteps of the powerful woman who led women's groups and church ministries, and inspired girls and

women to become better members of the society. "I accompanied my grandmother to most of her church and women groups' meetings and was fascinated by her influence in the community. This served as my introduction to leadership and women's empowerment," she recalls. From her grandmother, Florence learned that leadership translated into hard work and positively influencing other people.

In later years, the first of four children also got to understand the importance of education. "There was a big difference between educated women and the non-educated ones," she notes. Having lost her father in childhood, Florence took seriously every opportunity she got, doing her best in school, in the hope of a better future. She studied at Arya Girls' Secondary School in Nairobi and later graduated with a Business Administration degree from the Kenya Methodist University. Florence also holds a University of Nairobi Master's degree in Project Management and Planning.

The promulgation of the Constitution in 2010 prompted her to join politics. The then employee of World Food Programme (WFP) considered this an opportunity to work directly with residents of Busia, to improve their lives. Florence says that having worked directly with communities for 13 years while at WFP, she felt ready to help shift the thinking of Busia County residents from depending on cash handouts to self-reliance. "The people's dependence on cash handouts bothers me a lot. I feel sad when the residents look for me only when they want money. That is why I have various projects that should help reduce dependency and have them appreciate their ability to improve their lives," she says.

Florence experienced mixed feelings before following through her dream. "My husband encouraged me to apply. I was reluctant to leave my comfortable job for politics but after much reflection, I decided to give it a try. He actually dropped my papers at the ODM Party offices and that was the start of my

The people's dependence on cash handouts bothers me a lot. I feel sad when the residents look for me only when they want money. That is why I have various projects that should help reduce dependency and have them appreciate their ability to improve their lives.



journey to political leadership," she recalls. Florence chose ODM, which she felt had fought for the new Constitution.

Her greatest challenge during the campaign was lack of limited funding, and she took a risk and dipped into her family's savings. The other challenge was her identity. Born to a Luhya father and a Kamba mother, Florence's opponents dismissed her as an alien in Busia County, despite being married in the county. She reported the matter to the National Cohesion and Integration Commission and the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission for their intervention. Florence won the election with overwhelming support from residents. "I now have to fulfill my manifesto, serve the constituents, and ensure that their lives are improved," she says happily.

The MP's manifesto promised food security, economic empowerment, stigma reduction for people living with HIV/AIDS, education for all, jigger eradication, access to clean water and medical services. She is passionate about empowering women and the youth. Her programmes, conceived along the Millennium Development Goals, include 14 green houses to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger among the youth, the

destitute and widows who are generally stigmatised because of AIDS. Her other interests are in health education and distribution of undergarments and sanitary towels to girls, to help them attend school uninterrupted. She also has a mentorship programme to guide and mold boys into respectable people in the society, and coordinates the activities of Mama ni Mmoja, a foundation for orphans.

As the patron of Uwezo Fund in Busia County, Florence has ensured that women and the youth are well informed in order to benefit from the fund. To promote sustainability, she encourages members of the community to initiate projects they are passionate about. "I want people to know that the projects are not Mama's. I have worked with youth groups, women's groups, physically challenged persons' groups and boda boda (motor bike) operators' groups to start Savings and Credit Cooperatives (SACCOs), and table banking," she states. Florence has also informed these groups about Access to Government Procurement Opportunities (AGPO) and facilitated the registration of five companies for youth groups, women's groups and for people living with disability to help them exploit the opportunities available to them.

Florence goes beyond her role as a women's representative in Parliament. "The people have high expectation of women leaders and I have to make a difference in whatever way I can – with or without finances," she observes. Because of this, the MP challenges women leaders to work hard for elective positions as opposed to relying on the affirmative action seats. She adds that women leaders should impact the society through transparent and accountable leadership.

The legislator feels that County MPs were not embraced by other MPs upon joining Parliament. "We have all found our spaces and are now working very well, with our strength being in the committees," states the member of the Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries Committee, and Regional Integration Committee.

Hon Florence Mutua believes that training for women aspiring for political leadership should be decentralised to the county level where it is most needed. She adds that the objective of the trainings should change from raising numbers to improving the quality of women leaders. The dynamic MP is the secretary of KEWOPA, the vice chairperson of Women Democracy Network (WDN) Kenyan Chapter, a network that prepares women for political leadership through training and awareness creation. She also serves as an ambassador of the Bicameral Parliament for Women in Parliament (WIP), which is an independent international foundation that reaches out to all female parliamentarians to address global challenges. On her plans for 2017: "Watch this space," she asserts.



GLADYS WANGA

HOMA BAY

The Homa Bay County Women's Representative grew up in a political family. Her father, the late John Nyasuna, was a councilor and chairperson of Kisumu County Council. She emulated

him and developed interest in politics at an early age. As she puts it, getting into politics "was a natural thing for me." Her father inspired her a lot, and so did other political leaders whom she says, played a role in making her the politician she is today. Gladys singles out Hon Charity Ngilu, for whom she has great admiration, among the leaders she looks up to.

In high school at Kisumu Girls', Gladys Wanga was appointed head girl and she proved to be a natural leader. Her leadership flourished further when she joined Kenyatta University. "In 2003, I contested the highly competitive position of secretary general in the student's union, and became the first female student to be elected to that position. My role was to represent students at the university senate and council," she shares. Serving in the position Gladys spearheaded the review of the Constitution for the Kenyatta University Students' Association to allow for the union's independence in running its affairs. She also mobilised resources to run the union.

Gladys remained actively engaged in politics even after university. While she worked in various positions and organisations, including serving as the Programme Manager at LVCT Health, a Kenyan NGO with focus on HIV/AIDS, she engaged in ODM Party politics. "I actively campaigned for ODM in the 2007 and the 2013 election, as well as for individual parliamentary candidates," she reveals. When she decided to vie, she naturally chose ODM, which was the most popular party in her constituency. "I am an active member of my party's Parliamentary Group."

Campaigns are not always smooth for most politicians, and Gladys was no exception. "The campaigns were intense, and the most difficult part was raising the resources needed. Homa Bay County is vast and the terrain is difficult. With support of friends, giving small amounts of money and volunteering their services,

we managed to mount a successful campaign and got the seat," Gladys recalls. She experienced a lot of verbal violence from opponents who discredited women's leadership. Undeterred, she remained focused on the task at hand, receiving the support of mainly women and the youth, and a few men.

The holder of a Master of Science in Health Management degree received little help to prepare her for the position. "I have been learning on the job. Being a women's representative, which is a new office in the devolved government, comes with its own responsibilities. We have to ensure there is no duplication of roles with other offices," she notes. Her key promises were the empowerment of women and the youth, and education for the girl child.

Despite not having any money allocated to the office of the County MP, Gladys has partnered with several private sector and civil society groups to mobilise women to register for national identification cards, National Hospital Insurance Fund, National Social Security Fund, birth and death certificates, among other documents that are not easily accessible to many people in the rural areas. She is also promoting table banking as a means of economically empowering women, has launched a girl child mentorship programme known as 'Mama County Says', and encourages women to deliver in hospitals. Together with her team, the launch of Homa Bay County Women's SACCO and other youth programmes are top on the list of planned activities.

Do not be limited by your financial inability to carry out a grand campaign. If you can convincingly articulate your vision, you will get the support you require.

The training provided by KEWOPA and the State University of New York through its Legislative Strengthening Programme that was implemented in the Kenyan National Assembly assisted Gladys to understand parliamentary procedures and the various roles as a legislator. "Parliament has been a steep learning curve," she declares, adding that all interests - personal, national or political - must be balanced to nurture good relationships. The MP enjoys good working relations with her colleagues and works well with her main competitor at the county.

According to the legislator, many women view Parliament as being about glamour and appearance, and she urges such women to change their perception. Parliament, she points out, is about work and women work twice as hard as men. For women who want to join political leadership, Gladys says, "The sky is the lower limit, do not sit on your dream. Do not be limited by your financial inability

to carry out a grand campaign. If you can convincingly articulate your vision, you will get the support you require." She also notes that although there are more women leaders now, there is more room to invest and get more women in Parliament and as governors, senators and constituency MPs. "Focus should grow from just capacity building to material support for serious candidates," she notes.

Hon Gladys Wanga has worked hard to ensure that while in Parliament she is not only seen but also heard. "I moved a Motion on road safety with my colleague, Hon Priscilla Nyokabi. I have also requested several statements and moved many amendments on the floor, as well as making contributions at the Parliamentary Service Commission, where I serve. My other achievement is the spearheading the creation of the Information and Public Communication Committee, which I chair."

The MP is an eager learner and looks out for opportunities to make her a better legislator, the most important being the pivotal role of decision-making. "Every day presents choices, and since there are not enough hours in the day, you have to decide whether to attend a committee retreat or a function in your constituency; you have to decide whether to vote with your party or your conscience. Whichever you decide, you must be ready to face the consequences." Asked about her political plan for 2017, Gladys vows to serve diligently in her current position and keep to her mantra, "The sky is the lower limit."

Grace Kiptui has defied culture and other obstacles to become the first woman from the minority Endorois Community to get elected to Parliament. "I won the Baringo South Constituency seat because I planned well. I conducted a well-coordinated campaign and delivered the right messages to voters. It was tough but I managed to out-do male competitors," she says.

The MP is among the 16 women elected to the 11th Parliament, and is motivated by a desire to alleviate poverty in her constituency, and to help empower women and the youth economically. She wants these two groups of people to write proposals that can win them credit facilities for their income-generating activities. "Women and the youth are the majority in Baringo South, yet the most disadvantaged economically. I want to see their fortunes change for the better," she states. To succeed, Grace pledges to operate on an open door policy and incorporate the views of all her constituents. "All views from the constituents matter. I have to listen and vet what is important for their general benefit, and make good use of it," she says.

Grace did her Certificate of Primary Education (CPE) at Solian Primary School and proceeded to Kapropita Secondary School and later Lugulu Girls' High School in Western Kenya, for her advanced level (A-level) of education. She



GRACE KIPTUI
BARINGO

joined the Kenya College of Accountancy (KCA) and achieved Certified Public Accountancy (CPA 5). She worked with Medical Training College (MTC) from 1982 till she joined politics.

According to the MP, a wise choice of the political vehicle to use, URP, was also key to her emerging victorious in the election. Most contestants on the party's

ticket, whose leader is Deputy President William Ruto, easily won seats not only in the county but also in the expansive Rift Valley Province. Her priority areas include education to empower residents to be self-reliant in all sectors. "I am particularly going to ensure both young girls and boys are given an equal chance in education by campaigning against

early marriages among young girls," she notes.

Grace also intends to promote the development of more schools in Baringo South, and equipping them for better educational provision for local children. She also plans to work with other leaders to curb insecurity, which to her is a major threat to development not only in the area but in other parts of the country. Baringo County is among the regions hardest hit by the cattle rustling menace. "Development can only be realised where people live in peace and engage in their daily activities without fear. I intend to champion peace in the constituency and even neighbouring constituencies," adds the MP.

To promote infrastructural development, especially roads, she intends to liaise with the county government and the national government. "Close working relations between the two levels of government is crucial in matters of development. I will champion that and equally champion the need for all elected leaders to work as a team within the county," explains Grace.

In the National Assembly, she sits

in the Transport, Public Works and Housing Committee. She is a member of KEWOPA, and has benefitted from its induction programmes for women MPs and Senators. "Women in this country are still disadvantaged when it comes to elective leadership and a lot has to be done in mentoring those aspiring to make a mark," she points out. She adds that there is need for KEWOPA to partner with other organisations involved in women empowerment programmes to boost women's numbers in elective positions. "Despite the New Constitution's provision on gender equity, we are yet to realise the two thirds gender provision. This is an area that requires urgent fixing," notes the first-time MP.

Hon Grace Kiptui says however that it is upon women MPs in Parliament as well as those in the County Assemblies to be at the fore-front at championing for increased representation of women at all levels in the next general election. "Kenyans will keep us in check, as women elected leaders, on our contribution towards realisation of the gender equity in line with the Constitution. It is a

Kenyans will keep us in check, as women elected leaders, on our contribution towards realisation of the gender equity in line with the Constitution.

challenge we must work to overcome," she says.

The mother of four says that through proper planning, she is able to create time for both politics and family. "My skills in time management enable me to have room for my family, listening to my constituents, attending to the National Assembly's responsibilities and other political engagements."

She was a teenager when she first vied for a parliamentary seat, and came second. That was in 1983. Halima Duri had just completed secondary school examination, and desired to represent the people of Galole Constituency, Tana River District, in Parliament. "It was unheard of . . . a young Muslim woman of Somali origin contesting a parliamentary seat!" she exclaims, with a chuckles. "Parliament was then male dominated, but I was attracted to the power the MPs wielded," declares the Tana River County Women's Representative.

Although she does not proclaim it aloud, Halima seems to get motivation from doing anything that appears reserved for men. This started in her childhood when she herded her father's goats. Being the first born in a family of six girls, Halima had to perform this task for her father, which meant working side by side with boys. "My father trusted me a lot and to be a successful herds girl, I had to be tough," she shares. She was not just firm and brave, but she also walked and behaved like the boys, even wearing caps and carrying sticks under her armpit like the herds men.

This early routine created a tough woman in Halima. "My constituents call me Mama Gangari (The tough lady) because I'm firm and bold," she discloses. Her education and career have been rooted in leadership. She was a head girl in primary and secondary schools, and served as a high school principal for some of the ten years she was a teacher. Her last working years were spent in various positions in the provincial administration, starting off as district officer and rising to senior



HALIMA DURI
TANA RIVER

district officer by the time she resigned to join politics.

The married mother of six grown children has worked in many districts in the country, including Busia, Migori, Thika, Maragua, Sotik, Eldoret, Nandi North and Msambweni. This has equipped her with good interpersonal and public relations skills, and made her a competent peace campaigner and negotiator. "After the 2007 election, I was sent to work in areas with

disquiet because the government recognised my record as a peace and reconciliation advocate. I am a peace worker," she asserts.

Halima had nurtured the dream to join Parliament for a long time, and when the opportunity arose she grabbed it and has not regretted. After her first unsuccessful attempt for a parliamentary seat, she got engrossed in her career, but never turned her back on the people. She was so involved in their community activities that when the New

Constitution was passed, "My former students, friends, especially men, called and urged me to go for the County MP seat," she says.

As part of her plan, Halima got a transfer to Mombasa from Nandi North and started underground campaigns. She later resigned from the civil service to campaign more actively. "I enhanced my activities in the community – peace initiatives, harambees, funerals, name it - I attended them all," she says. Prior to this, Halima had remained connected with the people. "Wherever I worked, I commuted regularly to Tana River to participate in the community activities, particularly women related ones. This helped me to earn the people's confidence even before election," she recalls.

Because of her cordial relationship with the people, the community's council of elders did not hesitate to endorse her for the seat. The council plays the important role of bringing fairness by deciding how political seats are shared between the Wardei and Orma clans of Tana River. "We were seven contestants but I got 90 per cent of the votes. I attribute this to the good work I had done in the county as a teacher. The people know my capabilities and I'm very confident in whatever I do," she asserts. Halima adds that Tana River people scrutinise a contender's marriage, reputation, commitment and passion for the people and the job. "I passed the test highly. I command respect, I've been married for over 30 years and I've contributed to the community affairs whole heartedly," she adds.

"I continue to enlighten women, a majority of who are illiterate, on business, self-image and their rights as Muslims and citizens in this society that is dominated by men."

The MP promised to drill boreholes to reduce water shortage, establish a bursary fund and scholarships for learners, and improve health care services all over the county. She is working closely with the area governor and the three constituency MPs to deliver on these pledges. "But they see my commitment through various development funds for women's groups. I continue to enlighten women, a majority of who are illiterate, on business, self-image and their rights as Muslims and citizens in this society that is dominated by men. Women were my greatest supporters during campaign and I want the best for them," she discloses.

While she got a lot of support from nearly every group of people in the county, Halima had two major challenges, the first being campaign funds. "I didn't have as much money to campaign as my opponents did," she reveals. The other draw back was opposition from a section of her extended family. "My husband, his brothers, my sisters, and other relatives gave me so much support I feel like I owe them. I only wish it was like that with every member of the family," she adds.

The Wiper Democratic Party was the obvious choice because of its popularity

I continue to enlighten women, a majority of who are illiterate, on business, self-image and their rights as Muslims and citizens in this society that is dominated by men.



in Tana River. "Choice of a party is challenging because you have to go by the people's wishes," she notes. She however likes her party because its leader is sincere and was supportive and encouraging throughout the election period. "I didn't have money and he encouraged and helped me," she recalls.

When she first got into Parliament after the election, the legislator shed tears of excitement. "I had longed for that moment since 1983! I prayed to God to give me strength in this work," she discloses. The environment was however familiar as she had visited Parliament several times earlier. "The work is what I had always thought it was. It's an exciting place; you can develop yourself and grow your people through the networks from different backgrounds," she observes.

Hon Halima Duri says she is an active contributor in the Education, Research and Technology Committee, and the Health and Catering Committee. She continues to emulate her role models, "the older politicians from the single party days, like Senator Zipporah Kitony. They have so much authority it reminds me that this place has good pasture for me," she observes. Halima also looks up to Muslim politicians like Hon Amina Abdalla and Hon Aden Duale.

She encourages future female aspirants to increase their determination, courage and decision making skills because "the names you will hear during the campaign and the challenges you will face require a woman of steel. Be patient, have shock absorbers because most men seem to enjoy discouraging and belittling us," she states. The KEWOPA member plans to contest for the same seat in 2017.



HELLEN CHEPKWONY

KERICHO

Born to peasant farmers in 1951, Hellen Chepkwony grew up in Belgut Constituency, Kericho County. From an early age, Hellen recalls seeing women in her church take up some form of leadership roles, while the bigger roles appeared to be reserved for men. Young as she was,

this left her with many questions. She would later prove her leadership mettle as a pupil of Kamaso Primary School, where she mobilised fellow learners to reject Kiswahili and Christian Religious Education (CRE) subjects in the Kenya Primary Education (KPE) system. She did not see the need to study the two subjects that were not examinable in their end of primary school examination. The move

earned Hellen and her friends heavy punishment.

Her life in Kapsabet High School and later Mosoriot Teachers' Training College was uneventful. She was by this time well settled in leadership, holding various positions at the different institutions. Now as a member of the Committee on Catering and Health Club in Parliament, Hellen cannot hide her amusement at the fact that history seems to have repeated itself. "It's funny, because I was the vice president in charge of Catering and Welfare at Mosoriot TTC," she laughs. The mandate of her current committee is to ensure the welfare of MPs and staff, and at times advice on security matters. The MP also sits in the Lands Committee, whose task includes solving land disputes and digitalising issuance of all title deeds.

The leadership style of the first time MP is a hands-on approach that seeks to deliver results. Other than the time she led fellow pupils in boycotting subjects, the only other time Hellen has ruffled feathers in leadership was during her first teaching stint. She got into a school whose performance was rather dismal, yet it had the potential to perform better. "I initiated a campaign against lazy teachers, and things changed. The school went on to perform exceptionally well during the main examination," she recalls.

This urge to see results is one of Hellen's greatest assets in her current position as a political leader. She has a vision to improve the welfare of the people of Kericho County, particularly the vulnerable groups – women and youth – through the Uwezo Fund and the Women Enterprise Fund. Apart from that, she wants to make sure that parents

understand the importance of educating their children. "Education will improve the living standards of the people. It is embarrassing that we are still speaking of jiggers in my county in the 21st Century. Jiggers should not be a threat to our people," she says.

Hellen has so far introduced green houses for tomato farming. "My county encounters numerous heavy hailstorms that affect the production of tomatoes. To get good ones, we have to protect them from the harsh weather conditions," she says. The MP reveals that she has disbursed greenhouses worth Ksh6 million to the county. "I plan to start a cottage industry to do value addition with the tomatoes, and stabilise their prices," she adds. She has also introduced rabbit rearing in Kericho county and now plans to enhance operations of factories that manufacture the rabbit urine into fertilizer. The plans are to establish one factory in Belgut Constituency and another one in Bureti Constituency.

"Currently the farmers are transporting the rabbit urine to a factory in Bomet that uses it in the manufacture of fertilizer. We have given samples to the Kenya Bureau of Standards (KEBS) for testing, and as soon as they give us the go ahead, we'll start to market the fertilizer throughout East Africa," reveals Helen, confidently. Still in agriculture, she plans the expansion of poultry and dairy industry that are already well established in the county. "I give a lot of support and guidance to people in my county, especially women who have formed into groups to practice table banking. I give them freedom to exercise their own leadership," she says.

The mother of five admits that it is difficult to handle all the demands of the

One wonders that we have more women than men in the county governments, yet we still struggle to get more women into national elective positions.



people in her county from her position as MP. Hellen has shared this truth with them, and this has helped to reduce their demands on her. "I am with the people and I expose them to the reality. I explain the situation to them, and when I can afford it, I help; and when I cannot, I direct them to places where they can get assistance. Above else, I have helped to guide them to do businesses that will improve their lives," she shares.

Widowed in 2001, the hardworking farmer and businesswomen previously worked in the local authority and was elected the chairperson of the County Council of Kericho. She took over the position when Kericho County Council was ranked 173th in the country, and through organising, supervising and implementing activities, the county performed better and was ranked fourth in the country.

Hon Chepkwony is grateful to the Parliamentary Service Commission (PSC) and KEWOPA for inducting her and other new members to the various rules and functions of the House. While she appreciates workshops that female MPs

have attended since coming to Parliament, she stresses the need to decentralise such activities to the counties to help more women access information and knowledge, and in turn increase their numbers in leadership. "One wonders that we have more women than men in the county governments, yet we still struggle to get more women into national elective positions," she notes.

Hellen is dissatisfied that few women are in national leadership positions. "Not much has been done. We need to work harder. We have to convince women to understand that a woman's leadership is equal to that of a man, if not better," she says. She believes that the reason the number of elected women MPs is smaller in the 11th Parliament than in the preceding Parliament is that women fear to compete with men for leadership positions. "The number of women elected at constituency level has dropped by five from the previous Parliament. We need to undertake serious civic education and support fellow women with finances to vie for these positions," she maintains.

Joining URP was a decision informed by the party's popularity in Kericho County, discloses Hellen. She says that hers was an uneventful campaign, her only challenge being funding. She used her personal savings and borrowed money from her businesses. Now that she is in Parliament, the MP intends to emulate successful women politicians like Hon Charity Ngilu, the Cabinet Secretary for Lands, Housing and Urban Development. "Ngilu is a lady who faces challenges head-on. She tackles issues bravely," observes Hellen.

Mama Amani is the name Laikipia County residents fondly call their Women's

Representative, Jane Machira. Long before she joined politics, Jane was already a peace crusader in this cosmopolitan multi-ethnic and multi-religious county where cattle rustling is the order of the day.

Through her work as a programmes officer at the Centre for Conflict Resolutions Kenya (CCR-K), Jane travelled to Laikipia, Samburu and Baringo Counties helping to resolve conflicts that were sometimes allegedly instigated by local leaders. She also served in the Laikipia District Peace Committee where she helped to establish lasting peace policies and conflict resolution mechanisms. "It is an issue of concern when communities attack each other, stealing animals and destroying crops, and their leaders say and do nothing about it," she observes.

It was this apparent lack of concern for restoration of peace by the leaders of Laikipia and neighbouring counties that pushed Jane to seek a political leadership position. "As an employee, I did what I could. But there are some challenges we as an organisation just couldn't handle, as they required a political approach... I kept wishing to be an MP to help resolve the conflicts once and for all," shares the MP. Now that she is a County MP, she has organised various conflict resolution campaigns and trainings that involve entire



JANE MACHIRA
LAIKIPIA

communities, with focus on Christian and Muslim clergy, men and the youth. "Conflict is often caused by men and young people, yet when they occur, women, girls and children suffer most," she notes.

The MP's political interest did not stem from her immediate former job, but from way back in her days at Rumuruti Secondary School where she served as a

school prefect. Her responsibilities then cut across the school, instilling in her the two qualities of self-motivation and focus, which she believes are important for any leader. For a girl who came from a humble background in a family of 11 children, this elevation enhanced Jane's self esteem, and she vowed to offer leadership wherever she went. "Students

respected me and always sought my advice. I was also a very neat girl," she adds cheerfully.

After secondary school, Jane trained as a secretary at the Nyeri Cathedral College, and worked in the Ministry of Health in Gatundu, rising from secretary to senior positions. She also worked in Rumuruti District Hospital, and Kenyatta National Hospital before venturing out into NGO work. Throughout her employment, the firm but soft-spoken Jane was a leader of associations and women's groups that she belonged to.

She does not hesitate to stress how her husband, a lecturer at the Egerton University, has influenced her life. His determination to rise from being a probation officer to a lecturer, through sacrifice and hard work, is a lesson Jane applied in her own life. He studied Psychology in England and was promoted to head the district probation office, but he continued to strive for more, and now has a doctorate degree. Her life is no different. Starting off as a secretary, she has worked hard and is today a County MP. "I have emulated my husband's tenacity and self-development." Through distance learning, she undertook a degree in conflict resolution and management from the University of North Carolina, USA. "My husband is the biggest supporter of my leadership," she reveals.

The TNA Party member was assured of solid leadership in President Uhuru Kenyatta, and did not consider any other party. Campaigning to beat her five opponents was hard, that were she not an experienced mobiliser, she would have

Every upcoming leader must cultivate a learning culture, read books on leadership, and newspapers, participate actively in decision making, and attend parliamentary sessions. I did just that and it helped me gain knowledge on good leadership.



given up. The legislator however remained focused on her desire to reduce poverty, eliminate cattle rustling and overall insecurity, and provide clean drinking water for the county residents. With these promises, she won the support of women, and was elated when she won the race. A believer in mature leadership, Jane has forged friendships with her opponents and together they are working well.

Economic empowerment is one of the MP's passions, and she has helped many women's groups to start table banking. The caring mother also has a schoolgirls' mentorship programme focusing mainly on leadership. She plans to start a project to distribute sanitary towels to schoolgirls and unmarried mothers, who she says cannot afford those important items. She is working very closely with the government to ensure that the community gets access to clean water.

A beneficiary of leadership training organised by various NGOs for upcoming women leaders, Jane lauds the initiative. "Every upcoming leader must however do more, cultivate a learning culture, read books on leadership, and newspapers, participate actively in decision making, and attend parliamentary sessions. I

did just that and it helped me gain knowledge on good leadership." She believes the training also helped her sustain good relationships with fellow MPs. "In Parliament, I have friends with who we share experience and can work together regardless of our respective backgrounds."

Hon Jane Machira is an active member of KEWOPA and is happy that the parliamentary association has been in the forefront in helping MPs to understand their roles in and outside Parliament, and in passing Bills that are beneficial to women. "The mentorship we've received from KEWOPA is very beneficial, and I wish we could decentralise to counties and engage women at the grassroots."

She encourages women aspiring for political leadership to start engaging in leadership early. "When you realise that you're called to be a leader, start making friends with women already walking that path so they can mentor you. Also, be available for any leadership opportunity to gain the experience you need in this journey." When not engaging in politics, Jane visits her maize and wheat farms. She enjoys traveling around the country, as a domestic tourist.



JANET NANGABO

TRANS NZOIA

Janet Nangabo, the Women Representative for Trans Nzoia County, has faced challenges since her days as a nominated councillor in Kitale Municipality. The most recent obstacle was a petition by one of her challengers, contesting her election as the Trans Nzoia County MP, which

the court dismissed. She was relieved to have survived the petition. "I urge Trans Nzoia people to love each other just like I am ready to work with other leaders to bring development to the people of this county," says the MP.

A few days after the Kitale Court dismissed the petition, thugs raided Janet's home, but gladly, the police responded quickly when she raised the

alarm. The MP links the botched attack to her uncompromising stand against insecurity in the region. "The attack was linked to my championing of stiffer security measures to tackle the wave of crime in Trans Nzoia. I believe the criminals were not happy with that," she says.

Elected on a New Ford Kenya Party ticket, Janet hopes to address challenges in girl child education as well as peace initiatives in the county. "I chose to run on an NFK ticket because it was one of the most popular political parties in Trans Nzoia and parts of Western Province," she explains. The party's popularity in the area was due to the influence of former Justice Minister, Eugene Wamalwa, who also hails from Trans Nzoia.

Before securing the party's ticket, Janet was a member of the party's National Executive Council, and an influential figure in the county. She was born in Kaptama Village, at the foot of Mount Elgon in north western Kenya and is part of a large, happy family. In 1992, as Kenya prepared for election, ethnic clashes broke out in the Mount Elgon region, and disrupted her family's life. The ethnic clashes eventually saw her family move to the neighbouring Trans Nzoia District. "Ours was just one of the families that faced this growing nightmare. Hundreds of families suffered the same fate," she states.

It is said that some people are born into leadership while others have it thrust upon them. Janet belongs to the latter group. Leadership was thrust upon her at an early age. She was surrounded by hundreds of people facing painful

circumstances, suffering quietly without a voice. "Without someone to speak for us, our situation would not only worsen, but we would also face new threats like that of being displaced from our new home," she recalls.

As land was being distributed to internally displaced persons from other parts of the country, families that had moved to Trans Nzoia earlier, including Janet's, faced the threat of eviction. "There was need to speak out and fight for the rights of the men, women and children who now faced uncertainty and further danger," she states. It is then that she decided to work closely with with relevant authorities to express the frustration of her new community, fighting for their rights and pushing for opportunities for the young ones.

At some point, Janet established the Janet Nangabo Foundation, a community based organization specifically created to provide solutions for problems of the Trans Nzoia people. One of its aims was to help resettle squatters in the county. "There seems to be no leader from this part of the country who understands the problems of these people better than I do, because I have been a victim of displacement" states Janet, confidently. Other activities the foundation does and that target squatters and poor families in the county include peace building, development of skills, provision of basic healthcare and income generation.

Janet ventured into active politics in 2002 while campaigning for her late husband, for a county seat. He later became the mayor of Kitale town. In 2007 she again was active in political

campaigns, supporting other candidates, and was nominated to the council and subsequently elected the chairperson of Town Planning. She held the position till the 2013 general election.

The widow of the late influential Mayor of Kitale Municipality Maurice Nangabo, Janet has been able to carry on with her late husband's political prowess beyond the council. Her activities as a leader mainly include safeguarding the peoples' interests, and lobbying for better services wherever they are. Although the needs of the people can be overwhelming, she tries her best to seek solutions for them. She wants to ensure that women and the youth form income-generating groups for self reliance.

She has also been involved in helping members of her county register companies to enable them create rather than seek employment. "Many citizens view MPs as sources of everything, expecting us to solve their personal problems, which is not possible. This is particularly

Many citizens view MPs as sources of everything, expecting us to solve their personal problems, which is not possible.



challenging to us county MPs since we don't have any development funds," she observes. She has also worked with local NGOs to support the education of many young people from poor families.

The MP plans to have more laws legislated to effectively uplift the living standards of women, and empower them economically. She intends to tackle tribalism and promote co-existence between the communities in her county, to spur development. She also plans to empower the youth economically by working with financial institutions that can give them business loans.

Hon Nangabo worked with the Kenya Postal Corporation before her nomination as councillor in 2007. She attended Kuywa Girls' Secondary School from 1983 to 1987. In the National Assembly, she is the chairperson of the Catering and Health Services Committee, and a member of the Labour and Social Services Committee.

The legislator says that women MPs are rearing to perform as well as their male counterparts in Parliament, thanks to the mentorship they have received from KEWOPA. "KEWOPA has been playing its role in guiding women aspiring for leadership. But even as women leaders, we must also make our contribution towards this end to uplift fortunes of our sisters aspiring for elective positions," she notes. Janet promises to personally lead an initiative to mentor aspiring women leaders in Western Kenya. "I do not believe in failure and I want to encourage young women to focus only on success. With determination they can make it in the midst of the socio-cultural challenges women face," adds the MP.

The Turkana County MP, Joyce Emanikor, is fondly known as Mama Maendeleo (the woman spearheading development). Despite growing up in poverty, she has worked hard to become well educated, and now seeks to promote the welfare of the people in Turkana through education. Often ravaged by drought and recurrent famine and insecurity, the county is ranked among the poorest in the country. As one of the elected leaders in the county, Joyce knows that she has a heavy responsibility upon her shoulders, but being a self-driven go-getter the leader is ready for the task. She is committed to helping transform the lives of the constituents.

Born in 1962, Joyce attended Lokori Primary School in Turkana. She was a private candidate at the Lodwar High School where she sat for the Kenya Junior Secondary Education examination, as well as Sirikwa Secondary School in Eldoret, where she sat for the Kenya Certificate of Education. Joyce taught in her county after her secondary education, rising to become an assistant primary school inspector of education between 1984 and 1985. She graduated from Daystar University in 2001, with a First Class Honours Degree in Community Development and Peace Building, and later got a Master's Degree in Development Studies, from Manchester University in the United Kingdom. She was pursuing a PhD in Environmental Studies at Moi University, Eldoret, but deferred her studies to campaign for the



JOYCE EMANIKOR
TURKANA

Turkana County parliamentary seat in the 2013 general election. "Campaigns are hectic and I was forced to suspend studies to concentrate on seeking votes in the expansive county. I succeeded because of good planning," rejoices the first time MP.

The married mother of four grown-up children participated in the translation

of the Holy Bible to Turkana language, between 1985 and 1996. She also worked with the United Nations Children's Fund and Oxfam Kenya, among others, while actively involved in community development across Turkana County. She is passionate about the growth of her community. "We County MPs don't have a kitty like CDF to help in the

development projects that we initiate in our communities. I hope to lobby organisations for support for projects like bursaries," she says.

A proactive leader, Joyce is working for the unity of Turkana County leaders as one way to enable the people to benefit from unexploited natural resources like oil. "There is need for elected leaders in Parliament and the County Assembly to work hand in hand for the interest of the County at large. Differences may only serve to expose the County to exploitation by others," she argues. The MP also urges fellow Turkana leaders to work closely with the national government for the benefit of Turkana residents. Among the burning issues she wants addressed is the re-tarmacking of the Kapenguria-Lodwar highway, which is in a pathetic condition. The highway is the main link with South Sudan, which is an important trading partner for Kenya.

Concerned that children in Turkana walk for many kilometres to school, the MP is working to get more schools built and properly equipped. Educational empowerment is top in her quest to transform Turkana County. "Education is key because an educated society will achieve development and curb insecurity caused by cattle rustling that has bedeviled

our county for years, and retarded development," she says. "Education was the pillar in my campaign. Literacy level in Turkana is below 20 percent and this has to change," she states.

Joyce, who was elected on a URP ticket, says that she is concerned that few girls in Turkana transition from primary to secondary school and vows to support the education of girls. "I want to see them joining national schools," she says confidently. Other than actively promoting education of girls, Joyce also wants to mentor women leaders in Turkana. She also plans to help raise the economic standards of women in the county through the table banking concept. She points out that one of her activities after the elections was to mobilise women and the youth to form groups and societies that can benefit from the Uwezo Fund and the Women Enterprise Fund.

Environmental conservation is the other development priority Joyce has identified. She plans to come up with activities to involve the community to turn the semi-arid region into a productive area for food sustainability. "Currently most parts of Turkana are dry, without any agricultural activity save for southern parts, in areas like Katilu near Lokichar township, where irrigation is carried out.

I know we can replicate these activities in the whole county," says Joyce. She knows that without security, there cannot be any development thus since she joined Parliament, she has been vocal on issues of insecurity in Turkana County.

In the National Assembly, Hon Joyce Emanokor is a member of the Constitution Implementation Oversight Committee and the House Business Committee that programmes the business of the national assembly. She is also a member of KEWOPA and Pastoralist Women Legislators Association.

Education is key because an educated society will achieve development and curb insecurity caused by cattle rustling that has bedeviled our county for years, and retarded development, she says.



The story of Joyce Lay, the Women's Representative for Taita Taveta Country, is one of hope, hard work and resilience. Joyce grew up in abject poverty in Taita Taveta, but did not let this hinder her from pursuing a better life. From a young age she understood that poor leadership and bad governance contributed to poverty and marginalisation of people in her region. Lack of opportunities for the girl child and perennial water problems were not strange to her.

The sixth child in a family of nine, Joyce played a leadership role to her siblings by guiding and mentoring them. Tragedy struck when her father, the sole breadwinner, passed on just before she could complete her education. "That did not deter me from later pursuing education as an adult. I completed secondary education in Munda High School and worked in community development before venturing into business," she explains.

Her decision to join politics was not abrupt but rather a transformation that "has evolved over the years," says Joyce. Once she made the decision to vie for political office in the March 2013 election, the next step was to select a party. "I chose ODM because of its manifesto and it was also a popular party on the ground," she discloses, and adds that the nomination process was tough. "I won because with my campaign pledges I was able to secure development projects for the county," she says.

Even before pursuing political office, Joyce often responded to many



JOYCE LAY
TAITA TAVETA

community concerns. "I was passionate in helping and empowering my community even before I joined politics," she explains. "I also actively campaigned for the new Constitution, which was going to introduce devolution that would bring development in my county that had been marginalised for many years."

In the coast region, she cites landlessness, poor infrastructure,

inadequate and poorly equipped health facilities as some of the challenges facing residents. "I am certain that devolution will address these issues and now that I am in leadership there is political will to transform Taita Taveta," says the MP. Since winning the election as a first time MP, Joyce has achieved tremendous success in Taita Taveta. "I have initiated various projects including table banking

to empower women financially. I have also set up a foundation whose mission is to promote access to quality education, reproductive health, and help reduce child labour, alcohol and drug abuse, child prostitution and address early childhood development issues. I have also linked local farmers with international markets to sell their produce without involvement of middle men," she explains.

The MP lauds the March 2013 election as historic for Kenya because more women made it to Parliament, compared to previous elections. "But as women we are still far from where we want to be," she regrets. However, when it comes to gender issues affecting Kenyans, she is glad that all women MPs speak with one voice despite coming from different political coalitions. "Male MPs have also come to appreciate the role of female legislators and they value our contributions in committees and Parliament. I am proud of my contributions in many Motions, which include the Wildlife Act and the Mining Bill 2014," she notes.

To the public, the MP says that there is more to being a Member of Parliament, beyond representing a constituency or county; it is a call to serve the country. "Sometimes one may not be vocal on county issues as might be expected by the constituents but there is always a lot of lobbying and debating in the background while pushing for county interest." Demands and expectations of the public are extremely high and she is always careful about how to manage them, especially at the grassroots level. "We need to do more civic education on roles of elected leaders so that the public

We need to do more civic education on roles of elected leaders so that the public can appreciate what we do. An MP is not the solution to all societal problems but he or she only facilitates processes to bring solutions.

can appreciate what we do. An MP is not the solution to all societal problems but he or she only facilitates processes to bring solutions."

To women eyeing political office she has this advice: "Wisely consider before joining a particular political party. Political campaigns are very expensive and candidates should save or fundraise early so that they can conduct well-organised campaigns. Availability of finances also determines which position a candidate vies for, the reason why in the 2013 election we only had one woman presidential candidate and very few women candidates running for gubernatorial and senatorial seats," she observes.

The MP urges the media to continue giving visibility to women MPs, senators, members of county assemblies and other aspirants so that society can change negative stereotypes regarding women in leadership. "These efforts will lead to more votes for women candidates in future elections. Women should never give up,

there are challenges and that's why politics is a calling and not a career." She notes that KEWOPA has been very helpful in empowering women MPs through training. "I am an active member of KEWOPA and my main role is to support fellow MPs in pushing for Bills and Motions that resonate with our agenda. There have been many amendment Bills by members of KEWOPA that have failed to pass due to lack of support on the floor of the House. We are networking and lobbying across the political divide to realise our goals," she reveals.

Several African leaders have inspired Hon Joyce Lay's journey to leadership, including Pan-Africanists Kwame Nkrumah, Patrice Lumumba and Mwalimu Julius Nyerere; Kenya's independence heroes like Dedan Kimathi, Ronald Ngala and Jaramogi Oginga Odinga, and in recent times, the second liberation heroes like Kenneth Matiba, Masinde Muliro, Martin Shikuku and Kijana Wamalwa. "I am also impressed by the role played by Christian leaders like the late Alexander Muge, Bishop Okullu and Bishop Dr David Gitari. These are our unsung heroes," she says.

Joyce is married and cherishes spending time with family, despite the pressure that comes with being the people's representative. She is currently pursuing a degree in Political Science and Sociology at the University of Nairobi. "I am a testament that anyone can achieve their dreams as long as they are determined and patient. With more women leaders, Kenya and the rest of the world will see better results," she concludes.

Although she never had a chance to pursue further education, Maison Leshoomo, the MP for Samburu County never let this stop her from following her dreams. “The fact that I received limited education in my early days is the more reason I should represent my community and enhance girl-child education to beat cultural norms,” she asserts. Born in Mararal County 50 years ago, Maison was brought up in a polygamous home and a community where women are largely voiceless. “Even if a woman had a great idea, it would be dismissed by the mere fact that it came from a woman’s mouth,” she recalls with displeasure. She vowed to change the status quo.

The first born in a family of eight, the MP had her education at St Mary’s Primary School in Mararal cut short while she was in class four. Her parents married her off to a man 20 years older, claiming that educated women were disrespectful to the community. Today she remembers vividly how she defied her husband to attend public meetings. This shocked many people but in her heart, the legislator knew that she was training herself for leadership. “I never took orders from my husband or any man lying down,” she notes, adding that it is a characteristic she has embraced to date. Although the men snubbed her in public meetings, the young wife would listen and later share what was said with other women, while urging them to be active members of the Samburu community. “If



MAISON LESHOOMO
SAMBURU

you remain silent, how will these men know even when they hurt you,” she would challenge the women.

The mother of three shocked her husband when in 1992, she contested and was nominated for the then councilor’s seat in Besheba Ward, a position she maintained for 10 years. Maison advocated against harmful traditional practices such as female genital mutilation and early

marriage. “I practically stormed homes to pull out girls who had been married off and kept them in my house,” she laughs. This, she states, was a way to ensure that women understood their rights and that one had to get into marriage at the right age in full consent. “Even today when I speak on women-related platforms, I insist that Samburu women should cuddle their feminine dignity by marrying the man of

their choice and choosing the ripe time for marriage," she reiterates.

Culture, the MP points out, is not something one can change in a day. She continues to champion girl-child education and women's empowerment. To date, her efforts have yielded a number of fruits: incidents of FGM and early marriage have reportedly reduced in Samburu. "When I visit schools, I pride in seeing girls being respected by their male counterparts and being accepted in the same classrooms," she observes.

In 1995, she became a member of Maendeleo ya Wanawake organisation, rising to become the chairperson in Maralal district. In 2008, PNU Party nominated her to Parliament. She is quick to note that politics is more of a calling and one does not need to be trained to be one. "You can tell a politician from a distance," she notes. The legislator calls upon women to support each other in politics to give each other a better platform, especially in male dominated areas. A woman politician, she warns, is never cowardly. She urges women to step out of their timidity and face their male counterparts with confidence. "Know your area well to be able to address the issues that are at hand. If you don't know what is needed, how will you provide it?" she poses.

