

THE CHANGE MAKERS

*Women leaders
transforming lives*



Delivering the promises Nyamai way



BY SYRIAN MBEZA

Charity Ngilu might not know it. But the decision of one renowned woman to join politics was shaped by this former Cabinet Secretary and once a presidential candidate in 1997.

For Dr Rachael Nyamai, a former high school teacher, Ngilu's leadership has not only influenced Ukambani politics; but also made her to seriously decide to join politics.

She says Ngilu's 'I will conquer' spirit greatly inspired her. It made her believe in herself so much that in 2013 she chose to run on a Jubilee Allied party ticket in a region where the Wiper Democratic Movement was the preferred party.

Party leader Kalonzo Musyoka hails from Kitui, the county in which Nyamai was contesting. She contested Kitui South constituency.

"It was not easy to sail against the wind that was blowing through the entire Ukambani region. By sticking to the Jubilee party it was like a political death sentence, but I stood my ground. For me, it was beyond party politics.

My constituents needed service delivery and able representation irrespective of party inclinations," says Nyamai.

As soon as she won the seat, she got down to work. She knew what her people in the Kitui South constituency wanted.

“Since it was new, it had unique challenges. But we had to begin somewhere. All the hopes for this new start were heavily hinged on me.”

She identified her mission around a few pertinent issues: Education standards, water supply, food security and access to effective health care.

Most importantly, she made a promise to ensure adequate and equitable access to the Constituency Development Fund (CDF). That was crucial in bridging the inequality gap between regions, she says.

But her vast constituency presented another hurdle. “It is big which often affects one’s presence in places. You are expected to be seen and heard in every corner of the constituency.”

Through CDF, she has brought water closer to the people and many women who used to spend many hours each day in search for water are now happy that the valuable commodity is accessible. Thanks to the water points she has drilled across the constituency.

“The hours spent looking for water affected the women’s economic productivity.

Girls avoided classes to fetch water first. Overall, poverty was hot on the heels of spells of drought.”

So was the low access to health facilities was pandemic when she took over as Kitui South MP. The facilities were far and pregnant women and children were most hit by the inaccessibility.

“For many women, hospital deliveries were a dream. Home deliveries were the norm but the risks associated with this practice were many. I used the CDF to construct and equip health facilities.”

For many years, her people were known to suffer from perennial famine and depended on food aid from the government and humanitarian organizations.

This, Nyamai vowed, was going to stop. She had to do everything to ensure the constituents had enough for

their families. High on her agenda was irrigation, which she has effected with success. The people are now enjoying increased food supply and rapid economic growth, she notes.

“The incomes which in most cases were used to secure expensive food stuffs are now being diverted to economic projects. This is how to empower people. When people free their little incomes to other initiatives, the effect is magical,” she says.

She says CDF is the greatest boost in achieving all this plans. “All these projects require a huge financial input. Prudent use of the kitty has ensured equity and availability of services and projects. CDF has helped solve the age-old challenge of regional disparities.”

Whereas other women leaders are faced with the challenge of national visibility, Nyamai, who is a champion of effective management of population and development policies, has been vocal in the national assembly.

In Parliament, she has successfully moved a number of Bills including the Diabetes Management Bill (2014) and the Kenya AIDS Control Authority Bill (2014).

Indeed recent reviews have identified her as one of the most active women parliamentarians.

This is at a time when some studies have found parliament can be a very challenging place when it comes to debates and influencing decisions.

Nyamai advises fellow women leaders “to identify themselves with particular goals. With this, it will be easy to be visible in Parliament.”

For her, women leadership should go beyond elections. “Polls only give us an opportunity to pursue and make our missions come true. Never should we be content with entering the august houses. Much more is expected of us. That is how we can give life to the 2010 constitutional dispensation. We must be on a mission.”

In next year’s elections, Nyamai is ready to defend her seat. She is sure of clinching it, if her sterling record of development initiatives and transforming the lives of her constituent is anything to go by.

“It was not easy to sail against the wind that was blowing through the entire Ukambani region. By sticking to the Jubilee party it was like a political death sentence, but I stood my ground. For me, it was beyond party politics. **DR RACHAEL NYAMAI, WOMEN REP, KITUI SOUTH CONSTITUENCY**

How one woman MP is changing the face of Garissa



BY SYRIAN MBEZA

Shukran Hussein Gure is a first of a kind. When the Constitution was promulgated in 2010, she decided that her name was going to be on the ballot paper come the 2013 general elections.

