

KENYAN WOMAN

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Advocating for the rights of women



EDITORIAL

No turning back women must vote for their own

The long awaited D-Day is here with us and women must seize the opportunity as voters by ensuring that they put aside their differences and rally around one of their own who is on the ballot paper to win in the March 4, 2013, General Elections and take their agenda to the next level in the corridors of power.

They can not turn back now nor engage in a blame game about the controversial Supreme Court ruling that denied them the 2/3 affirmative action rule nor the chaotic and undemocratic party primaries that was very women unfriendly.

Instead, forming half of the 14 million registered voters the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission; they have the power to turn the tables around in the political arena by coming out in large numbers and using their numbers to pick one of their own vying for any of the six vacant seats.

The six coveted seats are President; Senator; Governor; Women's representative; Member of Parliament and County representative.

In fact voters will now be spoilt for choice to pick the best of them. The number of women contesting for elective posts is the highest in the country's history, thanks to the affirmative action clause, effective advocacy and lobbying by the women's movement and the civil society, and a decision by women to stand for their rights.

For the second time in the country's history, we will have a woman on the presidential ballot paper. The first was Water minister Charity Ngilu in 1997, who lost to President Moi, this time we will have former Constitutional Affairs minister, Martha Karua, who doubles as the Narc Kenya chairperson and Gichugu MP, battling it out with six other men.

Intimidation

Despite the intimidation, harassment, sexual violence meted on some of them; seven women luminaries are vying for the post of Governor in the 47 counties. They include Higher Education minister, Dr Margaret Kamar, in Uasin Gishu; Sports Assistant minister, Wavinya Ndeti in Machakos, and former Central Bank Deputy Governor, Jacinta Mwatela, in Taita Taveta, among others.

A record of 19 other women leaders of substance have been cleared by IEBC and are campaigning for the Senator's post in close to half of the Counties in the country. They include Water minister, Charity Ngilu, who is the Narc chairperson, in Kitui, and Housing Assistant minister, Bishop Margaret Wanjiru, in Nairobi.

There is even sweeter news from the 280 vacant parliamentary seats where women politicians have taken the challenge in 45 of the 47 counties. The missing ones are in West Pokot and Wajir County. This is a big kudos to the women and the civil society that gave them the support and moral backing.

But lessons learnt in this electoral cycle is that women leaders must spread out and not concentrate on vying for the Women representatives' seat as they have done this time around, because the seat is already reserved for them as per the Constitution.

After all is said and done, the women's performance in the party nominations has been impressive and we wish them success in the Elections so that more will be elected to the Senate, Governors' office; Parliamentary and in the County Assemblies to ensure that the affirmative action principle becomes a reality, sooner rather than later.

Like former South African First Lady, Graca Machel, told a national prayer breakfast meeting recently, women must be in the frontline to vote for one of their own and also to promote peace and harmony during and after the last person cast his or her vote and the result are announced.

And as we now look forward to casting our votes, let us reflect on a quote by Machel, who was part of the group of eminent parsons led by former UN Secretary General, Koffi Anna, that restored peace after the 2007 polls: "If we have intelligence, imagination and the ability to dream, things can happen."

It takes more than a party number to win nominations



...By Jane Godia

Voters queuing to cast their votes during the recent nominations marshalling the numbers key to winning party tickets and not just being a member. Photo: Correspondent

The recent party nominations give a clear picture of the political landscape and how different people engage. While many women turned out in their large numbers to vie for the various political positions, they found the field to be unlevelled. Most of them did not know the tricks of the game and ended up losing out even where they had an advantage especially in the big parties.

That is why there are many women who have been nominated for the General election but they are in small parties. This then leaves the question of what are their chances.

Parties

Politics of parties is not just about registering to be a member of the organisation. It involves much more. It involves being visible as well as paying money to big things like presidential campaigns among others.

Many women felt let down by parties because they assumed that by the mere fact that they were members of that party it was enough. They forgot about the wheeler dealing that goes on under the cover of darkness in clubs that they may not know exist or may not be allowed in for the fact that they are women. Networking and cutting of deals with clans, business communities and families that have been gate keeping in sections of the community to determine who will be nominated are done at night.