The legislator reveals that the youth and women were her greatest supporters during her 2013 national election campaign on the Jubilee Coalition platform. She will be forever indebted to them for their support against the odds of male domination in Samburu politics, she says, recalling the nights she spent out in the cold with them during her campaign. She is gratified that she has made her promises good by serving them diligently.

The Samburu County MP has also been engaged in security and peace making at national level, and is a long sitting member of the Samburu District Peace Committee. As cattle rustling continues to plague the Samburu people,

the MP has taken it upon herself to promote peace between the Samburu and neighbouring communities. The policymaker has engaged the youth in employment as a way to keep them busy and sober. She has helped many young people to get employment in different places within the county, while others engage in responsible pastoralism.

The MP is currently looking for donors to fund youth programmes in her constituency. More than 600 elderly and vulnerable people receive weekly food rations from the MP's home. She notes that the group started with only 40 people but has since risen to hundreds. She has also sponsored 42 students to high schools and colleges to fulfill the promise she made in her manifesto. "My salary will produce, in someone else, the doctorate that I never got," she declares.

Hon Maison Leshoomo, who sits in the Committee on Equal Opportunities, plans to study conflict resolution even if at a certificate level. She argues that the training will polish her skills and will make her more authoritative in solving disputes in her community and with the neighbouring communities. She applauds organisations that train women in political matters, saying that she has benefited a lot especially by being a member of KEWOPA.

Know your area well to be able to address the issues that are at hand. If you don't know what is needed, how will you provide it?





MARY MBUGUA

NAKURU

Since childhood, Mary Mbugua has been a leader in school and church, and at the helm of social and economic transformation for the poor and the physically challenged women, men and children. However, at no time had Mary ever nurtured the desire to become a political leader. Her decision

to vie for the Nakuru County Women's Representative position resulted from a demand by the people who had identified her leadership skills. "Soon after the people realised there was a special seat for women in the election, they started encouraging me to take the opportunity. Each day, I would get various groups including women, the youth and men in my home with the same message, to go for the seat," explains Mary.

Despite the pressure from the locals, Mary, a Christian who believes that a woman's power and strength to lead is anchored in the hands of God, took time to pray. Finally she gave in and became a member of the TNA Party, which handed her the ticket to her current position. Although other parties wanted her to be their member, the MP opted for TNA as it focused strongly on empowering women and the youth. "TNA had a future for me. It is a party that promises to uphold a commitment to help women and the youth become resourceful people in the country. That is what I would like to see," she says.

During the campaign Mary, popularly known as Mutumia Ngatha (Kikuyu for the virtuous woman), had an easy time convincing the electorate to vote in her favour. In fact, the groups that had directly or indirectly benefitted from her work took absolute charge of her campaign without demanding the usual campaign handouts from her. "I never spent money on my campaign. The people freely campaigned for me because of what I had done for their families and communities," she says. Even as she enjoyed generous support, she also received a fair share of opposition from fellow contestants. "They used to say that I was way past the age of their perceived incumbent of the position, but deep inside my heart I said, well, the seat is actually not for the girls," she recalls.

It is that self-control reflecting a virtuous woman that Mary believes earned her popularity to garner over 400,000 votes to beat her five challengers. She strives to incorporate her challengers in her projects. "In all the seminars that I organise in villages through the churches, I invite my rivals to enlighten women on how to be self-reliant," she says. Some of her remarkable activities

across the country include training women on dress making, how to make detergents, as well as distributing wheel chairs to the physically challenged.

Mary's leadership capabilities were manifested through her appointments into leadership positions at school and college. She attended Karia Primary School in Central Kenya before proceeding to Kambui Secondary School in the same area. She later joined Kambui Teachers' Training College for a diploma in teaching. "Throughout my primary school studies, I was a class prefect, the same case in secondary school where I graduated into a head girl. I was also a leader in college," says the MP, who grew up in Kiambu County.

The MP was a primary school teacher for 32 years. In 1986, while serving in the Ministry of Education, she was seconded to the Presbyterian Church of East Africa as a guild organiser, a duty she faithfully carried out until she retired in 2003. A strong advocate of family values, Mary is a trained marriage counselor who has for over 20 years enjoyed saving families from break-up. She has made appearances on radio and television, educating Kenyans on the importance of safeguarding the most important unit in society: the family. She also carries the title of a gospel singer. Under her collections are nine volumes with singles in Kikuyu and Kiswahili.

Mary has ably broadened her leadership skills portfolio: she has been to America, Zambia, Israel, Cameroon and South Korea on training in women's leadership. She says that her position is demanding, with challenges that require a responsive leadership. "Almost everybody in the village wants my help. When they see me, they see money. Some have genuine reasons to ask for money, others just lie. It can be

depressing," she notes. But each day she derives her motivation from her mentors, Senator Beth Mugo and Prof Wangari Maathai, the late Nobel Laureate, who was her very good friend. "These are women of noble character who have taught me that when you serve people, you serve God. I therefore draw satisfaction from helping people and seeing them smile," recounts the mother of six.

The MP has an unconditional passion for building a society with independent, ambitious and aggressive women. "It annoys me to hear a woman saying that she cannot do something because of this or that. Women can do anything; all they need is to change their attitude and focus," she says. She desires to live in an environment where families are built on a strong foundation of trust, faithfulness, humility, kindness and respect. And that was her promise to the people during campaign. "I have always stood for strong families. We cannot have a peaceful society and enjoy any development if we have unstable families," she emphasises.

Focused on delivering on her promise, the MP says she has written proposals to development partners seeking finances to construct counseling and rehabilitation centres in each of the 11 constituencies in her county. She reckons that the absence of a kitty that caters for the development needs of Women Representatives has hampered their efforts to deliver on their promises. Mary says that despite the concerted efforts to encourage women to take up leadership positions, many are still under-informed while others harbor the stereotypical attitude that "women are not supposed to be political leaders. Women have the power and strength supplied directly from God to do anything. But that cannot happen if

they hide their abilities under the annoying beliefs that 'I cannot do this without a man' or 'I am not cut out for a political position'," she advises.

Hon Mary Mbugua is a member of the Energy as well as the Catering Committees in Parliament. On her participation in parliamentary debates, she says: "I am a very active member during committee sittings, and it is the chairperson who presents our discussions before the House."

The MP says that for new legislators to become conversant with parliamentary business, it requires inductions such as those the MP attended in Nairobi, Mombasa and Naivasha, and through KEWOPA. "It is through KEWOPA's organised workshops for women representatives that I got a firm grasp of what is expected of us inside and outside Parliament," she says. Being in a male dominated house has taught Mary the art of aggressive persuasion, because passing any women-related Laws or Motions requires intense lobbying.

Despite the concerted efforts to encourage women to take up leadership positions, many are still under-informed while others harbor the stereotypical attitude that women are not supposed to be political leaders.





MARY KERAA

KISII

When Hon Mary Sally Keraa-Otara participated in the 2007 general election, her desire for more active involvement in politics was ignited. She had been a

campaigner for retired President, Mwai Kibaki, through the Akina mama na Kibaki campaign outfit. "Campaigning for the former president, and previously for former MPs, Zebedeo Opopo of Ford People Party, and Charles Onyancha of KANU Party, was challenging but enjoyable," recalls the soft-spoken legislator. The experience of 2007 left her

desiring a political position of her own. She immediately started preparing, and when the 2013 general election reached, she contested and won the Kisii County Women's Representative seat.

Mary, who ran on an ODM Party ticket, stresses the importance of scrutinising party manifestos before joining one. "Interrogate the manifesto well to be sure that the political party has your people's interest at heart," she advises. Mary found sections of the ODM Manifesto attractive, specifically those that highlighted issues that are important to her, like establishment of social welfare for the elderly people. "I identified with this section most because it was in line with my vision for the elderly people whom I've worked with in my county over the years," she explains. Her analysis of the ODM manifesto reveals just how familiar she is with the document.

Identifying her party of choice was one thing, and getting to actually contest through it was another, as Mary shares. "The nomination process to vie through ODM was tougher than the actual election," she laughs. Having previously served as the chairperson of Maendeleo ya Wananwake Organisation (MYWO), Kisii South Branch, Mary was not new to the intrigues of elective politics, including the possibility of being rigged out. She recalls that there was an attempt to rig her out of the contest during nomination but that the goodwill of the people was overwhelming.

The people supported Mary overwhelmingly because she has a track record of development through her work at the Evangelical Lutheran Church since

1996. She has also served in various boards of schools within Kisii. Mary influenced Habitat for Humanity to construct houses for 50 poor families, and has ensured school fees sponsorship for over 5000 children within her county. She has also been instrumental in feeding some 500 orphans in the county since 1998. "When I expressed interest in the seat, I was not worried because it was time to take stock of the contribution I had so far made to the community," she recollects.

Mary's fascination with politics started at a very early age. She recalls reading a lot about the pre-independence struggle and analysing the contributions of Kenya's founding father, Mzee Jomo Kenyatta; the Kapenguria six; JM Kariuki; as well as later day political developments. She has always followed women's political activities, with Hon Nyiva Mwendwa being her greatest motivation. "I was fascinated when former President Moi appointed her the first female minister and I am now sitting in the same house with my role model," she says excitedly.

A God fearing person, Mary says she walked with God throughout her campaign "and everything just fell in place." It is this faith that protected her from a near fatal attack by political thugs two days before the election. Mary's husband, two sons and two nephews had accompanied her on a campaign activity, and as they were returning home at night, they found the road barricaded with rocks and twigs. No sooner had her husband and sons got out of the car to remove the logs, than a mob pounced on them with clubs and other weapons, hurting them badly. Her husband broke his leg in the attack. The

Interrogate the manifesto well to be sure that the political party has your people's interest at heart.



philanthropic MP was unscathed because her family hid her in the car, which sped off as soon as the thugs appeared. "As if that was not enough, when they went to report the attack, my husband and children spent that night in the police cells apparently for campaigning beyond the stipulated period," she recalls.

Coming from a humble background, Mary got into politics with very little money, her only campaign support being her husband and children. That notwithstanding, she encourages women to take risks and join politics as that is the only way to achieve gender parity. She is determined to use her leadership position to encourage her community to elect more women into Parliament. She stresses the need for women across the country to be trained on leadership, as opposed to being concentrated in certain regions only. "Women must also learn to attend barazas where the first lessons in political leadership are learned," she adds.

While continuing with the projects she had initiated before her election, the development-oriented legislator has helped to establish women's groups to

apply for various development funds. She is also working on women's soccer teams in the county to encourage men to work with women in all fields. She acknowledges that Kisii County is broad and requires activities that can unify the people. She has extended the feeding programme of the orphans to other poor households in the county by sourcing for support from the business and agricultural investors.

Even though she is now settled, Mary admits that her first days in Parliament were not easy. It took her a while to make her maiden speech because she feared to be embarrassed by the speaker, like he did some of her colleagues. "I was anxious he would ask me questions like 'which standing order?' You know how the speaker can embarrass you if you mess in Parliament," she laughs. The amiable MP relates well with colleagues, likening Parliament to any other environment with friendly and not so friendly people. She is a member of the Public Investment Committee and the Committee on Implementation, and is the chairperson of the Social Welfare and Culture Committee of KEWOPA. While Mary appreciates that there are more women in Parliament, she looks forward to the day they will achieve the two-thirds majority rule.

Born in 1964, the mother of three studied at Kioge Girls' Secondary School before joining Neema Lutheran College for a Diploma in Social Work, and later a Degree in Community Development. She says philosophically: "I appreciate the people who have all along shown confidence in my leadership and I want to use my time in Parliament to grow others."

Kajiado County Women's Representative, Mary Seneta, got into political leadership to help liberate Maasai women and girls. The experienced primary school teacher started her political walk in the classroom. "When I started teaching, it became apparent that I was destined for bigger achievements, and I often participated in leadership forums where empowerment of women and girls was the agenda," she recalls with a smile. Mary took advantage of every chance she got to articulate women's issues, and encouraged women's groups to work towards economic self-reliance.

Mary went to school in Kajiado County where men were evidently held in higher esteem than women. She noticed that Maasai women did not hold any leadership positions in the community. "Women were voiceless and kept their opinions regarding important issues to themselves. They were sidelined from leadership." Mary further realised that men were better educated than women, and started to wonder how her Maasai community would be if girls and women became educated, and got employed like those in other communities.

While in primary school, Mary noticed the nice clothes her teachers wore, and their generally superior lifestyle. "What bothered me was that they were all from non-Maasai communities," she recalls. Mary often wondered where the learned Maasai men and women were, and what they were doing. The only better off



MARY SENETA
KAJIADO

Maasais she saw were chiefs and MPs. She decided to get the best education possible so that she could not only live the good life she saw, but also make a name for herself as the Maasai woman who dared to dream big. The MP has fought cultural norms that hinder women in her community from becoming leaders. She advocates for education for girls as one way of breaking cultural bias.

Role models like her step sister, also a primary school teacher, were rare. "She dressed and looked just like the teachers from other communities, and she constantly encouraged me to follow my dreams." Mary's other inspiration was a local primary school headmistress, Priscilla Nungurai, who was a crusader for the rights of the Maasai girl, and

a leading campaigner against female genital mutilation and early marriage. "My interactions with Priscilla as a colleague made me desire to become just like her - a champion for women's rights, and a leader with powerful oratory skills."

The mother of three attended Olturoto Primary School, and Moi Girls' School, both in Isinya District. She attained a primary school teaching certificate from Kericho Teachers' Training College, and taught until 2005, when she joined the University of Nairobi for a degree in Education (Arts). She worked at a community-based organisation, Dupoto-E-Maa, as an officer in charge of capacity building projects such as career motivation for teachers and pupils. Upon graduating, Mary took up a post-graduate diploma course in Human Resource Management and started Path Institute of Technology and Entrepreneurship Studies, in Kitengela. The college has nearly 300 students.

Hon Seneta, who had wanted to vie as a governor, became a victim of gender discrimination, which she has been campaigning against for a long time. Her relatives implored her to step down in favour of a male relative who was contesting the same seat. "They told me that they would not vote for a woman when there was a male opponent," she states. Women in her county advised her that as a first time politician, she was better off vying for a less demanding seat. "I reluctantly settled for the Kajiado County MP's position as I await the right time to run for the gubernatorial seat," she declares.

The campaign did not only cost her money, which was limited, but also wore her out since she was nursing her one-year-old son. Her family, particularly her husband, supported her a lot. "I thank God that he was encouraging in word and deed. He gave me his car and money, and often created time to accompany me to different locations," she says.

nya Party, Mary moved to TNA Party, which was the most popular in her county. She has held several leadership positions in various organisations and women's groups, also serving as a board member of schools and health centres in her area. This drew her support from all categories of voters, particularly old men and women. Her Christian faith and reputation as a hard working businesswoman and farmer also endeared her to voters.

Unlike her parliamentary colleagues, Mary did not make any promises during her campaign. "I asked them for their votes and told them if they voted me in, I would sit with them to agree on priorities to work on together." She also assured them that she would intensify her projects: affording girls quality education, and empowering women economically.

The 42-year-old parliamentarian is optimistic that one day, more than 90 percent of the girls in her community will be educated and economically self-assured. She demonstrates her willingness to empower women by working very closely with her opponents in the election.

Since her election, Hon Mary Seneta has helped to construct school dormitories and supported various women's groups to initiate table banking,

and exploit the Uwezo Fund. Through the fund, the groups are learning greenhouse farming and irrigation, for food security. Mary contributed to the motion on scrap metals because of the effect of vandalism of the railway line, gates, and billboards, among others. She has also contributed to the Basic Education and University Bills, among others.

The dedicated member of KEWOPA appreciates the critical role the association has played in enlightening its members, and looks forward to an increase in the number of women in the National Assembly. She is a member of the Education, Research and Technology Committee, and Regional Integration Committee.

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Her clear sharp voice and fluency in Swahili has already earned her the nickname, 'Mama Mwenye Kiswahili Sanifu (The lady with polished Swahili)' amongst her parliamentary colleagues. Her use of Kiswahili is deliberate, as she wants people who elected her to follow and understand her contributions in the National Assembly.

Mishi Juma, the Mombasa County MP, recounts that her journey to leadership began a long time ago. She was a class monitor in school, a leader in Madrassa classes where she taught other children who were younger than her, as well as in many other groups and in the mass choir.

Her charming and aggressive nature drew her to start participating in political campaigns during the 1992 election. She was then just a youth, but this did not deter her, because she mobilised other youth to support one of the parliamentary candidates for Likoni Constituency, at that time. She was merely following in her father's footsteps, as the chief campaigner of the parliamentary candidate in that election. "During the time, many people from different backgrounds used to visit our home and I was privileged to meet them. This boosted my morale to mobilise male and female youth to campaign," she says.

In the 2002 election, Mishi again participated in various political campaigns. Although her parliamentary candidate lost, the presidential candidate she was supporting won the election. "In



MISHI JUMA
MOMBASA

2007, I felt ready to leave my footprints in Likoni Constituency. Unfortunately I didn't go far. I lost during the ODM nominations, which were marred with a lot of irregularities," she notes. This did not kill her morale and she decided to campaign for the party's candidate, who won.

The 39-year-old set her eyes on the 2012 election, and aggressively made inroads

at the grassroots and with the community. She participated in the campaign for the referendum for the new Constitution as part of the Orange team. With the new Constitution and new elective positions, Mishi began consultations with her supporters and elders, and many urged her to vie for the position of senator.

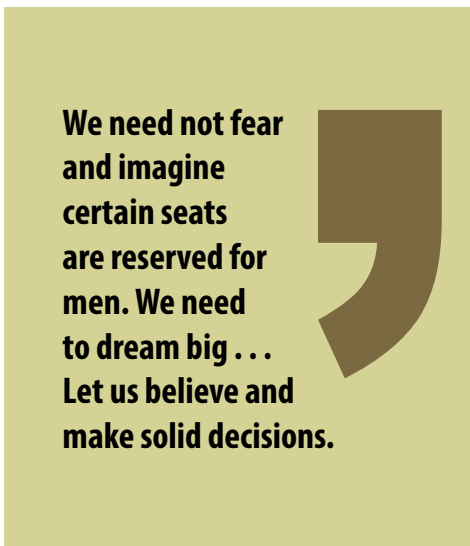
This was not going to be easy. She needed to traverse the six constituencies

and 30 wards in Mombasa County to sell her candidature. "There were also cultural perceptions that as a woman, I was not best suited for the seat," she says. Though she did not agree with this notion, after consultations, she opted to vie for the County Women Representative seat in Mombasa.

"The truth is that, the journey was not easy. I did not receive money from my party or any organisation purporting to assist women, during the campaign. I used my savings, as well as contributions from friends and family to get this far," says the MP. She won the nomination but that win was short lived. Another winner was pronounced. "I did not accept that decision and lodged a complaint with the party and the National Elections Board. I was given the certificate because I had won by 125,000 votes with my closest opponent getting 34,000 votes," she recalls.

The legislator endured verbal abuse, with some people calling her a prostitute. There are times that she witnessed physical fights between her supporters and rivals, and her marital status was put under scrutiny. "I am married with two children. But my husband is a civil servant and there was no way he was going to participate in my campaign. Because of this, many things were said concerning my marital status, but I soldiered on and don't think such should stop a woman from getting into leadership if she has the will to become a leader," she says.

Hon Mishi Juma sits in the House Committee on Appointments. She is also a member of the Transport, Public Works and Housing Committee. Women and the youth have been her greatest supporters,



and she has in her plans, programmes which; if undertaken, will better their lives. She urges women to apply for funding from the Women Enterprise Fund (WEF) that helps them to identify business opportunities and prepare business proposals. Some women have already received funding for their ventures.

For the youth in her county, Mishi is funding driving courses. Her vision is to start an education foundation that will rope in the girl child who is still lagging behind in education and development as a whole. She also would like to bring motions in the House for the establishment of government funded drug rehabilitation centres because many are currently owned privately. "Parents of children abusing drugs in my county cannot afford to take their children for rehabilitation in the private centres," she says, adding that there is also need to secure centres for street children.

The KEWOPA member is grateful for the training and mentorship she received as a first time parliamentarian. These included training on standing orders, budgetary processes, reproductive health and HIV, and she looks forward to many other eye opening endeavours from KEWOPA.

One of the MP's greatest disappointments is that not a single woman was elected as governor or senator in the country's 47 counties. She urges women not to limit themselves to the County Women Representative seat in the next election, adding that becoming a county leader is not hard. "Women can do that as they have the qualifications. We need not fear and imagine certain seats are reserved for men. We need to dream big to become president or deputy president. Yes, we can. Let us believe and make a decision. I competed with richer people, but I soldiered on," she states.

Outside the National Assembly, the legislator is a board member of several schools, among them, Likoni Secondary and Mtongwe Girls' Secondary School. She credits her zeal, energy, confidence, enthusiasm and exposure to the training and opportunities she received from different forums, especially on women and youth issues. She lauds AMWIK for training her on public speaking and media relations.

Mishi holds a degree in Communication and Public Relations from Moi University.

She has worked in the insurance as well as the clearing and forwarding industries, and as an untrained teacher and volunteered in many community-based organisations at the Coast.

It's been said that you cannot fight fate. Hon Nasra Ibrahim was not only unaware of her fate as the Marsabit County Women Representative but also attempted to block her own destiny when she became aware of it. She failed. Having served in the seat for some time now, Nasra has no doubt that hers was destiny planned by God. "I always tell people that my joining politics was God's making," she says. Hers is clearly an interesting story of the only MP in the current Parliament, whose political seat came looking for her.

Born 33 years ago, and brought up in Moyale, Nasra was enjoying her work as the Principal of Maragua Muslim Secondary School in Muranga County in early 2012, when she received a phone call all the way from Moyale. On the line was a representative of her Gare community elders, requesting her to vie for the Marsabit County parliamentary seat. "I told them that I was not interested and was not even prepared to try what they were asking me to do," she narrates. Nasra enjoyed moulding her students and had no plans or dreams of quitting her job for any other profession, leave alone political leadership. She had been heading the school for two years and had many projects to implement.

Unknown to Nasra, the council of elders had met, discussed the matter and settled on her, and they were not going to take no for an answer. They bombarded her with call after call and reminded her that she was their only choice and that they did not have another option. Feeling



NASRA IBREN
MARSABIT

cornered, Nasra consulted her husband who was also not comfortable with the idea. He said no. Next, she talked to her siblings just to be sure that she had made the right decision by maintaining her stand, but her elder sister supported the elders' idea. Nasra's sister and her husband talked with Nasra and her husband, and convinced them to allow

the elders to have their way. Even after accepting the elders' proposal and informing them of her decision, Nasra continued to teach till close of the school year, in November 2012, when she went to Marsabit County to start her campaign.

A month after rolling out her campaign, her father passed on. The death almost caused Nasra to abandon

the political race. "People who came to the funeral would be sitting around discussing politics while I was completely disinterested," she says. To rejuvenate her morale the elders, family and friends urged and encouraged her to focus on the better place ahead. Finally she gathered courage and soldiered on. When schools re-opened in January 2013, Nasra went back to Maragua to resign from her job, and there her journey in politics officially kicked off. "From there on, I never had any rest even for a day, until the election day," she recalls the rigorous campaign.

The reception she got during her campaign confirmed to Nasra that she had made the right decision. According to the MP, the county population gave her overwhelming support because they felt that she was a born leader who did not discriminate against anyone. They openly praised her for interacting with everyone, regardless of their status, a trait that endeared her most to the council of elders. She was known for mentoring, guiding and counseling young girls in her community. "It all comes naturally... I love influencing young lives and shaping the lives of girls particularly, irrespective of their social classes," the MP states. "When I went to the ground all the people accepted me," she adds. The only opposition came from right under her nose; her uncle (father's brother) who had wanted the seat for his daughter – Nasra's cousin – was upset that Nasra also declared her interest in the position. When the community leaders declined to reverse their decision, Nasra's uncle decided to campaign against her.

Vying on an ODM Party ticket, she beat seven other contestants to take the seat. Her closest opponent got less than half her votes. She did not experience any financial challenges because all candidates vying on an ODM ticket in Marsabit County had pooled their resources beforehand. Nasra fully appreciates her husband for supporting her during the uncertain and trying time. "He didn't rest even once; we would spend nights out on the campaign trail, and I am grateful to him for that," she says.

The mother of three young children – all under 10 years – attended primary and secondary school in Garissa, before going to Sudan for her undergraduate and Master's degree in Arabic language. She also has a certificate in teaching from the University of Africa, in Sudan, and a Diploma in Linguistics from the University of Nairobi. Although her entry into politics was late, her agenda for the people of Marsabit County is clear. She is focusing on enabling women and girls attain education and socio-economic development. To develop her community, Nasra is looking for ways in which water can be easily available. She recalls a time, before even considering a life in politics, when she spent Kshs50,000 to buy water for the residents. She had been moved by their desperation for water. "The problem of water persists. I will do whatever I can. Let it cost whatever it will but this one I have to do," she promises.

Since getting into Parliament, Nasra has quickly discovered that the demands and expectations of her constituents are

higher than she had anticipated. This has forced her to work harder to fulfill them, as she concurrently manages her wifely and parental duties. Despite all this, the MP wants to leave a legacy, an appreciation to her community for choosing her for the seat. "I want them to know that their votes were not lost," says the legislator, who sits in the Education, Research and Technology Committee.

The problem of water persists. I will do whatever I can. Let it cost whatever it will but this one I have to do.





NYIVA MWENDWA

KITUI

She is the longest serving Kenyan female politician, having been first elected the MP for Kitui West Constituency in 1974. Because of her experience, the warm natured Nyiva Mwendwa has taken up the role of mentoring many of the recently elected female MPs. "We older politicians missed what this current breed of female

politicians are getting from us; Grace Onyango was our only mentor, and we were also very few female MPs then," she laughs. Having intermittently served as an MP between her first election in 1974, and her current term in Parliament, the soft-spoken but blunt talking Nyiva has gathered gems of wisdom that she readily shares with youthful female politicians.

Noting that a lot of positive changes have occurred in Kenyan politics, Nyiva

stresses that gender equality in political leadership is still a dream. "Some may term my words primitive; that we're equal with men, but it is easier said than done. A woman politician still has to live a very guarded life; watching what you say, where you go, and your associates, because for a woman, you can easily walk yourself out of politics for making a very small mistake," the humourous legislator notes. Nyiva adds that any minor mistake a female politician makes in Parliament gets "glorified, while men will do big things that shake the country, and no one will touch them. We advise younger politicians to watch their words and their actions because little mistakes will never be forgotten," she advises.

Nyiva was a key player in crusading for gender equality, and she is glad that the country finally has affirmative action entrenched in its constitution. "I'm not for the one third provision though, why can't we get 50/50 - after all women comprise 52 per cent of the population! Aren't we more than men?" The Kitui County MP adds that ordinary life has more women working in the farm and trading, and this should be reflected in distribution of resources. In Parliament, this inequality is seen in the fewer number of women against men. "We're still not enough, we don't have the one third yet, and the men are already feeling like we're too many," she laughs.

As the Minister for Culture and Social Services, Hon Nyiva Mwendwa led a delegation of women to the Beijing Women's Conference of 1995, and upon their return, lobbied the government to ensure equal opportunity for all. "What we were asking for was equal access to employment opportunities for women and men, salaries and wages, admission to

schools and universities, etc; but it was perceived very negatively at the time. The country was still very conservative," she recalls. The 73-year-old legislator was then serving as the first female cabinet minister in Kenya, having been appointed by former President Daniel Arap Moi after the 1992 general election.

Known to have a taste for good life, Nyiva attended secondary school at the prestigious African Girls' High School (present day Alliance Girls' High School). She then joined the Royal College (University of Nairobi) to study a Manchester University (UK) Diploma in Education, and later a London University post graduate Diploma in Home Economics and Community Development, before acquiring a Master's Degree in Environmental Analysis (majoring in Textile Science, with a minor in Interior Design) from Cornell University, USA. "I practised interior design for a while and then decided to concentrate all the effort in my own house," she shares.

Married into a family with many politicians, Nyiva sometimes vied against her brothers-in-law. Her late husband, Kitili Maluki Mwendwa, also won the seat twice, the first time in a bi-election after Nyiva lost the 1979 general poll, and the second time in 1983, serving until 1985 when he died in a road accident. Kitili was also the first native Kenyan chief justice. Having been Nyiva's political advisor and strongest support, his death was a big blow to Nyiva. "The toughest period in my political life was when my husband died," she says somberly. Were it not for her husband's words spoken in premonition, Nyiva would not have remained in politics. "He once told me that I was a good politician whether he was around or

not. I wish there were more men who could encourage their wives like that," she says.

While it took Nyiva another seven years to come back to Parliament after her husband's death, she never lost her vision or acumen in politics during what she terms her longest parliamentary break. "I continued to work with people in the constituency. Some of the major problems they were facing then were lack of water, electricity, and good schools. I started by ensuring they received water from the Masinga Dam," she narrates. Nyiva also helped to dig many boreholes, renovated schools, health centres and dispensaries, and brought electricity closer to the people. "That is not enough, I desire to see every homestead with running showers and flush toilets. The roads are not yet good. I want all the dirt roads to have tarmac," she asserts.

Nyiva has also helped women of Kitui to grow their income base by teaching them more ways to run businesses and increase their agricultural output. "This is why I join other women's representatives in Parliament to push for a development fund," she states. She believes that county MPs should be allocated a fund to help

them initiate development projects. "It is hard to explain why county MPs don't have any funds because we're not duplicating any roles," she states.

Because of knowing what she was "going for", together with her experience in politics and development record in Kitui, Nyiva's campaign for the women's representative seat was easier than some of her earlier constituency campaigns. Vying on a Wiper Democratic Party ticket, she funded her own campaign, which she says would not have been possible for a beginner in politics. "Let's face it, women still own less resources, yet to win an election and rise in politics, we need resources for campaign," she says. And although she did not face insecurity, the MP says it is one of the main challenges women politicians face, alongside male domination. "A married woman still has to seek her husband's consent to vie, and in most cases he says no," she notes.

Nyiva who has also been a keen party official, serving in the executives of KANU, NARC, ODM-Kenya and now Wiper Democratic Party, plans to retire from politics at the end of this term. "My age is now advanced and any strength left, I want to invest in family," shares the proud mother of two, and grandmother of four. The born-again Christian sits in the Departmental Committee on Defense and Foreign Relations. She says that her faith has without a doubt helped her live her life as a widow with dignity, patience, resilience and tenacity. "When you're with God, you're never alone. After my husband's death, I have not struggled with loneliness, I've raised our daughter and son, and I've kept our estate and even invested more. I'm sure it is the Lord who has helped me," she concludes.

I'm not for the one third provision though, why can't we get 50/50 - after all women comprise 52 per cent of the population! Aren't we more than men?



Priscilla Nyokabi is one of the youthful, dynamic and visionary legislators whose focus is to bring positive change in the society. The 35 year-old lawyer comes across as an ambitious, diligent and committed leader who has already achieved a lot in her journey to political leadership.

The first born in her family, Priscilla hails from Othaya and was raised by her civil servant parents, who always encouraged her to excel in her studies. She graduated from the University of Nairobi with a Law Degree after which she joined the Kenya School of Law. In 2004, she qualified as an advocate of the High Court of Kenya and worked with the International Commission of Jurists (ICJ) Kenya Chapter, for six years. In 2009, she joined Kituo cha Sheria as the Executive Director. She was nominated by the Nation Media Group's Business Daily as one of the Top 40, Under 40 Women excelling in their careers in 2010 and 2011. Under her leadership, Kituo cha Sheria was declared the Civil Society Organisation of the Year in 2010.

It was while working at the two institutions that Priscilla began to question the rising rate of human rights violation in the society. She realised the need to lobby for better laws that would protect all Kenyans. After the promulgation of the Constitution in August 2010, Priscilla decided to join politics. Consequently, in 2012, she resigned from her job to campaign for the County Woman's Representative seat in her home county, Nyeri.



PRISCILLA NYOKABI

NYERI

At first, Priscilla had considered running as an independent candidate but later opted to join TNA. Her choice of party was influenced by its manifesto and popularity in the county. The party was also fair to women aspirants and charged them half the nomination fees. Priscilla campaigned on a seven-point plan in Nyeri. These included: promoting value added agriculture in

the county, quality healthcare and water for all, quality education that is student and performance based, and support for the welfare of women and the youth. She also committed to uphold strong representation at the national level. The campaign period was very involving and she received a lot of support from women and the youth.

The MP did not experience physical

abuse but there were incidents where she was verbally abused, and as a precaution, she had to hire her own security team to avert situations that could escalate to violence. She won the nomination election to represent her county in the National Assembly.

Having made regular appearances before parliamentary committees while at Kituo cha Sheria and ICJ Kenya, Priscilla was not a stranger to the workings of Parliament. Incidentally, it had been through those meetings that she had identified the need to have strong laws that would push for and enhance development. She believes that solutions for governance are in Parliament and especially in the budget process.

During her term in the 11th Parliament, she plans to introduce the Small Claims Courts Bill that will seek to create courts for petty offences and claims so as to decongest the current courts. She will also introduce The Housing Bill that will push for regulation of housing as a right to all Kenyans. "Housing is mainly controlled by the private sector and there is need for government to be involved too, so that all Kenyans can have decent housing no matter their income," the Nyeri County MP argues. She is also actively involved in the Freedom of Information Bill. She commits to support government Bills, especially the Public Procurement

Women leaders also need to set the bar high by being transformative leaders who society can look up to.



Amendment Bill to ensure that 30 per cent of government tenders are given to women and the youth.

The organizing secretary of the Women Representative Caucus, which is championing for creation of a fund for social development applied by County MPs, Priscilla is also the vice chairperson of the Justice and Legal Affairs Committee and a member of the Budget and Appropriations Committee. She sits in the House Business Committee, whose mandate is to set the National Assembly's calendar.

Hon Priscilla Nyokabi says that although women MPs are fewer than their

male counterparts, women legislators work as a team in the National Assembly regardless of their party affiliation. She says that although the House Speaker and KEWOPA are very supportive of the women MPs, their biggest challenge is finding a balance on work and the public's high expectation. "Sometimes the media also chooses to portray us in bad light and will hardly report positive stories about our work," she argues. She appeals to the media to be objective since it plays a key role in informing Kenyans.

The MP appreciates various organisations that trained and equipped her to sharpen her leadership skills. These include the Centre for Rights Education (CREAW), WILDAF Kenya, Women Empowerment Link (WEL), UN-Women and AMWIK, which trained her on how to work with the media and write her own press releases.

She encourages women to vie for political positions and not to shy away because they are equal partners with men. Women leaders also need to set the bar high by being transformative leaders who society can look up to. The legislator is greatly inspired by Narc leader and presidential candidate in the 2013 election, Hon Martha Karua, and the late 2004 Nobel Peace Prize Laureate, Prof Wangari Maathai.



RACHEL AMESO

KAKAMEGA

When Rachael Ameso Amollo decided to run as the Member of Parliament for Kakamega County, her main aim was to promote the economic wellbeing of

women and give back to the community. Her passion in advocating for the rights of those who are less privileged made her endure the exhausting journey to capturing a seat to Parliament. Campaigning in all the 12 Constituencies in Kakamega County was no easy feat for the businesswoman.

Rachael attended Makongeni West

Primary School in Nairobi, before moving to Emalindi Secondary School in Khwisero Constituency, Kakamega County for her secondary education. Born some fifty years ago, she holds an MBA from Daystar University and a Bachelor's Degree in Entrepreneurship from the Kenya Methodist University. She believes in education as the foundation to a better future. It is no wonder that Rachael spends a lot of her time in her county promoting better educational opportunities for all.

She has invested a lot in providing free sanitary towels to young girls in schools, so that they can remain in school throughout. Most of the girls usually miss school because they cannot afford sanitary towels. "Interacting with the girls, most of them say that they are asked at home: 'Is it ugali that we will eat or those sanitary towels?' - a sad state of affairs, that leaves me with no option but to help the girls to pursue education with dignity," states the first time legislator. She is also supporting the education of many young people in secondary schools, two of them in Alliance and Lenana Boys' Schools. She also visits different schools to give learners motivational talks. "We need to invest in young people as they are our future leaders," she states.

According to the MP, Kakamega County has limited employment opportunities as it does not have any manufacturing industries, and the agricultural land is fast diminishing. For that reason, she has made it a point to educate women and the youth on how to tap into the Youth Enterprise Fund and the Uwezo Fund, to start income generating activities that will

make them self-reliant. She notes that “it is not enough to provide fish, but people need to be taught how to hook the fish. With support from the government and proper planning by us leaders, the county will have a huge turnaround that will cause it to develop further.”

Having familiarised herself with the county during the campaign and after her election in 2013, Rachael acknowledges that there are many challenges that need to be addressed for the development of her county. “It is like a drop in the ocean, it feels like nothing has been done. Kakamega is one of the most highly populated regions in the country with very high levels of poverty, but you still have to do your best in such circumstances,” she states, with hope. She believes that it is her duty as a leader to help improve the lives of citizens. “It is like being a mother, where it is your responsibility to feed your children. Whatever the size of the bread, you have to share it, and to some extent you have to give it all to the children even when you lack,” she states.

Hon Ameso says that Kakamega needs leaders who have a heart for the people; vibrant leaders who will inject fresh ideas that will propel the county forward. Meeting the demands of the residents has not been an easy task and she says that she has to come up with new ways to do what she promised them. Rachael relies heavily on 15 years of work experience and business success in her county work. She is currently helping farmers in every constituency to develop green houses to enhance food security. “You have to be prepared, as other people will want you

to do so much and at times you have limited resources,” she states.

On her campaign trail, Rachael got support from the youth, men and women. She did not receive any financial support from her party or any sponsor but used her savings to campaign for the seat. The ODM Party legislator chose the CORD coalition based on its manifesto, which gives women an opportunity to serve. “Women are the best managers; they know what they are doing. They think of their children, their name and their reputation and they start to manage straight from their houses,” she shares.

The single mother and grandmother says that she relates well with colleagues in Parliament. Parliament being home to different people from different cultures and backgrounds has made Rachael better able to understand and appreciate diversity. She gets her inspiration from reading the Bible, praying and dreaming big.

The member of KEWOPA is grateful for the association’s support and assistance since joining Parliament. She believes that KEWOPA can do more than capacity building for members through activities such as helping women MPs identify ways to bring development to their counties. She also believes that KEWOPA’s activities should extend beyond the confines of parliamentary membership but also to other women aspiring for political positions “This will help us have more women elected into the next Parliament. I believe there is still more to be done to get women to decision making positions, more so in elective

positions. This does not have to wait for the election year, but should start years in advance, so that more women are mentored to vie for elective positions,” she advises.

Rachael sits in the House Committee on Delegated Legislation whose mandate is to examine statutory instruments submitted to the National Assembly; the Energy, Communication and Information Committee; and the Committee on Selection, whose mandate is to nominate MPs to sit in committees. Rachael is an active contributor to debates in Parliament.

It is not enough to provide fish, but people need to be taught how to hook the fish. With support from the government and proper planning by us leaders, the county will have a huge turnaround that will cause it to develop further.

She came into the political limelight after the 2007 General Election. The feisty Nairobi County Women Representative boisterously approached House debates and exhibited great courage in the predominantly male Parliament. Today, Rachel Shebesh is one of the many outspoken women MPs competing with her male colleagues on an equal footing during debate in the National Assembly. She is notable for her ability to marshal her colleagues in the Jubilee Coalition to support Motions deemed important by the government.

The daughter of former Nairobi mayor, Shebesh was born in 1971 in Nairobi. "When you grow up with a leader as your father, it is easy to say that leadership is in the blood," she notes. However, Rachel has shed blood, sweat and tears to be successful.

Following her father's long career as a civic representative inspired Rachel into joining politics. She was particularly struck by how easily he interacted with and tried to work with everybody. "My father was so good at networking and speaking fiercely against the social evils in the society that all I want to do is to carry his legend forward," she discloses.

In 2007, ODM nominated the outspoken politician into Parliament. It was during that term that she emerged as an organiser, an outspoken defender of women's rights, and an observant member of the House. "I don't fear, I'm not intimidated and I love challenges. I



RACHEL SHEBESH
NAIROBI

thrive on anything that looks difficult to do," says the MP.

When in 2010 the Constitution created the position of County Women Representative, Rachel set her eyes on the Nairobi seat. She joined TNA, and by extension, the Jubilee Coalition. "I am excited about the opportunities available for women, especially those provided

by the new Constitution," she says. She is happy that women have added their voices to the country's development agenda, and that what remains is to seek their representation in all spheres of the country's leadership.

The Constitution, adds the MP, has made it easier for women who cannot boast of any "connections" to make a mark

in politics and to represent their people effectively. “The current Constitution has offered exciting opportunities for women in top positions in the county’s leadership, such as senator, governor, deputy governor, member of parliament and women representative,” she adds. “Now one does not need tonnes of money, a husband or a name to compete for political leadership,” she states.

From her experience in Parliament, Rachel has noticed that it is the women who bring Bills and ideas that they know make a difference in the lives of fellow women, such as the Bill criminalising female genital mutilation, and the now Children’s Act. “If you look at the Bills brought to Parliament by women, they deal with bread-and-butter issues that affect the mwananchi. That’s why we encourage more women to vie for parliamentary seats,” she says.

Rachel is a member of the Speaker’s Panel, the House Business Committee, the Procedures and House Rules Committee, and the Labour and Social Welfare Committee. She was also nominated by TNA for a possible second term at the Pan African Parliament, alongside two senators and two of her national assembly colleagues.

If you look at the Bills brought to Parliament by women, they deal with bread-and-butter issues that affect the mwananchi.



The legislator is grateful to the various non-government organisations, membership associations such as AMWIK, and civil society organisations, for training women and building their capacity prior to the campaigns for the 2013 election. In her opinion, “the efforts in preparing women to produce results will definitely help in coming closer to the one third women representation in the next Parliament. Kenya will soon acknowledge that a woman’s leadership is about integrity and ethics,” she affirms. The MP however points out that women

aspirants need more training on strategic planning and communication to enable them to penetrate party structures. There is hope and time, she says, for women to achieve this.

Hon Rachel Shebesh has served in various other national, regional and continental capacities. In 2009, she was the UN Champion for Disaster and Risk Reduction in Africa. Her main role was to promote synergy between disaster risk reduction and climate calamities. She has also served in other roles, including as chairperson of the African Parliamentarian Initiative for Climate Risk Reduction, member of the Pan African Parliament, and rapporteur in the Pan African Parliament’s Committee on gender, family, youth and people with disabilities. She was vice-chairperson of the African Parliamentarian’s Network against Corruption, and has served as the assistant treasurer of KEWOPA.

A fashion designer by training, Rachel is a mother of three and says that her husband is her greatest supporter. In an interview with Citizen Television, she said that he is often the first to send her a text message when he feels that she has made a good contribution in Parliament. The couple recently become grandparents.

Very few people wake up every morning to do what they like best and get paid for it. And when they come back home, they are gratified that they enjoyed their day - tired as they may be. Hon Regina Changorok, a former primary school teacher and now West Pokot County Member of Parliament is one such person. The 52-year-old legislator says that all her social and professional engagements have been a continuation of what she likes best: fighting to protect the interests of the girl-child and the Pokot woman.