Born in 1978, Shukran started her preparation for this grand move immediately after the new law was enacted. She moved from her base in Minnesota in the USA to Kenya in mid-2012 in readiness for the campaigns. While in the States, she had studied Public Health at the St Catherine University in Minneapolis.

She was taking advantage of a Constitution that gave a rare chance for women from former North Eastern Province (NEP) to be finally elected to a political office. Before then, this was an exclusive domain for men.

However, there had been two women nominated MPs from the area – Kanu’s Amina Abdalla (the pioneer from NEP who served three consecutive terms) and ODM’s

Sofia Abdi (10th Parliament).

The youthful MP who was elected on a Wiper Democratic Movement ticket say the Constitution handed the women of the entire semi-arid North Eastern region a lifeline.

“It was history. Our people in the region were only familiar with men leadership due to cultural orientation. The political situation in the region was structured for men. It was a no-go zone for women leaders. Women were expected to stay at home and no more.”

Now, Shukran together with the Wajir and Mandera counties’ Women Representatives are the first ever women to be elected to Parliament from the north eastern region.

Shukran’s campaign agenda was on transformative leadership. Her intention was to give power to women and youth to transform their lives for the better.

After the grueling campaign and joy of victory, the reality was a tough call. The expectations were high.

"I was the new child in the homestead. People held me in high regard. They believed that I had the solution to the county's challenges. Women particularly wanted me to uplift their conditions instantly," she says.

She adds: "The homework to be done was cut out for me."

As a health professional, she was ready to deal with what troubled her people most. Her expertise was to help mothers especially to access health services. Records from the region and the county in particular showed that maternal mortality was consistently high.

"Child birth among my people has been a risky affair that often resulted in the death of the mother and baby. The few health centres in the county were far and apart, and walking to one centres was a risky affair that led to many mothers giving birth on the way. Many never made it."

Notably, even the few centres available were poorly equipped. "I had to do something about it. I had to bring hope to my despairing people."

In less than four years, Shukran has increased the health centres from four to 15 facilities.

The old ones are now fully equipped and the flow of essential medicines is regular.

There are also professional caregivers at these facilities as well as mobile clinics to reach patients in far-flung areas.

"We now have increased access to health care especially for women and children. We have witnessed a redeemed faith in our health provisions. Women who were trusting traditional birth attendants are now going

to health facilities for services. That is what inspires me the most."

Besides health, Shukran has reached out to young people. Due to perceived sidelining by successive regimes of the people of northern Kenya, some youths lead reckless lives including indulgence in crime.

"The youth must be empowered through tangible economic development projects otherwise we risk losing them to crime and terrorism."

She has encouraged the youth to form groups through which they get loans to start small businesses.

"Youth who had lost hope in their destinies are now rediscovering their lost paths. This is the generation we could have lost. I am willing to sacrifice my resources to ensure that more youth can find meaning in their lives."

She has a passion for education, too, for that is the vehicle through which a community is empowered.

As result of her interventions, there is a rise in the number of education numbers both in learners and facilities. "We have encouraged girls and boys to remain in school. Through this we will create a pool of professionals to foster the county's future."

Various research and media reports indicate that women parliamentarians are facing major challenges and this concerns Shukran.

"We are judged against men leaders in Parliament who have access to the Constituency Development Fund kitty. There was no express fund set aside for Women Reps.

Most of the projects we are initiating are funded from personal incomes. However, it is good that we are soon getting some little funds to help us realize our dreams for our people. After this, we shall give our male counterparts a run for their money."

Shukran will once again run for the Women Representatives position as "there are many pending projects that I need to complete."

"The youth must be empowered through tangible economic development projects otherwise we risk losing them to crime and terrorism."

SHUKRAN HUSSEIN GURE

**Kamweru
proves
women
leadership
brings change**



BY FAITH MUIRURI

For Rachael Kamweru, her political career begun even before had completed primary school. She served in leadership positions both at Primary and Secondary Schools.

But it seems her family, particularly her father, who was politician, played a major role in shaping this interest in leadership and politics.

Her turning point came when she joined her father's campaign team; an experience that opened her eyes into the murky world of politics.

"This helped to shape my world view and interactions with the people. From then, I have never looked back," she says during an interview.

In 2007, she was nominated as a Councillor in the now defunct Nairobi City Council. Come the 2013 General Elections, she was one of the TNAs key campaigners in Nairobi County. This contribution helped her to secure her a nomination at the Nairobi County Assembly.

At the County Assembly, Kamweru has emerged as a strong voice for women and people's rights issues and takes credit for having pushed for the formation of Nairobi Women County Assembly Caucus.