They forgot that by the fact of their marital status they could not stay out late when party big wigs were strategizing. They did not know that they had to be strategic in engaging with the political party process, know the godfathers and the middle-men who

would provide them with a password. They ended up losing because they had failed to master the rules of the game. They failed to understand that gatekeepers of political parties are men.

According to Hamisa Zaja, Chairperson of Disabled Groups in the Coast region, the women were missing when all the dealings were being done.

"When men call boardroom meetings, the women are not there, neither are they involved hence they are absent from decision making of what actions the party is going to take," says Zaja. Her sentiments are echoed by Joy Masheti of Caucus for Women Leadership who says that political party constitutions do not favour women.

According to Masheti, political parties were putting a line-up by putting their best leg forward.

Bid

She gives an example of Margaret Wanjiru who after losing her bid for governorship was offered the next best alternative.

"Although Wanjiru was offered women's representative slot by the party and she refused, the party went ahead to pick another woman who was looked upon as the next stronger candidate," explains Masheti. She adds: "This woman was seen as one who was stronger for the party."

Masheti notes that where nominations were not done, the parties opted for selection. "Party chose leaving out women who invested in their campaigns," says Masheti. She explains: "The parties were viewing that where there are men for senate of Parlia-

ment, then the party would instead chose a stronger man and withdraw the woman."

The women needed to have understood that choice of political party had to be given due consideration and not just by wearing party colour and paying up for membership. They needed to have been conversant with the party constitution and rules for nomination.

Membership

"Many women do not know the party constitution in relation to nomination," says Masheti. "This is why contesting their being locked out would not have favoured them as the parties were acting according to their constitution."

Looking by the line-up given by parties, it is quite clear that men play interesting games and it was all about appeasing of parties within coalitions. Women lost out in the game plans of political parties when they were sharing seats.

"The women were too trusting and did not realise that there were other factors at play and hence the reason why they were not involved in this process and that is why it looked like a whole male affair," says Masheti.

Other than failure to be strategic, the women also did not have money that they could have donated to the parties. While men will use even family property such as land and buildings as collateral to get loans to enable them have money for political campaigns, women are not able to do this because many of them do not have title deeds in their names and they cannot use family property to

INSIDE: 8 pages of PROFILES of Women Candidates 2013 elections

Women got raw deal in the nominations

...By Henry Owino

Despite assurance by political parties that nominations were going to be free, fair and transparent, the reverse is what was seen in most regions.

On the nominations day, the first problem to experienced was delay in availing voting materials in various polling stations.

In most polling stations, the nomination exercise delayed for hours with some opening as late as 5:00pm as was the case in Mbagathi polling centre in Langata Constituency, Old Kibera and Olympic primary schools in Kibra Constituency.

Countrywide, all the 47 Counties experienced different challenges with delays being the common denominator. This is because most parties slated their nomination exercise to start from 8.00 am until 5.00pm in the evening. No centre was ready by the set time with the earliest polling station receiving its ballot boxes and papers at 10:30am.

Violence

However, there were no reported cases of violence in these two constituencies as most voters remained calm. Chaos erupted only after release of the results for the various constituencies and wards where it is claimed defeated candidates were announced winners.

Several aspirants who had been in the political arena for a long time assumed they would be outright winners. The political heavyweights who were locked out of the race were not ready to concede defeat. This irritated the electorate leading to protests and with rumours going on to social media, contributing a great deal in throwing a spanner into the works.

Media

The disputes caused by aspirants led to media airing unconfirmed results with many picking information from social media.

The two leading coalitions — Jubilee and Cord — were blamed for the confusion that followed.



NOMINATIONS: Political Parties had to seek assistance while conducting their nominations.

Most political parties' election boards underrated the nomination exercise and assumed it would be simple. They did not anticipate the challenges that followed.

Voters complained that some candidates were bribing voters and had strategically placed agents to monitor them.

"Some aspirants who gave us money are now using agents to force us to vote for them inside the polling centre," shouted one voter. "We cannot accept these agents to intimidate us."

Dorothy Onyango, an aspirant for Kibra parliamentary seat on an ODM

ticket had it rough during the nomination campaign period. She was the only woman among seven men vying for the position. All her competitors had hired youths as bodyguards to assist their campaign and shield them from opponents.

Onyango lamented that the delay in voting and availing materials was a tactic deployed by CORD Election Board to discourage supporters from electing leaders of their choice.