The MP interest in women's issues and leadership dates back to when she was subjected to FGM at a tender age. Regina's father had died long before she joined primary school, and the MP believes he probably would have given her mother the support she needed to ward off the elderly women who circumcised Regina against her will. "It was traumatising! I felt abused and violated and as I grew up I vowed to deliver Pokot women from such maltreatment," the sixth born in a family of eight recalls. Regina did not know where her ambition would land her, but was convinced that one day she would be the saviour of the voiceless Pokot woman.

Joining Mosoriot Teachers' Training College after graduating from Nasokol High School was the best decision for Regina, as being a teacher would give her an authoritative platform to bond with and speak on behalf of women and girls. Today Regina smiles at her political



REGINA CHANGOROK

WEST POKOT

achievement convinced that it is a result of her earlier work. Her leadership skills became evident when she served as prefect and head-girl in school. "At home, my mother could not make any family decision without consulting me, never mind that I had elder brothers," she states.

Jumping from a primary school

classroom into Parliament is not a walk in the park.

Regina didn't enjoy the process of learning how to "become" an MP. The new environment that is completely different from her school and classroom often made her feel out of place. She feared making mistakes, even as she quickly learned how to ask a question or address the Speaker.

"Every day is a learning day and I'm still learning a lot in Parliament," she adds. Regina's mission to pronounce the liberty of the Pokot woman and witness educated girls in her community gives her strength to soldier on daily.

Regina finds life in Parliament exciting, with everyone willing to listen and help. "Disagreeing with someone in Parliament is nothing personal and for a first timer like me, it enhances my skill for future Parliamentary endeavours," she notes. Most of the time, the MP opts to remain silent in Parliament, as she believes that her good work will speak for her. "I find talking a lot consuming a lot of my time that I would otherwise be using to serve my community!" she chuckles. With great aspirations for the 2017 election, Regina is unwavering in her effort to complete projects that she has started in West Pokot County. She owes a lot to organisations such as KEWOPA and Women Regional Assembly that fully prepared her for her new life in Parliament. "To women aspirants, my message is simple: don't let your male counterparts underrate you," she advises.

The wife and mother of four, describes the state of women and girls in her community as "marital colonialism", adding that her greatest dream was to become a lawyer to save the Pokot women from this injustice. With so many family responsibilities facing her however, she opted to train as a teacher. Regina is also studying at the Nairobi University for a Diploma in Psychological Counseling.

When she told her husband, a former area chief, of her ambition to become the

West Pokot County MP, he didn't take her seriously. "He was later to be the man who spoke about women's leadership vocally in our local church and in most of my campaign meetings," she acknowledges, with a chuckle, that she owes most of her achievement to him.

Regina opted to vie on a URP ticket, a party she refers to as "the better option", because it also vouched for her to join the Parliamentary Service Commission. She was attracted to the URP slogan "Kusema na Kutenda" because she believes in action. In her manifesto she had promised to promote girl-child education and already she has sponsored five female students to school. She had also promised to empower Pokot women to own property, which can support the entire family. She consequently holds meetings with women in her county to empower them to start small projects that can reduce poverty.

A networker by nature, Regina interacted a lot with key male and female voters in her county during the campaign. "It is taboo for a woman to speak before men, but I had to brave it if I was going to help stamp out irresponsible cultural

behaviour in my community," she explains. Today she has earned a lot of respect within the community and relates well with the people, having been born and brought up in the county. "I have lived in the village all my life. I commuted daily from my village home to Nasokol Primary School till I got elected Member of the County Assembly," she adds.

The county MP enjoys cordial relations her challengers in the election, adding that they learnt a lot from each other during the campaign and after the election. Though she won with a margin of more than 20,000 votes, Regina believes the work she does will be of more value at the end of the day than the number of votes she got. She is working hard to deliver her services satisfactorily. "I am already paying school fees for some students in the county and have helped several women groups in their projects," she says.

There was no heckling or disruptions during Regina's campaign because she walked with authority, she says and attributes it to her teaching career. She says teaching earned her respect long before she got into politics. "If anyone wanted to say anything negative about my team or myself, they said it in whispers," she adds.

The MP understands the value of empowering both men and women, one of the many skills she learned from her widowed mother of eight. "It is true that by empowering a woman, the whole family and society is empowered. However, it is my obligation as a leader to serve men and women equally, as they all supported me during my campaign," she concludes.

To women aspirants, my message is simple: don't let your male counterparts underrate you.



She had never dreamt of becoming a political leader until an incident propelled her to “seek a higher level” from which she could solve problems of widows, in particular.

In 2006, Dr Reginalda Wanyonyi met her son’s friend who appeared to need assistance. On further investigation, she learned that indeed not just the youth needed assistance, but that his mother, a widow, lived in pathetic conditions. Her first meeting with the widow was rather bizarre, but eye opening. “She was on the grave of her late husband, crying and listing the problems she was facing after his death. As I listened to her, I felt like she was talking to me and not to her late husband. I was disturbed,” recalls the MP.

The first person Reginalda thought of approaching to assist the widow, was the area MP. She called him several times and booked many appointments but never got to meet him. “It hit me that if I could not get to him despite my education and better off status in society, what about the weak and needy like the widow I was trying to intercede for?” she poses. She decided to survey the state of other widows in her area and help them find solutions. What she discovered impelled her to take immediate action. “Most of the widows woke up each morning with red, swollen eyes, from crying throughout the night... I sought to become a voice for them,” she narrates.

The assertive legislator confesses that she didn’t consider joining politics as a way of assisting the widows, until her husband suggested it. “He told me to vie for a parliamentary seat, and take up the burden that was obviously mine,” she laughs. That is how Reginalda vied for



REGINALDA WANYONYI
BUNGOMA

the Kimilili Constituency parliamentary seat in 2007. “Since independence, no woman from my area had been elected or nominated into Parliament, I was hoping to be the first,” she asserts.

Campaigning for the constituency seat opened her eyes to political challenges she had never imagined, the greatest of them being the deep cultural bias against women in leadership. Because of her authoritative nature, she was accused

of disrespect by contesting against male “pillars” of the community. Reginalda vied from the little known People’s Party of Kenya, having decamped from Ford Kenya. “AMWIK had encouraged us to vie on whatever party available, so long as we knew what we had to offer the electorate,” she recalls. Reginalda emerged fifth out of 13 contestants.

Reginalda started projects in her area even after losing the 2007 election. She

encouraged women to start small savings schemes and helped them to start poultry and goat farming, towards economic stability. The savings project has since evolved into the Bungoma County Women's SACCO that has savings of Kshs10 million, a lot of it having been rolled back into development projects. "As we speak, there are smaller groups saving to buy buses and vans to enter the transport market," she discloses.

Nomination to vie on the Ford Kenya Party ticket was her first challenge. Determined to contest, she decamped to the New Ford Kenya Party, but the challenges were still numerous. "Some men ganged up against me, and heavily financed my opponents," she recalls. The mother of five had to use family resources for the campaign and is glad she won. She endured verbal abuse and intimidation, and in the end, "my kids suffered most from the insults thrown my way," she shares.

A natural leader, Reginalda has demonstrated her abilities in managing her family and in her career. Married in an extended family, she helped her husband to bring up his orphaned younger siblings, carefully juggling her duties as a wife and mother with her teaching role at Moi University. After secondary school education at Lugulu Girls' High School, the born-again MP attained a Bachelor's Degree in Education (Economics) from Kenyatta University. She taught briefly at her former high school before joining Moi University as an administrator. While on staff, Reginalda pursued Master's and PhD degrees in Environmental Studies. She was a lecturer and integrity assurance officer at the university, before joining politics.

Elective leadership was not new to her though, as she had successfully vied for and

served as the deputy secretary general of University Academic Staff Union (UASU), at Moi University. "The university union elections were tough, but not comparable to constituency or county level elections," she points out. She has served in various boards, including the National Governing Council of NEPAD's African Peer Review Mechanism; the Jomo Kenyatta Foundation; the Inter Christian Fellowships' Evangelical Mission (IcFEM); and many secondary and higher learning institutions.

As the chairperson of the fast growing Bungoma County Women's SACCO, Reginalda has a big vision. She wants each woman in the county to know the power of saving "that any income can be saved" for a better future. She is working with various organisations to build the women's capacities and increase their resources through poultry, dairy goat and cattle farming. "We're hoping to have a dairy plant soon. I want the women to be economically independent," she declares. Because of rampant violence against women and girls, the MP is also sensitising parents and the community on the need to respect this group of people.

For the youth, she continues to distribute textbooks to under-resourced secondary schools, as "schools that have received the books have recorded better grades in exams," she observes. To give girls dignity, Reginalda distributes sanitary towels, and is working towards establishing a girls' rescue centre to accommodate casualties of early pregnancies, particularly from the Mount Elgon area. With support of the county government, the legislator established Mbakalo Girls' Secondary School in the county.

Hon Reginalda Wanyonyi is cautious about disclosing her plans for 2017,

Articulate issues beyond political parties. Drop the ego or negative attitude, and you'll be accepted.



because "choices change, but I'm comfortable representing women. It's not an inferior position," she states. Her vision covers the country, as she plans to be an effective legislator who is able to deliver in her oversight role, to eradicate poverty, insecurity and corruption, and to promote harmonious living and cohesion between all the people of Kenya.

Indian nationalist, the late Mahatma Gandhi, is her role model. "He was available for the common man. We need leaders like Gandhi who celebrated humanity and diversity," she says. Inspired by the boldness of Narc Kenya leader, Hon Martha Karua, and the motherliness of Senator Beth Mugo, the legislator believes that the Kenyan women politicians have living examples to emulate. The MP who serves in the Budgetary as well as the Environment, Water and Natural Resources Committees, is also an executive committee member of KEWOPA.

"Be bold. Don't fear," are the MP's words of encouragement to female political aspirants. She adds that political leadership is not for the faint hearted, but is a call to plunge with hope. "Articulate issues beyond political parties. Drop the ego or negative attitude, and you'll be accepted," she advises. She looks forward to the time when Parliament will have a 50/50 gender balance.



ROSE MITARU

EMBU

Hon Rose Mitaru's composed demeanour projects her as a respectable leader, one who seems keen on the politics of issues and not mere brickbats for publicity. Perhaps it is because she is a counselling psychologist.

Born in Runyenjes, Embu County, and married in Mbeere, Rose attended Kathanjuri Primary and later Embu Girls' (today Kangaru Girls') schools. She had a keen interest in sports and served as the games captain in both primary and secondary school, excelling in different athletic sports, particularly the 1,500 metres race. "I also played hockey. I loved the discipline and the resilience that I derived from sports," she says.

In 1979, Rose joined the University of Saskatchewan in Canada, from where she graduated with a degree in Sociology. She later pursued a higher national diploma in psychological counselling at the University of Nairobi. In 1985, she landed her first job as a civil servant in the Ministry of Culture and Social Services, later becoming a deputy director at the Family Life Programme. She joined the National Council of Churches of Kenya (NCCCK) as a programme officer in an advocacy programme for the youth, women and other vulnerable groups, in 1997. "I was working at Life Skills Promoters when I decided to resign and venture into politics. I had worked with many groups and was confident about succeeding," she says. "I have worked with the church for many years. I have learnt to listen and help people," she states.

Currently pursuing a Master's degree in Development Studies at St Paul's University, Rose says: "I resigned in 2011 to concentrate on my studies as I laid the foundation for my political campaign." That year, when she made the decision to vie for the seat of Embu County Women Representative, Rose knew that it would not be smooth sailing.

Brought up in the Christian faith, Rose is a very spiritual woman, who is steadfast in her faith. During the campaigns for the 2013 election, some of her opponents used this against her, describing her as too conservative. "I never give people bribes. I do not believe in hand outs," she says of the first criticism she faced. "My opponents gave people money. I did not. My faith would not allow it."

The party nominations were gruelling. Unlike many places in the Mt Kenya region where bagging The National Alliance (TNA) was almost a guarantee of a win, it was different in Embu County. The Alliance Party of Kenya (APK) had a strong presence, and in fact, an APK candidate won the Senate seat. Rose sailed through and was nominated by TNA. "After the nomination, the real campaign began," she explains. In the race for the nomination of Embu County Women Representative, she beat 15 rivals, including the APK candidate, her closest challenger, with more than 25,000 votes. "Even with the usual challenge of matching the financial muscle of the opponents, my policies prevailed," says the MP.

Rose is keen to remain true to the promises she made during her campaign. "As a county representative, I want to sensitise people about the opportunities in Embu. We have huge unexploited resources. Leadership will help unlock these," she notes. The rampant unemployment among the youth worries her and she wants to ensure a good number of them undergo training

on income generating activities. "This will enable them to access opportunities availed by the government." She further notes that as County MP, her work is not just about women and children. "In fact, I fear for the boy child. He is being neglected by all the systems. All the focus is on the girl child. It is not healthy for society."

There is the business of making laws, committee meetings to attend, and the actual representation of the people in the House. It is a lot of work.

The legislator does not shy away from pointing out the divisions perpetrated in the county between the Mbeere and Embu people by selfish leaders. "I want members of both communities to have a sense of belonging, and feel that they fully own Embu," she says.

Rose reveals that the public's perception of differences between politicians from different parties is an act of choreography. "I was surprised that ODM and TNA MPs mingle easily with each other, have tea and talk a lot among themselves without the issue of parties cropping up," she notes. She has also learnt that MPs work hard despite the perception by the public that there isn't much to do. "There is the business of making laws, committee meetings to attend, and the actual representation of the people in the House. It is a lot of work," she says.

In the National Assembly, the MP sits in the Constitution Implementation Oversight Committee and the Education, Research and Technology Committee. She is married and is the mother of four grown children who have blessed her with two grandchildren.

She has always had a dream that she wanted to turn into reality. As a courageous young girl who liked music, it was during one of her frequent visits to State House to entertain Kenya's founding father Mzee Jomo Kenyatta that Rose Mumo said to herself: "I will work hard and become an important person in society so that school children can also sing for me." The glamour, pomp and colour at such ceremonies must have fascinated the MP's imagination as a little girl, and most importantly, her ambition for national leadership.

The dream came true for Rose, catapulting her to the position of Women's Representative for Makueni County in the 11th Parliament. She attended school and college in Mombasa where she enjoyed watching her father exercise his authority as a chief. After college, she returned to her rural home in Kati, to serve the community. She worked as a social worker with Action Aid Kenya for 19 years, interacting with communities in Kitui, Mutomo, Isiolo, Wamba, Maralal and the larger Samburu. The experience, she says, enabled her to appreciate blending the diverse and unique cultures that proudly make Kenya.

Her ability to positively transform lives of the people in the various communities motivated Rose to pursue short professional courses to improve her skills. She took a course to understand better the laws and rights that most Kenyans, especially in the rural and marginalised areas are oblivious to. At one point during her work, she encountered families that had been evicted from their homes. This changed Rose's



ROSE MUSEDO
MAKUENI

perspective. "I experienced first hand the suffering of those people. Children were dying due to the harsh living conditions and the families did not have food, water and shelter. The situation was disturbing," she says.

In her quest to help the evicted families, she asked herself: "What can I do to be the voice of the people? How can I be of help to innocent people suffering

because of failing systems?" Rose's soul-searching marked a turning point in her life. Her involvement with the community, especially women and the youth, saw her vie for the Maendeleo Ya Wanawake Organization chairperson's seat in Mokena. She got overwhelming support, with some members urging her to vie for the national seats. Rose concentrated on community building. "I interacted with the community

so much that we became one big family. I sacrificed a lot of my time and resources to improve the lives of the people I was serving. After some years of service, I was appointed the director of the Children and Women Department in the Seventh Day Adventist Church in my area," she says.

By 2010, Rose had become a household name in Ukambani, as her work spoke for itself. She was a women's rights advocate and her paralegal knowledge helped her deal with issues of gender-based violence. She worked with the community and the administration to seek justice for the oppressed, till a misfortune struck in 2007. Rose was involved in a tragic road accident that left her with a broken leg. After the experience, she had to learn how to walk using a crutch and even though she was physically injured, Rose's spirit and lively nature overshadowed her bad experience. "Today, I thank God because all through the experience, He gave me the strength to continue serving the people and we achieved a lot as a team, despite the setback," she says enthusiastically. "In 2011, I was preparing to travel to India for an operation on the injured leg and as is the local tradition, family, friends and the community gathered to pray for my quick recovery. There were over 600 people at my home and it was during the occasion that they requested me to be their County Women Representative," says Rose.

The request came as a surprise and she needed some time to consult her husband, daughter and above all, seek God's intervention. Having worked with the community, she did not take their request lightly even though she felt it was unexpected. "My hesitation sold me out. I

was feeling incapacitated because of my leg but they quickly intervened and said I did not have to campaign, as they would elect me. All they needed was for me to accept to vie for the seat," she adds. Rose attributes her amazing support to her diligence and commitment to serving the people.

With the approval of her husband and daughter, the MP registered with the Wiper Democratic Movement Party in December 2012, and was overwhelmingly elected during the nomination. My political rivals however capitalised on my misfortune to campaign against me". Some of them had a lot of money but that did not intimidate her. "I only spent around Ksh2 million to traverse the county and sell my agenda while some of my opponents spent almost Sh30 million to lure the voters to elect them," says Rose. "I knew my track record spoke volumes. I did not focus on the dirty politics but instead, pledged to work with Makueni people to strengthen family values," she adds. Rose also pledged to continue empowering women, helping to create wealth, promoting agriculture through irrigation and livestock keeping. She is confident that at the end of her term in Parliament, when evaluated on her achievements, she will have performed well. "I know that I will do it through God's will," she says.

Hon Rose Mumo regards Parliament as a whole new experience that she is enjoying. "From my background working with an NGO, the conditions in which I performed my tasks were organised, with a common goal. In church where I have served for many years, we work towards a common goal and the reference book is the Bible. But in Parliament, it is every man or woman

I knew my track record spoke volumes. I did not focus on the dirty politics but instead, pledged to work with Makueni people to strengthen family values.



for himself or herself, and God for us all!" laughs Rose. "At first, I thought MPs were noisemakers. But I later learnt that was the only way to put across your point. I appreciate the good brains representing the electorate in Parliament," she adds.

The legislator is a member of the Labour and Social Welfare Committee as well as the Catering and Health Club Committee. Married for 30 years and a proud mother of one, Rose is grateful for the candidness and unwavering support her family has accorded her. She thanks God for them because they have stood by her throughout and have shared joyous moments and victories with her. The MP adds that her role models are former Kibwezi MP, Agnes Ndeti and Lands Cabinet Secretary, Charity Ngilu, for their boldness, outspoken and receptive nature. Hon Nyiva Mwendwa, whose dedication to changing women's lives has borne fruits in the region, is also her hero. The MP, who believes in women's potential says that women are a power-house, adding: "They only need to be provoked to release their potential."



ROSE NYAMUNGA

KISUMU

Hon Rose Ogendo-Nyamunga was interested in politics as early as 1992, while a high school student at Ngiya Girls' High School. The niece of the late Robert Ouko, Rose followed political developments of

the 1990s from family discussions and knew where her fate was. "I followed political activists like James Orendo and Paul Muite, as I had an interest in people's rights and justice. Proper treatment of all people and poverty eradication were close to my heart," she shares.

Rose was born and raised in Ahero, in a monogamous Christian family of 12

children where honesty, respect and self-esteem were treasured values that shaped her life. "My father was a businessman who stood for economic empowerment of women. This made him an opinion leader who influenced local political leadership," she recalls.

The other influence on Hon Nyamunga's leadership abilities were the responsibilities her parents laid upon her shoulders. "I came to appreciate much later when I understood why I was being given the responsibilities. I believe my parents had seen that I could take on multiple task and still be thorough in everything that I did, I never liked short-cuts," she explains. She also served in various leadership positions at primary school, and was a head girl at Ngiya Girls' High School.

Before joining politics, Rose was in business. She had previously been formally employed for six years. "I am a hands-on person and I was not getting enough challenge in an office job, so I decided to engage in business," she expounds. The graduate of Commerce (Accounting and Finance), as well as a degree in Law (LLB) from the University of Nairobi, also has a CPA (K), and an MBA in Finance and Strategic Planning. She is currently pursuing a master's degree at the International School of Leadership. A micro-finance, business and economic empowerment consultant, she also has businesses in the hotel industry, real estate, rice growing and milling, general trading, owns a school in Nairobi, and has business interests in Juba, South Sudan.

Married to Eng Eric Opon Nyamunga, former Nyando MP, Rose was actively involved in her husband's campaigns and gained experience in developing a solid manifesto and campaign structure. She received overwhelming support because of her track record of good performance. "If people have seen that you can manage your home and you have proven to be a performer, it becomes easy to sell your manifesto to them," states the proud mother of five children. "I believe that the family is an important place to gauge one's leadership abilities." An ODM delegate, Hon Nyamunga chooses to concentrate on her work and deliver to the people of Kisumu County, as opposed to wider party activities, to avoid spreading her political engagements too thin. She is yet to decide on her next political move.

Campaigns for the Kisumu County seat were peaceful and uneventful, she says, and acknowledges the support she received from AMWIK, FIDA and other women NGOs that held forums to prepare women aspirants for the election. However, she wishes that the trainings were a continuous process instead of concentrating around the campaign period when the aspirants are busy on the campaign trail. "My campaign was fairly good and since it was a women's race, there was no violence. I traversed the county sensitising the people on my manifesto," she explains. She won the race by over 96 per cent votes. "The voters have shown great confidence in my leadership, and this keeps me on my toes to deliver on my promises to them." In her manifesto, Rose promised economic

You must have a manifesto that people can relate with in your personal life, dreams and achievements; and set a personal example of success.

empowerment for the youth and women, adult education for women, mentorship for girls and sports opportunities in the county. "For a first timer in politics, I have made good progress in laying the structures, as I await allocated funds to roll out my programmes," she confides.

Rose advises women aspiring for political leadership to prepare their strategy thoroughly and plan for the necessary resources for mobilising support. "You must have a manifesto that people can relate with in your personal life, dreams and achievements; and set a personal example of success," she emphasises.

Since her election, Rose has established

a community SACCO for affordable access to credit in partnership with Kenya Commercial Bank. "I feel sad when 70 per cent of the food is outsourced from other counties. If we improved our livelihoods then we would be able to generate wealth and eradicate extreme poverty," she notes. She has helped women's groups in the county to set up hatcheries for poultry farming, and is laying ground for dairy farming. She has also initiated training on drip irrigation for horticulture along major rivers in the county.

In retrospect, Rose feels that induction on Parliamentary procedures should be more rigorous. Apart from the formal orientation, she had to read a lot to familiarise herself with the House procedures. An active member of the Finance Committee, and the East Africa Committee, Hon Nyamunga plans to table Bills in Parliament before her first five years in the House elapse.

"We have a political caucus in Kisumu that is meant to mentor women for the next election. We are working with KEWOPA to provide capacity building to members of the caucus," says the MP who believes in political mentorship. "It is no longer wise to rely on a husband to provide for all the family needs, you should be a partner and not a dependant," she cautions. "I am working with various people to empower women and the youth in my county. I also mentor young children in Sunday school and have identified some of them for political leadership, because I believe it is a step by step process."



ROSELINDA SOIPAN

NAROK

They say that the apple does not fall far from the tree, and Roselinda Soipan's story asserts that. The daughter of former Narok South MP, Samson Ole Tuya, Roselinda's determination has led her to the success she is today. Through

hard work, resilience and diligence, the married mother of one is the women's representative for Narok County. "I have been privileged and have had opportunities that are not easily accessible to women in my Maasai community," she says.

Roselinda grew up in an environment that was marginalised, where culture was

an impediment to progress in today's society. "I was fortunate to go to school although I grew up in a rural background. My exposure to education inspired me to work hard and make a lasting difference in my community. With education I saw opportunities and open doors," she says. Her mother did not have the privilege to go to school and her father was the only one, out of 15 siblings, who had gone to school. He later became a teacher before joining politics and becoming an MP. "My parents always pushed me to go to school and excel. I did not disappoint them and went ahead to graduate in law from the University of Nairobi in 2002. A year later, I qualified to be an advocate of the High Court of Kenya," says the MP.

In June 2010 she received her Masters of Law (LLM) in International Sustainable Development from the University of Washington, USA. She has worked in different capacities for various government and civil society organisations, including the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), Kituo cha Sheria and the former Ministry of Justice and Constitutional Affairs, as a United Nations Volunteer Specialist.

Roselinda has always had an interest in politics. "I wanted to join politics many years ago but I needed some time to prepare for it. I previously worked closely with people at grassroots level and therefore joining politics came naturally," she discloses. Vying for a parliamentary seat was going to give her a platform to do more for women. "When I finally decided to join politics I did not have anyone to guide me, it was an impromptu decision like jumping

at the deep end of a swimming pool," she explains. The MP decided to vie for a seat two months to the 2013 election. "I did not receive training or support from the NGOs that were empowering women candidates," she states.

Vying on her party of choice, the URP, was a given because of its agenda and popularity in the region. The MP's first hurdle was the nomination process, which she describes as "very competitive. Before the nominations, some of my opponents spread malicious rumours that I had pulled out of the race. I had to hurriedly convene a press conference and give numerous interviews refuting those claims," she says. She was not married at the time of the campaigns, causing her opponents to subject her to ridicule, "that I was not ready to be a leader because I was inexperienced in family matters," she relates. They down played her ambitions, referring to her as a 'small girl with no sense of direction'. "I didn't experience any form of physical violence but I faced horrid verbal abuse," she says, adding, "Surprisingly the abuse mostly came from women." In the midst of the challenges, Roselinda chose not to focus on the propaganda but resolved to clinch the seat.

Like other political aspirants there was a lot of pressure on her to dole out money during the campaigns. "I became a target for hand-outs and fundraisings, yet I did not have enough money. I didn't relent," she says. Her youthful following aggressively mobilised people from all backgrounds and got support across the board. "When the elections came, I won

with a landslide, thanks to the support of the people of Narok, especially the youth who came out in large numbers," she says with appreciation.

Hon Roselinda Soipan is very active and lively in Parliament. She chairs the Parliamentary Implementation Committee, which is tasked with ensuring that the executive implements the Bills that are passed in Parliament. Roselinda says that key among the Motions she will present in Parliament is one on enhancing dispute resolution mechanisms. "Throughout the country, most land and family disputes are resolved locally. We need a legal framework that can guide such noble efforts," she explains. "These mechanisms must conform to written laws, keeping in mind that most cultural practices in Kenya are not gender sensitive." She is working very closely with KEWOPA in drafting the Motion, and lauds the association for empowering women MPs. "They have facilitated meetings and workshops to train MPs on how they can make contributions on the floor of the House in a meaningful way," she comments.

Acknowledging that Kenya has come a long way in realising affirmative action, Roselinda says that while the country has more women MPs than before, there are unhealthy 'supremacy battles' from various sectors eating away at what should be a celebration. These battles hinge on the roles of women's representatives vis a vis women MPs representing constituencies. "It doesn't go well with me because it is imperative that we speak in one voice," she laments. "We have an important role to play whether as elected or nominated

MPs, and the journey of achieving the two-third gender rule in Kenya is still on course."

The parliamentarian believes that in the run up to the next election, civic education will be needed to let all Kenyans know and understand the role of women leaders in Parliament under the new Constitution. "Many women candidates lost out on senatorial and gubernatorial seats because of perceptions that women could only be elected as women representatives. We should recognise that while we are not where we used to be, we are still not where we should be. We have a long way to go as women," she asserts.

Many women candidates lost out on senatorial and gubernatorial seats because of perceptions that women could only be elected as women representatives. We should recognise that while we are not where we used to be, we are still not where we should be.





SABINA CHEGE

MURANG'A

When the opportunity to represent her people presented itself, Sabina Chege did not hesitate to resign from a comfortable job at the Kenya Broadcasting

Corporation (KBC) to grab it. The KBC's Coro FM Breakfast Show presenter, and AMWIK member, was well known to her constituents, although many knew her voice long before they ever saw her face.

Born in Kinyona Village in Kigumo, Central Kenya, Sabina consistently found herself leading her peers. While at Mugoiri Girls' High School, she was

nominated entertainment prefect. She also served as the chairlady of the youth group at her local church.

A woman of many talents, Sabina enrolled at the Kenya National Theatre where she did some acting. Soon after her debut at the KNT, she was selected to play the role of Rehema in a popular Swahili soap opera called Tausi, which was broadcast on KBC.

Sabina has a Bachelor's degree in Education and a Master's degree in Communication, both from the University of Nairobi. She started her communication work at Kameme FM as an intern, and was soon promoted to marketing manager. She also worked with the World Space Africa Satellite Radio as a business development manager, before joining KBC as the Controller of Radio Commercial Services and Coro FM Breakfast Show presenter, in 2007.

Working in the mass media gave Sabina the opportunity to interact with people from all walks of life. As a radio presenter, she spoke into the ears of thousands, if not millions, of people and actually got the opportunity to meet some of them. "The transition to politics was therefore not difficult," she says. "I addressed developmental and women's issues on my radio programmes, and realised that I could represent the people at national level and be able to address their concerns from a higher platform - the Parliament," she says of her motivation to join politics.

Speaking to the people directly made Sabina realise how much could be achieved through dialogue. "I got inspired after attending a peace

initiative in Maela, Naivasha, organised by AMWIK. This was meant to enable the association's members to witness the impact of their work in the lives of the Maasai and Kikuyu communities in the area after the post-election violence, through the radio listening programmes," she recalls. Witnessing the two communities come together and vow not to attack each other again was to Sabina, a great accomplishment. "It is so satisfying to make a difference in people's lives. Transforming people is my passion," she reflects.

As the County MP for Murang'a, Sabina represents women, children and people living with disability from seven constituencies. She is happy not to be limited to one constituency. It wasn't easy for Sabina as she started political life and the travails that come with politics, like voters asking for money after campaigns. "Seeking approval from the male elders was a big challenge. To get support from the community elders before launching a campaign strategy is an uphill task. I stood my ground and went on with campaigns," she says.

Apart from the bad-mouthing that comes with campaigns, she also struggled with basics, such as financing the production of campaign posters, t-shirts, logistics, as well as paying allowances to campaigners. Her friends often pulled

her out of such tough spots. Most of them were artistes whose careers she had helped grow by playing their music on her show at Coro FM.

The God-fearing youthful politician adds: "Prayers have been my biggest support. Without prayers I don't think I would have come this far. I have humbled myself before God and have always asked Him for guidance. It is not easy to vie for a leadership position if you are a woman." She has her eyes set on the objectives she set before entering Parliament.

In the National Assembly, Hon Sabina Chege was elected the chairperson of the Education, Science and Technology Committee. She was a natural choice for the Joint Committee on Parliamentary Broadcasting and Library and is also a member of the Housekeeping Committee on Liaison.

In Murang'a, she continues to use the Sabina Wanjiru Chege Foundation

to help educate needy children. She had before the elections helped educate more than 40 students from Murang'a. "I am determined to help educate children from needy families who cannot afford school fees. I have started a mentorship programme in primary and high schools in the county to mentor young people on the importance of working hard and believing in their abilities," she says.

Her first priority being to empower women, the youth and people living with disability, the legislator says: "My agenda for women is to build their capacity in entrepreneurial skills and assist them to access grants and create a platform where they can invest to support their children." She is however saddened by the high level of alcoholism among young men in Murang'a County, and hopes to work with partners aiming to tackle the issue.

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SHAKILA ABDALLA

LAMU

When she decided in 2007 that she wanted to become the MP for Lamu East Constituency, Hon Shakila Abdalla was making history on the island by becoming the first Muslim woman to seek an elective position. "To many people it had come as a shock. But someone had to break through the glass ceiling," she says. Although she lost that bid, she caught the eye of the ODM-K Party and was nominated to the Tenth Parliament. "It's difficult being a nominated MP. You are like a snake without poison. Without

control over CDF for example, I could not even give out bursaries to deserving cases," she says. She maintained the desire to get elected into Parliament and consequently won the Lamu County MP seat in the 2013 election.

With valuable experience gained in the Tenth Parliament, where she also served as the treasurer of KEWOPA, Shakila knows just how to spend her current Parliamentary term. First in her agenda is to empower women and the youth through loans from Uwezo Fund. The county is a bigger constituency befitting the MP whose vision is to tackle the low literacy level in Lamu.

Without resources, Shakila's biggest challenge in the 2007 election was reaching the people with her message. Lamu East Constituency is a series of islands. To move around, she needed boats but had none, nor money to hire any. "I would walk, sometimes for up to eight kilometers to the venue of my campaign meeting," she recalls. "If it got dark, and it was too late to go home, I would get a place to sleep until the following morning, when I did more walking." Her campaign was characterised by mudslinging, with male candidates trying to discredit her on claims that a Muslim woman should not become a leader. "Religion was being used as an excuse, but it was all lies. Islam does not bar women from politics," states the MP.

Shakila grew up in a poor village in Faza Island, Lamu, where children often went deep-sea fishing with their parents, in tiny leaking boats. "Due to poverty and ignorance, early marriages and child

labour were the order of the day, but no one seemed to bother," Shakila recalls. "With the coming of self rule in 1963, dreams of a better life for the islanders turned into illusions when the new African government ignored the region," she observes. She maintains that Lamu remains desolate, with little to show for 50 years of independence. "There's not even a kilometer of paved road," she adds sadly.

Shakila studied at Faza Primary School and Lamu Girls' Secondary School before joining Utalii College for a House Keeping and Laundry Operations course. A Muslim girl working in the hotel business was a first of sorts, and many were surprised at her decision. Shakila worked for various hotels until 2003 when she saw an opportunity to serve her community. The National Rainbow Coalition (Narc) had just dislodged KANU from power and a wave of excitement permeated the country. A group of local elders who wanted to introduce multi-party politics in Lamu approached Shakila to help them make Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) strong in the area. "Through the push for multiparty democracy, the Lamu people had largely remained in KANU. They seemed blind to the injustices they had endured under the party, including being chained to poverty," says Shakila.

The Lamu team initiated a programme to create political awareness and conduct local civic education. Shakila explains that she also wanted to take part in campaigning for a new constitution. She believes that it was due to bad laws that successive governments had kept her

community, and Kenya as a whole, under the yoke of oppression. Then Shakila was working at the Leisure Lodge Beach and Golf Resort, but split her time between her activism and the job. Eventually she left employment to devote her time to activism. "It wasn't an easy decision because it meant that I had to start life without a salary. I set up a small business to make ends meet," she says. Shakila and her team, however, needed recognition and approval by LDP for their activities. So far, they were unknown beyond the little island. An opportunity came when the then LDP leader, Hon Raila Odinga, visited Lamu to survey development projects.

The 1961 born MP figured that if she played her cards well, she would build her reputation through the years by working for the people of Lamu who she hoped would elect her to Parliament in 2007. The team explained their mission to Raila and got the blessing of the party. Shakila was later elected the Lamu District LDP Chairperson, further preparing herself for the political battle in 2007. When ODM, which evolved from LDP, split between

Hon Kalonzo Musyoka's ODM-K and Raila's ODM, she joined Kalonzo's side and became the party's national treasurer.

In the 2013 election, the main supporters of the Wiper Democratic Movement-Kenya MP were the youth. "The older people still harbour stereotypes about women. Some were saying 'she must be crazy' and I thought it was just ridiculous," notes Shakila, who is a member of the Lands Committee.

The soft-spoken MP believes that the biggest challenge for women leaders in Parliament currently is to increase in number and attain the two-thirds majority rule. Beyond that, she notes, women still have a long way to go in political elective leadership. "You could be a very strong candidate in the grassroots but if your party does not believe in women's ability to lead, you won't get its nomination to vie for any position," she says. She is however glad that women in Parliament "work as a family, regardless of party affiliations. We support one another and lobby for women's issues both inside and outside Parliament," concludes the MP..

You could be a very strong candidate in the grassroots but if your party does not believe in women's ability to lead, you won't get its nomination to vie for any position.



Her gentle ways and petite stature camouflage a vibrant and zealous woman who is emphatic about her plans for the people of Garissa County, especially the women. Her desire to serve did not start with the promulgation of the New Constitution, though she admits that “the Constitution provided the much needed opportunity” to get involved in the male dominated politics and convince men to vote for her. After all, she reasoned, the Women’s Representative seat that she vied for and won was not in contest with the “male reserved” seats.

Hon Shukran Gure recalls her desire to become a nurse while a pupil at Modogashe Primary School, 26 years ago. This dream began one day when she saw immaculately dressed nurses disembark from an airplane at the Modogashe airstrip, which was located directly opposite her school. “They wore neat white uniforms with caps on their heads. It was a beautiful sight! And just then, I knew that I wanted to become a nurse,” she laughs. Now that she is in Parliament, Shukran confidently draws parallels between nursing and political leadership. “Both entail caring for and working to better the lives of people,” she asserts, adding that she has experienced both.

After secondary education at Umusalama Girls’ and Madogo Secondary Schools in Tana River, Shukran won the United States Diversity Lottery, commonly referred to as the Green Card, and went to study abroad. She attained a Bachelor’s Degree in Nursing, and another one in Public Health, from the University of



SHUKRAN GURE

GARISSA

St. Catherin, in Minnesota. She has also trained in Neurology, Neonatal Intensive Care and Mental Health and worked in prestigious hospitals in the USA, like Mayo Clinic, Fairview Hospitals, and Abbott Northwestern Hospital, before embarking on private business. Shukran started the Metro Care Providers, a home healthcare agency that took care of the elderly, and Metro-Area Physical Therapy Clinic, both in

the USA. She plans to replicate the services for the people of Garissa County.

Inspired by world-renowned leadership motivational speaker, Dr. Stephen Covey, Shukran has managed to sharpen her leadership skills. Her interest in politics was awakened after participating in the Obama presidential campaign of 2012. “I campaigned for Obama from door to door, learning from the campaign team’s

organisational skills. I was keen to identify good leadership characteristics and qualities, and realised that leadership skills could be learned," she offers.

Shukran's family returned to Kenya to do business and to settle their five children down at home, and the new Constitution opened for her the window to make her political debut. She was qualified, indigenous and able to express herself to the electorate. The MP says that she felt the urge to assist the women of Garissa improve their living standards, through the County MP's seat. She describes the state of women in Garissa as despicable, and has categorised the county's women into three groups: the educated, the middle level who are semi-literate, and the illiterate, who in her view, are the majority. In order to enhance development, Shukran motivates the educated women to consciously and proactively help the others to elevate their living standards and that of the entire community.

Although she beat five opponents to clinch the Garissa seat, Shukran has reached out to them and pledged to work with them for the wellbeing of the people. Her focus during this tenure in Parliament is to build market stalls for the women to trade their merchandise, look for funds to construct girls' boarding schools, and engage the youth in activities that will generate wealth. She plans to table a Motion that will assure security for pastoralist communities. She says that because of their pastoralist nature, many of the people in Garissa do not have identity cards, and this poses a security problem, especially for those over 35 years. "They stay in the bush for so long and only

realize too late that they need identity cards," laments Shukran.

The other issue that she wants to address is the re-registration of Kenyan Somalis who falsely acquired refugee status in order to get scholarships for studies abroad. "I know some of them because we attended the same schools, although their records read refugee status, and they cannot be registered again as Kenyan Citizens," she says with sympathy. She is determined to explore ways of straightening the records to enable the over 150 young men and women to constructively contribute to economic development of their country, and enjoy citizen status.

The MP, who vied on a Wiper Democratic Movement Party ticket, believes it was the best choice she made. The party and its coalition, CORD, backed her campaign. She had made a decision to join the party before returning to Kenya because she attended the party's town meetings in the USA in the run up to the election, and found its agenda attractive. She says her party leaders regularly visited and sold the party's plans, manifesto and vision to the people in the diaspora.

Shukran encountered various challenges during the campaign. First, she launched it when her husband was still in the USA.

Secondly, she did not have the finances she needed to traverse the expansive county. When he finally came home, Shukran's husband supported her through campaigns and finances. "His biggest headache was however getting male supporters and a security team to assist me in the door to door campaign, and protect me from any form of violence," she laughs. "In the end, navigating the county wore me out, to an extent," she adds jokingly. Shukran particularly appreciates the efforts of the 25,000 young people who volunteered to campaign for her physically, and through social media like Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp and Vibe.

The 34-year-old legislator says that Parliament has been a learning process, and that she is grateful for the role KEWOPA has played in inducting new female MPs. The MPs have also received additional skills in fundraising. The member of the Environment and Natural Resources Committee, and the Committee on Budget and Appropriation, advises women aspiring for political office to fight for their rights. She believes women are better managers, and is optimistic that women in the 11th Parliament will make positive change for the benefit of Kenyans at large.

I campaigned for Obama from door to door, learning from the campaign team's organisational skills. I was keen to identify good leadership characteristics and qualities, and realised that leadership skills could be learned.

Before plunging into politics ahead of the 2013 general election, Dr Susan Kipketer worked as an administrator at Moi University. Like most MPs in the Rift Valley, she contested for her seat through URP, which was the dominant party in the region. "URP was the right choice because it was the most popular. You can be popular as a person but when you make the wrong choice of a political vehicle, you pay the price of your miscalculation," she notes. Being her first attempt at politics, Susan is glad she won.

Hon Kipketer attributes her victory to the confidence the people of Elgeyo Marakwet County had in her, courtesy of development programmes she had initiated in the expansive region. Her most popular programme is the Tumdo Ne Leel, which offers girls in her community an alternative rite of passage to the outlawed FGM. The programme also supports young girls to access education as opposed to rampant early marriage, which almost always follows FGM. The programme's success has inspired Susan who plans to export the concept to neighbouring Pokot and Baringo Counties, which are also affected by FGM and early marriage. "I want to boost education of the girl child wherever and whenever I can," she declares.

The soft-spoken mother of three, and grandmother of six, knows the benefits of education from experience. In fact, she attributes her victory to her education



SUSAN CHEBET
MARAKWET

background, which stood out among her opponents in the election. She is thankful to her voters for choosing her to be the leader who would enhance development in the region, as well as give them the right representation at national level. "Society is now open and there is need for general participation in transforming the lives of Kenyans irrespective of

gender," she notes. Susan had to hunt for votes from the two Kalenjin sub-tribes of Keiyo and Marakwet, who are the main occupants of Marakwet County. In the end she drew her support from men, women and the youth across the county - voters she cherishes. "Every vote counts," she says.

Born in 1955, the MP grew up in a

rural setting in Keiyo District where social, cultural and traditional practices were the order of the day. She attended Chepketeret Primary School from 1967 to 1971. Her parents could not afford to pay for her tuition fee and because she was gifted in class, the school waived the fees between class two and seven, when she sat her national exam. Susan then joined Kapkenda Girls' Secondary School in the same district and graduated in 1975, an accomplishment that was short of a miracle. "It was very exciting to complete secondary school because many times I was sent home for fees, and I almost dropped out of school," she recalls. Inspired by the fact that she was among the few girls who had continued with their education to secondary level, members of her community often raised funds for her school fees, but she always had arrears.

One of the reasons she is passionate about assisting students who lack school fees is because she benefited from community benevolence. In the midst of her struggle to remain in school, her secondary school head teacher linked her up with a local charity group, University Women Association, who helped in paying her school fees. The group was composed of successful women alumni of the University of Nairobi, who supported the education of young girls from poor families.