"I am the founder chair of the Nairobi Women County Assembly Caucus which brings together all women MCAs regardless of their political affiliation to champion for the rights of women and girls; and to come up with gender responsive bills and motions," she says.

Approach used to win support

Renowned for her charm offensive, the Kamweru has been able to win over her male counterparts to push for gender responsive legislations.

Key among them is the enactment of Public Participation Bill. "I sponsored the public participation bill as a private member. It is now an Act. For me this is a big achievement because even the National assembly has not enacted public participation bill."

Kamweru says that with the new law, the public can influence decision making process in policy, legislation,

service delivery, oversight, and development matters within the County.

She says the law requires the County government to provide information to the public in a transparent and timely manner, engage the public in decision making, and respond to their needs.

"I have also been pushing for gender responsive budgeting process. I have been mobilizing people to make sure that they provide their input into the process. I have been liaising with the Republican research Institute to make sure that women and the youth participate in the process every year."

Successes registered

Besides the Public Participation Act, she highlights her other successes among them pushing for the establishment of shelters to accommodate survivors of Gender Based Violence (GBV).

Kamweru says that she was able to change the narrative around GBV that men can also be victims, an approach that has helped her to garner enough support from men to pass the motion.

She says that the Assembly will now set aside funds to oversee the formation of shelters for GBV survivors, complete with police referral systems, a counselling and a trauma unit.

A strong advocate for gender equality, Kamweru has won a prestigious award from the Global Girls International for her role in championing for the realization of the two thirds gender rule.

She says that she was able to mobilize chairs of the County Women Caucus across the 47 counties to collect signatures in support of the two thirds gender rule. "I was coordinating all the chairs of women caucus in 47 counties to make sure we garner enough signatures from the counties in solidarity with the National Assembly and the Senate on the two thirds."

The MCA has also been vocal on the need to reconstitute committees at the assembly. She says that the County Assembly has 18 committees but all of them are chaired by men.

Kamweru has also been able to bring in personal statements among them challenging irregular promotions and recruitment of county officers. She has also brought to light the irregular implementation of a power generation project in Dandora without the knowledge of the County assembly.

"I am happy because of my intervention, the project has been suspended until it is clear how they plan to generate electricity and how the youth will benefit from the initiative," she adds.

But one her most courageous moves happened when she demanded the reconstitution of Powers and Privileges Committee after a female MCA was attacked and injured by a male colleague in the assembly.

In addition to this, she takes pride for the formulation of a policy on leases which is to be tabled before the floor of the house in the course of 2016. She says the policy was informed by her statement on why the County Government had failed to renew leases since 2013. "I brought this statement and I am happy because of this there is a policy in place."

Kamweru has remained outspoken even beyond the assembly. Recently she presented a paper on women and governance in the just concluded Commission on the Status of Women in New York with highlights being able to ensure women at the grassroots level take active participation in leadership.

Mentoring other women

Kamweru has also been involved in empowering women and she is currently liaising with Professors from Havard University to mentor women on leadership. This is scheduled to happen at the in Multi Media University.

In the past few years, she has been running a mentorship programme and mentoring girls for Akili Dada and Face.

"As I am being mentored by key politicians affiliated to Kenya Women Parliamentary Association, I am mentoring others."

However, her string of successes is not without challenges. She says that despite men knowing you are good leader, they will not give you space to chair committees. "Things are even worse when you have an independent mind, because there will always be attempts to intimidate you."

According to Kamweru, economic empowerment is still a hurdle that women must overcome to be at par with their male rivals.

She singles out a recent survey which revealed that most voters want money and are not keen on ideologies or principles. "We are likely to lose out good leaders during the 2017 General Elections because women do not have enough money to woo voters."

But this does not deter her. She has learnt that in politics, one has to be resilient, brave and spiritual to win a political seat. "You will always need a fall back plan because sometimes everyone will run away from you but if you are spiritual, you can overcome."

She says that women aspiring for leadership must be strategic, have a passion and the will to succeed before seeking elective seats. "They have to join political parties and start doing something in their locality to profile themselves," she says.

Women also need to go back to school to acquire the relevant academic credentials to avoid being locked out during the 2017 General Elections, she advises. "Most women want to contest but they do not have the relevant academic credentials."

Her participation in the 2017 general elections is foregone conclusion. What is not yet settled is which position she going to content.

"I sponsored the public participation bill as a private member. It is now an Act. For me this is a big achievement because even the National assembly has not enacted public participation bill."