She said her supporters complained of being threatened.

Onyango's efforts to reach the election board through were futile

since not even a single one of them had their phones on.

"This was a plot to drag the process late into the night so that women who are my supporters would leave without voting," Onyango noted. She added: "The delay was a deliberate plot to cause confusion and create tension. Surely many voters especially women left the polling stations without casting their ballot papers for fear of unknown consequences."

It is alleged that the few who

made it to the ballot box were directed on who to cast their vote for.

"I do not understand why there is a delay in delivering the ballot materials as scheduled as we were promised by election board. This is not fair to my supporters as a candidate," said Onyango.

Out of the seven women aspirants who contested for various county representative seats in the five wards making Kibra Constituency none was successful.

Lack of civic education to blame for primaries failures

...By Valentine Atieno

Women aspirants in Kisumu County who lost during the political parties' nominations said the biggest challenge they faced was lack of knowledge by their audience on the various positions that the devolved government brought forth.

According to Farida Akhmed Salim who lost the seat for Kisumu Central parliamentary on an ODM ticket noted that majority of the people were not aware of what a Governor or Senator means though they were interested in voting.

Aspirant

Salim who is also a civic educator for Shauri Moyo Ward observed that those who are aspiring for the Governor and Senator seats should take the initiative of educating the people they want to serve on what their positions entail so that the voters are able to make informed decisions.

"I had a big challenge running as parliamentary aspirant and at the same time doing civic education at the grassroots. Despite the time I spared to educate people in my Constituency on civic matters, male rivals still dominated by bribing voters on the election day, something that was unheard of among

women aspirants," she explained.

According to Salim, politics is a very clean game but people in it tend to make it look dirty because those who are money minded tend to think that everything in politics revolves around money.

"I always want to give credit where it is due because when we sit back and cheat ourselves that all is okay then we will be lying to ourselves. We believe so much in money more so in Nyanza regions where money and politics are inseparable," reiterated Salim.

The politician was speaking to women leaders and journalists during a media encounter held under Peace Initiative Kenya project in Kisumu.

She noted that another factor that makes it impossible for women to secure political seats is enmity amongst women.

"Women do not like other women prospering and this makes them not vote for the female gender," Salim said.

Opponents

"The challenge that women aspirants must overcome is that they are competing with male opponents who have money and this really brings them down because whenever they go for political rallies, the people's expectation is that at the end of the meeting

she will dish out money and if you don't give hand-outs then they tell you that they only deal with those with money."

According to Nadhifu Yusuf Hamis who was vying for Kaloleni Shauri Moyo Ward in Kisumu Central Constituency on an ODM ticket, party officials on the ground categorised aspirants into three groupings in which some were viewed as non-performers.

"There were members, owners and followers. Women were categorized into followers and I was once asked what I have done for the party to make me qualify for being a ward representative," noted Hamis.

Voters

She says this made matters worse on the ground as the alienations confused the voters more with some confusing women aspirants for being ODM campaign agents.

Both the aspirants said that religion also played a big role in the nominations. They noted that among the Muslims it was a challenge as their religious leaders urged them to leave the seats for male competitors from their faith.

"Civic education can help enlighten residents and religious leaders on gender disparity so that they are informed that women can also serve as good leaders," observed Hamis.

The women claimed that the nomina-

tions were total sham since most people were rigged in and in some cases voters were being transported from one place to the other to vote for the well to do male opponents.

"I had to stop activities at one of the polling stations because the returning officer was removing voters from the queue to go act as the clerks in the exercise which was against the rule," explained Hamis.

She claimed that her bodyguards were denied entry into the polling centres yet the same was not applied to the male opponents.

The meeting helped women aspirants who lost in nominations to air out their challenges and find a way of forging forward despite their loss.

Attitudes

According to Jane Godia, Gender and Media expert with African Woman and Child Feature Service, an implementing partner in the Peace Initiative Kenya project, members of the public should change their attitude towards female aspirants because they too have space in the society.

"The issue of voters asking a female aspirant the whereabouts of their husbands should stop because some male aspirants are in the race but such questions are not posed to them yet they too are not married," she observed.

Dr Sally Kosgei

It will be hard to dethrone the diplomat and luminary politician

...By Ray Limo

She was once the most powerful albeit reserved civil servant under President Moi's Kanu regime.