Susan proceeded to Kipsigis Girls' High School, through the support of one of her former primary school teachers. She was at the University of Nairobi between 1978 and 1981, graduating with

Society is now open and there is need for general participation in transforming the lives of Kenyans irrespective of gender.



a BA degree in Political Science; followed by a Master's degree in Human Resource Development (Gender) at the University of Manchester in the UK, between 1993 and 1994. She did her PhD at Moi University between 2001 and 2007, and has also made a name as an author. Retired President, Mwai Kibaki, awarded her the Head of State Commendation (HSC) in 2010 for her work in the community.

Among her top most priorities in Elgeyo Marakwet County is to conserve the environment by protecting forests and other water catchment areas. The county is home to several forests and rivulets which supplement the Kerio River and onwards to Lake Turkana. "We should protect our forests by minimising pressure on them. Farmers should plant more trees and

reduce overreliance on forests for wood fuel," she says, adding, "My long term vision is to empower all residents, and especially women and the youth, who are the driving force in development of the county," Susan pledges.

In the national assembly, the legislator sits in the Education, Research and Technology Committee, which handles matters relating to education, training, research and technological advancement. She says that women MPs have been well prepared for challenges in the House after several inductions, courtesy of KEWOPA. She appreciates that KEWOPA has especially done a lot towards ensuring that newly elected women MPs work together and are familiar with their new environment. "I am happy about the good relations with other elected leaders and with time, we are going to make massive contributions in the House," she states.

On women's leadership, the MP says that although immense resources have been spent over many years preparing women for political leadership, a lot still needs to be done to curb the glaring gender disparity in leadership positions in the country. She is concerned about the yet to be actualised two-thirds gender provision in Parliament, and hopes that the 11th Parliament will develop a formula to make the two-thirds gender provision in the Constitution a priority. Susan advises women aspiring for political leadership to be firm in what they believe in and persistent about the many odds that often hinder their climb to political leadership; some of which include lack of finances and cultural constraints.



SUSAN MUSYOKA

MACHAKOS

The boldness and courage of former MPs Charity Ngilu, Martha Karua and Phoebe Asiyo, gave Dr Susan Musyoka, the Machakos County Women Representative, the courage to vie for political office.

Her party of choice, she says, was

the Wiper Democratic Movement within the CORD Alliance, due to its popularity in Machakos. "Campaigning was a gruelling task - very tough. The area was vast and a lot of resources were required. I had God's favour all through and a lot of encouragement and support from all, especially the youth, who wanted an educated person to represent them," she

notes. "I did not experience violence but there was bearable intimidation in some parts of the county."

Born in a middle class family, Susan is the third born among four girls and a boy. Her father, a teacher, was the first Secretary General of the Africa Inland Church. He passed on when Susan was only nine years old. Her mother was a primary school teacher. "I thank God for my mother who inspired and encouraged me all along and prepared me to take up life's challenges that most women do not want to venture into, including landing me in a medical career," she says.

After her father's death, life became tough and Susan's family had to leave the comfort and prestige of living in the city. "We relocated to the village where life was tough and the fine things in life were hard to come by. I started asking myself many questions whose answers I could not get," she recalls.

The changes did not kill her spirit, but instead inspired her to pursue excellence.

"I remember my childhood and know that were it not for education, I would not have made it in life. Also, it was thanks to the support and encouragement from my role models and mentors like Prof Florence Musiime who hails from my village, and who spent time with us as we grew up, that life became bearable," she says.

Dr Musyoka went to Mulango Girls' Secondary School, in Kitui and proceeded to Nakuru High School for A-Level education. She remembers that though Nakuru High was a mixed school, her class of 30 students had only four female students.

In 1980 Susan joined the University of Nairobi to pursue a degree in Medicine and proceeded to study for a Master's degree in Public Health. "I have been working as a medical doctor in private practice in Machakos for more than 20 years and encountered all manner of problems seriously affecting the community I serve. Most affected by these issues are women, while the major contributing factor is poverty and lack of empowerment," she states.

Susan has mentored girls, encouraging them to take up sciences and work hard in school. She has also delved into community health issues among other development activities in her town. The MP has also been active in the Rotary movement, through which she has initiated water projects and was the president of the Machakos Rotary Club in 2005/2006. She contributed to school development programmes and served as the chairperson of several school boards, the most recent being that of the Machakos Technical Institute, now Machakos University.

I urge women to come out and vie for seats, in addition to positioning themselves in businesses and property acquisition, in order to compete well in this competitive world.

Like other County Women Representatives, Hon Susan Musyoka hopes the MPs will get a fund to support their development agenda. "I made promises, mainly on the empowerment of women and the youth, education and skills development, and on healthcare service improvement within the county," she says, and is keen to fulfil these promises.

"Being in the Parliamentary Health Committee, and collaborating with the health cabinet secretary in the county, I look forward to engaging more in health related issues that will impact positively in the county, " she pledges. The MP

regularly visits schools to counsel girls while also encouraging women and the youth to take up business opportunities in the county.

The legislator praises KEWOPA for helping members to find their bearing in Parliament. She says that the training she attended ahead of the election was quite useful during her campaign. "More work should however be done to encourage women to take up elective positions. I urge women to come out and vie for seats, in addition to positioning themselves in businesses and property acquisition, in order to compete well in this competitive world," she advises.

Coming from a humble background, Tiyah Galgalo never envisaged herself representing her constituents in Parliament.

The accomplished administrator and educationist, with over 20 years of experience, narrates the pain of growing up in need, in a family that squeezed into one small room in Isiolo town. Her peasant parents, as she describes them, relocated to the town after losing all their livestock to drought when Tiyah and her siblings were young. Out of 11 siblings, Tiyah is the only one who made it to university.

Born in 1966 in Bulesa, Isiolo District, Tiya experienced suffering that motivated her to work hard to rescue her family from poverty. When she was admitted to Garbatulla High School for secondary education, the young Borana girl could not imagine missing the opportunity due to lack of school fees. She approached the town clerk for a bursary, and got one term's fees. "The then Town clerk, Mr Jaffary Tupi, pleaded with the head teacher not to send me home for school fees. When children were being sent home for outstanding payments, my name was always first on the list, and I would hide to avoid being teased by other students," she recalls with a shy smile. Tiyah detested how the better off students teased those who had fees balances.

When she realised that the threat of losing her place in school due to fees arrears was imminent, Tiyah talked to a Mr David Weighman, a volunteer teacher at her school, who paid her fees as she assisted his wife with house chores. "I would reach school at 6am, and when the other students



TIYAH GALGALO
ISIOLO

left for the day at 2pm, I would head to Mr Weighman's house to do my chores till 6pm, then run home and study late into the night," a radiant Tiyah recalls.

When Tiyah excelled in the secondary school exams and got admitted for high school education at Njonjo High School in Nyandarua County, she faced another school fees dilemma. The brave girl sought for help at the Isiolo DC's office. She did not get

a bursary, but the then DC, Mr Nyambwa, encouraged local leaders to help him educate the bright girl. "It is now laughable that a girl who had never left her home district could travel to a new district on her own, to join a new school," she reminisces. Tiyah was the first girl from Isiolo County to study up to form six. At her new school, she rubbed shoulders with children from affluent families, and often mused at the display of

luxury during visiting days. She remembers how on her first day in school, one of her classmates arrived by a helicopter.

Tiyah excelled again and joined Kenyatta University for a Bachelor's Degree in Education. She graduated in 1991 and was posted to teach in her old school, Garbatulla High School, which she believes was the best thing that happened to her, as she related well with girls from backgrounds like hers, and became their role model. She took the opportunity to give back to society by supporting the girls. "I lived with some of the poor girls in my house and even shared my own bed with them," says the former teacher, who has a Master's degree in Education Administration and Planning from the University of Nairobi.

It is during her 13 years as the principal of Isiolo Girls' High School that the MP inadvertently began her political journey. She inspired girls to change their attitude and perception of life. "Most girls came to school to buy time as they prepared for marriage," she observed. Tiyah motivated them to study to the highest level possible. She worked with the Pastoralists' Development Network of Kenya, and started the Foundation for Kenya Pastoralist Women, to secure sponsorship for vulnerable children and lobbied universities to admit girls from disadvantaged communities for prestigious courses. Many young women have since joined universities in Kenya and abroad as a result of her effort.

After combing through almost all the other parties, the MP found TNA's manifesto and organisational structure attractive, implementable, and sensitive to the desires of Muslims. Her biggest motivation into joining the party was however nominated MP, Hon Amina Abdalla, whom Tiyah

admires for her beneficial work record in the community. She attributes Amina's success to her long term working relationship with President Uhuru Kenyatta. Her political role model is Narc Kenya leader, Martha Karua. "Martha is bold, articulate, and assertive, and is not apologetic for her prowess," shares the legislator, who attributes her own success to being fearless, confident, assertive and visionary - "traits that Martha and I have in common."

Tiyah benefitted from training from the National Democratic Institute, Women in Democracy Network and International Republican Institute, in the run up to the election. She recommends however, that such training be better coordinated to avoid duplication, and also be conducted earlier in the campaign cycle to enable the beneficiaries to use the knowledge in their campaigns.

Her own campaigning to capture the Isiolo County seat was challenging, she discloses. "Violence is a given in any election, but my biggest challenge was the clan," she confides. She explains that the governance structure among pastoralists determines who takes which seat in political election. And while Tiyah was favoured by virtue of belonging to the two major clans by marriage and birth, she declared her interest in the County MP seat later than the other candidates because she was a commissioner in the Interim Independent Electoral Commission. "People had already been identified for various positions and turning this around in nine months left bad blood between some family members who felt betrayed. The healing process is still ongoing," she discloses, remorsefully.

Lack of resources, poor infrastructure and limited time were the other challenges in her campaign. She warns: "Campaign is

not about seeking votes, but an opportunity to showcase what you have done for your community." She received "red carpet reception" from her former students and parents who had benefited from her initiatives. She listened to the electorate rather than making promises because she does not believe in empty promises, which is "like putting a rope around my neck," she observes.

Hon Tiyah Galgalo has not lost focus of her vision to address unique challenges like drought and floods that usually ravage Isiolo County. She introduced the Motion to establish the Disaster Management Authority to handle, prepare and create awareness on disasters. She is optimistic that the larger presence of women in the 11th Parliament will benefit the electorate more. "There are no party boundaries between women MPs when it comes to women and youth issues. We must harness our strength," she advises. The vice chairperson of the Labour and Social Welfare Committee, Tiyah is also a member of the Budget and Appropriation Committee, as well as the Selection Committee. The vibrant legislator is also the chief whip of KEWOPA and deputy treasurer of the Pastoralists Parliamentary Group.

There are no party boundaries between women MPs when it comes to women and youth issues. We must harness our strength.



Wanjiku Muhia was born into a humble family in Nyandarua County, where her parents made a living as peasant farmers. Her father inspired her to join politics by often telling her that a nation could only develop if it had genuine political leaders who would carry the vision of the people. He was a successful 'kingmaker' in Nyandarua. Some of the candidates he campaigned for included the charismatic Nyandarua North MP, the late JM Kariuki.

Wanjiku enjoyed political discussions as a young girl and was an active member of the debating clubs in her primary and high schools. She attended Kamahia Primary School in Kipipiri Constituency, and Nakuru High School. After completing secondary education, Wanjiku opened a vegetable shop in Nairobi's Eastleigh Estate through the help of her sister. One year later, with the money she had saved, she joined the Rift Valley Institute of Science and Technology (RVIST) for a business certificate course.

On completing the course, she secured jobs at several flower firms in Naivasha. Over time she was promoted to the rank of Human Resources Manager. She is credited with bringing several social changes to the flower industry, among them the creation of a day care centre for breastfeeding mothers, a SACCO, and medical and insurance care for the workers.

From the flower industry, Wanjiku joined Equity Bank, and resigned six years later to join politics. She had set her eyes on the Nyandarua County Women Representative



WANJIKU MUHIA
 NYANDARUA

seat, and her choice of political party was very important. She says: "Party choice is a sensitive driver in one's political career. One can be a great leader but easily lose in an election because of being in the 'wrong' party." Party popularity influenced her decision to join TNA.

The other consideration that was paramount in her decision was the party's

manifesto, which had to be at par with her vision for Nyandarua County. She believes that her party is people-driven, youthful, dynamic, vibrant and ambitious. After winning the TNA nomination, Wanjiku set up a campaign team, which comprised women, men, the youth and people with disability.

The MP is committed to fulfilling her promise to empower the youth and women

with entrepreneurship skills. A vocal advocate of self-employment and the need to foster the culture of saving among the people for their own development, she has set up county offices in all constituencies where the people she represents can benefit from entrepreneurial activities. She also plans to put up centres for persons with special needs within Nyandarua.

Additionally, the legislator has identified areas to improve in the Persons with Disability Bill of 2003. Her notable amendment to the Bill was the inclusion of a requirement that all television stations include sign language and subtitles in their news so that deaf persons can have improved access to information, according to the Bill of Rights.

Wanjiku wants improvement in the quality of education given to young children. She hopes to set up nursery schools in every village; her objective being to reduce the distance young children cover to attend school. She has also been actively involved in the establishment of the Affirmative Action Social Development Fund, which aims to allocate funds to county MPs. This fund will enable the county MPs who do not have any funding structure to initiate development activities.

Hon Wanjiku Muhia serves in the Committee on Regional Integration, and the Administration and National Security Committee. She appeals to the public to be patient with MPs, whose main mandate


is to improve lives and livelihoods of the electorate. "The public expects that after the election, and the MP becomes a *mheshimiwa* (honourable person), things should start moving immediately. However, this is not the case because the MPs first need to familiarise themselves with the system," she says.

Representation by women in the National Assembly and the Senate is higher in the 11th Parliament compared to the past. The MP believes that there would be more benefits if these women in leadership were allocated funds for county and constituency development. "The women MPs, particularly the 47 county MPs, should be adequately funded to engage in tangible projects that the society can see and relate to their leadership. Otherwise if they become 'microphone leaders' who are vocal but will have nothing to show for their leadership after five years, the public will judge them harshly and may not re-elect them," notes the legislator.

Her advice to women political aspirants is to believe in themselves and their respective visions. "They should adequately prepare and start their campaigns early and not be intimidated. Women can make the best leaders when given a chance. All they need is support and encouragement," she states.

The MP has a Bachelor's degree in Business Administration in Entrepreneurship, from the Kenya Methodist University. She hopes to complete a Master's degree by 2017.

The public expects that after the election, and the MP becomes a *mheshimiwa* (honourable person), things should start moving immediately. However, this is not the case because the MPs first need to familiarise themselves with the system.





WINNIE NJUGUNA
KIRINYAGA

Kirinyaga County Women Representative, Winnie Njuguna, lives by a simple philosophy: she gives her best in everything she undertakes. With an undying passion for working with women to achieve their

development, Winnie believes Parliament is one of the best platforms to implement her dream for women's growth. To her, women are the foundation of the family and the community.

Flashing back to 1992 when the Mwea area had a major water shortage, Winnie says that this meant that women faced the biggest test of dealing with the challenge

Unbelievably, the water crisis goaded her to seek solutions beyond Mwea, and she approached a Swedish non-governmental organization for assistance. Winnie mobilised 100 women to register a self-help group through which they applied for a grant from the Swedish NGO to install piped water into their homes. The water project enhanced the lifestyle of the people of Murinduko Location in Mwea and brought the commodity into schools, hospitals as well as other institutions.

Because of her success with the water project, among others, Lucy observes that her entry into politics was actually proposed by the people. "The residents felt that I had the potential to do more than I had already done for them," she points out. The push to vie came from the staff of schools where she had initiated the water project, as well as from students whom she had assisted to pursue education. "I had a rich background in community service when I got into politics," Winnie smiles.

It was not a wonder that the MP trounced her seven opponents with a big margin. She garnered 164,000 votes against the runner up who got 40,000 votes. "My votes were even more than the governor's," she says excitedly. Winnie says that she is inspired by respected politician and NARC-Kenya leader, Hon Martha Karua. Coincidentally, they both hail from Kirinyaga County.

The staunch Christian credits God for all her achievements. She says: "Trust in God, for He is the truth, and the truth shall set you free." With this assurance, she believes that her big plans for the

people of Mwea will be accomplished. To date, Mwea has a large amount of canal water for irrigation, but lacks clean piped water, something Winnie hopes to solve within her term in Parliament. She plans to extend her development efforts to include the improvement of roads and increase the number of secondary schools in the area. "Mwea has 108 primary schools and only 17 secondary schools; the disparity is stifling the advancement of education and forcing children to drop out of school and marry at a tender age," she observes.

Hon Winnie Njuguna studied at Kirinyaga Primary School and Kabare Secondary School before joining Kagumo Teachers' Training College for a Diploma in Education. She was later promoted to a graduate approved teacher, which saw her shift to train teachers at Kigali Teachers' Training College. She is pursuing a degree in Leadership and Management at the St. Paul's University. Her 20-year career as a teacher taught her to tackle all situations that come her way head on. She believes in hard work and urges

all women aspiring for political office to brace for the same.

Winnie intends to keep promoting the rights of farmers by bringing a parliamentary Motion that will enable easier access to land by citizens. She acknowledges the need to be proactive since the number of legislators in the National Assembly has increased almost threefold, and as such, one has to be very strategic to catch the speaker's eye to make a contribution during debate.

The MP credits KEWOPA for playing the key role of uniting women parliamentarians, even as she still believes that the Association "needs to do more." She specifically points out that the more experienced MPs who have served in the past Parliaments should help new members to gain the required skills in order to participate fully in Parliament.

In the National Assembly, the legislator sits in the Labour and Social Welfare Committee. She is also a member of the Standing Committee on Implementation, whose mandate is to scrutinise resolutions of the House.

Her 20-year career as a teacher taught her to tackle all situations that come her way head on. She believes in hard work and urges all women aspiring for political office to brace for the same.



ZAINAB CHIDZUGA

KWALE

Zainab Chidzuga's journey to leadership began when she was born. "As the first born in my family, my parents gave me a challenges and responsibilities, which I had to handle well. I believe they prepared me for leadership, and the reason I am where I am today," she says.

Her leadership potential started to show as soon as she stepped into school. While in a primary school in Uganda, she was a class prefect. She later joined Mwija Primary School and Mutomo Girls' High School, where she held different leadership positions. The trained secretary also had a brief stint as a primary school teacher, a role that further enhanced her leadership skills.

Although she is not new to leadership in Kwale, Zainab is humbled by her election into the 11th Parliament, and thanks all the people who voted for her. She has been a member of the Maendeleo ya Wanawake Organisation (MYWO) for more than two decades and was the provincial treasurer in the Coast, before scaling down to the district level. She chose this position at the district level to get closer to the people she served. After a brief stint as the treasurer for the district, she got elected the chairperson of MYWO, Kwale District. She was also a director of the board of Coast Water Services Board, and the Kwale Health Management Board.

Even with her inborn leadership qualities, Zainab needed political leadership knowledge, and MYWO gave this to her. "Being in the leadership of the organization helped to nurture and prepare me for political leadership," she says. The late Margaret Thatcher, Britain's first female Prime Minister, whose legacy lives on, is one of the people who inspired her to get into politics. The other political inspiration is Hillary Clinton, the former US Foreign Secretary in President Barack Obama's government, and wife of former US President, Bill Clinton. Zainab is also inspired by President Sirleaf Johnson of Liberia, Africa's first female president. "I look up to these female politicians in my journey in political leadership," she says.

With such powerful role models, one wonders what drove Zainab into elective politics. "For a very long time, I have watched as women, the youth, and the general community that I come from, struggle to put food on the table. I have told myself several times that maybe I could help ease their struggles and

challenges if I were their representative in higher political office," she reveals simply. "I also realised that our county has a lot of resources, especially water, from which our people are not benefitting as they should. I wanted to help change that," she adds.

Zainab says that when she embarked on her campaigns, she made promises, one of which was to create an environment that would allow the youth to employ themselves. So far, she has helped them to register their companies in order to benefit from projects that are being undertaken at constituency and county level. She believes the youth are better placed to tender for goods and services that county governments and other state corporations and parastatals need. Before her election, Zainab had initiated the Kwale County Women in Development Organisation that offers micro finance to women to undertake various projects to uplift their livelihoods. This organisation has helped women to provide for their families with less hardship.

Even though the seat for County MPs was reserved for women, many cultural beliefs regarding women in leadership still made it difficult for some women to vie. It was even harder for Zainab who is a widow. "I had little money and had to fight cultural biases against widows. Thankfully, people who understood my background and my active involvement in the development of the community voted for me. They elected me," she says. Even in the midst of the challenges, and minimum verbal abuse, the development conscious MP did not face any violence, and is grateful for that. She chose ODM, a party she believes will help her to resolve



We are here as representatives of the people. They are our employers and so our effort should be directed towards the development and growth they desire.

historical injustices relating to land and the distribution of resources.

Hon Zainab Chidzuga is a member of the Committee on Delegated Legislation, and the Environment and Natural Resources Committee. She has been active inside and outside the National Assembly, contributing to House Motions, and continuing with her farming activities and running her businesses. She continues to supervise the development projects she initiated in her constituency with a view to expanding them to reach more people and enhance their sustainability. She is however unhappy that some MPs have dedicated their time and attention to the politics of their different parties at the expense of the electorate who gave them the mandate to be in Parliament. "We are here as representatives of the people. They are our employers and so our effort should be directed towards the development and growth they desire," she says.

The other area that Zainab feels still

needs improvement is the representation of women in the various political offices. "A lot of work needs to be done to help women get into leadership," she stresses. While the MP acknowledges that a lot of resources have been invested in women's leadership, the results are not yet adequate. Training, she believes, is still needed to enhance the women's understanding of what they need to get into. "I am grateful for the training that I got through seminars and workshops that were organised by my networks. I went into the election feeling confident and well equipped after the training, plus the networking opportunities I got through various organizations," she says. Apart from such trainings, Zainab challenges women to participate in civic education whenever the opportunities arise. "Civic education is very helpful to anyone in politics. If access is limited, just go out and initiate them!" she challenges. She urges women to be brave and to demonstrate their leadership skills to the people, as a way of winning the confidence of their potential voters.

The current vice chairperson of KEWOPA, the legislator believes that the organization is well placed to assist women in the National Assembly and the Senate to perform better at their work. She has been on record promising to work with all the leaders in Kwale for the benefit of the people of the county. Kwale County has approximately 600,000 residents, and is quite poor, despite being rich in natural resources and playing host to tourist attractions such as the Shimba Hills National Reserve and the Mwaluganje Elephant Sanctuary. "What matters now, is that the people who elected me have given me their support and we are moving forward together," she affirms.

Her service to her community has seen Zipporah Kering rise from the classroom to political leadership. During her career as a teacher, she interacted with the community and contributed towards development, and advocated for the rights of all people in the society. In turn, the community overwhelmingly voted for her in the 2013 general election as the first Nandi County Women Representative.

Zipporah ventured into leadership when she first sought to be elected as a women representative in KNUT, a position she won with ease. She later rose in the union's ranks to become the Nandi Central Branch executive secretary and Nandi County chairperson for the union. "As an official of KNUT, I also got involved in women's activities and participated in income generating activities that empowered residents at the grassroots," she says.

During her tenure as the Nandi Central executive secretary, she was one of the only three women in Kenya holding such positions, out of the 210 positions. "It is then that I realised the potential of women leadership," notes Zipporah. This opportunity honed her leadership skills and gave her the courage to plunge into politics. "I conducted my parliamentary campaign with a lot of ease because as a teacher and union official, I had addressed several education forums, church functions in the larger Nandi County and I was quite well-known in the county," says the former teacher.



ZIPPORAH KERING
NANDI

She drew most of her support from women and the youth, some of who were her former students. "My fellow teachers were supportive, especially given the fact that I was their union official and now I was seeking a higher position that would benefit them. As a County MP, my role is to legislate and represent. I will not only represent women and teachers, but everyone in the county," she states.

Born in 1966 in Aldai Constituency, Zipporah attended Kamarich Primary School and later Kapsabet Girls' High School in Nandi. She was employed as a casual worker at the National Cereals and Produce Board soon after high school and later as an untrained teacher at Itigo Primary School before joining Highridge Teachers' Training College in 1989 for a two-year teaching course. While teaching

at Kamobo Primary School, which she joined after graduation, the MP enrolled for a diploma course at the Kenya Institute of Special Education (KISE). Thereafter she taught at Kapsabet School for the Deaf.

The legislator says that she did not spend much money in her campaign. "I did not have the amount of money associated with campaigns. I received support and goodwill from friends, family and well wishers," she says. Her vision for Nandi County is to empower women and the youth to raise their standard of living through income generating activities. "Poverty in our society mostly affects young school leavers who are unemployed, and women who have limited avenues to income generating activities," she points out.

County women representatives do not manage any development funds, thus limiting their influence in the development of the counties. "As county women MPs, we are trying to push for a Bill that will streamline the Women's Trust Fund to enable women across the country access it with ease," she says. Nandi County has enormous potential for economic growth. Among the leading income generating activities in the county are tea, dairy and maize farming. The legislator says that

she will ensure residents are given the necessary opportunities to exploit their natural wealth for their own economic advancement.

Like other newly elected women MPs in the House, Zipporah has benefitted from induction courses organized by KEWOPA. "The training we received has assisted us to compete on equal footing with our male counterparts in the National Assembly. More training opportunities should be provided by KEWOPA and

other organizations interested in women's empowerment," she observes.

Hon Zipporah Kering sits in the House Committee on Health. She advises women aspiring for political leadership to come out forcefully and campaign for the various positions in the political arena. "There is nothing that cannot be achieved if one has the will and drive to go for what her heart desires. Politics is no different and fellow women leaders should be ready to join the race in future electoral contests," she emphasises.

The MP is married and a mother of five children. She learnt how to balance her personal and public life when she was a teacher and unionist. "I hope I will equally manage to do the same as a politician because there is little difference between unionism and politics," she says. Despite the tight schedule that comes with political engagement within the county and in Nairobi, she always finds time to be with her family.

She holds a Bachelor of Education Degree from Kenyatta University. Outside the teaching profession, she has also trained at International Amateur Athletic Federation (IAAF) as a level two coach. She chaperoned Kenya's athletics teams to world championships in Canada, Italy and Japan, between 2005 and 2009.

There is nothing that cannot be achieved if one has the will and drive to go for what her heart desires. Politics is no different and fellow women leaders should be ready to join the race in future electoral contests.







2 | CONSTITUENCY MPS



ALICE NG'ANG'A

THIKA TOWN

She is a tenacious leader. She had vied for the Juja Parliamentary seat many times before and not won, but never gave up. She does not easily give up on her dreams. When IEBC created Thika Town Constituency out of the formerly large Juja Constituency,

Alice Ng'ang'a declared her candidature for the Parliamentary seat. She started to campaign in her home constituency early. "I did not want to miss out on my dream again, so I strategised to start early," she says.

The MP embarked on empowering women through self-help groups, and by training them on various income

generating skills like entrepreneurship. Alice had learnt from previous attempts that a strong campaign was the key to winning an election, and she put in as much effort as she could in hers. Contesting on a TNA Party ticket, she was confident of a win. "TNA Party's manifesto was great. It was development conscious, especially on matters affecting women and the youth," Alice who was the party's national aspirants' coordinator, says.

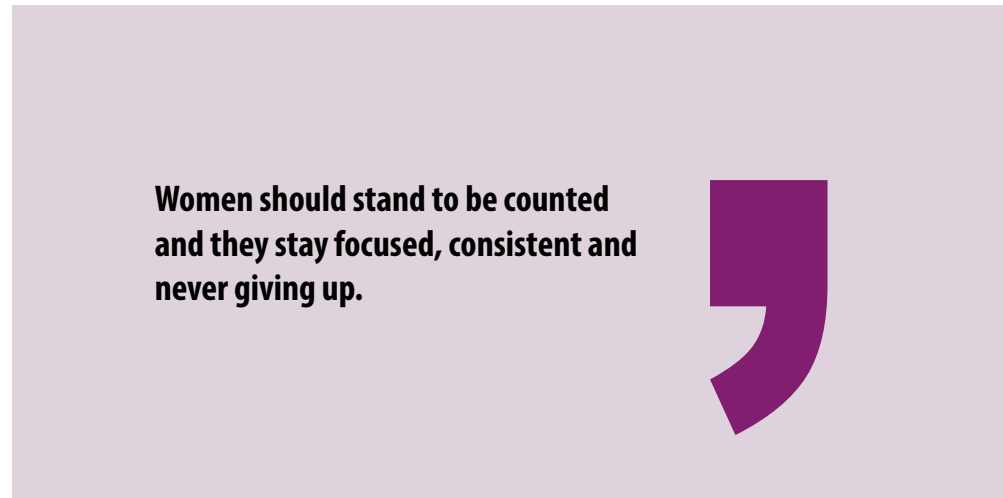
Leadership is a dream Alice has nurtured since childhood. She had great admiration for her teachers who were diligent in imparting knowledge, inspiring and challenging learners to work hard to become successful and positively influence in the society. She was a disciplined student who excelled in academics, as well as leadership. She was the school head girl, something that boosted her morale to become an influential leader in the future. That aside, Alice looks up to her father as a source of inspiration. He has always encouraged her to aim high, assuring her that with focus, she could achieve whatever she set her mind on. "This is perhaps what makes me tenacious," she laughs.

Prior to joining politics, Alice worked as the director of a mining company, a Sunday school teacher, and a women's leader at her church. Working with different people in these positions sharpened her leadership skills. Unsurprisingly, Alice experienced verbal abuse from her opponents' supporters during campaigns. Her campaign posters were pulled down, and leaflets containing

propaganda about her were dropped everywhere, including her supporters' doorsteps. Such acts demoralised her but she soldiered on. On the other hand, a majority of women, young voters and some men gave her undying support, something that gave her a deep sense of appreciation. With over 72, 000 votes, Alice became the first MP for the new Thika Town Constituency. "My campaign team was just great," she confirms.

One of the greatest challenges for women political aspirants' over time has been financial support, and Alice is grateful to her family and friends for pouring in their money into her political dream. "It was not just money, for they were always at hand to encourage me especially when things would become too difficult for me during the campaigns," she says with lots of appreciation. Alice also thanks the Centre for Rights Education and Awareness (CREAW) and the Centre for Multiparty Democracy (CMD) for facilitating the printing of her campaign posters and t-shirts. The publicity she got through local newspapers that profiled her was also of great assistance on her journey to victory.

Alice acknowledges that not all women aspirants are as fortunate as she was in her political journey. For instance, organisations that supported her materially and with publicity don't always reach all women, especially those that need them most. "They should create more awareness so that more women can know where to seek help during campaigns," she challenges. Alice adds that marginalised women do not venture into competitive



politics because they do not know how to go about it. "Everything appears overwhelming, and so they just shy away," she says. The low representation of women in Kenya's Houses concerns her a great deal. The Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) report that women constitute only 19.25 % of all members of parliament in the world. "With the increased numbers in Kenya, we are still a minority," Alice says, and urges women to come out in large numbers to vie for political positions in the next election. "Women should stand to be counted and they should stay focused, consistent and never giving up," she says.

Improving the quality of primary and secondary education and working more with women and the youth to set up development projects that will improve their livelihoods, are some of Alice's plans for her constituents. She is also

committed to addressing the rampant drug and alcohol abuse in Thika Town Constituency, and solving the problems of IDPs who are still looking for resettlement. She is currently finalising plans to resettle the displaced people in Kilimambogo. Alice is confident that she will competently represent her constituency in the National Assembly as well as implement her manifesto, to the satisfaction of her supporters.

The optimistic legislator feels that she was well inducted in Parliament, and particularly on Parliamentary procedures. She has adapted well and looks forward to being one of the people contributing to a vibrant 11th Parliament. She hopes the current leaders will debate and pass Bills that will contribute to the growth and development of Kenya. She is a member of the Lands Committee, as well as the Environment and Natural Resources Committee.

When Hon Alice Muthoni Wahome was a young girl, she nurtured big dreams for her future. She did not want to become an ordinary woman in the village, so she motivated herself to work hard in school. The MP for Kandara was born in 1959 in Muruka Location, Kandara Division in Murang'a County, and brought up in a closely knit polygamous family. Her parents worked hard to ensure that she and her siblings did not lack school fees. Alice attended Karumu Primary, Siakago Girls' Secondary and Ngandu Girls' High Schools. She later studied Law at the University of Nairobi from where she graduated in 1984.

Alice worked for two years as a state counsel in the office of the Attorney General, in the civil litigation department. She thereafter started her law firm and got actively involved with women's organisations. She is a founder member of FIDA-Kenya and was also a council member of the Law Society of Kenya (LSK). She got inspired to join politics in 1992, after attending a rally organised by the FORD Party. However, she felt that her children were too young and they still needed her care, and reserved the attempt for a later date.

In May 2002, Alice vied in her constituency of birth, Kandara, and not Tetu Constituency in Nyeri, where her husband comes from. She felt that she had more to offer in Kandara because she knew and understood the needs of the community better. She came second in the Democratic Party (DP) nominations and defected to



ALICE WAHOME
KANDARA

Safina Party. Alice came third in that year's elections. This encouraged and motivated her to improve on the shortcomings and prepare for the next elections.

Between 2002 and 2007 Hon Wahome worked with self-help groups, initiating projects to empower the community. She started her campaign early. Having learnt that it was not wise to vie through a party that

was different from the party of the people's preferred presidential candidate, she made an attempt at the PNU nominations, but missed the ticket. "The officials used delaying tactics to favour the incumbent and discourage other aspirants," she recalls. She filed a complaint at the party headquarters and was awarded the PNU ticket. Her opponent allegedly hired criminals who

physically assaulted and injured her and was admitted in hospital for two days. The case is still in court and yet to be concluded. She continued to be resilient and her family was very supportive.

In July 2012, she joined TNA Party, which was very popular in Murang'a County, and won nomination for Kandara Constituency Parliamentary Seat. Although she intensified her campaign, it was still not as easy as she had expected. Alice had to deal with competitors who maligned her character and spread malicious rumors about her. She fought the propaganda and did not allow herself to be intimidated. Finances were also a big challenge but her political party, and supporters walked with her.

Alice won the Kandara Parliamentary Seat with a landslide in the March 4, 2013 general election. She believes that her success resulted from engaging party structures as well as campaigning well and receiving

support from everyone in her constituency - men women and the youth. "Most women lose election at the nomination level due to the many dishonest acts that take place at that point. This can change with adequate sensitisation," she notes.

The MP serves in various committees in the 11th Parliament, including the Committee on Administration and National Security, the Constitution Implementation Oversight Committee, and the Selection Committee. She is thankful to organisations like AMWIK that helped to shape her leadership skills. She remains vibrant in the women's movement hoping to inspire aspiring women leaders to work hard without giving up. Alice plans to push for several motions in Parliament, including; free secondary education, election law on the two-third gender rule, and also rally support for social security stipend for the elderly and the vulnerable.

Most women lose election at the nomination level due to the many dishonest acts that take place at that point.





AMINA ABDALLA

NOMINATED

Amina Abdalla has been nominated to the August House more times than any other politician. She was first nominated to parliament in 2003 by KANU. The party, under the PNU Alliance, again nominated her to

the 10th Parliament in 2008. She is serving in the 11th Parliament, having been nominated by The National Alliance Party (TNA) of the Jubilee Coalition. The other four nominated women members of the current national assembly are serving their first terms.

Born and brought up in Nairobi, Amina attended New Pumwani Primary School and

Ngara Girls' High School before proceeding to State House Girls' High School for her Advanced Certificate of Education. She graduated with a Bachelor of Science degree in Agriculture and Home Economics at Egerton University.

Amina's first employment was in 1993 at GTZ, a German NGO, through which she was involved in rescue work at Dadaab Refugee Camp in North Eastern Kenya. Her mobilisation skills granted her favour with donors, and as a result the World Conservation Union (IUCN) employed her as a regional coordinator. She managed environmental programmes that required collaboration with the government. Amina soon discovered that there were numerous government bureaucracies that required political goodwill if she was to actualise her organisation's development initiatives. "As the person spearheading the programme, I realised that its success depended on the political class and leadership," she says.

As she strove to overcome the hurdles, Amina developed interest in politics and took on a strategic approach. She first undertook a Master's Degree in International Development Planning at Cornell University in New York, USA. Working in the development sector with exposure to international politics prepared Amina well for her political debut. In 2002, she took leave of absence from her work place to campaign for then KANU Presidential Candidate, Uhuru Kenyatta. She looks back with nostalgia, happy that she made the right decision. She owes her three nominations to Parliament to President Kenyatta, whom she works closely with. Amina acknowledges her

own strength and contribution, saying that parties only identify with you and nominate you if they can “tap into your potential.” She describes politics as the “wheel around which all our lives revolve,” and cannot see any other way to help her people other than through politics. Amina plays a central role in the Jubilee Coalition. She is one of the leaders who fought hard to have Uhuru Kenyatta as the Jubilee Coalition torchbearer during party nominations.

Surprisingly, Amina does not have a role model, and is philosophical about it. She is “motivated by failure.” A smiling Amina explains that she does not accept failure. Whenever she meets a challenge, she summons all her internal and external energies to ensure that she succeeds. “It does not matter how long it takes, I must accomplish what I set out to do,” she says.

The visibly elated member of the National Assembly however shares her admiration and high regard for politician Martha Karua, who left a lasting impression on her during their first encounter at Kenya Women Parliamentary Association (KEWOPA). As Martha welcomed the new women parliamentarians to the political fold in 2002, she challenged them to add value to the legislative debates in the 9th

Parliament. “She told us not to be flowers that decorate Parliament,” Amina says with a giggle. She took the challenge seriously, and has made significant contributions through the parliamentary committees she has chaired or sat in for the past ten years. In 2007, Amina brought to Parliament the motion that established The National Drugs Control Authority.

The MP is the chairperson of the Environment and Natural Resources Committee that is mandated with looking into matters relating to climate change, environmental management and conservation, forestry, water resource management, mining, and natural resources. She can proudly trace her contribution to the New Constitution from Parliament and other

caucuses. In the last Parliament, she served in the Constitutional Implementation Oversight Committee, which oversaw implementation of the 2010 Constitution. She also sits in the powerful committee that vets cabinet and principal secretaries.

Having gained much from KEWOPA since joining Parliament, Amina has been one of its most active members. The environmental scientist encourages women to invest in political parties and explore avenues of owning them. She says: “Political parties are the slaughter houses of women’s political ambitions. It is only after parties recognise your strengths that they begin to tap into them,” She regrets that voters cannot tell the difference between politicians and legislators, and have denied many good legislators a chance to serve in Parliament. “Legislators make laws that are progressive for a developing economy like Kenya. Make wise choices,” she advises the electorate.

The legislator has explored the available opportunities to empower and improve the lives of the nomadic communities in North Eastern Kenya, particularly by building peace among them. She works particularly closely with Muslim women, who respect her as a political role model. She is an inspiration to many sitting women MPs.

**She told us not
to be flowers
that decorate
Parliament.**



Hon Cecily Mutitu Mbarire may be youthful, but her political leadership experience is consistent and rich. She recalls her first leadership role as compound prefect at Sacred Heart Kyeni Girls' High School in Embu. Cecily got into student leadership at her second year of Political Science studies at Egerton University. "Friends urged me to vie for the post of assistant organising secretary, which I did and won," she narrates. At fourth year, the straight talking Cecily vied for the vice chairperson's position and won. "That was the highest office ever held by a female student at the university," she says with confidence.

Serving in student leadership suddenly thrust the energetic Cecily into national politics. "We joined hands with political leaders to fight injustices, including pushing for an end to community clashes in the Rift Valley then," Hon Mbarire narrates. Just two months before completing her studies, Egerton University students went on a strike that saw Cecily and eleven other students expelled. That sudden departure from university did not slow her down. Cecily got into civil society activism through the Education Centre for Women in Democracy (ECWD), on the invitation of Hon Charity Ngilu and Ambassador Tabitha Seii. Meanwhile, the students instituted and won a court case against the university and were able to complete their studies.

At ECWD, Cecily found many young women and men sharpening their skills in leadership, and seven of them started the Youth Agenda, an organisation that has remained strong. Their aim was to help enhance the lives of



CECILY MBARIRE
RUNYENJES

young people through proper education on their political, economic and social rights. The MP's first exposure to "the real world of politics" was in the 1997 Presidential Campaigns for then SDP candidate, Charity Ngilu. "The exposure and experience was an eye opener," says Cecily, who decided then to vie in the next election.

In 2002, the 41-year-old mother of two contested the Runyenjes Parliamentary seat

on a National Party of Kenya ticket under the Narc Coalition, and lost. "I was not politically prepared. We'd gone through ECWD training, but I realised that theory and practice are not the same," confesses Cecily. She started her campaign late, and "was not aware of the ukora (violence) of politics" which saw her lose at nomination level. "I came second in nominations but stayed in the party because I was keen to see a new regime," says

the deeply spiritual Christian. Once again she got involved in presidential campaigns, this time for Hon Mwai Kibaki (now retired president) and he won. Cecily got nominated into Parliament.

"I didn't feel like a nominee," asserts Hon Mbarire, who decided to prove her worth to the Narc Coalition and to the people of Runyenjes. The government appointed her the Assistant Minister for Transport, and she served in the position between 2005 and 2007. In the constituency, she partnered with the government, NGOs and corporate organisations to enhance the lives of the people. Cecily steered the provision of medicine and ambulances to dispensaries, and the improvement of schools, by helping to construct new classrooms. She also helped in identifying employment opportunities for the youth and became well known in the constituency.

In 2007 she was confident of winning the election when she vied on a PNU Party ticket and became the first female MP for Runyenjes Constituency. Again the government appointed her the Assistant Minister for Tourism. Cecily won her seat again in the 2013 general election, being the second MP to have ever served a second term in the constituency. "The people of Runyenjes are notorious for one-term MPs," she shares. The only other MP that has ever done two terms in the constituency was Cecily's late father.

While listing lack of funds as one of the barriers to the success of women seeking political leadership, Hon Mbarire says the greatest challenge she faced in her two campaigns was gender discrimination. When she first vied, not many women were running for political office; besides that, no woman had ever been elected in her community, and convincing voters in her favour was hard.

In the 2013 election, the discrimination

Use your five years wisely; gain experience to vie for different seats in the next election so new women can fill the affirmative action seats.



was two-tiered: first, the people felt she should have vied for the women's representative position, and not the constituency MP position. They also chided her for being a foreigner because she is married to a man from a different community. "They told me that I didn't belong there, and if I needed to vie for the seat then the constitution had provided for special seats for women. I faced them with real issues," she asserts. In 2007 she told voters that she was keen to deliver, and in 2013 she told them that she had pending projects to complete.

After the 2007 election, Hon Mbarire got into "an ambitious water project" and had done 60 per cent by the time of the 2013 election, and as she promised her voters, "I'm trying to finalise the remaining 40 per cent." From experience, she identified lack of water as one of the greatest challenges women face, and has worked tirelessly to avail tapped domestic water. She also has a record of proper CDF management, youth and women's empowerment, as well as enabling an improved education system. About 1,500 young people have been trained on safe boda boda (bicycle taxi) operations, greatly reducing accidents.