**RACHAEL KAMWERU, NOMINATED MCA
NAIROBI COUNTY ASSEMBLY.**

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Raising personal profile key to women's political success

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BY JOYCE CHIMBI

It is never easy for any woman in competitive politics to navigate the rough waters, especially where politics are defined by how visible you are to the voters and gender of the person.

This is the situation that faced Jane Wangui Ngugi, the sitting Member of the County Assembly for Gilgil Ward, Gilgil Constituency in Nakuru County.

Winning this seat was not an easy task for her especially with the huge interest it had attracted from the male competitors. To complicate matters, it was in an area where The National Alliance Party (TNA) ticket enjoys massive support.

This means a nomination is as good as having won the general elections. Hence, the players throw in all what they have to win it.

For Ngugi, one thing that made her to be ahead of the pack was her popularity she enjoyed among the communities in her ward. She says her good profile in the community worked extremely well, and she advises fellow women to work on this profile if they are to make headway in politics.

“I was in the public limelight for a long time, which saw me being appointed the Chair of the Constituency Development Fund (CDF) in 2007,” says Ngugi.

She talks about social capital saying that female politicians should invest in building a personal brand and eventually it will catapult them into positions of power.

Her presence at social functions from weddings to funerals provided her with that personal touch with the people.

“So people knew me and knew that I could bring change to Gilgil. They wanted to change the narrative and development in the area,” she

observes.

One of the biggest concerns how the sharing of revenue collected in Gilgil went to benefit Naivasha and Nakuru, leaving Gilgil behind in development terms. Hence one of her key focus was to correct this and increase the visibility of Gilgil and its development record.

Under her leadership, land prices have gone up exponentially, thanks to her work of improving access roads. Before she begun development in the area, an acre of land was going for as little as Ksh40, 000 but now the same piece of land is going for nearly a million.

She further says that Gilgil is now being known for much more than the meat business. “Maji Moto is where hot water springs from, this is beginning to emerge as a tourist hotspot,” says Ngugi, thanks to her efforts to advertise the town.

In addition to roads and tourism issues, education has been very close to her heart. As a result, every year, Ngugi builds one Early Childhood Development (ECD) school. So far she has done two, and she is currently building the third one.

“If we get it right in the early years, we know that children will thrive and do well throughout their adult lives,” she adds.

Other areas where she has managed to transform is children’s access to bursaries, assisting motorbike riders to get driving licenses for free, and introduction of street lights, which have greatly improved security and business in the area.

Ngugi also pays school fees for many needy children. “I believe in education and when a needy child knocks at my door, I cannot shut it in their face.”

“All these are ongoing projects that anyone can come to my area and confirm. I wanted to serve

my people and am doing it," she adds.

As recognition to her leadership qualities and commitment to leadership, Ngugi was elected to chair the Children, Culture and Community Services Committee.

This committee has provided her platform to table the issues and needs of her constituent and to work towards finding lasting solutions.

"Children are now growing in an environment that makes them vulnerable to many dangers, we have to be vigilant and ensure child safety is a priority. It is not enough for children to access an education, they must be safe and enjoy their childhood," she expounds.

Ngugi is also a member of the Implementation Committee that oversees the functioning of the County and delivery of its programmes.

She holds the plight of the vulnerable and disadvantaged at heart and is keen on the orphans, female headed households and even widows.

She explains that her strategy is always "to teach people how to fish and not just give them fish."

As a result, her main pillars of development are education, infrastructure and uplifting people engaging on new economic activities.

"Benefits of access to education are clear to all, when we improve infrastructure we make Gilgil more attractive to investors, generating more opportunities for our people," she says.

Among the opportunities she has helped create is

improving the conditions of markets where people trade and the bus termini. For instance, she has campaigned for the building of a market, which should be up and in operation before the end of 2016.

Though she has managed to do all these, she had to content with several challenges.

"A leader cannot please everyone at all times. The Constitution demands for public participation, when our people come to address us, everyone wants to be served first,"

"Like now people have been complaining about not having an ECD but I can only afford one per year," she notes.

She decries that though women like her were elected, the society is yet to fully embrace female leadership.

"Am happy that our assembly of 50 men and 24 women is led by a woman. So we have a great example in her," she says gleefully.

To Ngugi, the contribution women in the county are making towards governance and development process is evidence enough that they need to be given a chance to lead come next year's party primaries and general elections.

For her, 2017 general election will present her with the opportunity to defend her seat so that she can continue to help shaping the future of Gilgil as well as improve her profile for bigger things in future.