Cecily's project highlights are however an irrigation project costing Kshs700 million that has benefitted over 2,000 farmers. "They were trained on modern farming methods and are doing very well," she says. Cecily has also initiated a women's bank that has over 6,000 members. "This is the biggest success story for Runyenjes, and it has helped many women, including me," she says humbly. The obviously ambitious youthful legislator is not stopping work any time soon. She plans to initiate phase two of the irrigation project, and help the youth and women to access the Uwezo Fund.

The seventh born in a family of 10 perceives leadership as a people/servant relationship that requires humility. "Times call for being tough," she advises women politicians, adding that they should remain in touch with voters at the constituency. To county MPs, Cecily recommends: "Use your five years wisely; gain experience to vie for different seats in the next election so new women can fill the affirmative action seats; that's the only way we'll achieve the 30 per cent threshold and meet the purpose of affirmative action." She urges them to come out strongly on issues affecting women and prove that they can be better legislators than men.

The current chairperson of KEWOPA is also the vice chairperson of the Public Accounts Committee, and a member of Transport and Housing Committee. Though younger than most new MPs, she mentors them through different forums, "the way we were supported by the MPs we found in Parliament." The holder of a Post-Graduate Diploma in Gender and Development Studies plans to table a motion that will assure gender equity in agricultural labour inputs. "It intends to compute input of women in agriculture because they work so hard in the farms yet they don't have control over the finances," shares Cecily.



ESTHER GATHOGO

RUIRU

Exuding confidence and warmth, Hon Esther Gathogo is pleased with her achievement. Formerly a businesswoman, she has worked hard, with patience and determination, to become the first female Member of Parliament for Ruiru Constituency. Esther

describes herself as a self-made, charismatic, outgoing, ambitious and resilient woman, who does not hold back when pursuing a goal. "I rose from being a shopkeeper in Githurai Kimbo in the outskirts of Nairobi, to becoming a councilor, deputy mayor and finally the MP of Ruiru Constituency. I'm honoured to serve the people of Ruiru, and to offer them my leadership."

Aware of the complexity of representing the populous constituency of over 300,000 residents, Esther says that she is up to the task. The graduate of Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology (JKUAT) considers herself a born leader. She remembers serving as a class prefect in primary school, and later as deputy head girl at Kibutha Secondary School in Murang'a County. Even as MP, Esther remains the vice chairperson of Mothers' Union, a women's fellowship group, in her local church.

"I joined politics by chance. Just before the 2007 election, a friend requested me to volunteer in his campaign team. After the election, the Party of National Unity (PNU) nominated me as a councilor. This came as a surprise for me, and it took my husband's moral support to transition from a businesswoman to a politician. I was later elected the deputy mayor for Ruiru Municipality, ably serving in the local government and developing my leadership and people skills," recalls Esther.

As the 2013 election drew near, Hon Gathogo decided to take the big leap and vie as the Member of Parliament for Ruiru. She emerged victorious out of the eight aspirants who vied for the The National Alliance (TNA) nominations. "Initially I was a member of the Grand National Union (GNU) Party but my supporters convinced me to join TNA, which was popular at the grassroots." Esther set up a robust campaign team that got to work immediately. Her campaign strategy was door-to-door, to reach as many voters as possible, as every vote counted.

Hon Gathogo encountered a lot of verbal abuse during the campaign. "My opponents spread propaganda about my personal life, which was very discouraging," she shares. She quickly learnt that politics is not for the faint hearted, as, "male opponents are known to hire goons to intimidate us." Esther experienced hooliganism but chose to be proactive by hiring security personnel. She did not let threats or verbal abuse intimidate her in her pursuit to represent Ruiru Constituency.

The other challenge she faced was limited finances. "Election campaigns are very expensive but I had no choice but to work with what I had." Her family and supporters donated to her campaign kitty, while TNA's policy to charge female aspirants half of the fee for party candidates was helpful. Besides that, Esther's volunteers, mainly women and the youth traversed Ruiru to garner support for her. She acknowledges experienced women politicians like Hon Alice Ng'ang'a, the MP for Thika Town Constituency and Hon Rachel Shebesh, the Women Representative for Nairobi County, for their moral support and advise on how to manage a campaign and deal with opponents. "They introduced me to organisations that supported women candidates, training and equipping them with necessary presentation and media skills, and even printing campaign material for the women candidates."

Esther's campaign manifesto clearly articulated issues facing Ruiru. She spelled out her plans to empower women, the youth and people living with disability.

Women leaders have what it takes to transform this country. I hope we will have more women MPs in the next Parliament. Be focused and go for what you want.

Her other agenda was the improvement of school infrastructure and addressing the rampant water problem - plans she hopes to achieve within her initial five-year term. "I was elated when I won the election with over 60,000 votes, defeating many male contestants. Pundits did not expect me to win the election because I'm a woman, while others did not expect me to deliver." Esther is in touch with Ruiru constituents, and is always ready to address issues affecting them, like rising insecurity. She understands Ruiru's potential for development as a rising cosmopolitan constituency.

For the next election, Esther urges women to come out in large numbers and vie for elective positions, and to remain positive and learn from successful women politicians. She challenges them to go beyond vying for the positions of women's representatives, and contest against men

for other positions. In preparation for politics, Esther notes that since women politicians and their families face slander and malice, they should all prepare adequately on how to deal with such challenges. "Women leaders have what it takes to transform this country. I hope we will have more women MPs in the next Parliament. Be focused and go for what you want."

"KEWOPA enables us to network with fellow women MPs from different political parties. We share ideas and strategise on Bills to support in the House," she says in appreciation of the role of KEWOPA in inducting women MPs on parliamentary procedures. Esther is proud to serve in various committees of the House. She is the vice chairperson of the CDF Committee, a member of the Energy Committee, and the treasurer of KEWOPA.

Her dream is to see the implementation of Article 81(b) of the Constitution, touching on the two-thirds gender rule. "In 2012, the Supreme Court ruled that the gender rule should be implemented progressively, but we need to adhere to the spirit of the 2010 Constitution that envisioned affirmative action from the Senate to the County Assemblies. Our country is a patriarchal society and women face cultural and economic challenges compared to men," says the mother of three.

Hon Gathogo, who has been happily married for 20 years, says that she has learnt the art of balancing her family and political responsibilities. Her family supports her political aspiration and cheers her towards excellence.

Esther Murugi is the first woman to vie for the Nyeri Town Constituency parliamentary seat, and she went for it backed by two pros: an aspiration to bring forth a leadership that was accessible to the people; and find a way to address the plight of the elderly.

Esther tossed her hat into the ring for the first time in 1997. She lost. She tried and lost again in 2002. "In my first attempt, I thought that all I needed to do was to let the voters know my plan," she says. She learnt fast that to win one must have a sound work plan, do the groundwork and continuously interact with the people to have them know and believe in you, as only then can they buy into your plan. One must also have the necessary resources and an early start in the campaigning journey.

In her second attempt, she did the above but fell short because she was not in the "correct" party. "Times are changing and we are starting to see people win elections as independent candidates. Nonetheless, it is still very hard to win an election in Kenya if you are not in the most popular political party in a particular region," Murugi says matter-of-factly.

In her third attempt in 2007, Murugi was elected, becoming the first female MP for Nyeri Town Constituency. She was later appointed Minister for Gender and Children Affairs in 2008 and Minister for Special Programmes in 2010.

It was during her time as a minister that Murugi accomplished her biggest feat yet - the pet project that drove her into politics in the first place: providing the necessary care and support to the elderly. "I am happy



ESTHER MURUGI
NYERI TOWN

that the Cash Transfer Programme for Older Persons is still going on, as through it, the elderly in our midst are able to take care of themselves and thus retain their respect," she says. Through the programme, persons over 65 years living in extreme poverty receive Ksh1, 500 monthly for upkeep. Esther oversaw the enhancement of the programme from three districts to 44, in 2009.

In 2013, Murugi was re-elected, becoming

the first MP to capture the Nyeri Town Constituency parliamentary seat for a second term since the advent of multiparty politics in Kenya. "Learn what works for you," says Murugi. "I mean, I'm not many things. I'm not much of a 'shouter'. And guess what? I have come to learn that you don't have to shout to be heard. I'm not a big talker either, and I've also learnt that you don't have to promise voters heaven and earth to be elected," she adds.

Her greatest achievement in the constituency is the implementation of water projects, which have enabled most households get access to adequate water for home and farm use. She is also proud of the level of transparency in her constituency, stating that anyone who visits the Nyeri Town CDF offices can see how every coin given to the constituency has been used.

Born in 1953, Murugi never thought of joining politics until her early 40s. "I didn't have a particular career in mind until I joined high school and started fancying a career in nursing," she says. "Actually, almost my entire class wanted to become nurses - thanks to our overly pretty school nurse." This dream died instantly though, when Murugi's class visited Eldoret District Hospital and found out that a nurse's job was not that pretty. Murugi opted for a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Land Economics at the University of Nairobi in the 1970s before working at several organisations and eventually starting her own real estate firm Lustman & Co Ltd in 1989.

In the early 1990s, while still running her young company, Murugi joined Soroptimist International and started working and interacting with women living in her home village of Githiru in Nyeri. These interactions made her realise that she was the type of leader her community was looking for: approachable, dependable and accountable.

The MP's greatest source of inspiration is her grandmother. "I was named after my maternal grandmother, the founder member of the Women's Guild in Nyeri and one of my first exposures to women in leadership," says Murugi. The first born in a family of 11 had her first leadership role at Highlands

Secondary School, (now Moi Girls' School Eldoret). The school also produced another of Murugi's role models, the late Philomena Chelagat, former Eldoret North MP. "When I was appointed a prefect in high school, most of my friends were the noisemakers and so they knew I would just let them be. I didn't. In so doing, I learnt a key leadership lesson: doing the right thing."

In politics, Murugi learnt the importance of doing the right thing at the right time. "One of the biggest challenges women in politics face is violence during political campaigns," she says. She handles this by following the counsel of the late Isaiah Mathenge, a friend of her father's and one of the candidates she competed against in the 1997 election. He told her not to campaign during the night.

"Calling it a day at 6 p.m. may seem like a disadvantage seeing that men go on campaigning way into the night, but the

idea is to concentrate on what works for you," she says reassuringly. "The strategy can protect you from physical violence. For verbal violence, which women aspirants get in abundance, a thick skin will do the trick," adds Murugi who is a member of the Committee on Appointment and the Lands Committee.

The thick skin also comes handy when a woman is elected, as politics is still very much patriarchal. "The notion that women are not supposed to hold opinions on important matters is still alive," says Murugi who though soft-spoken, speaks her mind when need be.

Grateful for a second chance to serve the people of Nyeri Town Constituency, Murugi is not looking too far into the future because there is still a lot to be done in the present, including tackling issues of drug and alcohol abuse, unemployment, and the declining standard of education in her constituency.

She hopes to make a difference that would start changing people's mindset about women's ability to lead. "I would rather more resources were used to help voters appreciate the role women play in leadership than in organising conferences for women aspirants," she says.

Murugi who unwinds by reading, swimming or farming, is optimistic about the future of women in politics in Kenya, but states that it will take a while before a woman takes the highest office in the land. "For Kenya to get a woman president is a tall, tall, tall order. Yes, three tall," she says, never missing a chance to exercise her funny bone. "It isn't impossible, but it will take time. Let's start by electing women senators and governors," she states.

Calling it a day at 6 p.m. may seem like a disadvantage seeing that men go on campaigning way into the night, but the idea is to concentrate on what works for you.

Grace Kipchoim has defied culture and other obstacles to become the first woman from the minority Endorois Community to get elected to Parliament. Grace won the Baringo South Constituency seat in the March 4, 2013 General Election. "I won because I planned well. I conducted a well-coordinated campaign and delivered the right messages to voters. It was tough but I managed to defeat all other candidates, predominantly men," she says. Grace is among the 16 women elected to the 11th Parliament, and is motivated by a desire to alleviate poverty in her constituency, and empower women and youth economically. She wants these two groups of people to write proposals that can win them credit facilities for their income generating activities. "Women and youth are the majority in Baringo South, yet the most disadvantaged economically. I want to see their fortunes change for better," she says.

To succeed, Grace pledges to operate on an open door policy and incorporate the views of all her constituents. "All views from my constituents matter. I have to be open minded about the concerns of my constituents, but I also have to strike a balance between their expectations and reasonable priorities," she says. She did her Certificate of Primary Education (CPE) at Solian Primary School and proceeded to Kapropita Secondary School and later Lugulu Girls' High School in Western Kenya, for her advanced level (A-level) of education. She joined the Kenya College of



GRACE KIPCHOIM
BARINGO SOUTH

Accountancy (KCA) and achieved Certified Public Accountancy (CPA 5). She worked with Medical Training College (MTC) from 1982 till she joined politics.

According to her, a wise choice of the political vehicle to use, URP, was also key to her emerging victorious in the election. Most contestants on the party's ticket, whose

leader is Deputy President, William Ruto, easily won seats not only in the county but also in the expansive Rift Valley Province. Her priority areas include education to empower residents to be self-reliant in all sectors. "I am particularly going to ensure both young girls and boys are given an equal chance in education by campaigning against early

marriages among young girls," she notes. Grace also intends to ensure development of more schools in Baringo South, and equipping them for better educational provision for local children. She also plans to fight against insecurity, which to her is a major threat to development, not only in the area, but in other parts of the country as well. Baringo County is among the hardest hit by the cattle rustling menace. "Development can only be realised where people live in peace and engage in their daily activities without fear. I intend to champion peace in the constituency and even neighbouring constituencies," adds the MP.

To promote infrastructural development, especially roads, she intends to liaise with the county government and the national government. "Close working relations between the two levels of government is crucial in infrastructure development particularly roads. Roads play an important role in personal and regional development, since they enhance access to services and markets. This is high on my list of priorities," explains Grace.

In the National Assembly, she sits in the Transport, Public Works and Housing Committee. She is a member of KEWOPA, and has benefitted from its induction programmes for women MPs and Senators. "Women in this country are still disadvantaged when it comes to elective leadership and a lot has to be done in mentoring those aspiring to make a mark," she

points out. She adds the need for KEWOPA to partner with other organisations involved in women empowerment programmes to boost women's numbers in elective positions. "Despite the new constitution's provision on gender equity, we are yet to realize the two thirds gender provision. This is an area that requires urgent measures and interventions," notes the first-time MP. She says however that it is upon women MPs in Parliament as well as those in the County Assemblies to be at the fore-front at championing for increased representation of women at all levels in the next general election. "We are going to be watched as women elected leaders on our contribution towards realizing gender equity in line with the Constitution. It is a challenge we must work to overcome," she says.

The mother of four says that through proper planning, she is able to create time for both politics and family. "My time management has room for my family, meetings and listening to my constituents, attending to the National Assembly's responsibilities and other political engagements.

Development can only be realised where people live in peace and engage in their daily activities without fear.



Were politics all aboutspeaking loud and heckling, then Hon Hellen Jepkemoi Sambili, the MP for Mogotio and a one-time cabinet minister,would have long been ruled out of it. Her gentle voice mirrors her humility, something that contradicts her status as a seasoned politician. Hellen has retained her parliamentary seat twice in succession. Prof Sambili's words are calculated, and like she attests, "necessarily few". "Not in politics, not anywhere should anyone shout to be heard," she states, adding that politics is not a game of words like some people deduce. "It is a game of action and delivering to the people who sent you to represent them in whatever capacity," she declares.

Born in a small drought-prone village in Mogotio, Hellen attended Kipng'orom Primary School with the determination to excel in academics. Having lost her father at the age of eight, Hellen watched her mother make immense decisions on her own, andstruggle to bring up herseven children single-handedly. "My mother has since been my role-model and I vowed to work hard in school to assist her in educating my siblings," the second born of the seven siblings says. Hellen remembers her childhood with nostalgia: "I wanted to become a teacher because I was not exposed to manycareeroptions. Besides that, teaching was already viewed as a noble job," she states. Today as an MP, she is a member of many school boards and an academic mentor to many youth.

With education from the Universityof Nairobi, Lancaster University, UK, and a



HELLEN SAMBILI
MOGOTIO

Commonwealth Fellowshipalso in the UK, the former Minister for Higher Education is a veritable academician. She studied Botany and Zoology in herundergraduate studies, taught at Kabarak Girls' High School among other renowned schools. She lectured at the Egerton University, Njoro, where she was a curriculum and instruction head of department and an acting dean,till she joined politics.

"I thank my husband for his great support as I went through these levels of education. He stood by me and was my mentor," she reveals. She asserts that her education has influenced her in promoting schools within her community. "When I sponsor students to join universities, I am sure that their lives will change for the better!" she emphasises, adding that her competence influenced even

her siblings who equally did well in school.

Hellen's star in leadership started shining at an early age. However, she could barely tell that it would be her gateway, not only as an educationist but also as a renowned politician. The land in Kipng'orum was very unproductive and as Prof Sambili now recounts, her mother moved the family to the neighboring Kiplombe Village. As a result, Hellen and her siblings transferred to Kiplombe Primary School. It is in this new school that the head teacher spotted her prowess in education and nurtured her. "Today, I recognise Kiplombe Primary School as the foundation that made me the professor that I am," she says, noting that she still recalls how the head teacher insisted that she remains back and "make a name" for his school even when the family went back to Kipng'orum after the drought.

Coming from the remote Kiplombe Village where politics, especially among women, was previously unheard of, it was unsurprisingly not in Hellen's wildest dreams that she would one day be a Cabinet Minister, or even a representative of the government. "My dream was to become a high school teacher and be a role model to my siblings," she laughs because indeed a teacher she did become though at the highest level.

The wife and mother of four, Hellen recalls how she stayed with her grandmother in Kiplombe when her family went back to their village. "Not only was I lonely because of being separated from my family, but I was also overwhelmed by house chores," she remembers. She tells how she walked six kilometers to Kiplombe Primary School every weekday and collected firewood on her way back home. She would then fetch water and

One should bear in mind that the illiterate woman in the village and the doctorate holder in Parliament are all partners.



make dinner for her and her grandmother, before settling down to do her homework. "From that mud-walled hut, I emerged first in Kiplombe and joined Nakuru High School," she beams. She was the head-girl in the mixed secondary school, where her potential for leadership was released.

Prof Sambili's entry into Parliament was an unpleasant experience; political skirmishes had rocked the country in the post 2007/2008 election. She regrets that she had not even healed from bruises of the political campaign when duty to preach peace in the county called. "I had been rigged out at the nomination level by ODM and had joined the then unpopular UDM through which I got the seat," she asserts, adding that she thought that she would have time to heal from the disappointment by ODM.

In the 2013 election, Hellen vied on a KANU ticket and though it was not a walk in the park, she won. She declares that her gentleness has silenced many people who would have tried to foil her campaigns by insulting her. She never experienced any physical or verbal violence. "I believe that the best way to avoid a quarrel is by keeping quiet," she remarks.

Her promise to the Mogotio people has been the same since joining politics: "I will protect your resources." She has started eleven secondary schools and helped over 300 youth to get jobs. Women and the youth were among her key supporters and she notes that it would be inexcusable not to involve them when she settled in Parliament. "I have always felt agitated to see people languishing in need while the people they elected enjoy posh lives," she observes. She shakes her head disapprovingly as she recollects the cold nights with her supporters in a community that is so hostile to women leadership.

Hon Sambili says that her relationship with the opponents she defeated in the election, and colleagues in Parliament, is cordial, thanks to her Christian faith. She has not received any training from any politically affiliated body and does not think it is necessary. "I find it a waste of time, more so for the MPs who have served a previous term" she notes. The legislator believes that politics is something you learn on the job and one can do well if they relate well with everyone in the political circles. "One should bear in mind that the illiterate woman in the village and the doctorate holder in Parliament are all partners in one way or another," she stresses.

For women wishing to join politics, Prof Sambili warns about being cosmetic. She says that it is prudent to be yourself and sell the original you. "You cannot hide in cosmetics forever, your lie will soon expose you!" she says. The MP advises that interacting with people in the community before announcing one's political intentions is a good idea, because people get to know the aspirant better before the campaigning period begins. "No one will vote for a stranger," she wraps up.

Hon Janet Marania Teiyaa was the first girl to get an education in Ilkilorit Village, Kaijado County. Janet has been passionate about politics since childhood. “Whenever I got the opportunity, I would cheer any leader addressing a gathering, and it didn’t matter if I knew him or not; as long as he was talking politics, he had my ears,” she laughs. Her passion for and interest in politics was so overwhelming that Janet could not hide it from friends and family. Her parents often complained that she was getting overboard with her political debates. “I liked listening to the radio and reading newspapers for news; any news on politics, to keep myself updated,” says the nominated MP.

Away from her youthful dreams, as an adult, Janet has engaged in politics from a different platform and in different capacities. She was an agent at a local polling station during the 2007 election, and later during the August 2010 constitutional referendum. Janet also remembers campaigning actively prior to the YES/NO referendum of 2005.

The 33-year-old legislator says that she has worked hard in her community and appreciates that she got rewarded with the political leadership position. The journey, she says, began after her secondary education at Enoomatasiani Mixed Boarding School. Janet took a one year accounts course at Masaai Technical Institute in Kajiado Town, after which she started projects to improve women’s social and economic well being in her village. She also dabbled as an adult education teacher.



JANET TEIYAA

NOMINATED

Through a women’s group called Ewanganoo Ilkilorit Self Help Group that she initiated in 2007, Janet spearheaded sponsorship of girls to school. Fifteen girls have already benefited. Hon Teiyaa also founded an NGO called Wema Trust to support and empower persons living with disability. “I believe people living with disability should enjoy the same rights and opportunities as others. They should be free

to communicate and have their views heard,” she says. Through the organisation, persons with disability in her area enjoy improved sanitation through easy access to toilets and water; improved mobility; education and physical fitness, among others.

Because she likes to empower her community, Janet has helped many Maasai men and women get adult education to be able to read and write and transact businesses

with understanding. "Many local pastors now know how to read their Bibles, while small and medium enterprise owners are able to run their businesses more efficiently, and even access loans," Janet reveals, happily. She has held seminars in various parts of Kajiado to empower her people socially, economically and spiritually. Kajiado is one of the richest counties in Kenya, something that Janet is proud of.

Being nominated to parliament by TNA Party to represent persons with disability was an honour to the first born of seven siblings. "That I am a woman, and one with a disability, and I'm serving my people in Parliament, is a big achievement," exclaims the soft spoken Janet. She says that cultural norms in her community continue to perpetuate stigmatisation of people with disability and women. Janet did not know that local leaders in her county had identified her as a potential leader and the right candidate to represent persons with disability in Parliament. When she got the news, through an IEBC gazette announcement at her local market, she was elated. She recalls that some of her benefactors had urged her to vie for a seat in the general election to represent persons with disability, but she had declined due to her work load. "Seems like God had already decided my fate," she laughs.

Although Janet could not stand up or walk using her legs, she played and did much of the things children her age did. Crippled by polio at the age of five, her biggest challenge was that her polygamous father was not willing to send her to school alongside her siblings. "By God's grace, a social worker, Grace Kinyatua, heard about my plight and together with the local chief,

Ole Sayo, they got my parents to take me to school," she recalls with a smile. She attended AIC Kajiado Girls' Boarding Primary School, where she learnt to walk on crutches, easing off the discomfort of depending on others to move around.

The legislator shares advice with other potential leaders: "Learn as you go. Take one day at a time. The best teachers are leaders who have been there before you, who have succeeded in addressing issues affecting Kenyans." Janet appreciates the good relationship she enjoys with parliamentary colleagues of either gender. "They are friendly and always willing to assist each other," she says. The MP sits in the Labour and Social Welfare Committee. Keen to understand parliamentary processes, Janet has been taking her time to first adapt to her new environment, and learn about parliamentary Standing Orders, language and how to ask and respond to questions and motions, among other things. "Now I feel ready to start working on a Bill," says the born again Christian, adding that all things are possible with God.

Learn as you go. Take one day at a time. The best teachers are leaders who have been there before you, who have succeeded in addressing issues affecting Kenyans.



She appreciates the work KEWOPA has done in mentoring women leaders. "KEWOPA has been at the fore front in ensuring that we are well equipped with knowledge and skills even as we serve Kenyans," notes Janet. She hopes that Parliament will ensure that the one third gender rule is attained soon. "Countries like Rwanda, Uganda and Tanzania are far ahead of us when it comes to these issues. Kenyans, we should pull up our socks," she states.

Some of the challenges she has faced include the slow pace of effecting major changes on issues that affect persons with disability. Janet and fellow parliamentarians with disability are forced to stay at the back during parliamentary sittings because there is no ramp to help them access the front. This challenge reminds her of one of her priorities during her term in Parliament: to ensure the lives of persons with disability are improved. "I plan to push for implementation of the legislation that makes it mandatory to have ramps built in all public buildings to increase access for persons with disability. I will also push to have the government compel public transport vehicles to be built to accommodate people with disability, especially those on wheel chairs," she declares.

The other priorities that Hon Teiyaa hopes to achieve in this term are construction of more bore holes and improvement of roads to reduce the burden on her people. She will also continue to address the sorry plight of girls and women in her county. Currently she is seeking solutions for women who do beadwork for a living, who are currently facing challenges due to a slump in tourism. "Leaders are meant to be servants who are serving their people, and that is what I am out to do," she says.



JESSICA MBALU

KIBWEZI EAST

Kibwezi East Member of Parliament, Hon. Jessica Mbalu, won her current position with a landslide, unexpected of a first timer in political leadership. A woman of remarkable modesty and decorum, Jessica draws her strength from family.

Her interest has always been in

development, having worked with the women and youth of Kibwezi before she started her journey to politics. Some of her initiatives include being a founding trustee of Centre for Women and Girls, an organisation that exists to empower women, being the patron of RICH, an association that works with people affected by HIV/AIDS, and a board member of St. Mary's Secondary School.

Hon. Mbalu is not new to leadership, having been a prefect from her early days in school. "I was a prefect at Ituumo Primary School, and head girl at Muvuti Secondary School, and participated in student leadership during my undergraduate studies at the University of Nairobi," Jessica recalls. Before joining Parliament, she worked as a finance consultant for Water Trust Board, and a part-time lecturer at the Catholic University of Eastern Africa. "When my head of department at the university encouraged me to pursue a leadership position in my constituency, my family and friends supported the idea and I decided to run with it," she says.

It was not until nine months to the election that Jessica declared her interest in vying for the Kibwezi East parliamentary seat. She had been and still is an apprentice of the women leaders whose strong persona she admires, particularly Hon. Charity Ngilu, Wavinya Ndeti and Martha Karua. "During my campaign, I was branded Martha Karua wa Kibwezi," she says smiling. Jessica looked up to Hon. Ngilu in many ways and even engaged with her party, NARC-Kenya, before moving to the Wiper Democratic Movement. "This was solely because the political wave in Kibwezi at the time was in favour of the CORD Coalition, and since this is what my constituents wanted, I moved from NARC-Kenya to Wiper. Notably, this did not jeopardise my relationship with Hon. Ngilu with whom I still work," she explains.

Apart from political preparation by experienced women leaders, Jessica

benefited from training by organisations such as the UNDP. Her case was a “get it right the first time” scenario, as she had barely six months to make herself known to the constituents, liked, preferred over other candidates, and most important, voted for. At the Wiper Party, she went through nominations, and being a first timer, astounded many when she won it with a landslide. She says the achievement was not easy. While winning the nomination was a step towards the right direction, real work awaited her during campaigns. Her posters were pulled down, and her constituents urged not to vote for her just because she was a woman. “There was propaganda about my conduct that was aimed at discouraging me - that as a woman I was not good enough to represent the people of Kibwezi. But that was not about to put me down because I am proud to be a woman,” she asserts.

Wisely, Hon Mbalu chose to keep her head high and focus on her campaign. She did not respond to her critics with insults because, as she puts it, “I have to maintain my respect regardless, because these men are our brothers, fathers, husbands, sons and so on.” She received insurmountable support from women and the youth, perhaps because she already had rapport with them in the development projects she had initiated, and because she is a youthful woman.

The Certified Public Accountant witnessed a huge turnout at her first rally. She had invited family, friends, and being a staunch Catholic, the clergy. “I wished the election was happening the

I have to maintain my respect regardless, because these men are our brothers, fathers, husbands, sons and so on.



following day!” she says. The tremendous show of support motivated her further.

Jessica’s issues of priority for her constituents are water, education and poverty. Her goal is to do her very best, and to leave a legacy. As Jessica puts it, there were a number of white elephant projects left undone by her predecessors, some of them dating back to three terms. She plans to finish those as well as her own new projects before leaving office. Hon Mbalu has worked on water projects and education. She notes that most pupils in her constituency do so well in primary school but not in secondary school due to limited resources.

A member of KEWOPA, Jessica appreciates the association for building her capacity and mentoring her on diverse parliamentary issues, including how to approach Bills and Motions, and how to deal with pertinent issues in her constituency. She received basic induction to parliamentary procedures, and the rest, especially about the Constitution and Standing Orders, as she puts it, “You learn through experience and participation.” She is part of the chairperson’s panel, popularly known as the Speaker’s Panel. Courtesy of this position, she serves in

the Public Accounts Committee, Business House Committee, and Rules and Regulations Committee. She has made major contributions in Motions related to water, land and electricity, which are a priority in her constituency.

Among the challenges the MP faces include the expectation that she has to solve her constituents’ every problem immediately. She tackles this by setting her priorities right. Her family is her backbone, and Jessica creates time for her husband and their two sons. She strongly believes in women empowering fellow women, and notes that the resources used to train women political leaders are a wise investment because the trainings help women become better leaders.

To women aspiring for elective positions, Jessica says: “Go, go, go! I encourage more women to take up leadership positions and not to be intimidated by challenges.” Noting that certain changes in Parliament can only be achieved with the participation of more women, Jessica looks forward to the day that women in Parliament will not be a third only, but as many as the men, because they are capable of winning more elective positions.

On vying in 2017, the confident leader says, “My leadership is focused on output. At the end of my term, I will evaluate my performance and when satisfied I will go back to the ballot box for the same or a higher position.” Jessica has a degree in Commerce, Finance option, and an MBA, Strategic Management option, both from the University of Nairobi, and is currently pursuing a PHD.

Confident, assertive and accountable are the words that best describe Dr Joyce Laboso, the MP for Sotik. A distinguished scholar, a teacher by profession and a seasoned politician, Dr Laboso stands out in her community. “Who would have ever guessed that I would walk the hot political ground after many years of a peaceful life as a lecturer and high school teacher?” the deputy speaker of the National Assembly wonders.

The first born in a family of six, Joyce commanded respect from her siblings at a very young age. “I always felt in charge and welcomed no intimidation, especially from bullies,” she recalls. Being in charge saw her become a prefect throughout her primary and secondary school education. She resolved differences between her siblings with judiciousness that stunned her mother. “My siblings were close in age, making fighting inevitable, but I was the one to stop any kind of misunderstanding between them,” she chuckles.

Born in a financially stable family in Kericho, Joyce attended some of the most prestigious schools in the area, including the then famous Molo Primary School and Kaplong Girls’ Boarding School. She later joined Kenya (Girls’) High School for her secondary and advanced level education. She owes her character to Kenya High School, noting that her talents were spotted and nurtured there. “I could sing like a cockatiel parrot and recite poetry so well that today I wonder why I didn’t pursue music in my line of education,” she recounts. Dancing is still one of her hobbies.

Joyce’s love for poetry and literature, which she has extensively pursued



JOYCE LABOSO
SOTIK

academically, stems from her grandmother who she stayed with in her first years of primary school. Joyce says her grandmother was never short of stories and songs that were educative and had a moral. She remembers with nostalgia listening to her grandmother’s folk songs and stories about animals during long walks to the farm to weed. The alumni of Kenyatta University studied Literature and French, and got a scholarship for her post-

graduate degree in France. She started French Classes at Kipsigis Girls’ Secondary School where she was posted to upon returning from France. After her Master’s studies in the UK, Joyce taught at the Egerton University, Njoro.

She started off as an assistant lecturer, rose to become a lecturer, then an assistant dean of students, before flying again to the UK’s University of Hull for her PhD. She owes a lot of her success to her academic

accomplishments. "I attend workshops and courses whenever I have an opportunity even in my current capacity as a politician," she states. Though her schedule is tight, the wife and mother of two works efficiently and finds time for her family. "At the end of it all, I am still the wife to my husband and the mother of my two children," she quips.

Having won the Sotik Parliamentary Seat twice consecutively, the MP points out that politics is not a piece of cake, and that one has to learn the skill of convincing and building supporters' trust. During political campaigns, she notes that anything can bring the candidate down. "My marriage to a man from the Luo community, for instance, did not only bring family displeasure, but also caused me serious political headache," she recalls, adding that she had to be wise to be accepted by her Luo and Sotik relatives.

Joyce met and married her husband amidst opposition from her family and community. But like she refers to herself, she was the "madam fix it" who later stood up, as an MP, to preach anti-tribalism in her community.

Joyce met and married her husband amidst opposition from her family and community. But like she refers to herself, she was the "madam fix it" who later stood up, as an MP, to preach anti-tribalism in her community.

Her debut into politics was unceremonious. The first signals were sent as she eulogised her late sister, Lorna, who had died in a plane crash barely three months after being elected to Parliament. She recalls how, during the funeral, she mentioned the issues her sister would have addressed had she completed her term, rousing loud and enchanting applause. The message was clear that the people wanted her to fill the position left by her sister. A week later, elders announced that they had chosen her to fill the vacant Sotik Parliamentary Seat. "I was dumbfounded!" she recollects. "I am the least vocal in my family and wondered what I would say during campaigns or even as a representative of the people."

After soul-searching and encouragement from her husband and family, Joyce gave the position a try, consoling herself that even if she did not make it, no one would blame her for not trying. "I engaged with ODM which was the party of the time and the party with which my sister had won," she recalls. When Joyce won the primary election, her courage increased and she forged ahead, even though her opponents argued that she had been favoured. During the nomination, she reflected that she would sail through using her late sister's manifesto, which she had helped to draft. She has stood by that manifesto and is glad that most of her late sister's wishes for the Sotik Community have been accomplished.

Her first campaign saw enormous backing from women and the youth. "Political campaign is not a game for the nervous," she says, remembering that at one point her opponents had paid goons to strip her naked at one of her rallies. She dared them to come near her while on the rostrum as she addressed her supporters. "Though I laugh out when I remember my maiden campaign, the things people do and say during such campaigns are a foul taste to the mouth," she states.

**Political campaign
is not a game for
the nervous.**



The second race for the parliamentary seat was not as difficult as the first as Laboso had become renown in politics. She had successfully moved a bill to law. Her choice of party was again prompted by its popularity in Sotik. "It was URP for me, and again I won by a landslide," she says.

Joyce acknowledges that she has learned a lot from KEWOPA and other seasoned women politicians such as Hon Charity Ngilu, among others, and gained the confidence to hold the deputy speaker's position. "I had sat as an acting speaker before, what would stop me from being the deputy speaker of the National Assembly?" I had reasoned.

Dr Laboso enjoys mentoring school and university girls from her constituency. In her two terms in Parliament, Joyce has prioritised the development of roads, education, water and electricity within her constituency. She has also held close to heart women's empowerment. So far, the legislator has seen the revamping of Kamureito and Kapures roads, together with the tarmacking of Gorgo road. This has made transport of merchandise to the markets easier for the people. She has also had water tanks put in different schools and started several water projects. Dr Laboso also prides in having started in the constituency, a women's Sacco, which already has 5000 members. A Youth Sacco will soon get started.

The Deputy Speaker has some advice for women interested to vie for an elective position: "Start selling yourself early, attend weddings, baby showers and funerals in your constituency. That way people will know you before you go asking for their votes," she cautions, and quickly adds; "Don't fear insults and malice. Be focused on what you intend to give your people," she concludes.

She made history when she won the Teso South Parliamentary seat. Mary Emaase, a person of remarkable achievement, is the first woman to be elected an MP in Teso South Constituency, and the third to be elected in Busia County. Her predecessors were Prof Julia Ojiambo, a former Funyula Constituency MP, and Prof Christine Mango, who represented Butula Constituency. Mary is also the first MP from the Teso Community to join Parliament. Vying on a URP ticket, she clinched the seat with 14,420 votes, beating her closest challenger with more than 3,000 votes. Mary was the only elected female MP in the more than 30 constituencies in Western Province.

An accountant by profession, Mary had sworn not to lose in the political battle. She assured the Teso South voters that casting their votes in her favour translated into electing the right leader who genuinely cared about the welfare of the people. After party nominations, she quit her original party, ODM, which was one of the popular parties in the region, for URP. ODM, she said, had rigged her out in favour of a stronger candidate. Confident of her popularity, Mary moved to URP, vowing to teach ODM and the bigger political parties a lesson. "For years, these parties have looked down upon women candidates, however strong, preferring to push in male candidates, who have more money," she regrets.

Elated by her win, Mary announced that she would immediately start to implement all the projects she had promised. Striking a reconciliatory tone, she says, "I look



MARY EMAASE
TESO SOUTH

forward to working with the brothers who were my opponents in the contest, because pooling our ideas will ensure that Teso South Constituency moves forward fast, and unite the people towards a common cause. At the end of the day, we will not be judged by how many diplomas we received, or how much money we made, or how many great

things we did; but we will be judged by 'I was hungry, and you gave me something to eat, I was naked and you clothed me. I was homeless, and you took me in;' this is what we have to be and do in our society," she says, quoting Mother Teresa, who is one of her role models.

Having tested and seen the benefits

of education, Mary plans to transform education in Teso South Constituency to escalate development. Her other priority is to fight insecurity that has been common in the area since early 2013. "This is one of the first challenges I have faced as MP as it began just months after my election," she says. She has persuaded the government to deploy more security personnel in the area as one of the immediate measures. "Busia County was bruised irreparably by the killings that took place this year and we need lasting solutions. The people fear that conflict might recur if not properly handled," she discloses.

Like in most parts of Kenya, poverty among the people of Teso South Constituency is one of problems that bother Mary. To reduce it, she is working towards eliminating unemployment. Also on her list of priorities is the improvement of the rights and welfare of girls and women. Her other plans include

For years these parties have looked down upon women candidates however strong, preferring to push in male candidates who have more money.



providing clean water and improving the road network in the constituency.

Mary is the vice chairperson of the Budget and Appropriations Committee in the National Assembly. She also sits in the Finance, Planning and Trade Committee,

and the Committee on Selection, which nominates members to serve in Parliamentary committees. As a member of KEWOPA, she is one of the new female MPs who have been inducted well to carry out her duties competently in the 11th Parliament. "Without KEWOPA's support, we new comers would be lost around the House," she says.

During her homecoming fete, Mary hosted Deputy President, Hon William Ruto. More than 10 MPs from the region attended and pledged to work closely with her and the Jubilee Government. She has also pledged to unite with her Teso North counterpart (who also won on a URP ticket) to promote development of the two constituencies for the benefit of the Teso Community. Her approach to leadership is people driven, inviting her constituents to share with her through the social media, their concerns and problems and how best to solve them.



MARY WAMBUI

OTHAYA

She is a go-getter. In her 50s, Mary Wambui, the MP for Othaya, has deleted the word impossible from her vocabulary. "I chose to work hard and prayed to God to help me achieve all that I have ever dreamed of," the first-time legislator states.

Brought up in a humble family that could sometimes barely get enough to eat, Mary owes her success to her determination and assertiveness. She confirmed to herself, her family and constituents that everything is possible when she trounced her political opponents and succeeded former president, Mwai Kibaki, as MP for the coveted Othaya Constituency. "When I decided to contest for

the seat, I knew I would not stop at anything until I got it," says the calm mother of one.

Mary remembers her life as a young girl, with nostalgia. The poverty and need she experienced as she grew up did not stop her from emerging the household name she is today, and getting into heights of politics and business prosperity. She enjoyed joining her age-mates to the forests, which were Mau-Mau hideouts, to fetch firewood and draw water. "I was an obedient child and my mother's favorite, so I did most of the house chores," recalls the first born of three. Besides, Mary was scared of corporal punishment, so she never disobeyed. "I don't remember a day when my mother physically disciplined me," she laughs.

Born in Munyange Location, Mary attended Munyange Primary School. She was a sports girl who always represented her school in competitions. Her father, who was an employee in the then common European farms, could not afford her secondary education, forcing her to drop out after primary. She has today focused on education for her constituents, saying she must give them what she never got. "I have been manhandled several times by people who are more educated than I am," she confides.

Hard work has been her mantra since childhood. She learned from her mother never to depend on anyone but to be fast to assist other people. The Christian from the Presbyterian Church of East Africa notes that she gets most of her blessings through giving. "I owe my success in business and politics to generosity," she discloses. Mary started business after quitting employment as an untrained teacher in both Mukima and Chita Primary Schools in Nyeri.

The soft-spoken Mary had barely taught

for two years when she quit. Her father had died. With her little savings at the Post Office Bank, she bought a farm at Ol Kalou and started farming. She later bought another farm in Othaya where her business started flourishing. I bought cows and engaged workers and soon I was doing very well in business," she recollects.

It is however her involvement in charity work that brought the MP fame. After her business picked up well, she started giving donations to schools, hospitals, churches and other charitable institutions. She recalls one time when the Othaya Dairy Farmers' Society where she is a member, was on the verge of being auctioned for a Ksh3million loan and she offered to bail it out. "I paid the loan and through my friends and well-wishers, we were able to even pay the workers and enable the society to stand on its feet again," she happily notes.

With reputation from her charity work, Othaya people elected Mary the secretary of Maendeleo ya Wanawake Organisation at the district level, serving them from 1976 to the 1980s. She remains a life member. She also started the Mama Winnie Foundation. "This is a platform where I assist those who are in need. I have paid school fees for scores of university students and feed hundreds of orphans and vulnerable children," she says. It was no wonder that the MP donated her first salary as legislator to the youth to boost their business in motor cycle transport.

Her political eyes were opened when the then President and MP for Othaya, Kibaki, retired and the seat was declared vacant. She considered the good work that the former MP had done and thought that she was in the best position to continue with it. "Many people approached me saying that because

I was assisting them, I should continue from a political platform," she notes. She grabbed the opportunity and announced her interest in the seat. As she puts it, she was shocked to know how politics can be tiring and overwhelming. "I was used to charity work but in the political campaign, I realised I was no match financially with the other contenders."

As if that was not enough, her opponents challenged her education in court. This, Mary confesses, was something she had not thought about as she entered the political field. She jumped the hurdle easily thanks to a teacher who had taken her through secondary education as a private student. The politician has also done other simple administrative courses privately. "This experience has motivated me to promote education for all the youth in my constituency," she affirms. She secures scholarships for bright students through Mama Winnie Foundation, and gives bursaries through CDF.

Most of the Othaya MP's supporters were women who had known her generosity and concern for the youth. The youth also played a great role in mobilising people for her during the political campaign, which Mary refers to as a "nightmare". She attributes her sailing through to her fear of God. "During

campaign, supporters can be paid off to say anything about an aspirant but my best weapon was silence," she recalls. She lauds her friends in politics, including Rachel Shebesh and Beth Mugo who gave her moral support to soldier on. "Beth is my friend and I used to consult her many times," she said. Her worst experience, she says, was after she had won the nomination but realised that her certificate had been given to someone else. "I stormed the IEBC offices demanding an explanation until I got the certificate," she notes, adding that she felt humiliated.

Mary is glad to settle in her office after winning protracted court battles with one of her opponents. She did not have time to do much during the case in which her opponent had challenged her election claiming that the process had been marred by irregularities and electoral malpractices. The initial petition at the high court was dismissed, but her opponent appealed the decision at the Court of Appeal, where she lost the case. The MP was however reinstated by the Supreme Court.

The resilient legislator observes that the cultural belief that women are not worth political leadership is a thing of the past. She urges men to support women who wish to get into politics. This will enable more women aspirants to contest in future general elections. Mary's caution to any woman who wishes to vie for a political seat: "Block your ears and be focused. Don't be intimidated by insults and false accusations as you will lose your track," she concludes.

Hon Wambui is a member of the Agriculture, Livestock and Cooperatives Committee and the Constitution Implementation Oversight Committee, as well as KEWOPA.

Block your ears and be focused. Don't be intimidated by insults and false accusations as you will lose your track.



Hon Millie Odhiambo-Mabona is an achiever. “I grew up liking challenges... I beat boys in class and they cried. Always,” she recalls. Her life’s journey is a bold painting of a woman who will pursue any dream to its successful end. Millie first thought about becoming Mbita MP at age 13. “Of course I pushed the thought aside,” she laughs, adding, “Otherwise I would have vied for the seat immediately after high school.

Years of consistent work as a lawyer, women’s and children’s rights activist earned the graduate of the Universities of Nairobi and New York, awards. Millie started her career as a state counsel at the State Law Office, followed by the Federation of Women Lawyers in Kenya (FIDA-K) as a legal officer, the Association of Women in Development, Coalition on Violence Against Women (COVAW) and the Caucus for Women’s Leadership.

The CRADLE is one of the MP’s dreams come true. She founded the organisation that promotes the rights of children, in 1997. The CRADLE has offered legal aid to children and women; mentored young women on leadership, life-skills and career choice; advocated and lobbied government for legal reform and human rights mainstreaming. Millie received the YWCA Democracy Award, the Eve Woman of the Year Award for Human Rights and Gender, and an acknowledgment in 2006, by then US Senator, Barack Obama, during his visit to Kenya.

In 2006, Millie’s younger brother and a friend, requested her to help the then Mbita MP, Hon Otieno Kajwang’, with his campaign. Millie, who had never engaged in politics, was baffled and reluctant, but relented and became Kajwan’g’s chief manager. At about



MILLIE ODHIAMBO
MBITA

that time, the passionate supporter of ODM Party realised that its presidential campaign was not going well. She mobilised more than 20 ODM MPs to heighten the party’s campaign, and with the approval of party leaders, Millie initiated and financed the Western Kenya Presidential Campaign that consolidated political activities in most of Nyanza and Western Provinces, parts of Nairobi and the North Rift regions.

The hard work bore great returns and Millie got nominated into parliament, but a few people thought she had been unfairly nominated. “Women have to be prepared ... their success is always viewed as coming through below-the-belt activities,” the straight talking politician says. The passionate lawyer who had served as a delegate at the Bomas of Kenya, during the constitutional drafting process says that served as “my political

tipping point! It propelled me to the public forum, and I could feel myself moving towards a different arena."

But that was not her first brush with politics. Much earlier, in 1983, Millie who grew up in Homabay Town watched with fascination as Hon Phoebe Asiyo beat the late Okiki Amayo in Karachuonyo Constituency election. "Okiki was then very powerful, perhaps second in power only to President Moi. Watching Phoebe beat him in an election, even after he had demanded for a recount, and seeing him break down in tears, was intriguing. I admired Phoebe's power. My interest in politics was pricked," Millie relates.

Since her election, Hon Odhiambo has started various SACCOs to enable her constituents participate in diversified agriculture and fishing. She has also started training and entrepreneurship opportunities for youth in catering, tailoring, driving and mechanics. For the continuity of the rich Suba and Luo cultures, Millie has started cultural events that will bring the youth and the old together.

To Millie, winning the Mbita Parliamentary seat by more than 7000 votes was "sweet". Her nomination was ugly and bloody, and she was denied the nomination certificate after winning. She confronted reluctant party officials and got it. The campaigns that followed were packed with propaganda, backstabbing, cunning and dishonesty from people who were closest to her. "Until you experience such things, you can't say you've been in politics," she notes. Her opponents claimed she was a foreigner because she has been married to Zambian hotelier, Magugu Mabona, for seven years.

The absence of ODM support was also "painful". Were she not a fighter, Millie says she would have given up. Although she invested heavily, with the support of

I know that in politics there are no permanent enemies; but that is also true in life.



her husband, friends and relatives, Millie's closest challenger outspent her more than ten times. She almost got grounded during the campaign, and advises women to start saving ten years before getting into elective politics. Millie believes that by not supporting her in the election, ODM squandered its only opportunity to make history. "I ended up as the only elected ODM female MP."

According to her, elective politics is murky. "It is one thing to teach women about political leadership, and another to have them get involved. You plunge in there and suddenly discover that you're on your own," she says, adding, "My greatest investment was on anti-rigging, not even campaigns." From experience, Millie knew that her opponents would try to rig her out. She also picked her battles wisely and surprised her opponents with her tactics. Where they expected confrontation, she used "soft power", a motherly power that draws everyone to you. She danced a lot and spoke softly with a smile.

On top of all the challenges, Millie's greatest loss was her mother, who was worried by her decision to contest in the election. Millie's father twice attempted to vie for the same seat in the 1970s, and died under mysterious circumstances. With that history, "When mom panicked, some of my siblings tried to talk me out of my decision...we agreed to take her abroad until after the election, but

she passed away before that," Millie remembers somberly. The family's grief became fodder for her political opponents. "It took a toll on my family," she says remorsefully.

Apart from learning about "soft power" from Phoebe Asiyo, Millie learnt to be "tough" from Martha Karua. From Charity Ngilu, she learnt elegance and ambition, and from Madeline Albright, how to exercise authority with modesty. Her greatest inspiration, her mother, taught her godliness, strength, generosity, empathy, proactivity and forgiveness. "I know that in politics there are no permanent enemies; but that is also true in life," she witnesses. Millie has written a book for women in politics: *Politics Unpackaged: Lessons for Aspiring Women Politicians*.

Millie initiated the Maiden Institute of Leadership, Legal Innovation and Education (Millie Institute), through which she mentors girls in leadership. She also initiated the Women and Girls' Education and Development Initiative that focuses on girls' education, especially in marginalised areas and Nyanza.

Her experience in social work has seen her effectively lobby for the enactment of laws that protect women and children's rights. She initiated the Sexual Offences Act long before her nomination to parliament, and had former MP (now Judge) Njoki Ndun'gu, push it through parliament till its enactment. Millie is also behind the Children's Act, the Counter Trafficking in Persons Bill, and has more recently drafted the Victim Protection Bill, the Child Justice Bill, and the In Vitro-Fertilization Bill, among others.

Millie's political achievements continue to grow. ODM Party nominated her to represent the Kenyan Parliament at the Pan-African Parliament, based in South Africa. With these achievements, Millie is fulfilled. "I've achieved my core goals as a leader," she says.



NAOMI SHABAN

TAVETA

Confident, authoritative and a woman of her words: meet Hon Naomi Namsi Shaban, the MP for Taveta and a former Minister for Gender, Children and Social Development, and Special Programmes. "I chose to command respect and walk in authority when I was barely 12-years-old, and I've grown up acknowledging myself as a leader," she states.

Brought up in Mombasa by her grandparents, as her widowed mother worked in Nairobi, the first born of four recalls playing the role of father and mother to her siblings. She had to set an example and practise dependability if her siblings were to admire and obey her. "My voice alone got everyone doing homework or revision," she recounts. That same voice characterises Naomi as a political icon.

When her grandfather retired, he

relocated to Taveta and transferred Naomi and her siblings to Mahoo Primary School in Taveta. This marked the beginning of her interaction with the Taveta people, who have thrice elected her to Parliament. "I knew there were many ways to be important and walk with dignity and respect while serving the Taveta people, but becoming an MP, leave alone a cabinet minister, never flashed through my mind," she notes.

The 51-year-old legislator recalls how "an elegant lady" amazed her at a funeral she attended with her grandmother. To her grandmother's embarrassment and everyone's amazement, the then 10-year-old Naomi approached the lady and introduced herself. "That was when I made up my mind that I would become a respectable leader in my community like her." She later discovered that the lady was Lydia Mnene, a former executive secretary with the Housing Finance Company.

Lydia remained friends with Naomi, mentored and helped her get a job at the Housing Finance Corporation after completing school at Butere Girls' High School. "I was a clerk but made many friends from different organisations through who I got jobs for many young men and women in my community," she says. Coming from a family with medical background, Naomi is also a dental surgery graduate of the University of Nairobi. "Medical practice is the best way to serve one's community," she reckons.

When she completed her internship at Kenyatta National Hospital and later sat in the hospital's board for 71/2 years, she ensured that many youth from her community joined the Kenya Medical Training College. Little did she know that she was rising to prominence. She became the first woman MP from the entire Taita-Taveta region.

The entry into politics of the now

mother of two came with challenges. Naomi remembers December 28, 2000 as her political birthday. Several elderly women at her Taveta hometown informed her that Taveta people needed her leadership in Parliament in 2002. The God fearing legislator of the Muslim faith told the women she needed to seek God's guidance first. In amusement today, she recounts that both Christians and Muslims teamed up in prayer and fasting amidst her mother's opposition. Coincidentally in 2001, the then MP for Taveta resigned before term and a by-election beckoned.

Although she was not keen to vie for the seat, Naomi developed an interest when Taveta elders refused to support a female candidate, warning that they would intimidate her if she dared to vie. "KANU was the major party in Taveta and to gain ground, I had to use it oblivious of the danger I was exposing my family and I to," she says. Although KANU national leaders supported her, Taveta elders remained hostile and prejudiced and thwarted her nomination. She had to move at lightning speed to register with Ford Kenya and meet the nomination deadline. Meanwhile the KANU leaders started to negotiate with her but she was already committed to Ford Kenya. "I had suddenly become a political hot cake!" she chuckles.

Naomi did not win the seat that time, but the experience heightened her determination. One of her worst experiences in politics was the day before the by-election. "Thugs had been hired to harass me but my supporters hid me in a vehicle boot and retaliated, causing a real war. The national and international media broadcast that episode!" she recounts. Pausing in deep thought, the bold MP recalls how

goons attempted to throw her three-year-old baby into a pit latrine. "If my house-help were not brave enough to shield the baby with her own body, I would have lost the child," she narrates. She regretted joining politics, especially after her grandmother who brought her up suffered a stroke after witnessing the wickedness of that day. "But it was too late for me to back off," she smiles.

The legislator appreciates that she has received several parliamentary preparation trainings from the Women Political Caucus and individuals like Hon Phoebe Asiyo. She appreciates leaders like Hon Beth Mugo, Zipporah Kittony and Jane Kiano; who went out of their way to support her. "Beth Mugo gave a fuel donation while Zipporah gave materials for my campaign," she shares. She trusts that her maiden entry into politics during the by-election was the best way to learn. "I lost a lot. My feminine dignity was trampled on; but my political vigour was revitalised," she says. Naomi prides in having sailed through the last general election and retained her seat since 2002.

Hon Shaban's biggest achievement as a minister was the launch of the African Women's Decade, which was held in October 2010, attracting over 3,000 participants from

across the world. The humorous MP states that her promise to the Taveta people has never changed over the years: "I promise never to lie to you." She argues that promising silver and gold, which one cannot deliver, is tantamount to robbing the people of their votes. However, she has managed to acquire land from the government and resettled her constituents. She has been instrumental in sponsoring scores of bright learners within Taveta to colleges and universities, and is a member of the board of governors of different high schools.

During her term as the Minister for Special Programmes in 2008, the country experienced a long drought, and as she puts it, the mother in her ensured that Kenyans did not starve. That was the year many Kenyans got internally displaced, many others lost their lives in a fire at Nakumatt Supermarket, and at Sachangwan. "I did my best in disaster management, especially at a time when the country was recovering from political skirmishes," she says, adding that settling IDPs had the most disputes.

Her advice to women who want to venture into politics: "You don't wake up one morning and become a politician." She stresses the need to start early and make a name within the community long before publicly announcing plans to vie. "Never underestimate other contestants; always prepare to fight a giant!" she advises.

Taveta people will soon have a modern one-stop immigration department at the Kenya-Tanzania border, thanks to Shaban. A modern market stands on the same land, and like she states, it will enhance Taveta's economy and create employment opportunities for the youth in the community. "I am determined to make a city in Taveta," she states with confidence.

Never underestimate other contestants; always prepare to fight a giant!





PERIS TOBIKO

KAJIADO EAST

She wrestled five men in the last general election to emerge the first female MP in the history of the Maasai Community. Hon Peris Pesi Tobiko is a calm, friendly and strong representative of the Kajiado East Constituency. She is a household name in her area, with

adults and children finding her warm and approachable. She drops various names of her constituents in conversation, a sign that she knows hundreds of them at personal level. Peris enthusiastically defends the vulnerable among her people, something she has done since her youth. "I will halt any business to address the plight of a person who has been denied justice," states Hon Tobiko.

Born in Oloitiko Village, Kajiado County, into a polygamous family with deep rooted Maasai culture, Peris had no choice but to embrace the culture. "What else would a typical Maasai girl hold dearer than her culture?" she quips. With time however, as Peris elevated into academic success, she became an opponent of any cultural habit that defied human respect and dignity. "Culture is adorable, but only when it does not abuse human self-worth or force harmful tendencies down anyone's throat," she points out.

The third born in a family of 14, Peris had a quiet yet well calculated childhood. She does not believe in shouting to be heard. "I believe in fighting challenges unobtrusively and giving results the best way I can," Peris asserts. She never liked feminine chores like cooking, fetching firewood or drawing water, but preferred herding cows and goats, which was to her more masculine and quieter.

At six years, Peris joined Mashulu Primary School and proved to be exemplary and determined to excel, thus becoming every teacher's darling. "My dream was to join the university one day," says Peris who holds a Master's Degree in International Relations. As she grew older, she desired to become a judge to "jail those who married off their young daughters", because her own father had tried to marry her off three times during her primary, secondary and high school education. "Were it not for the intervention of my head teacher and kind women in the village, plus my determination to study, I would have been married off to an older man whose first wife was barren," she recalls, adding, "The thought still sends chills down my spine."

The mother of four is amused that she now serves the men who were her suitors on a different platform, as their MP. "Instead

of cooking and bearing children for them, I now represent them in Parliament!" the jovial politician laughs. She remembers negotiating with her father the first time he tried to marry her off: "Allow me to sit for the Certificate of Primary Education (CPE) examination and if I fail, I'll marry him," she remembers. This gave her the strength to study hard, emerging among the best pupils in Kenya that year. Seeing her name and face in newspapers mesmerised the girl who had never been to Nairobi before and was now being interviewed and photographed by enormous cameras.

Peris joined Moi Girls' High School, Isinya, in Kajiado County, and vowed to beat the elderly men at their own game by qualifying for high school. She joined Moi High School, Kabarak, where her career started shaping up. "My goal was to join university and henceforth condemn early marriages," she says. She teamed up with other serious minded girls at the school and christened themselves "policy-makers".

At the University of Nairobi where she pursued a degree in Political Science, the MP made up her mind to fight early marriage in Maasai land, a challenge that she believed surpassed the others the girls faced. "Being married off to an elderly man whom you don't love is a nightmare I had to battle," she narrates. She was inspired in her cause because one of the elderly men who had wanted to marry her later married her younger sister. To make her case against early marriage stronger, Peris got married to a young man of her choice, while at the university. "With my husband by my side, I knew I could speak against the vice with authority and dignity," she says.

During her first job as the District

I respect nomination and the affirmative action for women, but I strongly feel that I need to fight it out with men to be gratified.



Officer for Embu, Peris envisioned a future where she would be serving her people in an open forum. She later worked at the Ministry of Agriculture as an Assistant Secretary, a period within which she enrolled for a Master's Degree in International Relations at the University of Nairobi. She explains that she has never enjoyed working in the confinement of an office, not even when she was a Benefit Manager at NSSF in 1995. When she left that job, Peris knew that she had a future in politics.

Kajiado East constituents know that Peris is an advocate for fairness and justice, as testified by her service in various school boards. Her family was least surprised when in 2007 she announced her intention to vie for a parliamentary seat. Although she did not make it then, she took it as a phenomenal experience to learn from and to prepare for the next general election. "I used the following five years gathering momentum and learning from the mistakes I had made earlier," she says. Peris had no trouble choosing her party as her mind was already made for TNA. Her manifesto was loud: fairness, participatory and

consultative. Her major supporters were the youth and women. She confesses that her greatest challenge was handling gender discrimination. Her father and her husband were her key campaigners and they silenced anyone who tried to intimidate Peris on account of her gender.

The MP has since embarked on empowering women to actively participate in development activities within the constituency. She has already established several boreholes and has helped several bright girls get bursaries to complete their studies. The legislator says that her notion about feminine events has never changed and rarely will you see her in weddings, baby-showers or women's groups. Meanwhile, Peris is ready for the next general election where she will defend her seat. "I respect nomination and the affirmative action for women, but I strongly feel that I need to fight it out with men to be gratified!" Peris advises fellow women leaders never to be intimidated by their male counterparts. "They are colleagues and we have to fight for elective seats not against them but with them," she states.

A member of KEWOPA, the MP believes that the resources used to empower women are well spent. She received training from AMWIK and CREW in preparation for Parliament. "I owe my good rapport with my colleagues and constituents to the trainings I got," she affirms. She is also a member of Pastoralist Parliamentary Group that seeks to end cattle rustling, banditry and clan-based conflict, and sits in the joint Parliamentary Committee on National Cohesion and Equal Opportunity, as well as the Parliamentary Labour and Social Welfare Committee. Peris's election was petitioned by a losing contender, but she won the case.

After a teaching stint at the recently elevated South Eastern Kenya University (SEKU) and previously at the Kenyatta University, 37-year-old Dr Rachael Nyamai surprised many when, as a novice, she contested and easily won the Kitui South Parliamentary seat in the 2013 General Election. Her win was not only a surprise because she was a first timer in elective politics, but also because she ran for the parliamentary seat on a NARC Party ticket in an area that had fanatical following for the Wiper Democratic Movement Party. She opted for NARC because its leader, Charity Ngilu, was championing for women candidates and motivating them to vie for positions. "Although the Wiper Democratic Movement Party was more popular, it cheated me out of the seat," she says.

As she talks about her bid for the Kitui South seat, the legislator expresses her admiration for Ngilu and her style of politics. "I was inspired by Ngilu to join elective politics. She has been my role model since my days in school. For 20 years, she worked hard as the only female politician in a region full of men, something that inspired me more," says the MP. Rachael is the first woman to run for the Kitui South Parliamentary seat, and was viewed as disadvantaged during the campaigns. This is because she was running on a political party whose leader had long standing and bruising rows with then Vice President and Wiper Party leader, Stephen Kalonzo Musyoka. Due to



RACHAEL NYAMAI
KITUI SOUTH

the Wiper wave in Ukambani, Ngilu lost her quest for the Kitui Senatorial seat to Wiper's David Musila. There was much exhilaration when Rachael braved the strong Wiper wave to garner 18,401 votes against Wiper candidate's 13,175 votes. The other six male candidates came trailing.

Having been born to a polygamous

assistant chief, Rachael learned at a tender age, to fight hard for whatever she desired. "The virtue of fighting hard for whatever I wanted was instilled in me at a very young age, and as such, battling out with the seven other male candidates for the Kitui South seat was no big deal to me," she confesses. Although her opponents tried to portray her as a project

of Ngilu, Rachael worked hard to prove her independence. As Ngilu's political protégé, she was clearly the engine of the Jubilee Alliance campaigns in Kitui South.

With Ngilu's coaching, Rachael was able to work her way through elective politics. She started preparing for her campaigns early. "I started campaigning in 2009, soon after completing my PhD," she states. She interacted with voters through the social media, telephone calls and text messages. She also attended many social gatherings, national celebrations and educational functions. Part of the financial support for her campaign came from the Jubilee Alliance that also gave her vehicles to ease her travel. Rachael also had the full financial and moral support of her husband and family. "Juggling between the duties of my young family and hitting the campaign trail was tough," she says. Rachael also had the support of youth and women, whose lives she has pledged to work hard to improve.

Like other female politicians, Rachael had to fight off stereotypical wars, insults and threats by her opponents. "I was not violently assaulted but some of my supporters were physically attacked. Besides, my competitors hauled unprintable insults at me, and I received threats of rape and death, which forced me to beef up my security. I boldly soldiered on and I'm glad that I did," she relates.

Her campaign pledges were to improve the standard of education, and

provide adequate safe water in Kitui South Constituency. Other pledges included reducing food insecurity by harnessing water for irrigation, as well as fair and equitable distribution of CDF projects across the vast constituency. "I am working in collaboration with some NGOs to improve the welfare and living standards of my constituents," she discloses. She is the chairperson of Kaki Foundation, an outfit she is using to mobilise funds for development projects as well as to finance education of learners who cannot afford it. Rachael, who appreciates the transforming power of education, has a Master's degree in Sociology of Education, and a PhD from the Danish School of Education, University of Aarhus in Denmark. She did her earlier education at Kyatune Primary and Muthale Girls' Secondary Schools,

before joining Kenyatta University for her Bachelor's degree in Education.

Although she is yet to move any Motion since joining Parliament, Rachael promises to aggressively and actively contribute to debates. She is keen on supporting and moving Motions that positively impact Kenyans, and particularly her constituents. As the chairperson of the Parliamentary Committee on Health, Rachael plans to initiate two Motions that if passed, will see major changes in the management of HIV/AIDS and Diabetes. One of the Motions will seek to have all persons visiting hospitals screened for diabetes, in an effort to initiate early treatment and save lives. The other one will seek the formation of the National Aids Authority to manage HIV/AIDS in the country. She would also like to see the Ministry of Health Budget increased from Ksh6 billion to Ksh10 billion to reduce the challenges in the health sector. Rachel also sits in the Housekeeping Liaison Committee, Labour and Social Welfare Committee and the National Cohesion and Equal Opportunities Committee.

Being her first time in Parliament, Rachael found operations of the August House, particularly the Standing Orders, difficult to master. KEWOPA and her teaching experience at SEKU University however helped her adjust quickly. The women parliamentarians' body also taught her how to brand herself. Rachael hopes that more female leaders will join Parliament. "Run for elective positions in large numbers," she urges women aspiring to join politics.

The virtue of fighting hard for whatever I wanted was instilled in me at a very young age, and as such, battling out with the seven other male candidates for the Kitui South seat was no big deal to me.





REGINA NTHAMBI

KILOME

Hon Regina Nthambi Muia is the first female to be elected as MP for Kilome Constituency. In fact, no other woman has ever contested the seat. Regina developed interest in

political leadership at a tender age, having been raised by a father who was a counselor for three terms in one of the wards in Kitui Constituency. What captivated Regina was the respect he commanded from the people. "I found it interesting that people respected him so much that they would visit him daily at

home in large numbers," she says. The MP cannot count the number of times that she attended her father's campaign rallies and political meetings discreetly, just to admire what he was doing. By the time she was leaving home, Regina knew she would one time become a politician.

Married in Kilome Constituency, Regina first tried her hand in a political contest in 2007. Vying against seasoned politicians like Harun Mwau, she discovered that this kind of leadership was different from any other that she had tested. The MP was a prefect in primary and secondary school, and the head of a house while in college, but that did not give her enough preparation to contest against 22 male candidates, including Mwau. She may not have clinched the seat then, but ranking third was a great encouragement for the first timer who had contested on a NARC ticket. Ironically, her interest in the seat drew more men into the contest.

With those results, Regina felt inspired to work harder, hopeful for victory in her second attempt. The Nairobi businesswoman did not rest after the 2007 elections, but started to work closely with the people of Kilome, and did so till the 2013 elections. "I literally camped on the ground for the five years, working closely with the youth and women," she says. As the sales director of a company she started with her husband and children, it was easy to take time away from her job in Nairobi to work on the ground in Kilome. "The constituents wanted to know who I was and why I wanted to run for

the seat, and so I had to work closely with them," she said.

In the five years, she initiated several development projects, among others, sponsoring needy learners from the constituency in seven national schools and universities. Her passion and compassion for the constituents, with whom she connected so well, endeared her to them. "By 2013 general election, I did not need to declare my interest in the seat with the constituents persuading me to become Kilome's next MP," she states. She contested on a Wiper Democratic Movement ticket, also serving as the party's chairperson at the grassroots and secretary for social security at the national level. This time she contested against 14 men and came top with 12,741 votes. Her closest contender had about 6,000 votes.

Of the challenges women face in the campaign trail, lack of finances was not one of Regina's problems, but the Kilome MP faced numerous others. Insecurity and socio-cultural barriers were rife in her journey. Intimidation from her male opponents and their female supporters was the most dominant. "They claimed that I would not represent them well since I was born in a different constituency. It can be intimidating when men fight you from various ends, calling you names and mobilising fellow women to insult you, but I endured it and rejoiced at the outcome," she says, adding that she was well prepared for such challenges.

Female political aspirants may not be as fortunate as she was to have enjoyed her husband's support, as well as less

By 2013 general election, I did not need to declare my interest in the seat but the constituents persuading me to become Kilome's next MP.



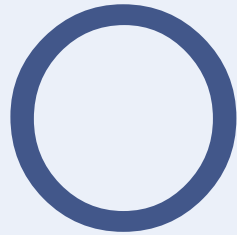
humiliation from her male opponents, Regina notes. "Male challengers always try to find their female counterparts' weaknesses to use against them; so be ready for that. Be ready also for abusive language, which can even get violent," she adds. She advises future female aspirants to remain focused on their goals for the community and work on winning the voters' confidence. "Don't allow yourself to be derailed. Don't respond to insults, but concentrate on your development agenda as you ignore all forms of provocation," she advises.

Working with the youth turned out as a blessing for the motherly legislator. Regina forged cordial relationships with this group of people who loved her

so much they called her Mama. They also acted as her security personnel, protecting her during the campaigns. "My opponents feared them and would not dare intimidate or threaten me when I was with them," she recalls happily. Other than that, she planned her time so well so that all her political meetings ended before 6pm. Her public declaration of faith in God also drew her immense support from the local church.

Regina has adjusted to her new role in the National Assembly, and enjoys the experience. Some of the goals she has set to deliver for her constituents are to provide consistent access to clean water and electricity, and to upgrade health facilities. She welcomes the government's plan to provide school going children with laptops as it is consistent with her own goal to introduce at least one fully equipped computer laboratory in every secondary school in her constituency. She also plans to empower women and the youth economically, to increase their social status.

Regina is determined to deliver on all the promises she made to the people of Kilome Constituency. "I have a task to prove to the people represent in Parliament - that they did not make a wrong choice," she says, knowing very well how to balance her role on the ground, and in the House. She sits in the Procedure and House Rules Committee whose mandate is to propose rules for orderly and effective conduct of committee business. She is also a member of the Administration and National Security Committee.



One day in 1982, Catholic missionaries returning to Doldol from a medical mission, about 25 kilometers away, discovered a five-year-old girl hiding in their truck. They were bewildered but decided that whatever the consequences, she wouldn't head back home to Kimanjo Village, but to standard one at the school they had started at Laikipia. Sara Korere Paulata turned out to be so bright that when she sat the Kenya Certificate of Primary Education examinations seven years later, she was the second best in the then Laikipia District. She was offered a place at Moi High School, Kabarak, but her father wouldn't let her go to a place so far away.

Fortunately, the missionaries sent Sara to a secondary school they had set up at Doldol. Two years after completing secondary school, she landed a job at the Arid Lands Development Programme as a field assistant. Luck was smiling upon her and after two years, she applied for and got admission for a diploma course at Egerton University. After graduating she went back to Doldol, awake to the reality that she had achieved a rarity that not many girls could. This motivated her to start St Francis Girls' School in Doldol, with the backing of friends and supporters like the Catholic missionaries who had walked with her all this while.

Sara taught at the new school as a volunteer for three years before the Ministry of Education could recognise



SARA KORERE NOMINATED

it. Starting with 39 girls, the school's population had grown exponentially and the ministry was glad to run it. At this point, Sara got a job with the Electoral Commission of Kenya (ECK) as the District Deputy Elections Coordinator for Laikipia. Still, the community insisted that she continues to mentor the school, and up to the time of her nomination

to the National Assembly, she was the chairperson of the board of governors.

In her new role, another reality hit Sara. The Laikipia Maasai did not have a political voice. For a long time, she says, that community had been voiceless as the larger communities in the county domineered. "It is very unfortunate when you are in a constituency and you have

a vote but you know that vote doesn't count," she says. Laikipia was initially divided into East and West Laikipia Constituencies, and later North Laikipia Constituency was hived off the two. When Sara joined politics in 2011, she became one of the people who pushed for the creation of the Laikipia North Constituency to cater for the minorities in Laikipia. "I come from that minority group, the Laikipia Maasai," she says. As the Deputy District Elections Coordinator, she knew the intricacies of the population and the voting patterns, and noticed that without another constituency, her community's voice would probably never be heard. She initiated the move to create the new constituency and she is happy that it was successful.

During her tenure at the ECK, Sara interacted a lot with politicians, voters and community leaders. This advised her move to the civil society movement. At that point, she realised that if her community's life was to improve, she needed to be at the legislative level, where she could influence policy-making. In 2009 Sara had travelled to the University of Georgia in the United States, where she took a short course in women and leadership. "It actually inspired me to venture into politics," she says. When she came back, she got involved in educating voters on the Kenya Constitution of 2010. "I come from a community where ignorance is a real menace," she says. "And I'm in politics to change the way things are in my community and the country. I didn't think there would be an opportunity like the one I have now," she says.

Sara initially wanted to campaign for the position of the Women's Representative for her county, but after thorough groundwork she realised that the political reality was not on her side. "My community represents less than 10 percent of the population of Laikipia, and I must say, I enjoyed the support of the younger generation from the Kikuyu Community, but my party affiliation and alignment were a big predicament," she says. Sara took the bold step to negotiate with her party, URP, to nominate her as a representative of a minority community, and she succeeded.

According to her, life in Parliament is tough. Juggling motherhood, and her work in Nairobi and her constituency, is tough. As a mother, her child is priority. For instance, her child had been hospitalised for six days, just before this interview. As an MP, the youth in her county look up to her, and so do the women, yet Sara is not often facilitated to meet their needs. Like other nominated MPs, she has no control over the Constituency Development Fund, and cannot therefore help those who

might need bursaries, or direct resources for the needs she identifies. In the five years of her term, Sara has three priorities and all of them are education. "Where I have come from, a lot has changed. But I can't say that change is enough," she says.

As a development conscious legislator, Sara is angry that her community continues to practice Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) when others have abandoned it. She says FGM and early marriage are connected and if anything is to be done to improve the lives of girls in her community, FGM has to be eradicated. Sara believes that even if education is free, more effort needs to be put to make it accessible to all. "I will lobby the county government to start small feeder schools and low-cost boarding schools to help keep children from pastoralist communities in school," she states.

Sara believes that KEWOPA has programmes that will address the needs of women legislators as they continue to work together. "We are still new in this place and as we get to know each other, we are going to get ways to operate," she says. Like fellow first-time MPs, she is still learning the Standing Orders and the operations of Parliament.

Sara is a member of the Lands Committee, and the Regional Integration Committee. The MP believes that fellow female MPs should help their female constituents to take advantage of appropriate government programmes such as the Women Enterprise Fund and the Uwezo Fund, to grow their businesses.

**I come from a
community where
ignorance is a real
menace.**



In September 2011, a fire destroyed homes and killed over a hundred people in a slum in Nairobi's industrial area. The accident happened very close to an electro-mechanical engineering company, Turn-O-Metal Engineering. Nominated Member of Parliament, Sunjeev Birdi, who then worked at this family property, witnessed the appalling sights. Deeply touched by the suffering people underwent, she resolved to do something to help. "I saw people suffer helplessly because they could not afford to go to hospital. They were burned, tattered, and desperate, and this went on for days," she recalls. She has great admiration for her parents who are largely philanthropic. "My father has always ensured that the people around him are catered for. Being kind is always a blessing," she reflects.

Three days after the tragedy, Sunjeev, who is popularly known as Sonia, ventured into the slum and later went to Tom Mboya Hall, along Jogoo Road, where survivors of the fire were temporarily sheltered. The pain and anguish she witnessed in the hall was unimaginable. Sonia made a list of the survivors' requirements and mobilised support from the Asian community. She started working closely with the District Officer for Makadara, the Kenya Red Cross, and the Sinai Slum community. Within weeks, Sonia had become a household name in the slum. It therefore did not surprise her when in April 2012 a delegation from the community approached her to vie for the



SUNJEEV BIRDI

NOMINATED

Makadara Parliamentary Seat during the 2013 elections.

Sonia's parents were not very receptive of her idea to venture into politics because of fears over her safety. She respected their stand because she believes that family blessings and support are important in any venture, especially politics. When her

parents finally decided to support her, she was happy.

Born and raised in Kenya, the first born in a family of five went to Our Lady of Mercy Primary School and later Loreto High School, Msongari, before proceeding to Sheffield Hallam University in England, for her MBA. Sonia draws inspiration from

her mother, as she believes that it's more practical to get inspired by people you interact closely with, and not those in the media. "I communicate with my mother and feel her all the time," Sonia stresses.

When she stepped into politics, the people of Makadara suggested that she joins URP and work with its leader, William Ruto. She did not have adequate resources to campaign but still made the attempt. The MP immediately identified unemployment, especially among the youth, as the biggest challenge in Makadara. She started her campaign by using the only resource she had, her skills - to teach the young people how to write CVs. She recalls making trips into Sinai Slum on foot, and addressing the electorate from the three tier wooden platform that her father had built for her. "It is a pity that the culture of money is so deeply rooted that the electorate do not appreciate donations made in kind. Everyone just wanted money," she laments.

Gratefully, the political team Sunjeev worked with had lots of experience and guided her accordingly. She recalls how tedious the nomination exercise was, and how she maintained her commitment to party values because she had been promised nomination. She worked very

It is a pity that the culture of money is so deeply rooted that the electorate do not appreciate donations made in kind.

hard for the National Executive Council of URP, crisscrossing the country campaigning for the party. She supported the plans and vision of the Jubilee Alliance because it addressed women's issues on representation, poverty eradication, and technology.

Community development is important to the nominated leader who knows that education is one of the main ways to develop a community. One of the key things she recalls doing was to have a transformer installed at St. Mary's Viwandani Education Centre in industrial area, to give steady power supply to the school and neighbouring areas. The school received a donation of 60 computers

as soon as the electricity was installed. Echoing the Jubilee Government laptop project, Sonia emphasises the need to embrace technology "because there will be no development without technology."

The MP finds herself in an awkward situation where she hardly knows half of the 349 MPs, yet they all know her. She is optimistic that by the end of her first term she will have known and interacted with all of them. She exudes confidence in her plan and vision because she feels blessed. "The position is an absolute miracle that I intend to use well to serve as a good, intelligent and informed legislator," she says. Sonia is focused on advocating for availability of water in all communities because water is life. She has a notice of motion on the state of dams in the country. Sonia also advocates for environmental conservation and is passionate about better infrastructure to improve the working conditions of Makadara residents. The constituency contributes widely to the country's economy through its high number of industries and workforce.

In parliament, Sonia serves in the Procedure and House Rules Committee, the Constitution Implementation Oversight Committee, and the Environment and Natural Resources Committee.



ZULEIKHA JUMA

NOMINATED

The youthful ODM nominated Member of Parliament, Hon Zuleikha Juma Hassan, did not get her nomination on a silver platter. She had to fight and unravel political schemes to become the strategic and proactive person she is. While she never

imagined joining politics when growing up, her passion and zeal to alleviate suffering seemed intertwined with political leadership. She takes us through her journey, with youthful vigor and nostalgia, often bursting into laughter.

Born 33 years ago, Zuleikha is grateful that her father's postings abroad exposed her to a myriad of opportunities,

which impacted on her life positively. She attended Coast Academy for her primary education before joining Legae Academy in Gaborone, Botswana, where her father worked as an expatriate electrical engineer. She later graduated with a Bachelor of Social Science in Development and Social Transformation from the University of Cape Town in South Africa. She specifically chose to study in South Africa to learn more about the suffering of black people, and to understand the intricacies that drove the apartheid system. She looks back and confesses that it was a very necessary experience in her life because she "went through the stages of anger over apartheid and then accepted it."

Zuleikha knew from the onset that she wanted to help alleviate suffering, especially of young children. She had initially planned to study child psychology, but her experience in South Africa diverted her interests towards social science, which she saw as an opportunity to address the plight of many people, as opposed to psychology that involves individual cases. Unlike most of her siblings who chose to relocate to western countries, Zuleikha was determined to come back home to influence her society positively.

When she came back home, Zuleikha did not find a job as easily as she had imagined. A professor advised her to research on the plight of Muslim women, since she wanted to address issues affecting them. Surprisingly, the research that started with 56 women in Mariakani Ward in Kaloleni Constituency, Kilifi

County, evolved into a movement with over 2,000 registered members.

Seeing the soaring numbers, Zuleikha's father encouraged her to try her hand in politics. She let the 2007 election pass, but the post-election violence in 2008 made her realise that she needed to redirect the energy of the youth to more constructive activities and thoughts. By this time she had worked with several NGOs that either focused on empowering young Muslim women, or overall community development. "I still felt inadequate because if the legislative environment is not conducive, your interventions are limited, and sometimes you get crippled by government," she narrates. At that time, Zuleikha realised the need to influence policy formulation from inside, and her father's earlier encouragement to join politics was a logical consideration.

Hon Hassan says that there were many attempts by ODM Party officials to rig her out of the Kaloleni Constituency parliamentary seat. When the race became very tight, and she couldn't be sweet-talked to step down, elders talked to her father, and only then did they succeed. "I felt helpless in the hands of patriarchal traditional structures and tendencies," she says. It was during the national party elections held at the Bomas of Kenya in 2009 that the constitutional provision for youth representation opened avenues for young Zuleikha. She was elected the deputy youth leader, a more powerful role than her previous one as local party representative. The national position saw her traverse the country campaigning for

her party leadership. It also created the required bonds and networks with high-ranking party officials.

Asked about her nomination to Parliament, Zuleikha declares that she is a good and intelligent student of politics. She recalls training on strategic thinking where she was educated on mapping and using proxies. The work she did for the party and the people she interacted with were helpful in lobbying for nomination. "I was not in the first list of nominees, so I remembered and applied my training on the use of agents, and the power of right timing – and I made it!" she states. The MP received training in the run up to elections from the National Democratic Institute, and the Christian Democratic International Centre.

The one regret this go-getter has is that her party leader, Raila Odinga, did not win the presidential election. "I am inspired by his political life. I consider him a living legend. Hate him or love him, he is selfless, consistent, diplomatic and really, *Mweupe kama pamba* (white as snow)," she emphasises, raising her head to reinforce her words. Some of the lessons she has learned have only

strengthened her resolve to make a difference in people's lives. "Though you may not always get what you want and deserve, you must make the best out of what you get," says Zuleikha who comes from the Duruma Community.

Although the first days in the House were not easy as she had to learn Parliamentary Standing Orders on her own, she is determined to leave a mark at the end of her term. Lack of a structured orientation on Parliamentary proceedings made her wish for an association for youthful parliamentarians (currently about 90), to assist new comers into the House, just like KEWOPA does for its new members. "Lawyers find it easier to adapt in Parliament because they are trained to think and debate on their feet," she notes. This learning period has however not intimidated Zuleikha to silence. She brought a motion seeking to have the government fund the National Youth Council, to encourage the youth to venture into fields like agriculture. "By engaging the youth in agriculture, we'll stem rural-urban migration and contribute to food security," she beams.

Zuleikha's vision is to see the youth given a platform to speak and also access economic empowerment. She would also want to see schools recognise the rights of Muslim girls with regard to the hijab, as well as a conducive environment to observe the Ramadhan calendar. The MP is the national youth coordinator for ODM, and a co-founder of the inter-party youth forum. She also sits in the House Committee on Agriculture, Livestock and Cooperatives.

I felt helpless in the hands of patriarchal traditional structures and tendencies.







3 | SENATORS
(NOMINATED)

Dr Agnes Zani, the nominated Senator for Kwale County and a former lecturer at the University of Nairobi, has walked in success and favour since she was a young girl. "I owe nothing to my efforts though, I believe God paves my way all through," the staunch Christian of the Catholic faith reflects. But even as she speaks about favour, the humorous senator quips: "If a wheelbarrow doesn't have the front wheel, it would be very difficult to push it!" meaning that the success she has gained in life is largely due to the support she has received along the way.

Agnes was born in Mombasa but lived her early years in Golini, Kwale, before moving to Mombasa for her studies. The second of three children born to Zacharia and Teresa Zani says that education is her main agenda for the people of Kwale County. "I want to see doctorates coming from Kwale!" remarks Agnes, whose parents were renowned educationists in Coast Province.

Agnes recounts how she embraced integrity from the day she joined Star of the Sea School where she completed her primary education in the late 1970s. As a senator now, she recalls that from her childhood days, any kind of injustice to anyone made her hair stand on end. "I am surprised that those memories remain to date," she says, recalling a day while in primary school, when she physically fought a boy who was fond of bullying girls in the school bus. She adds that since that day she has never allowed a man to intimidate her



AGNES ZANI

and is determined to stand up and defend what she refers to as her marginalised community.

Never in her wildest dreams did she however think that this principle would lead her to politics. Although she had considered studying law to be able to exercise her fight-for-justice in a more authoritative platform, Agnes studied

sociology at the University of Nairobi after completing her sixth form in Nairobi Girls' School. She pursued a Master's degree at the same university and joined the academic staff in 1993. Nine years later, Zani went to Oxford University, UK, to pursue a Master of Science in Philosophy, and a Doctorate in Philosophy, thanks to a scholarship from the Ford Foundation.

Life in the UK was not easy and often she longed to be back home. When she did come back, she continued working at the University of Nairobi's Sociology Department from 2008 until 2013 when she was nominated to the Senate. "I am now determined to do my best and leave a mark when I retire," she says. She embraced philosophy after realising that her calling was more to respond to people's needs than fight for justice. Agnes became a relationship expert later in her career.

The scholar says that for the first week in the Senate, she was mesmerised. She listened to and observed what others were saying and doing. The orientation did her a lot of good and barely a month later she came up with a motion on investment, seeking to have a percentage of county earnings and resources reinvested in the counties. She is a member of the Rules and Business Committee.