"Children are now growing in an environment that makes them vulnerable to many dangers, we have to be vigilant and ensure child safety is a priority. It is not enough for children to access an education, they must be safe and enjoy their childhood,"

JANE WANGUI NGUGI, MCA FOR GILGIL WARD, GILGIL CONSTITUENCY IN NAKURU COUNTY.

Matee: the Defender of women and girls

BY JOYCE CHIMBI

It never occurred to many people that the young girl who fell pregnant when in Standard five would one day become a Member of the Nairobi City County Assembly. Her fate had been sealed.

It all started in Kajiado where she was born to a Maasai father and a Kamba mother. Her pregnancy is just one in line of many odds she had to overcome to be where she is now. This is Hon Leah Mumo Matee, a nominated Member of the Nairobi City County Assembly.

This Member of the Health, Housing, Planning and Lands Committee is making a name for herself as a politician of reckon particularly in urban politics that are not only male dominated but also require a woman to be strategic and tough to make a difference.

Her contribution to the health and infrastructure sectors in her ward has really improved her profile as a performer.

“We should not just be talking about improving livelihoods, but how these improved livelihoods can contribute to the Gross Domestic Product, which in turn results in further improvement of Kenyans lives,” she says.

She says she determined overcome the odds to deliver to her constituents. This hard work is manifested in how she managed to overcome the pregnancy to reach where she is now.

When she delivered, her mother and grandmother enrolled her in a new primary school to finalize her education. But while in Secondary school, she faced many challenges



that made her drop out in form three.

Out of school and greatly discouraged, she opted to book the final Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education exam as an out of school student. She scored an impressive B-. Still life has not been easy.

“I have worked very hard to get a degree and now am pursuing a second one on leadership and governance at the University of Nairobi,” she says.

It is this background that has made her very passionate about highlighting the plight of young girls.

“There are people speaking for women but what about teenage girls? The image that comes to mind for many when one says the word ‘youth’ is that of a young male. So who is taking care of our young girls?” she poses.

Mumo never misses an opportunity to urge mothers to take care of their teenage daughters “including those who have made the same mistakes I made,” she says.

The youthful politician says she is running a major campaign to get parents with teenage mothers to take them back to school.

“I personally offer to oversee the education of these girls particularly those growing up in the slums. This is because the society writes them off,” she says.

She has publicly, within the Assembly and even in Chief Barazas encouraged the society to protect the girl child and to be vigilant to keep predators at bay especially the now notorious boda boda operators who are responsible for the many teenage pregnancies and subsequent school drop outs.

“This is an issue that is well documented, the latest National Adolescent and Youth Preliminary report. The document is very clear and I will take it to the Assembly, as leaders we must address this issue in a comprehensive manner,” she says.

The issue of rape and child defilement has been a constant headache for the politician.

“People knock at my door at all hours and I take up these matters but justice takes time and I have been

very vocal that we need to find a more efficient way of pursuing justice for these children,” she expounds.

But girls rights is just one of the many other issues she is handling. The other is the safety of her constituents.

“I have installed street lights in a place called Nile Road, off Jogoo road. This is a crime zone, so the lights are very useful in reducing crimes,” she says.

She is advocating for maternal health, taking a leading role in ensuring that women get appropriate services.

To assist pregnant women to access Makadara Maternity, she is behind the smooth road that connects the health facility to Jogoo Road.

“The number of women who are now delivering in hospital has increased because I and other leaders have tried to remove the barriers that keep pregnant mothers at home,” she says.

In addition to this, she is supporting young people to generate income by donating water tanks to help them start car and carpet cleaning businesses. She also on the forefront in advocating for safety and human rights of Kenyans in the Middle East, where she has travelled to get first hand information about their plight.

“I made my own arrangements to travel to places such as Qatar and Saudi Arabia and was able to see how many Kenyans are suffering as domestic workers,” she says.

She is now working to get the Ministry of Foreign Affairs put in place appropriate measures and interventions to address the situation.

“I believe what we need is proper legislation on the issue of our people working in the Arab world. We need to look at the loopholes to stop our people returning to us in coffins,” she says.

For now, her eyes are trained on the 2017 general elections. “I believe that I will return to the County Assembly as an elected member,” she says.

“There are people speaking for women but what about teenage girls? The image that comes to mind for many when one says the word ‘youth’ is that of a young male. So who is taking care of our young girls?”

HON LEAH MUMO MATEE, A NOMINATED MEMBER OF THE NAIROBI CITY COUNTY ASSEMBLY.