A born leader, Agnes recalls that she identified her leadership qualities from when she was a little girl. "In primary school, I was a prefect for as long as I can remember," she says. This is despite the fact that she was playful and outgoing. "Thankfully, my teachers knew that I was a focused student." At the university, Agnes occasionally acted as the chairperson of her department and started the Ford Foundation International Fellowships Alumni Programme, which she has been chairing since.

Those who are just getting acquainted to Dr Zani today may think that she has always enjoyed the good life, but she disputes this categorically. "I have seen

Embrace every opportunity and never underestimate yourself. When an opportunity comes your way seize it, it may never come again.

lack; like many families, we sometimes went with meager food and were short of other necessities as we grew up," she reveals. Although her parents were teachers, Agnes recalls that due to numerous obligations, the family would sometimes go with only ugali and fermented milk for dinner. She celebrates her father saying that despite his financial challenges, he ensured that his three children got education. "This is something I have emulated today since I support the education of various orphans and vulnerable children within Kwale County," she says. She does this through the Zani Foundation that gives financial support to bright needy learners.

When Kwale residents threatened to boycott the 2013 election during the infamous Pwani si Kenya unrest, Dr Zani took it upon herself to offer free civic education to her community. "I did this as a Kenyan with no political agenda," she says. In the process, and as expected, some people approached her to vie for a political seat, which she declined stating that she was already a lecturer at the

University of Nairobi and was not willing to quit. "I had also seen my brother vie for elective political positions and fail, so I was not motivated to join politics," she explains. Her passionate involvement in gender issues however is what motivated ODM to nominate her to the Senate. Agnes had admired the ODM leadership and even identified with the party as she carried out civic education.

Lamenting that Coast is still underdeveloped, Agnes has embarked on empowering women and the youth, in a bid to bring the desired development in the County. She has started a project in Kwale where every three months the youth benefit from driving courses, which she pays for. She has also started a pilot project with a women's group, building rental houses, and hopes to replicate the project across Kwale. She is also on a mission to eliminate retrogressive cultural practices like early marriage and violence against women. "My father never discriminated against women and I learned a lot from him," remarks Zani. The development-oriented leader believes that she will assure positive change for her people from her current position, having started to work with them long before she even considered joining politics.

To women aspiring to join politics, the member of the parliamentary associations - KEWOPA and KEWOSA (Kenya Women Senators Association), has a word of caution: "Embrace every opportunity and never underestimate yourself. When an opportunity comes your way seize it, it may never come again!"



BEATRICE ELACHI

Beatrice Elachi clung to a party that had been abandoned by more experienced politicians, and her resilience, motherliness and management skills paid off: she got nominated into the Senate, became the House's Majority Chief Whip and the most influential woman in the 11th Parliament. Had

she allowed herself to be swayed by the mass movement of politicians towards a party that promised more, Beatrice would probably not have been in Parliament today.

Beatrice was aware that PNU had been created to accommodate three politicians: former Vice President, Kalonzo Musyoka, PNU leader, the late George Saitoti, and Kanu Chairman, now President Uhuru Kenyatta. The

three never really got to work together, and PNU later rebranded as the Alliance Party of Kenya (APK) before the 2013 campaigns began. In spite of the fact that Kenyatta appeared to be miles ahead of the remaining leaders of APK in popularity, with a sophisticated campaign strategy, Beatrice never attempted to move to his TNA Party.

"I joined APK knowing Kenyatta would be the alliance's presidential candidate. In fact, he is the one who seconded me as the alliance's interim secretary general," she recalls, adding, "I felt betrayed when PNU failed to hold together and the leaders started to go their separate ways." Beatrice remained in APK to build it into the "outfit I desired." Obviously APK suffered a lot, as TNA went off with much of the support the alliance previously enjoyed, leaving APK with support from Meru and Embu Counties only.

The resilient manager soon figured out that APK provided an alternative chance to candidates in Central Kenya who thought the big parties had treated them unfairly. As elections drew nearer, Senator Elachi found herself often left alone to run APK with most of the party's leaders having to retreat to their counties to campaign for their elective seats. "There was no one to consult; Party Leader, Kiraitu Murungi, went to Meru, while his deputy, Lenny Kivuti, disappeared to Embu where he was running for Senate," she remembers. With minimal support from the party leaders, the growing number of aspirants seeking the party's ticket to vie for various seats overwhelmed Beatrice who remained strong.

When after the election the party got a chance to nominate a woman to the Senate, she was heads higher than any other member. "I was elated! It was not something I had hoped for. Politics is intriguing, and I had

never contemplated running for an elective position," she says. Senator Elachi's humble background has bred in her a strong desire to help the people around her achieve their goals. Her past could have easily broken the willpower of any woman, were it not for her perseverance and hope that life had something better for her.

Brought up in an unstable cross-cultural family, Beatrice's parents separated when she was in school, and most needed their support. "I had to drop out of Nazarine University where I was studying Social Sciences, in order to handle issues at home. I just couldn't cope," she confides. "Being the only girl in the family, I was most affected by their separation. I started to understand how marital problems could affect children," she says.

In 2003 Beatrice was appointed a programme officer at the National Council of Women of Kenya (NCWK). Two years later, she joined Prof Wanjiku Kabira at the Women Political Alliance in preparation for the Banana/Orange referendum campaigns. She joined the Banana Team. "I instantly developed an interest in politics," she says. After the referendum that divided Kenyans deeply, then Internal Security Minister, the late John Michuki, noticed her deftness and engaged her to do civic education on ethnic divisions. Her demeanor and negotiation skills earned her the position of outreach manager for the Kibaki Tena campaign in 2007.

"By this time I had plunged into the depth of politics and was keen to see Kibaki serve a second term. We pegged the campaigns on development goals and achievements," she remembers. A year later, she was appointed the executive director of the League of Kenya Women Voters. Barely two years into the job, the political bug bit her, and in 2010,

she found herself in the Kibaki succession intrigues as an active member of PNU.

Senator Elachi's life isn't just about politics. She is also philanthropic, supporting seven children orphaned by ethnic clashes in Tana River County. "I was emotionally affected when I visited Kipini, Ozi, Duru and Ngao areas. In Ngao, I met children whose pregnant mother had been killed. They were overwhelmed by sorrow and I decided to help them," she explains. Three female university students from needy backgrounds run her spacious office at KICC. The Senator pays them a salary that enables them pay their college fees. She is also raising her late sister's children. "They are my children. We live as a family," she says.

Being one of the most active and outspoken senators inside and outside the House, she faces many political battles. In June 2013, the Senate clashed with the National Assembly over the Division of Revenue Bill that had been assented to by the president. "I worked hard to ensure the Senate had one voice. It was not a matter of Jubilee or Cord, it was a constitutional matter that touched on the Upper House," she says. Although the Senate

I worked hard to ensure the Senate had one voice. It was not a matter of Jubilee or Cord, it was a constitutional matter that touched on the Upper House .



suffered a setback when President Kenyatta signed the controversial Bill into law, she had learnt a lesson on the operations of the Senate.

Senator Elachi believes that she got her senatorial seat and the office of the Majority Chief Whip by positioning herself right. "I was at the right place at the right time," she notes. She had wanted to become the Deputy Chief Whip but when Elgeyo Marakwet Senator, Kipchumba Murkomen, moved to head the Devolution Committee, "I said I wanted to go for the main position and the senators were supportive. In this position one must have full support of members," she says. In the Senate, the ever-busy legislator sits in three committees. She is a member of the powerful Rules and Business Committee, the Finance, Commerce and Economic Affairs Committee, and the Committee on Devolved Government. Additionally, she is a member of the joint National Cohesion and Equal Opportunity Committee.

An eloquent debator, Senator Elachi successfully passed a crucial motion in the House. The motion, which was passed unanimously, recommends that the NYS be established in all counties, and youth be trained on various skills before joining universities or other institutions of higher education. She argued that reintroducing the upgraded NYS programme would reduce unemployment among youth and ensure that the young people are not idle. This aims to reduce abuse of alcohol, drugs and general anti-social behaviour that is increasing among the youth. Youth who have passed through the upgraded NYS would also get the first consideration for employment opportunities.

Outside politics, Beatrice loves a traditional meal with Lingala or Jazz music in the background. To keep fit, she goes to the gym.

Senator Beth Mugo is one of the most experienced female politicians whose achievements in politics inspire newly elected female MPs. "To me politics is a calling," she states.

Born in the heart of the struggle for independence, Beth experienced the fear, the pain and the desperation that accompanied the hope that drove Kenya's freedom fighters to plough on for a better future. She remembers the Johnnies (British soldiers) marching up and down the villages, haphazardly arresting adults and shooting at children, who appeared 'out of order'. "Our parents and older siblings were arrested. We slept in pineapple plantations fearing the Johnnies. Our normal lives, education and so on, were disrupted. It was a very disturbing time," she recalls.

At 14 years, Beth witnessed the arrest of her uncle, Kenya's founding father, Mzee Jomo Kenyatta. "I was very scared. Those incidents left a mark in me. They influenced me to fight for people's freedom," she states. Beth has been involved in the economic and political development of women in Africa, and the struggle for multi-party politics in Kenya. She was also a key player in the political movement that got Daniel arap Moi to retire from presidency. Her political journey as the MP for Dagorretti Constituency witnessed great development, for which the people fondly remember her. They view her elevation to the Senate as a loss.

The 73-year-old mother of four founded the Kenyan chapter of the International Federation of Business and Professional Women (IFBPW), through which many professionally and economically successful women today can trace their growth. She was also a founding director of the Kenya Management Assistance Programme (K-MAP) and the Kenya Women Finance Trust (KWFT),



BETH MUGO

among others. She was celebrated among 24 top African women leaders in economic development, and served as the president of Council for Economic Empowerment of Women in Africa (CEEWA). "My strength has been in economic empowerment; I'm a businesswoman," she states modestly. But Beth's political achievements rival her economic success.

The political drive in the early 1990's to

return Kenya to a multi-party state saw Beth participate as a founding member of the Democratic Party. "We gave the struggle our best, and I'm happy that things did change. Education is now available to all children, health, infrastructure, etc have all improved," she asserts with satisfaction. She vied for the Dagorretti Constituency seat in 1992 and lost. Determined to win in the subsequent election, Beth remained on the ground

and initiated many development projects, including the bursary fund that became synonymous with the politician. "You can't come to the ground last minute and expect to win, people must identify with you," she shares.

In the 1997 general election, Hon Mugo decamped to the Social Democratic Party (SDP) and won the election. "Kibaki, my party leader, was surprised that I abandoned the party we had formed. But I had to support SDP Presidential Candidate, Charity Ngilu," she states. Beth became the first woman to be elected to Parliament in Nairobi, and remained the Dagorretti MP till her retirement on medical grounds, prior to the 2013 election. TNA Party however nominated her to serve in the senate. "I know I have a good name in Dagorretti because I worked for the constituents . . . our nature as women makes us adopt the constituency as our own home," she asserts.

Dagorretti Constituency continues to benefit from years of Hon Mugo's leadership. She started many schools from scratch and supported many others through the bursary fund, the CDF and general infrastructure improvement. "I don't think there is any school in Dagorretti that I didn't leave a mark in," she says. She is also remembered for expanding the road infrastructure, electricity and water services; and constructing Mutuine Sub-District Hospital. Hon Mugo has also served and left her development mark as an Assistant Minister for Tourism and Information; Minister for Education; and Minister for Public Health and Sanitation. "Politics is give, give, give; and it's never been a burden to me. It's a calling," she declares.

In Parliament, Beth has made contributions that will benefit Kenyans for many years to come. In 2000, she successfully moved a motion for the adoption of the Affirmative

Action. She was also behind the enactment of the Cancer Control and Prevention Act, the Tobacco Control Act, and the Breast Milk Substitutes Regulation and Control Act, which she views as her highlight.

Even with obvious success as a politician, Beth cannot trace exactly when her journey in leadership begun. She was the headmistress of Kiganjo Primary School in Kiambu by age 20, soon after graduating from Kambui Teachers' College. "I've had several areas of leadership that have influenced my political journey, so it's really hard to say where it all begun," she states. Beth adds that being born in a political family may have propelled her. Her uncle, Mzee Kenyatta, whom she describes as a focused leader who understood the direction Kenya needed to take after independence, inspires her leadership style. "I mingled a lot with his cabinet; I'd listen to their conversation at Mzee's table," she recalls.

Of the challenges she has faced in politics, discrimination against female leaders stands out. When she joined politics, the electorate

were jittery about women's leadership and verbal and mental abuse were rife. "Very few women such as Martha Karua, Charity Ngilu and Mary Wanjiru from Nyandarua, were elected to Parliament after the re-introduction of multi-party democracy in 1991," recalls Beth. She believes that the democratic space has widened with more political parties, and enabled more women to vie for political positions. "Having more women voted in has been an uphill task. One of our major achievements is seeing an increase in the number of women being elected and appointed to leadership positions," Beth adds. Besides that, she says the electorate have seen "women's leadership in action - more development and less politics. Women aren't abusive."

Mentored by Hon Phoebe Asiyo, Hon Mugo remembers Phoebe telling her from the start that politics wasn't easy. "She told me it wasn't easy, but still urged me to vie," she laughs. Beth is sad however that with the achievements made for women in politics, women have become inactive in the "movement", yet there are still grounds to be covered. "The passion is no longer there. The movement has gone down. Pulling each other down won't help us. We'd like to see the passion rekindled so we don't lose our gains. We want future presidents to appoint more women," she laments.

The Senator is a member of the Staff Welfare Committee, the Health Committee and the vice chairperson of the Parliamentary Service Commission. As a mentor of younger women politicians, Beth encourages them to speak with one voice on matters affecting women. "Women parliamentarians' biggest challenge is to make men understand that women's issues are national issues. We need gender mainstreamed in industry, legislation and policy," advises the founding chairperson of KEWOPA.

The passion is no longer there. The movement has gone down. Pulling each other down won't help us. We'd like to see the passion rekindled so we don't lose our gains. We want future presidents to appoint more women.



CATHERINE MUKIITE

Senator Catherine Nabwala Mukiite contested the Saboti Constituency parliamentary seat in 2007 to help reduce poverty, marginalisation and general hopelessness among members of her community in Trans-Nzoia County. She however lost to former Justice and Constitutional Affairs Minister, Eugene Wamalwa, but remained in politics. Choosing not to contest in the 2013

general election, Catherine was instead one of the active campaigners for Ford Kenya and CORD coalition.

The dedicated and hard working politician not only financed Ford Kenya campaign activities but also gave out her vehicles for the campaigns, and was paid off with several victories in the county. "Getting those seats in Trans-Nzoia County was a formidable task as the region was dominated by the New Ford Kenya Party, which belonged

to a different coalition," she notes. To cap it all, Catherine got the unexpected call that rewarded her achievements. "When I got the call about my nomination, I was excited, but tried to take it calmly," discloses the politician who describes herself as social. She confesses that her nomination to the Senate came as a surprise despite having been an active member of Ford-Kenya since 2007. "I had applied for nomination to Parliament but did not expect to be nominated to the Senate," she confides.

A retired banker, Catherine is passionate about empowering girls, women and the youth, particularly in Trans-Nzoia County. "Trans-Nzoia women lack economic empowerment to diversify their activities," she says, adding that she will encourage them to make the most of the Uwezo Fund. Believing that the fund will bring great changes in the women's lives, Catherine teaches them ways to enhance their eligibility for the money meant for micro-businesses. She has also devoted her time and resources to help the women understand the power of banking as a means of economic growth. "Once they understand its usefulness, they will realise that they don't need millions to achieve goals. I urge them to establish merry-go-rounds to increase their ability to save," she explains.

The firm but gentle Senator is also encouraging the women to own property as a way of reducing their vulnerability, especially where retrogressive cultural practices undermine their growth. "I believe that the secret to proper societal development lies in women owning property," she says. Even as she works with women, Senator Nabwala is concerned that many girls in her county drop out of school because of challenges ranging from parental negligence to lack of school fees and ignorance on the community's part. Added to this, early pregnancies have become

common, as the girls are often molested as they travel long distances to school.

For the youth, Senator Nabwala introduced a motion seeking to empower unemployed graduates, and help improve their standards of living. She was driven by the desire to have elected leaders find specific solutions to the spiraling unemployment of youth in the country. The former manager at Barclays Bank of Kenya speaks with authority on issues of credit, which is the main focus of her motion seeking the enactment of the Graduates Establishment Fund in all counties. She says the youth are unable to venture into private enterprises because they can't access affordable credit. If enacted, Catherine believes the legislation would reduce to near zero, unemployment of youth which currently stands at 70 percent nationally.

The 62-year-old legislator attended Misikhu Primary and Secondary Schools for her preparatory and secondary education, before joining Limuru Girls' High School for her advanced level education. She later studied for an online degree at the London Certificate College of Accounts, and also holds two diplomas: one in Banking and Management, from the Kenya Institute of Bankers, and the other in Risk Management from Barclays Bank, her employer of 33 years.

Catherine retired from her lucrative senior managerial position at Barclays Bank in 2004, long before she planned to join politics. Her work at the bank has helped in her current political position. "In Barclays, we set 12-month goals and reviewed them every three months. This enhanced my effectiveness as a leader," she discloses. The soft-spoken member of KEWOSA and treasurer of KEWOPA, describes herself as a strong personality who believes in transparency and accountability, fairness

We must look for ways to empower women, from all sectors of society to compete successfully for the national and county level elective posts.

and justice, and living within her means. "I don't believe in straying out of the right path just to earn an extra coin," she states.

Catherine's failed attempt at an elective post, and experience from campaigning in the run-up to the 2013 general election, have taught her that elective politics is not as easy for women as it is for men. Men have dominated the political scene, she says, adding that this has in itself acted as a barrier to women aspiring to vie for political office. Besides that, she says that poverty in Kenya has a woman's face, meaning that most women cannot afford to fund their campaigns. "In my own bid for election, lack of finances was a major obstacle, and I know other women experience the same hardship during campaigns for political seats," she notes.

The challenges in the political contests notwithstanding, Senator Mukiite encourages women aspirants to remain relevant to their electorate, and be bold and courageous when sharing their visions and goals. She is disappointed that in the last general election, very few women got elected to Parliament. "We must look for ways to empower women, from

all sectors of society to compete successfully for the national and county level elective posts," she says.

The warm and motherly Catherine describes her relationship with fellow Senators as cordial. She sits in the Committee on Finance, Commerce and Economic Affairs, and is also a member of the Health Committee, as well as the Broadcasting and Library Committee. In March 2014, Senator Mukiite was nominated to the Inter Parliamentary Union's Standing Committee on United Nations Affairs, alongside her National Assembly counterpart, David Pkosing Losiakou, who was nominated to IPU's Standing Committee on Democracy and Human Rights. They will retain the posts for four years till 2018.

Apart from the motion she moved on devolution of the Youth Fund to increase its access at the County level, she has moved another one on decentralisation of the Kenya Medical Practitioners and Dentists' Board so patients' complaints can be handled better and faster. "Did you know that some cases and complaints by patients are currently handled by the police? That can't help the patient!" She believes that women's leadership is still challenged and that even with the constitutional provisions, a lot of the power has been removed from some positions. She cites the Senate and the Nominated Members of County Assemblies, who can only vote by delegation. "We need to guard women's leadership because it is under threat," she asserts.

The senator, who is also a farmer and hotelier in Kitale, has many interests outside politics, some of which include reading, keeping fit at the gym, and traveling. She is however reluctant to talk about her family. "I'd rather keep that private," she says politely.

Senator Daisy Kanainza Nyongesa is the youngest member of the Eleventh Parliament. The 25-year-old graduate of an Education degree in English Literature was nominated by ODM to represent the youth in the Senate. "In as much as I've been in politics, I've never dreamt of becoming a Senator," she says, adding, "But again, I worked hard in grass roots politics and was very passionate about advancing the youth agenda. I guess someone somewhere spotted what I was doing," she says gratefully.

The alumnus of Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology in Western Kenya recalls the day news of her nomination hit her tiny village in Kakamega: "When people heard that I had been nominated, they broke into song and Isukuti dance. I do not want to disappoint them, I have worked so hard and will continue to do so until I see Kenya become a better place," she says.

As a student, Daisy watched and admired Nairobi Senator, Mike Sonko, fighting and chanting while advocating for the rights of the people. "His zeal and determination to help the poor was so touching," she recalls. Other than Sonko, the youth also refers to fellow Senator, Janet Ong'era, as her political role model. "She has nurtured me politically and I intend to learn more from her," she states. Daisy adds that Janet, who is the deputy minority whip, facilitated her participation in political leadership programmes while still a university student.

Senator Nyongesa never participated in university politics, preferring local party politics. She served as the secretary general of ODM Youth League for Kakamega County, and as a result, refers to herself as an icon of rural youth, having experienced the problems



DAISY KANAINZA

youth encounter in their daily lives. Daisy also vigorously participated in political leadership training programmes through Programme for Young Politicians in Africa (PYPA), Interparty Youth Forum (IPYF) and Women in Politics Forum. These forums transformed her into who she is today. "I had a keen interest in politics and gained political knowledge along the way; that together with my academic qualifications got me here," she says with confidence.

Before her nomination to the senate, Daisy was a teacher at Friends School Mang'ana, a local school in Western Kenya, earning Kshs.4000 a month. Her contribution in the House proves that indeed age is just a number when one is focused. Daisy who describes herself as a unique and determined young adult with an inquisitive mind acknowledges the transformation in her life. Although bodyguards now escort her, the

sociable Senator remains a friend to her peers. “Nothing has changed in the way I relate with my peers; many call me by my name and address me as it has always been. That is the way it should be. They shouldn’t refer to me as Senator Daisy,” she says humbly.

The senator says her interest in politics dates back to her primary school days at Silver Bells Academy and Moi Girls’ Nangili, during debates and UN mock sessions. The coverage of political news and politicians in the media and listening to them speak at rallies and other public forums motivated her to join active politics. She also experienced leadership as a prefect both in primary and secondary school. She was an avid reader of biographies, profiles and stories of the lives and times of veteran politicians such as the late Jaramogi Oginga Odinga, Tom Mboya, Masinde Muliro, Martin Shikuku and former MPs Chelagat Mutai and Dr Julia Ojiambo.

It is however her admiration of the leadership and politics of former Prime Minister and ODM leader, Raila Odinga, that inspired her to join active politics. “I got really inspired by Raila Odinga, especially his addresses in public rallies, and I have been actively involved in politics since the inception of ODM,” she says. During the 2010 Referendum campaigns for the current Constitution, Daisy got fully involved in the ‘Yes’ campaigns under the auspices of the Western Youth Alliance. However, it is in 2011 that she got a wider forum to articulate her political goals after she was elected secretary-general of Orange Young Democrats League to campaign and popularise the party.

While campaigning for her party and presidential candidate, Raila Odinga, Daisy encountered discrimination against women in its various forms. “There was open bullying by domineering male colleagues and an obvious

lack of a level playing field,” she says, adding that challenges should not deter women from getting into politics. She argues that women’s poor performance in the last election is mainly due to lack of financial and material support. “Apart from the prevailing societal prejudices, women were harassed, abused and subjected to cultural injustices,” she observes.

Daisy believes the situation can improve through intense civic education and mobilisation of financial support. She encourages women aspiring for political leadership to fix their eyes on the prize. “Just go for it and mobilise the women and the youth in particular, and be prepared to face discrimination and all sorts of injustices. This, however, should not deter you,” Senator Daisy advises.

Daisy has settled well in the Senate and relates well with all her colleagues. “The whole team is very supportive and the more experienced colleagues are always willing to help,” she says, adding that Kenya is lucky to have women parliamentarians who are focused, thorough and result oriented. According to her, sitting and interacting with these women is not only a privilege, but also a blessing.

I worked hard in grass roots politics and was very passionate about advancing the youth agenda. I guess someone somewhere spotted what I was doing.



Daisy who is a member of the Kenya Young Parliamentarians Association (KYPA) is vocal in fighting for the youth, especially on issues related to the distribution of the Youth Enterprise Fund and the Women Enterprise Fund. The Senator, who says she wants to change the lives of the Kenyan youth, is also a peace ambassador. She is alarmed by the rate of unemployment among the youth in Kenya and says that they have been used for statistics for too long. “It is important for this leadership to take youth issues with much concern and urgency,” she states.

She is actively ensuring that youth get jobs. She says Kenya has enough resources to become economically stable. “As a representative of the youth, my vision is to ensure they are well accommodated in the Kenyan system,” she says. Nurturing talent among the youth is one of her priorities. She helped organise the Kakamega County Beauty Contest, and sponsored the Likuyani Constituency Football Tournament, which drew several MPs and Kakamega County leaders.

Daisy is the vice chairperson of the Implementation Committee, and a member of the Education Information and Technology Committee. She has toured several countries to learn how youth are represented, and subsequently plans to table a bill that will see an increase in the number of children attaining secondary education. “I have understood the cracks in our education system, and... I intend to table a bill that will seal those cracks and allow as many people as possible, to access basic education,” she says. She is also a member of the Human Rights Parliamentary Caucus.

Away from politics, Daisy is dating and plans to serve as a role model for youth who may be disillusioned about marriage. She plans to remain in active politics after the marriage and expiry of her term as Senator.



ELIZABETH ONGORO

Hon Elizabeth Ongoro Masha's political strength and power is rising fast. In 2007, she vied for the first time and won a seat in Kasarani, a constituency that was previously dominated by hardened male politicians. She also served as an assistant minister in the

coalition government, and was ODM party's deputy chairperson.

The fast rise aside, Elizabeth's relatively young political career has already tasted the pain and disappointment also experienced by her female political predecessors. Her race to the senate, prior to the 2013 general election was marked with disappointment, occasioning from what she perceives as ethnic and gender discrimination. The

outspoken politician, who backs up all her statements with Christian ideals, is yet to get to terms with that experience.

After "three years of gruelling and heated campaign", Elizabeth was assured of her party's support to vie for and win the Nairobi Senatorial Seat. "I was shocked when I didn't get the party's nomination just because I came from the same tribe as the party's gubernatorial candidate for Nairobi," she says. "That to me has been the biggest negative statement I've ever heard," she adds slowly, for emphasis.

The eloquent politician believes that were she a man, the party would never have made that unpopular decision. "Most painful was that faced with a choice between the two, the woman was dropped," she states, the hurt evident. "I thought my party stood for something bigger. I was so disappointed," she adds. That and a few other experiences in the overall political space have taught the keen and fast learning Elizabeth that politics is yet to accommodate women. She blames fellow party officials. "If they could decide the fate of a fellow leader behind closed doors, how much more the fates of other women?" she poses.

Kenyan politics, Elizabeth says, is male dominated and women have to fight as though they are alone. She says the affirmative action that has seen many women get into the 11th Parliament doesn't give them power to make important decisions. "The biggest problem women politicians face is not voters or blue prints, but need for a strategy to deal with the big boys' club. I'm fully alive to this bitter truth. We've not yet gotten a formula or a girls' club to counter this reality," she shares.

Hon Ongoro remains in politics to seek the desired change. "I've already lost a lot, and I'm still hurting. But I'd rather be a

case study than quit. If I don't stick it out, it will take another set of women to come and deal with the same issues," she states with determination. Elizabeth urges women to vie for top positions in their political parties, as a winning strategy. "Women, get out and fight for these posts; I know it's like hitting a rock, but it will eventually break," she encourages.

She urges women to learn from and build on the foundation already laid by earlier generations of women politicians, to ensure continuity. And that with each generation, women should change their political arsenal if they want to see political growth, and not get frustrated out of politics like has happened to many. Elizabeth draws lessons from Narc-Kenya leader, Martha Karua, whom she believes has achieved a lot in politics. "This is the way it should be! How I manoeuvre this course will be a case study to future women politicians, and that's why I want to remain in it to it's sweeter end," she declares.

Born fifth of 12 children, Elizabeth grew up under humble circumstances. She picked three life principles: cleanliness, hard work, and generosity, from her hardworking and strict grandmother, who raised her between 6 months of age and three years. Elizabeth also learnt bravery and leadership from the matriarch, a midwife, who was also outspoken on governance matters. "My earliest memories of her are of a strong woman who was not afraid to address barazas and instil discipline in anyone who ever passed through her home," she recalls.

The daughter of a Catechist, the Catholic Church influenced most of Hon Ongoro's childhood, including her earlier dream to become a nun. At Siriba (now Maseno) Teachers' Training College, where she grew up, Elizabeth and her siblings helped their

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father with his church duties, including liturgy and choir training, making them "a team of church workers." After her form one studies at Mary Hill Girls' School, Elizabeth dropped out of school for two years because her parents could not afford the school fees.

Completing secondary and high school education were nothing short of a miracle for the legislator, who holds a Master's Degree in Urban Development from the University of Nairobi, and an undergraduate Degree in Education from Kenyatta University. During her two years out of school, she helped her parents and the church with chores. A priest noticed her intelligence, kindness and dedication, and educated her through Rangala and Lwak Girls' High Schools. "I rejoined school in form four and worked hard to recover the two years I had lost." The competitive Elizabeth says she wasn't going to lag behind her contemporaries.

Hon Ongoro is gifted in business, having run successful investments since her second year at university. Her ventures have included, among others, boutiques, a refuse handling company, a construction company

and a refrigerated transport company. "I did not know day or night, I just worked and built businesses from nothing," recalls Elizabeth, who also remained active in church. Her contribution as an employer and a servant of God pushed her into politics. "I never liked, or wanted to become a politician; destiny will never give up on you. I was thrust into politics because of many colluding circumstances that are hard to explain," she discloses.

Employees and clients persuaded Elizabeth to join politics. "I chose Kasarani, a constituency that talked to my past and present," she says. Kasarani was one of the biggest and most populous constituencies, yet ethnically balanced, and not dominated by any one party, she explains. In Kasarani, Hon Ongoro experienced the two phases of her life – poverty and affluence. "I could talk to each category comfortably, from the heart," she adds.

Elizabeth will vie in the next election. "Any politician with no ambition or ability to correct past mistakes is not in the right career," she says. Like most politicians, she joined politics hoping to solve the people's problems. "Sometimes you feel frustrated and inadequate when you meet many problems that you can't quite solve... I can't settle to a full meal. The voices get back to me; it affects us," she says. She is learning how to balance what she can and cannot do for the people, while putting effort in law making and policy formulation and implementation, where the most sustainable solutions lay.

In the senate, Elizabeth serves in the Foreign Relations and Security Committee, the Energy Committee, the Speaker's Panel, and is the chairperson of the newly constituted Kenya Women Senators Association (KEWOSA).

Senator Emma Mburu recalls how as a young girl, she would stand up against bullies to defend not just herself, but also friends, peers and anybody who appeared weaker than she was. “I have always had a soft spot for social justice and human rights,” says the TNA senator from Mombasa County. This explains her daring move, in early June 2013, when she bailed out seven women accused of stripping in a Mombasa club. The senator did what many leaders would not dare, for fear of negative reactions from the society. She criticised foreigners who come into the country to exploit desperate and jobless young Kenyans by engaging them in demeaning activities for money. The outspoken senator said foreigners were welcome to invest in the country but not to exploit Kenyans.

As the news of what she had done spread across the country, Emma suggested to fellow women legislators to get together and draft legislation that would help end such “immoral businesses”, and protect the people against exploitation by unscrupulous foreigners. “I have been active as a human rights defender, an anti-corruption crusader, a campaigner against drug trafficking and substance abuse and a community mobiliser,” she explains.

Born on November 23, 1967, Emma is keen on “good” politics; the kind she claims to have practiced since joining the male dominated political field. This kind of politics, she says, entails organising society for common good. “It was therefore a natural destination for me,” says the legislator whose major areas of interest are community development, human rights and social justice. Emma is the founder of a number of successful community development groups, including the Mombasa based All Race Kids Club (Arakic), which empowers children on issues affecting society, such as



EMMA MBURA

drugs and substance abuse. “Children in the club are taught the importance and benefits of protecting the environment by planting trees and keeping neighborhoods clean,” she says. The club has helped to keep children away from divisive activities during school holidays. The Mombasa Municipal Council has particularly benefited from hundreds of trees planted by the children.

The other community group that Emma started is the Baraza la Kina Mama wa

Kimijikenda (The Council of Mijikenda Women), which has worked to empower Mijikenda women in rural areas. It helps to identify the challenges and problems affecting the women and finds solutions. The other development group she founded is Women of the Flag of Kenya, a singing group made up of women from all communities and races of Kenya. The women have in the past offered patriotic entertainment on national events in Mombasa and Nairobi. They also campaign for

peaceful coexistence among all communities of Kenya. In the run-up to the 2013 general election, they mobilised people to register as voters and encouraged them on the day of election, to cast their votes.

Emma worked as a guest relationship executive in Nyali, Bamburi, Leopard and Leisure Beach Hotels between 1995 and 2008. Before that, she had a one-year stint between 1994 and 1995 as a community social worker at Mkoma Clinic. At the time of her nomination, the TNA senator was the Coast regional coordinator for Kenyans for Justice and Development (KEJUDE) Trust. She is remembered for mobilising the community against ills such as graft in the public service; trafficking of drugs and substance abuse; exploitation of workers; and child prostitution. She also mobilised the community to defend and protect their human rights.

An alumnus of Pwani College, Emma started off her political career as an active campaigner for veteran Coast politician, the late Shariff Nassir. More recently, she campaigned for former Mvita MP, Najib Balala, for the Mombasa Senatorial seat in the run up to the 2013 general election. Balala lost the race and was appointed the Cabinet Secretary for Mining. Emma was one of TNA's key campaigners in the region in the last election. She settled for TNA because, in her view, the party injected freshness into Kenya's political scene, and because of its ideology. "I like the youthful leadership of TNA. I identified with its ideological platform and policy framework which is geared towards economic liberation of Kenyans through modernising the country's economy," says the 47-year-old human rights campaigner.

Senator Mbura has used the public relations skills acquired from her experience in guest relationship work in all her professional engagements. She has employed this skill in

toughest of times, including in tackling the Mombasa Republican Council (MRC) menace. The MRC was one of the toughest challenges her team of development and political workers faced in the run-up to the 2013 election. "The rejection of the set election dates by the MRC was our main challenge. When that was dealt with, we focused on the other challenge, campaigning for TNA at the Coast," she says. The Coast region supported CORD heavily, and that was a big challenge for the campaigner. Thanks to her development work, the bulk of support that the Jubilee Coalition received came from the youth and women who have benefitted from Emma's development work.

Married with four children, Senator Mbura cautions women that politics is not for the faint hearted. "If you join politics, be prepared to fight it out with men to achieve your goal," she adds. She further advises women aspiring for political leadership to be strategic by building winning teams and networks, and by joining

popular political parties. She adds that they should be capable of mobilising resources. "Politics is not for those who are easily cowed and neither is it a walk in the park. Women aspiring for elective positions must know that nobody will give them the positions without a fight," Senator Mbura points out.

She suggests heightened civic education and women's empowerment to ensure that the dismal performance of women in the last general election is not repeated. Emma also proposes a critical look at the country's electoral system that is favourable to those with money and "those are naturally men. If that is not addressed, women will continue performing dismally at elections," she observes.

The Senator, who loves planting trees and engaging in clean-up exercises, says her relationship with other senators is cordial. She adds that although this is the second time that Kenya has a Senate, theirs is the first under the current Constitution, and all 67 Senators are learning on the job. "There are no experienced senators to take us by the hand," she says.

Emma is a member of the Committee on Delegated Legislation, and also sits in the joint Committee on National Cohesion and Equal Opportunity. Senator Mbura intends to spend her five-year term "humbly serving the country both from inside and outside the House." She has five pending motions: on accountability in writing off debts owed by local authorities; on gender and violence; privatisation; modernisation of road and rail infrastructure; and on the provision of laptops to standard one pupils.

A member of KEWOPA, Senator Mbura sits in its committee on Public Administration and International Relations. She says KEWOPA has helped to increase her confidence through interaction with other women legislators, as well as through mentoring and building her capacity through inductions and training.

Politics is not for those who are easily cowed and neither is it a walk in the park. Women aspiring for elective positions must know that nobody will give them the positions without a fight.





FATUMA DULLO

Senator Fatuma Adan Dullo was the first woman from the Borana community to serve as a District Officer. She was 22-years-old and fresh from Garbatulla High School when she got employed in that position. For 17 years she served in various capacities in the

provincial administration in the Coast, Eastern and Rift Valley Provinces.

In 1995 Fatuma joined the Ministry of Health as an Assistant Secretary. Ten years later she left the government service to work with the United Nations Development Programme as a Human Rights and Legal Adviser. She however returned to public service in 2007, when

she was nominated Commissioner at the Kenya National Commission on Human Rights (KNHCR), in charge of Security Sector Reform, International Obligations and Wajir Regional Office. Her docket included additional responsibilities of mainstreaming the rights of children, people with disability and women.

When her contract with KNHCR ended, she embarked on her journey to leadership at another level. "I knew I was ripe for politics and that is where I was headed," she says. Fatuma travelled back home to Isiolo County intending to contest for the County Women's Representative seat. "I was good enough to participate in active politics. I had done a lot of groundwork and was sure of a win," she relates.

An election strategy meeting in Isiolo comprising clan leaders and political leaders from the Jubilee Coalition had different plans. "It was agreed that I withdraw my bid for the sake of unity in our county. As I did not want to divide the people, the voice of the clan and elders prevailed."

The Senator says that the campaign team for the Jubilee Coalition had a tough assignment defending the candidacy of its flag-bearers, Uhuru Kenyatta and William Ruto, because of the charges of crimes against humanity related to the 2007 election, at the International Criminal Court. "There was a lot of propaganda and the people had been misled that the presidential candidate and his running mate were prisoners. I was able to explain the true position because of my background as a lawyer and my years of experience in government," she says.

On 20 March 2013, URP nominated Fatuma the Senator for Isiolo County. "I had supported the leaders in their strategy and they in turn kept their word. I cannot defy the elders as I highly respect them," says the advocate of the High Court of Kenya.

Described as a team player and excellent manager by her peers, Fatuma is confident that she and her team will deliver the promises they made to the Isiolo County electorate. "It is not something I can deliver on my own. We shall do so as a team to ensure that Jubilee fulfils the pledges made to the nation," she says.

Fatuma is a member of key Senate committees: she is the vice chairperson of the Committee on National Security and Foreign Relations, and a member of the Senate Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights. She also sits on the board of Pastoralist Women Access to Justice, and is a member of the Law Society of Kenya, KEWOPA and FIDA.

Fatuma is confident in her ability to sponsor a bill that would impact the lives of the youth, as well as legislation to empower women to be able to compete for leadership positions with men. But in the meantime, the Senator chairs the Northern Kenya Access to Justice, a civil society for the local community.

She encourages women aspiring for

political leadership to come out and fight for their rights. "There is no difference between them and men because they are equally competent. Although there are challenges and barriers, they need to develop confidence and look up to those already in such positions and follow suit," says the Senator. She also believes that it is important to include men in civic education as "it is the best way to cultivate community acceptance for women in political leadership."

Speaking in reference to the poor performance of women in the race for parliamentary and gubernatorial seats, Fatuma says that one of the major challenges is that civic education efforts with a view to increasing women's acceptance in politics, tends to focus on a few select women, as opposed to a unified approach that embraces all women involved. "It is also important to include men and the youth in the civic education that seeks to increase the number of women in elective politics," she adds.

Besides the divisionary approach, she also acknowledges that lack of money was one of the reasons many competent women stayed out of Parliament and county leadership seats in the 2013 election. "They can't afford the whole process from registration, to campaigns," she says. Her challenge to women

Women should be able to support each other. Because of failing to give each other that support, men use us to fight their political wars.



already in leadership is to particularly mentor the women in the grassroots as they lack exposure. "Women should be able to support each other. Because of failing to give each other that support, men use us to fight their political wars," she points out.

Senator Fatuma Dullo has paramilitary training from the Administration Police Training College, undertaken in 1993. She also studied for a Diploma in Law and Bachelor's degree in Law between 2001 and 2005, at the University of Nairobi. She recently completed her Master's Degree in Law at the same university in 2012.

She was nominated to represent persons with disability after a spirited campaign in the 2013 general election. Senator Godliver Omondi from Kakamega County campaigned determinedly alongside other politicians who were seeking election to Parliament. "I went around all the 14 counties of Western Kenya campaigning for ODM because I knew the more votes the party got, the higher the chances for my nomination. I campaigned tirelessly and all the campaigns I did were self-sponsored," Hon Omondi discloses. "I would campaign in three churches each Sunday for three months," recalls the politician, who was Western Kenya's coordinator for people with disability.

After the election, Godliver's name topped the ODM list of nominees presented to IEBC for nomination to the Senate, as a representative of people with disability. "I was so confident I was headed to Parliament because the party had given me an assurance. I later saw the list of nominees and indeed I had been nominated and my name was top on the list," she recalls.

Soon after her nomination, Godliver was to go to Tanzania for a conference to discuss issues of women with disability. But just before boarding the flight, she decided to confirm one last time with an official at IEBC that the list was still intact. "I do not think I will ever forget the response, because the words hit me like a thunderbolt," recalls the Senator. "The officer said, 'Hon Omondi, I am sorry to tell you that the seat has been given to



GODLIVER OMONDI

(Harold Kimunge) Kipchumba,' I almost collapsed," she remembers.

Not one to give up, Godliver armed herself with a copy of the original list, which she had photocopied, and went to the High Court. After six months of a court duel, the Judge ruled that Kipchumba had been unfairly nominated and the seat rightfully belonged to her. On October

15, 2013, Godliver was finally sworn in, and immediately set out to work to catch up with colleagues. Her work has proven that she is indeed a fast learner. "Even the Speaker of the House was surprised, and to my joy, he commended me for that," she says.

Senator Omondi is grateful and thankful to God that her dreams and effort

to become a lawmaker have finally been fulfilled, though heartbroken that her mother did not live to see her dream come true.

Born 42 years ago, Godliver contracted Polio when six months old. She lost use of her limbs as a result and is now confined to a wheel-chair. "I have never known the joys or pains of walking. I have never walked or stood in my life," she says without a hint of self-pity. For the eight years of her primary education, she crawled for 4km to school and back. Her mother had been widowed when Godliver was just about a year old. Because of that, she could not afford a wheelchair or a helper for her daughter.

"I went to an ordinary school and crawled to school under a lot of difficulties. Sometimes I came across kind people along the road who gave me a lift on their bicycles," she recalls.

Now that she is able to move around with ease, Godliver says, "This wheelchair is my life. I am comfortable in it and it has never been an obstacle to anything that I have wanted to do." The amiable legislator appreciates her mother, who did not remarry because she needed to give all her attention to her disabled daughter. "She was often mocked for having a disabled child. People used to call me a pussy cat, and they would tell my mother, 'If you want to get married you must first make up your mind about where you want to leave that pussy cat of yours.'" Senator Omondi knows the sacrifice it took to have her mother choose to stick with her. "She had hope in me," she states jovially.

After primary school, she got admission to Mumias Girls' Secondary School, but

could not join the school immediately. "When the school administration learnt about my condition, they refused to admit me saying they would only do so if I was on a wheelchair," she remembers. Godliver had almost given up on secondary education when help came from the most unlikely of places. "I was crawling from church one Sunday when a man on a bicycle stopped me. He asked me to tell my mother to take me to a place in Butula in Busia County where I would get help. When we went to Butula, he gave me a wheelchair," she says, her face lighting up.

With the issue of the wheelchair resolved then area Member of Parliament, the late Dr Elon Wameyo, offered to pay her school fees. "A local councillor introduced my mother to the MP. He

agreed to support me throughout my education. I will be forever grateful to him," the Senator says.

After completing high school education, the mother of three trained as a telephone operator and worked at the Mumias Municipal Council. Later she trained at the Mbagathi Teachers' Training College in Nairobi and at Mombasa's Government Training Institute, acquiring knowledge that saw her rise within the ranks in human resource management. Today Senator Omondi is the national chairperson of the United Disabled Persons of Kenya (UPDK).

The Senator first dabbled with politics during the Kenyan constitutional review process that culminated into the 2010 Constitution. She is passionate about issues affecting people with disability, particularly women. She is grateful to her husband, Alfred Were Wekesa, who has walked with her through her political and family life. In addition to their three children, the couple adopted three of her brother's children following his death a few years ago.

The lawmaker plans to use her position as a senator to push for implementation of policies and laws on people with disability. "I have always wanted to be where laws are formulated and implemented so that issues affecting people with disability are more visible. That is now my focus," she asserts. "I want to work with other senators to advance issues on disability and come up with an affirmative action." Senator Omondi sits in the Health, Delegated, Broadcasting and Library Committee, the National Cohesion and Equal Opportunities Committee, and is a member of KEWOPA.

I went around all the 14 counties of Western Kenya campaigning for ODM because I knew the more votes the party got, the higher the chances for my nomination.



HALIMA ABDILLE

Senator Halima Abdille Muhammad, from Wajir County, is grateful for Kenya's current Constitution, without which she would not have been an MP. "The Constitution motivated me through its provisions on gender and equity," says the Kenyatta University graduate. The 25-year-old legislator is still coming to terms

with the effect her new status has had on girls from Wajir County, and particularly those from her home in Eldas. "I am very excited that even my own sisters have been motivated and inspired by my nomination to the Senate, a matter I also attribute to my hard work and consistency in school, college and the community," she says.

So keen is Halima on empowering and improving the status of girls and young

women in her home that she chose a woman as her bodyguard. "I want young girls and women to know that offering security to VIPs is not a preserve for men," she says. She is emphatic that her hard work at Eldas Primary School in the outskirts of Wajir, and later at Wajir Secondary School, thrust her into the national limelight in March 2013. Halima developed interest in politics just months to the general election, while working as a field officer with a humanitarian organisation in Wajir.

After graduating with a Bachelor of Education Degree in Science, Biology and Chemistry in 2011, Halima was employed by the Wajir-based Arid Lands Development Focus (ALDEF) as a field monitor. She rose within a few months to the position of Education Project Officer. "Through this organisation, I learnt a lot about the community and the challenges women and girls in particular face. It is through this work that I came face to face with the problems they face due to gaps in education," says the soft-spoken senator.

By advocating for the education, rights and empowerment of girls and women, organisations such as UN-Women inspire the youthful Senator. She has decided to do everything in her power to motivate girls to follow in her footsteps and embrace education to secure their future. "Having understood their problems, and especially challenges the girl child faces in her attempt to access proper education, I decided to be a role model for them in Wajir. I tell them that with focus in education, they can become successful in life, no matter which school they attend," says Halima.

Hon Muhammad is full of praise for her father, Wajir businessman, Abdille Muhammad. She is glad he motivated and

encouraged her to pursue education to the highest level. "I remember him promising to take me to a good school in Nairobi if I passed KCPE well. In turn I promised to persevere the conditions at Eldas Primary School and pass highly because I was convinced that my determination and hard work, and not the state of the school, would see me through. I did not disappoint dad," she says proudly.

An obedient daughter, Halima remembers most of the advice her father gave her and her siblings, especially constantly reminding them that the only thing they could inherit from him was education. "I have followed his advice to the letter, and I am happy to say that I have inspired my younger sisters to follow suit. They are very keen to succeed in education. I am happy that my father is among the few men in the community who are keen on education for their daughters," says the second born of 13.

One of Halima's younger sisters, Hamun, was the best pupil in the 2012 KCPE in Eldas Constituency. She also joined Wajir Girls' Secondary School, while one other sister is studying for a Bachelor's degree in Environmental Studies at one of the local universities. "I am so happy that many other young women and girls are willing to work hard to beat the challenges to get where I am. They want to be like Halima," she says. "My husband also encourages me to pursue my goal to empower girls and women, and my other interests," she adds.

Encouragingly, local political leaders embraced and supported Halima when she showed interest in political leadership. She chose ODM Party because it is serious about a rule by the people and for the people. Besides that, ODM was the more popular party in Wajir. "I liked their use of the word

Some told me that I had no chance at nomination, and would not go far politically on account of my age. They were wrong. I was number three on the list of CORD nominees.



democracy and that is what the whole county wanted," she emphasises.

Initially, Halima had purposed to run as the county's women's representative, but on consultation with fellow leaders, she opted to concentrate on campaigning for the party. "We conducted intense campaigns and delivered for the party. Almost the whole county went to CORD," she says. Halima shrugged off pessimists who attempted to dissuade her from applying for the position of nominated MP. "Some told me that I had no chance at nomination, and would not go far politically on account of my age. They were wrong. I was number three on the list of CORD nominees," she recalls.

Halima has maintained her passion in education by joining Senate's Committee on Education, Information and Technology. To crown it, and to her utter surprise and joy, she was elected the committee's vice chairperson, after defeating Pokot Senator, Prof John Lonyangapuo of the Jubilee Coalition. Halima is also a member of the joint Parliamentary Broadcasting Committee. "I am very happy and proud to be interacting

with very senior politicians and leaders in this country, and to sit in the same chambers with them. I have learnt and keep learning a lot from them," she adds.

To find her way around the House and understand its procedures, Halima spends a lot of time studying the House Rules and Standing Orders as well as the Constitution, and observing keenly what senior politicians do. She is glad that KEWOPA has done a good job of inducting new MPs and guiding them on all aspects of Parliament. "I am still learning and reading and I am not worried because I know practice makes perfect," says the member of the executive committee of KEWOPA.

Halima hopes to introduce a motion making education of girls mandatory. She intends to use her political platform to promote the education and empowerment of girls. "I want to campaign for the rights of the girl child nationally. I also want to be able to tell girls and young women that there is no short cut to success and academic excellence, except through hard work. I want them to know that the fruits of education are sweet," the legislator says with authority.

Although no women senators or governors were elected in the 2013 general election, Halima is happy that Kenyan elections have improved. She believes that to enhance women's political leadership, the civil society and political leaders should enhance civic education to ensure more women are elected in future political contests. Senator Halima urges women interested in taking up elective positions to come out and follow their dreams even as they deal with the challenges and obstacles along the way. "Anything is possible. They should stand up and take their positions in leadership. They must not shy away," she challenges.

Her mother reminds her that when she was a child, she often said that she wanted to become the vice-president of Kenya, and would often imitate soldiers marching. Hon Janet Ongera cannot remember the childhood fantasies, but remembers that her maternal grandfather was a traditional Kisii chief, who was treated like a king. Her paternal grandmother was a spiritual leader with the power to stop rain; and her paternal grandfather was an adviser to the community.

Janet, a last born, was brought up in a polygamous family of the Seventh Day Adventist denomination. Her mother was a deaconess and her father a sergeant in the Prisons Department. The family did not always enjoy life's basic needs, but was filled with love.

Despite having grandparents who were leaders, Janet's political mentor was her brother-in-law, the late Zephania Anyieni. A long-serving Kisii politician, Zephania taught Janet a lot about political leadership from a very young age. She grew up in his house. "He took me to school a year earlier than my peers, and exposed me to his political campaigns. I remember campaigning for him in Bomachoge Constituency when I was in standard seven. I campaigned again for him in two other elections," she says.

Her roles in the campaigns were simple. She helped to feed the people who flocked to Zephania's home during the campaigns and reported back whatever she heard them saying. Her other role was to sing and dance with them on the campaign trail. "To a young girl, those were thrilling moments. Seeing people singing and dancing in praise of someone I



JANET ONGERA

knew personally was exciting and joyous. The people called him E Simba ya Bagusii (The Lion of the Kisii) a name that elicited a lot of excitement from the people, and more confidence in me," she recalls. Her interest in politics was thus formed in early childhood.

Presently, one of Janet's greatest political inspirations is ODM leader, Raila Odinga. He was able to successfully bring out the politician in her, when family and friends

merely viewed her as a lawyer and manager. Her first meeting with Raila was coincidental. Janet had been Uhuru Kenyatta's campaign manager in the Kisii region when he unsuccessfully vied for Presidency in 2002. As a civil servant, she was doing this work illegally, and soon after the election, she was shown the door at the Kenya Airports Authority, where she was deputy-managing director. Three years later, Raila, Uhuru,

William Ruto and Kalonzo Musyoka offered her a political deal she could not ignore. From then, she got immersed into politics.

The four had teamed up to oppose the Draft Constitution that was the subject of a Referendum in November 2005. They wanted her to manage their 'No' campaign. "That was the first time I participated in serious politicking. I was responsible for the success of their campaign. The campaign went right and we won the plebiscite," she recalls joyfully.

When the team later parted ways, Janet had already made up her mind to stick with ODM. During their travels to drum up support for the Orange team around the country, Raila exhibited a strength and resilience that she had not seen in anyone before. "Raila's resilience resonates with my spirit. I believe that with resilience and patience in politics, one can achieve a lot. I admired that trait as well as his bravery," she says.

Clearly, Janet who narrowly missed nomination into Parliament in 2008 and ended up taking up the post of ODM's executive director admires her political mentor. "If you don't want him to attend a function, don't try to dissuade him with words such as, 'Don't go to that place because of riots or danger...' because that perceived danger will be precisely his reason to go to the place. To me that is real bravery of a politician," she says. Watching and emulating Raila has slowly turned her into the politician she is.

Janet also credits the Centre for Multiparty Democracy for mentoring her. She has also gone through and benefited from the political academies of the National Democratic Institute and the Norwegian Government. With such expansive mentoring,

Janet has a broader and liberal view on the country's politics. She believes that the best way to attain political peace in Kenya would be by having a government of cooperation and abandoning the politics of division in favour of inclusion.

As the 2013 general election drew nearer, Janet wanted to vie for the Kisii Senatorial seat. Working in Kisii, Janet interacted with a lot of people who have also become her political supporters. For instance, she has mentored the youth through the NGO, Green Fingers International, which engages in projects such as brick-making, tree-planting and other innovative ways of generating income. With such a rich interaction with women and youth, Janet believed that they would help her clinch the position. Party leaders however persuaded her to withdraw her candidacy in favour of long-serving politician, Chris Obure. She agreed to do so, having reasoned that running against her ally would have easily caused a split in the votes and caused her party the seat. She is glad that Obure won, and she got nominated to the Senate, as a reward for the good work she did as ODM's executive director.

The ease with which she settled in the

Senate was largely a result of years Janet spent watching and learning from the skills of grounded MPs in her party. A good listener, she has also made it a point to take in their words of wisdom laced with experience, as they interacted with her in the years that she served at the ODM secretariat. They generously included her when strategising on how to pass Bills and Motions in the House. Were it not for that past, she believes coping in the House would have been hard, as the increased number of legislators in the Eleventh Parliament has made training for new members a demanding task. "We keep making blunders in the House but I'm glad that the senior ones help us greatly and tell us what to do and how to go about different situations," she says.

As the deputy minority whip, Janet has worked hard to get members of her party to table motions in Parliament. She is also pondering on a few of her own as she continues to learn. Unlike the National Assembly, the Senate has had few political rivalries between members from the different political sides, a situation that makes Janet happy. "We have an excellent working relationship in the Senate. We may differ on principle but we do not demean or embarrass each other. We sit and agree, giving opposing members the right to voice their opinions," she says.

A member of KEWOPA, Janet is pleased with the work the association has done for members, but challenges its leadership to ensure that the one-third gender principle is achieved, not only in elective but also appointive posts. "We women leaders in Parliament should champion this principle and ensure an enhanced civic education for women to empower them for political office... We have not yet given the rural based woman the attention she deserves," she concludes.

Raila's resilience resonates with my spirit. I believe that with resilience and patience in politics, one can achieve a lot. I admired that trait as well as his bravery.





JOY GWENDO

Even as she pursued a career in journalism at the Royal Media Services, Hon Joy Adhiambo Gwendu knew she was destined for politics. Her dream came true when TNA nominated her to the Senate. "I have always been

interested in politics. In fact, my late father believed I would either become a politician or a lawyer," she says. "I am sure he turned in celebration in his grave, when I joined politics."

The former student of Lwak Girls' High School traces her passion for leadership to her childhood, growing up

in Chiga Village in Kisumu County. "At 13 years, I became the secretary general of our church youth group at Chiga Parish. Our activities included enlightening other youngsters on HIV and AIDS, and talent development in the village," she remembers.

A staunch supporter of President Uhuru Kenyatta and his TNA party, the youthful senator took to social media and intense blogging to campaign for her favourite candidate and party.

"I supported and campaigned for TNA because I felt quite passionate about the principles of the party leader as well as the backdrop on which the party was formed. It gives women and youth visibility," she says.

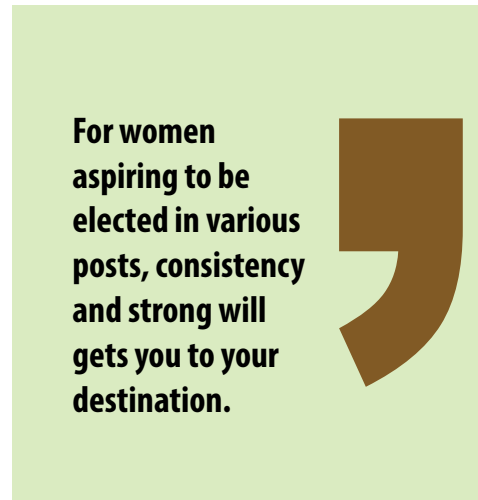
Before her nomination, the graduate of the University of Nairobi, Bachelor of Information Sciences, had worked in the mass media industry, and could therefore not participate actively in politics. "Since 2002, I was keen and interested in politics but could not engage actively because of the dictates of my career in the media," she says. "I did not imagine that one day I would have a platform to express issues that are close to my heart and affect people daily. Now, I have it in the Senate."

Joy has authored an English – Luo / Luo - English Dictionary, aimed at increasing the understanding and speaking of the two languages among the Luo and people interested in the language. She got into mainstream politics after interviewing now TNA Secretary General, Onyango Oloo, at the Ramogi Radio Station. Oloo had

formed a political party mainly targeting the people of Nyanza, something that attracted Joy. She however could not go public about her political activities because her employer did not encourage employees to participate in politics. "I did not hesitate to join DFP, and worked as the party's head of communication, for two years – behind the scenes," she discloses. DFP is one of the parties that joined TNA before the 2013 general election.

The staunch believer in women's empowerment is sad that only 16 women were elected to represent constituencies in Parliament, and that none were elected in the Senate and at the gubernatorial level. That however, should not make women leaders give up or lose hope, she says, adding that instead women should seek new ways of getting the electorate to understand the need to elect and empower women. "We must keep reminding voters that if women can take care of families under whatever circumstances, why not the country?" she poses.

Hon Gwendo is enjoying the new experience at the Senate because apart from her love for challenges, being in the Senate is an opportunity of great learning. "I am from a background (journalism) where I used to sit down to write a story



on the leaders but now I am one of them. I must say that this is magnanimous and I have God to thank," she says excitedly.

The Senator is a member of the House Committee on Education, Information and Technology. She also sits in the crucial Implementation Committee. "It is exciting to interact with and learn from some of the very brilliant people in this country," Joy says. She is also a member of KEWOPA and is looking towards exploring available opportunities through the association.

Her advice to the youth and in particular young women who want to be in political and national leadership is that

they should be consistent in pursuing their goals and stand firm for what they believe in. "For women aspiring to be elected in various posts, consistency and strong will gets you to your destination," she stresses. She, however, feels that young women in Kenya who rise into positions of leadership are still viewed with suspicion by society. "As a young woman, society still looks at me as one who did something to get to my position and not that I worked for or deserve it. There are also those who see young women as flower girls. These are some of the stereotypes we must fight to change," says the mother of one.

The Senator has taken her quest to address issues affecting the youth further and whenever she is invited for radio interviews, she seeks their views ahead of the programme, through social media. Using the same forum, Joy has also sought views of these constituents so the Senate Education Committee can address them.

Joy has also worked as a Marketing and Creative Executive with Home Boyz radio. For the last five years, she has written for the Catholic Church magazine, the Seed, published by Consolata Missionaries. She says she will continue writing for the magazine's youth page, even as a senator.

“ I did not see my debut into politics coming,” laughs Senator Judith Achieng’ Sijeny. She was in Johannesburg, South Africa, representing the Law Society of Kenya in a National Construction Authority Conference, when she learnt of her nomination by the Wiper Democratic Party. “It was too much for me. I was overwhelmed and excited,” she remembers.

Born and brought up in Nairobi’s South B Estate, the Senator grew up in a polygamous home, where she witnessed disputes over property. “My mother, being the fourth wife, was always quiet and content with whatever share she got, but the future lawyer in me saw injustice.” She strongly believes that God allowed disputes in the family to prepare her for a great career. She made up her mind to study hard and become a lawyer. “I have always believed in justice and will not let anyone be mistreated even if I do not personally know them,” she asserts.

As a young girl, Judith disliked politics intensely. Her father, Antony Sijeny, a politician and prominent businessman, was often absent from home. When she socialised with the children of other politicians, questions such as “when were you last with your dad?” often dominated the conversation. “I vowed to be a present mother and spend ample time with my children,” the mother of two remembers.

The trained Karateka always took up



JUDITH SIJENY

the role of defending her siblings from bullies, and remembers an episode where she wrestled and pinned down a big boy who was fond of bullying her stepbrothers. “I was sitting on top of him and raining punches on him.” Her father took her to Bar-Korwa Girls’ Boarding School, for class five to seven, between

1976 and 1978, which she credits for transforming her life. “I could spread my bed, draw water and practice personal hygiene under no duress,” she recalls, adding that she was later to champion speech contests and was even made the school timekeeper. “I was getting more responsible by the day,” she admits.

After completing her studies at Ng'iya Girls' Secondary School in Siaya County in 1982, Judith went to study in India. She joined Jabalpur University where she started her BA in economics, and later completed the course at Poona University. Later she joined Bombay University where she studied Political Science, English and Literature. Finally Judith joined the Government Law College where she studied for a Bachelor's Degree in Law. After six years in India, she returned to Kenya and enrolled at the Kenya School of Law.

She believes that God paved her way into politics because no sooner had she finished her studies at the Kenya School of Law, than former Vice President, Kalonzo Musyoka, who is also a lawyer by profession, recruited her into his legal firm. "I managed the firm very well, something that impressed the then presidential aspirant," she recalls. Being so close to a presidential aspirant exposed her to politics. "I used to do all the legal write-ups for the Wiper Democratic Party, and was eventually appointed the party's national elections board secretary," she says. She would later be selected to chair the Wiper National Appeals Board.

Judith later left the law firm to join Muthoga Gaturu & Company Advocates, which was founded by Judge Lee Muthoga. She remained under Kalonzo's mentorship. She joined FIDA Kenya and actively volunteered to assist women in legal advisory. She served as the chairperson of FIDA-Kenya between 2006 and 2010 before starting her own firm, Sijeny and Company Advocates.

The warm and welcoming politician chose not to vie for the FIDA position again because she now sits in different Senatorial committees. She is the vice chairperson of the Roads, Transport and Communication Committee, as well as the Delegated Legislation Committee. She also sits in the Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights. "I have so much in my hands as far as governance is concerned that I would feel selfish if I didn't let another person serve in the FIDA Committee," she states.

Judith is grateful to KEWOPA for the induction training they gave the first time legislators upon joining the senate. She believes similar organizations should do more to enlighten and empower women politicians.

Sijeny has already drafted a bill on reproductive care, which will be discussed soon. She believes that lack of education is the cause of maternal death, especially among teenage girls.

"Education on reproductive health should be enhanced to stop teenage girls from abusing contraceptives, especially the morning-after emergency pill," she stresses. She suggests that health facilities should have adolescent friendly lectures to ensure safe and responsible motherhood. "I have always had a soft spot for women," she adds. Judith also wants legalisation of gestational surrogacy, a treatment process in which another woman, other than the one donating the embryo, undergoes the embryo transfer process, and then carries the pregnancy to term.

To female political aspirants, the

**Get prepared
psychologically
and involve your
family - they play
a great part.**



Catholic faithful advises: "Get prepared psychologically and involve your family - they play a great part." She further advises the women to become strong and prepare well financially, even before declaring their interest. On her future in the political career, Judith is yet to decide in which county she hopes to vie for an elective senatorial position in the 2017 general election.

The 48-year-old senator is the only surviving child of her mother. She lost her younger brother and only sibling in a road accident. Challenging as it is she is balancing well her roles as daughter, mother, lawyer and senator.



LIZ CHELULE

Hon Liz Chelule joined elective politics “to give the people of Kuresoi Constituency, Nakuru, better political representation.” She remembers an incident in 2002 that jolted her into politics. The peace advocate and some pyrethrum farmers met their then area MP to request him to lobby the govern-

ment to intervene and help solve the problems that distressed pyrethrum growers. “The MP told us off, saying that he was not obligated to help us. That provoked me and I decided to run for his parliamentary seat, and told the group of farmers as much,” Liz recalls.

That incident occurred just months before the 2002 general election and Liz contested on a National Rainbow Coalition (Narc) ticket and lost. She contested again in 2007 and

lost. But she did not give up. The 50-year-old was keen to vie for the position of Women’s Representative on a URP ticket in Nakuru, but withdrew her candidature. The Jubilee Coalition had a strategy where some contenders stepped down for the sake of others to increase unity between coalition members and increase chances of winning. Her decision to step down in favour of a contestant from TNA was wise. The candidate captured the seat and Liz got nominated to the senate.

She joined URP because of its policies and manifesto. “I was even more thrilled when the URP and TNA leadership came together in the Jubilee Coalition because they put peace at the top of their campaigns. The result of their coming together today is the peace and tranquility we are enjoying particularly in the cosmopolitan Rift Valley Region, which has for many years been haunted by ethnic and political suspicions and hostility,” she says.

Born in 1962 and raised in Kuresoi South Constituency, Senator Chelule attended Maharet Primary, Kaplong Girls’ High and Moi Minariet High Schools between 1971 and 1979. She holds a Certificate in Information Technology from JKUAT and is pursuing a Diploma in Gender Development Studies at Egerton University. She has worked as a laboratory technician at the Kenya Cooperative Creameries, and served as a director of the Pyrethrum Board of Kenya for three years, between 2003 and 2006.

Liz believes leadership is in-born and not acquired through works. Her very first leadership opportunity was as a head girl at Kaplong Girls’ High School in Kericho County. She is also a development initiator in her constituency. She worked with teams advocating for peace in Nakuru after the 2002 general election. Their common objective was to cultivate unity between

the communities. After the disputed 2007 general election, Liz was again among local leaders in Nakuru who campaigned for peace and unity between the conflicting communities.

Through the Gender Equity Network (GEN), which she formed in 2008 after the elections, Liz traversed Nakuru area implementing peace initiatives and giving civic education. The senator has in the last five years enlightened communities about empowerment of women, the youth and people with disability, through the affirmative action, to enhance their participation in elective politics. "I believe leadership in me is in-born and with or without a platform, I'll continue to exercise it," she says.

Twice, Liz represented women in the constitutional review process as a delegate representing Nakuru at the Bomas of Kenya Constitutional Conference. "That was a great learning opportunity," she says. In the countdown to the new constitution, she served for three year. She had earlier served in the same capacity ahead of the 2005 referendum.

The farmer turned politician says her years of campaigning for a parliamentary seat have taught her that a lot has to be done to level the ground for women in politics. For instance, while she got support from women voters, most confessed that their husbands dictated their voting patterns. She believes there is still need for an enhanced civic education on the ground to empower women voters and aspirants.

The other challenges women politicians face, she says, are lack of financial support and retrogressive cultural mindsets which cause the electorate to undermine women candidates. Many women have avoided politics as a result of such challenges. Those that try fail in their bid to join Parliament because men who are

often the better off financially do not support them. "Women aspiring for political leadership should not focus on the obstacles along the way but on their goals," she advises.

She adds that women should start by working with the people on the ground and following up with consistency of goals and implementation of programmes, coupled with courage pays. "If you're keen on getting into politics, do not let anyone or past failures discourage you. Breaking into politics is not easy but it can be done. I have remained persistent and continued to work for the people even after failing to win a seat," she advises.

As a way of ensuring high performance of women in elections, Liz advises women political leaders to reach out more to their electorate and participate in and enhance civic education initiatives in their respective communities, because men already have an upper hand due to cultural gender issues. "Make sure the voters are not just sensing your pres-

ence, but let them see you in action. Make yourself accessible to them, don't think that you'll stay in Nairobi all the time and only re-emerge in your constituency at election time and win a seat," she adds from experience.

A member of KEWOPA, she is happy the association offers women parliamentarians a good forum to exchange ideas. She however suggests that KEWOPA should start to work with women in the rural areas towards a stronger political future.

The Senator who is popularly known as Mama Chemu intends to sponsor legislation aimed at financing women's projects, such as improving the Women's Enterprise Fund. She also plans to introduce a motion to reduce interest rates charged on loans from African Farmers' Corporation to farmers from the current 10 percent down to 3 to 5 percent. She'll further push for a fund to be established to assist farmers in mitigating crop failure caused by diseases and the impact of environmental changes.

She sits in the House Committee on Agriculture, Land and Natural Resources, and the Committee on Delegated Legislation. The jovial senator is concerned that most of the female nominated Senators in the House do not have a vote on motions that touch on counties. She wants the rule revised. She is among the special team of 17 Senators the House selected to come up with legislation to determine the amount of money investors are to pay as royalty to counties. The select committee will also draw the criteria to guide how revenues from natural resources are shared between the national government and the county governments. Overall she aims to spend her term in the senate working towards uplifting the standards of life of women, the youth and people living with disability.

I believe leadership in me is in-born and with or without a platform, I'll continue to exercise it.



As soon as she learnt that her party, the United Democratic Forum, had nominated her to the Senate, Hon Martha Wangari Wangari pledged to vie for a leadership position in the House. The 30-year-old embarked on a campaign for the post of deputy speaker of the 68-member Senate. "I had done a lot of lobbying, especially among women and the youth because I was confident I had the ability to represent them in that position, regardless of being a first time member of the House," says the UDF founder member and national treasurer. However, she dropped her bid following a consensus within the Amani caucus that the position, now held by her Murang'a County colleague, Kembi Gitura, needed someone with experience.

Senator Wangari is a focused, motivated and self-driven individual. She describes herself as a self-made politician. "I do not have any history of family directly involved in politics, I am self-made. My interest in politics shaped up when I was only a first year student at the University of Nairobi," says the youthful legislator.

Married with a son, the Senator's journey into active politics started when she was elected finance secretary of the Organisation of Nairobi University Science Students (ONUSS) in 2004. The following year, she was elected again as the vice chairperson of ONUSS. "By third year I was the Students' Organization of Nairobi University (SONU) vice-



MARTHA WANGARI

chairperson in charge of academic affairs. It has been a long journey," she recalls. Even as she was graduating from the university in 2007, she had joined President Kibaki's campaign team as a community mobiliser and strategist, in the "Kibaki Tena" secretariat.

Martha founded the lobby group

for young women, Warembona Kibaki, which she headed to mobilise young people to campaign for President Kibaki's re-election. During the 2010 constitutional referendum campaigns, she joined the "Yes" Secretariat and served as the deputy head of logistics. "Women must be in the thick of things because the

political terrain has not been friendly to us. We must come out to offer ourselves and prove that we can be leaders," she says

Senator Wanjira says that her choice of party was given because she was involved in the formation of UDF and has seen it grow from a society to a political party. "We formed the party out of a deep need to change the political status quo. We were tired of how things were being done, and so we brainstormed on the best way to bring change in the country and from that, UDF was born," she explains. She believes that UDF is a women friendly party. "Out of the 13 members of the executive, six are women. Even during the election, we gave a soft landing for women. I am proud of the party," she says. UDF's presidential flag-bearer in the 2013 election was former Deputy Prime Minister, Musalia Mudavadi.

The sociable Senator blends well with her colleagues at the Senate. She is the vice-chairperson of the nine-member Sessional Committee on Devolved Government, whose key responsibility is to monitor and ensure devolution is implemented and county governments succeed. She is also a member of the Standing Committee on Energy, Roads and Transportation, but regrets that nominated women Senators do not have a vote in the House.

The Constitution and Senate Standing Orders require that nominated members delegate their votes on county matters, and only cast their votes with the elected senators as the delegation leaders. "What

is the point then of nominating people to the Senate? If we cannot vote to represent the constituencies - women, youth and people with disability - we were nominated to represent, how can we influence change where it matters?"

The alumna of Kahuhia Girls' High School is also troubled by the fact that Parliament is not conducive for women MPs and Senators who have babies. She perceives this as unfair because young mothers with babies are then forced to choose between parliamentary work and raising their babies. "We must accept the reality that since this Parliament has an unprecedented number of young women, we must expect many babies, and the MPs must execute their mandates, that notwithstanding," she says. Martha has petitioned the Parliamentary Service Commission through the Senate Clerk, to help ensure that young mothers are

facilitated to do their work as they take care of their babies.

Hon Wanjira who has a Bachelor of Science Degree in Statistics, advises women keen on joining politics to get involved in activities of political parties as a starting point. "Most of those who have been nominated to Parliament are products of political parties," she notes. She is the Deputy Secretary of KEWOPA.

Apart from politics, she is the Managing Director of Pernes Agency Limited, a media, public relations, marketing and events management firm. She holds a Post-graduate Diploma in Human Resource Management from the Kenya Institute of Management, and has taken a special course on Environmental Impact Analysis and Environmental Audit, from Nazarene University. She chairs the Martha Wangari Foundation and is a board member of various academic institutions.

Women must be in the thick of things because the political terrain has not been friendly to us. We must come out to offer ourselves and prove that we can be leaders.



Despite many unsuccessful bids for Parliamentary seats, Senator Mvita Kisasa Mshenga never lost her dream of becoming an elected leader. "All along I knew that I would always be a leader in every stage of my life. I had this strong belief that leaders are born and I was in that group," she says. When she was selected as a prefect in primary school "it never occurred to me that this leadership would eventually be elevated to that of a political nature," she says.

Popularly known as Mama Mlezi (guardian mother) by the communities she has worked with over the years in Kilifi and other parts of the Coast, the former nurse and midwife joined active politics as a candidate in the 1997 general election. She was unsuccessful in that first bid for the Bahari Parliamentary seat, but she remained hopeful. Mvita continued to work with women and the youth, giving civic education and empowering the unemployed youth and those in the informal sector in Kilifi.

In 2013, the married mother of five - three boys and two girls - prepared to run for the newly created Kilifi North Parliamentary seat on a URP ticket. Unfortunately, she was forced to withdraw from the race following protracted negotiations within the party. For her sacrifice, URP leader and now Deputy President, William Ruto, promised her nomination to the Senate. She joined



MVITA MSHENGA

those campaigning for URP's candidates and was part of the team coordinating the presidential campaign for Jubilee's Coalition Presidential flag-bearer, Uhuru Kenyatta.

When the Jubilee Coalition emerged victorious, URP did not let her down. The party fulfilled its promise and nominated

her in appreciation of the work she did in a region that was firmly behind ODM and its presidential candidate, Raila Odinga.

Senator Mshenga says that the campaigns had numerous hurdles. At the Coast region, it was particularly challenging for women aspirants because of the insecurity and tension created by

the presence of the Mombasa Republic Council (MRC) Militia. "We were very scared and as a result, we started off from a disadvantaged position. We could not come out at night to campaign because of the insecurity," she says. "I am glad it ended very well for me. I am now a Senator and I have the Deputy President in particular and the party to thank."

Mvita describes herself as motivated, hardworking and always eager to learn. She is the chairperson of the nine-member Delegated Legislation Committee, making history in Kenya's first Senate as the first woman to head a House Committee. Hers is also the only committee at the Senate whose leadership is an all-woman affair. The vice chairperson is Senator Judith Sijeny, a lawyer and women's rights campaigner. "I am very humbled by the confidence my colleagues showed in me by picking me to chair the team. I am also elated that they overlooked the fact that I am not a lawyer," she says.

She draws a lot of support and inspiration in her new leadership role from Nominated MP, Amina Abdalla, who has been in Parliament since 2002. The senator is also a member of the Sessional Committee on Devolved Government.

She says that the fact that Parliament now has an unprecedented number of women, courtesy of the current Constitution, is an inspiration. The soft spoken, but firm leader says consistent good performance of women in the Senate and National Assembly is evidence that they are equal to the task.

Senator Mshenga plans to introduce proposals that will eventually become law on matters relating to land at the Coast. "At the Coast you cannot talk about

At the Coast you cannot talk about anything else. Land issues are thorny and touchy and I believe as leaders, we have a responsibility to tackle and address them once and for all.

anything else. Land issues are thorny and touchy and I believe as leaders, we have a responsibility to tackle and address them once and for all," says the legislator.

She praises the various stakeholders involved in civic education focusing on women, ahead of the elections. In particular she praises KEWOPA for helping to empower women Parliamentarians particularly the new ones. "I have attended many important workshops that are an eye-opener for me, courtesy of KEWOPA. That is why I keep asking my colleagues never to take any of those workshops for granted," she says.

Recalling an incident that saw her assist a woman give birth at one of the ferry crossings at the Coast, the senator says that her nursing skills remain close to her heart, even with her new status as a Parliamentarian. "I always walk with my midwifery tools in my bag. I don't leave them behind," she says.

Mshenga also holds a Diploma in Sales and Marketing from the University of Nairobi. Previously she worked at the Aga Khan Hospital and Coast General Provincial Hospital, both in Mombasa. She likes cooking, swimming, indoor games, current affairs and travelling.



NAISULA LESUUDA

At 29, Senator Naisula Lesuada is one of the youngest members of the Senate. Kenyans may remember her as the youthful face on Kenya Broadcasting Corporation's (KBC) television station. She hosted the "Good Morning Kenya" show

and worked as a reporter and news anchor at the station for six years. "My coming into politics actually started when I got involved in peace work. People got to know that I could be a key person in the community," she begins. She had previously worked as an information officer documenting lessons learnt in Somalia, for Diakonia, a development organisation.

According to her website, naisulalesuuda-peacefoundation.org, the Senator is a founding member of The Peace Caravan, an initiative for the promotion of peace by collecting and broadcasting peace related news, lobbying and visiting communities in conflict. The Peace Caravan brings together professionals from different communities that have experienced conflict for many years. It has worked mainly with pastoralists from the Samburu, Pokot, Turkana, Rendille and Borana Communities.

In the run-up to the 2010 Constitution Referendum, Senator Lesuada and her colleagues in the peace initiative successfully went to areas considered hot spots for politically instigated violence, especially in the Rift Valley, to sensitise the communities on peace, in a bid to prevent conflict. "I utilised my excellent communication and negotiation skills to send peace messages articulately to the people living in those areas, including Laikipia and Samburu Central," she says.

Naisula documented this initiative in a report titled: The Peace Caravan, the impact, lessons learnt and the communities' view of sustainable peace. As a result, then President Mwai Kibaki, awarded her the prestigious Order of the Grand Warrior of Kenya (OGW), for her efforts in promoting peace among warring communities in the country. In 2011, she was again awarded the Wedge Award for Outstanding Professional Women by the International Labour Organization (ILO).

The youthful yet authoritative Senator was thrust into active politics in the run-up to the 2013 general election when she

campaigned for TNA and presidential candidate, Uhuru Knyatta. "In Samburu, the politics was complicated and we realised that we had to do a lot of work to rally support for our candidate," she says. When TNA emerged victorious, she was among those nominated to the Senate. She attributes her nomination to her peace advocacy work in the grassroots, contribution to the presidential campaigns in Samburu and the political mentorship she received from Samburu County Women Representative, Maison Leshoomo.

The Communications and Community Development Graduate from Daystar University finds herself suddenly thrust into numerous leadership roles within the Senate. She is the current deputy chairperson of KEWOPA, and was recently elected deputy organising secretary of the Pastoralists Parliamentary Association. "It is a whole new experience for me but I am confident that I will do my best," she says of her new status. A go-getter, Naisula is an active member of the Senate, where she has distinguished herself as an eloquent debater. "All I'm doing now is to read more to understand the Standing Orders of the House," she says. Naisula attributes her ease in relating to her more seasoned colleagues in the Senate to

her interaction with them in her former employment as a KBC journalist.

Although she appreciates that the 11th Parliament has an unprecedented number of women, she feels that those in leadership must do more to push for gender equality and equity in political leadership. "I am worried that we appear to be making gains and then falling back to where we started and this is an indication that we have to work a lot more," she notes in reference to the fact that Kenyans did not elect any female Senator or Governor. Naisula believes that even as the pledge for affirmative action in Parliament stands, women leaders must do a lot of civic education such as sensitising communities on the need to elect more women. Naisula adds that women hoping to get elected to Parliament must go for other seats instead of just eyeing the exclusive county women's representative seat.

She serves in the joint Committee on Parliamentary Broadcasting and Library, and the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Land and Natural Resources, and remains a member of the Association of Media Women in Kenya (AMWIK), and the International Association of Women in Radio and Television (IWiART).

A jack of many trades, Naisula is

I am worried that we appear to be making gains and then falling back to where we started and this is an indication that we have to work a lot more.

the director of Kristo13 Media and Communication Consultancy Firm, and will continue working as a rights and peace crusader, trainer and facilitator. In 2013, she established the Naisula Lesuuda Peace Foundation through which she will continue to work with the youth in pastoral communities, and especially with the reformed youths. "I intend to do a lot of work with them, to rehabilitate them and make their lives more meaningful and ensure they remain peaceful," she concludes.

Hon Zipporah Kittony was thinking about retirement in 2012 when a call she couldn't ignore and a request she couldn't turn down interrupted her plans. "When the United Nations calls you, you just can't walk away." The UN wanted her to join eight other eminent persons to visit violence hotspots around Kenya to speak about the need for peace and prevent a repeat of the violence that flared up after the 2007 general election. "We went to the conflict areas, assembled the leaders, the people affected in various ways by the conflict, particularly the youth, and talked about the repercussions of 2007. We talked with the people and agreed on the need to maintain peace no matter what. I must say that the nine of us who worked on that project were proud of ourselves. We were successful," she says.

The UN-appointed team visited Tana River, Uasin Gishu, Trans Nzoia, Nyanza and Mombasa, and a few other parts of the country that had experienced the most violence in 2008. These were areas that could have easily returned to violent reactions after the 2013 elections. The team engaged the people with logic and emotional appeal, leading them to make the decisions that would ensure lasting peace. That project went well for the 70-year-old Senator, who has been in leadership for most of her life. After the general election, KANU nominated her to the Senate, and again she put on hold her retirement plans.

Zipporah believes that her upbringing prepared her for leadership. "I was born in a family of nine girls and three boys. My parents were liberated because they



ZIPPORAH KITTONY

assigned us jobs equally. I never saw any form of discrimination among my brothers and sisters. Our parents made a duty roster that had tasks for each one of us every day," she recalls. She attributes this enlightening upbringing to her father who was a teacher and a church elder. One may wonder then how she ended up a politician. "Other than the fact that my father's church leadership exposed me to

the people's needs and a desire to help, former President Daniel arap Moi was a family friend and frequented our home on visits," she explains.

When Moi went to Kapsabet and got married, Zipporah lived with his family. She was still a part of the family when Moi was selected to represent the Rift Valley in the Legislative Council in 1955. "That is the time I developed an interest in politics.

He became and is still my role model. He has helped me a lot in my own political career. I owe a lot of my successes to him. Thankfully he has been close to me all my life," she explains.

A former chairperson of Maendeleo Ya Wanawake Organization (MYWO), Senator Kittony attended Kapropita Primary School and then Kapsabet Girls' Secondary School. Kapsabet was the only girls' secondary school in the Rift Valley at the time. She later re-joined Kapropita when it was elevated to a secondary school. She completed her education at Kapsabet Teachers' Training College, and became a teacher in the 1950s. Zipporah worked at the Family Planning Association of Kenya as a field officer in Kericho from 1954 to 1970.

When she joined the World Assembly of Youth, Zipporah got immersed in politics. Through the organisation, Zipporah was among youth who traversed the region doing seminars on youth and population development. The aim of the programme was to encourage young people to be self-reliant and to understand development and family planning. In 1976, she was promoted to the position of senior programme officer for East and Central Africa and continued running the programme "handsomely and proudly" she says. "I still get stopped in the streets by people I don't recognise and they thank me for how the work I did through the World Assembly of Youth transformed their lives," she says proudly. The programme enabled Zipporah to attend conferences in the region and around the world.

She recalls in particular a meeting in New York in September 1971 where she read the resolution of the youth to the United Nations General Assembly. "I believe that my exposure to the issues of empowerment of women and

political leadership is in-born, because I grew up and found things moving in that direction and that's what became of me - a successful and seasoned politician," she says.

Kenya's first party at independence, KANU, was the natural option for Zipporah who has never thought of leaving it. Looking at a picture of Jubilee women politicians meeting President Uhuru Kenyatta and Deputy President William Ruto at the Kenyatta International Conference Centre in March 2013, Zipporah jokes that she has always reminded President Uhuru that his "heart and blood are KANU. That is what I was telling him when that picture was taken. You see the way we're both laughing?" she points out, before bursting into soft chuckles.

According to Zipporah, parties are "sacred" and one should not hop from one to another. That is the reason she has remained in KANU in good and bad times. Her latest test of dedication was the internal wrangling that forced President Uhuru to move out and form TNA. "I stay where I am and work from within, criticising from within and so on. I'm that kind of person and that's how I have survived. That's why I'm here now sitting very proudly and confidently," she says. Zipporah believes in and has championed for women's empowerment. She hopes to one day see them "elevated to their rightful place in society and in leadership

because of the significant role they play in the social and economic aspects right from the home," she observes.

The Senator is proud that women have made significant strides in leadership in Kenya. She recalls how significant the contribution of women like Priscilla Abwao, the first woman in LEGCO, and Grace Onyango, the first woman in Parliament, has been to women's leadership in Kenya. "Currently we are 18 women Senators and 68 women MPs. That achievement has taken a struggle, and a good one, although we've not reached the two-thirds majority. We are still on the journey till we achieve and comply with the two-thirds rule," she emphasises.

Women Senators act like sisters and Zipporah is happy with that. It was her joy when two motions brought forth by fellow women were passed and adopted. Her main aim during her term in Senate is to ensure that the Jubilee manifesto is implemented. She would also like to see Kenyan youth become more empowered to engage in more useful activities that will develop the country. She is also keen on the implementation of the free maternity care. "There are many things that I would like to see accomplished," she concludes. Senator Kittony is the vice chairperson of the House Committee on Health, Labour and Social Welfare.

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