Now Dr Sally Kosgei has made a headlong plunge into politics and is making very many tactical moves. When she left Government to pursue a career in politics, critics thought she was out to remain relevant in the public eye.

However, the self-made politician surprised both ally and foe when she curved her own niche and is today a key political figure in the country's politics.

Kosgei's role at the mediation talks after the 2007 bungled General Election introduced a new side of the former Head of Civil Service in former President Moi's Government.

Contacts

She played a key role in the negotiations using her international contacts to help resolve the standoff that almost sent Kenya to the dogs.

The highly educated career diplomat is credited for introducing a sober approach to the resolution of the post-election crisis by the warring parties.

She was also a key plank in Government efforts to defer the cases at the ICC back to Kenya.

Kosgei used her diplomatic deft work to get appointments with key world players and talk them into accepting to defer or defer the cases facing among others United Republic of Kenya (URP) leader William Ruto.

Kosgei, who is serving in the current government as Minister for Agriculture is an alumni Stanford University and among the few Ivy League graduates in the last Parliament. One of them was the impressive Mandera Central MP, Abdikadir Mohammed.

Her vast experience in public service is also an added asset and could probably explain the effective use of resources in her constituency.

Seat

The MP has done so much in the five years in Aldai than any other elected MP did since independence. She is in the coming General Election seeking to retain the seat on an Orange Democratic Movement ticket.

Kosgei's tough stand on matters she believes in has endeared her to many

who regard her a principled politician. She is among politicians in the Rift Valley who have dared to go against the political tide in the region but with reasons she believes are valid.

Kosgei explained her decision to stick to ODM while most leaders in the region had ditched the party for URP.

Kosgei disclosed that she had been approached and persuaded to decamp but she stood her ground saying she did not believe in "running up and down".

Kosgei recalled the formation of the Kenya's People's Union (KPU) for Nyanza residents in 1966 after leaders from the area defected from Kanu.

"It (KPU) did not serve the interests of that region. Instead that move cost them because they were isolated for 40 years from the rest of the country. Is that what we want for our people? she posed.

Kosgei said leaders in Rift Valley should make careful choices when leading the community and cautioned against making rushed political decisions.

"Before we leap, let us first have a clear sight of the direction we are taking. We need to evaluate the pros and cons in order that we do not isolate our community from the rest of Kenya," she explained.

During campaigns for the new constitution, Kosgei strongly advocated for its passing despite opposition from Rift Valley residents who were led to oppose it.

Outgoing Eldoret North MP William Ruto led majority of leaders in mounting opposition to the Constitution even after backing it in the initial stages.

Benefits

However, the Constitution was passed after Kenyans overwhelmingly voted for it, and like other Kenyans, Rift Valley residents are reaping its benefits.

Kosgei said she believes Rift Valley residents were misled to oppose the Constitution that would later benefit them on flimsy grounds.

"The devolved system of Government is a God given gift through this new constitution yet this is what the people were being told to reject," she said.

Fast forward to 2013, Kosgei was among leaders touted for positions of Governor or Senator in Nandi County. However, she resorted to defend-

ing her Aldai Constituency seat arguing she was not done developing the area.

"You just do not jump into a position because it has been created. You must ensure you do not leave unfinished business behind. Leadership is doing at least 99 per cent service to your people, not 50 per cent and then you abandon them," she explains. She chose ODM as the party of choice and clinched its ticket unopposed during the recent party primaries in Nandi.

Kosgei will now face it off for the seat with newcomers, Cornelius Serem of URP and Gilbert Nyongiri (UDF) in the March 4 General Elections.

Her competitors, however, face an uphill task trying to dethrone Kosgei who has used her international circle of friends to develop Aldai in the five years she has been MP.

Kosgei has supplemented financing of nearly all her CDF projects with donations from her friends and

organisations abroad thus hastening completion.

Development record will play a key role to determine aspirants who will be elected in the March 4 polls in Nandi County if results of the recent nomination are anything to go by.



Kosgei has contributed to effective use of resources in her constituency.

Photo: Kenyan Woman Correspondent

CAREER

- 2008: Member of Parliament for Aldai Constituency.
 - 2001-2003: Permanent Secretary, Secretary to the Cabinet and Head of the Public Service Office of the President.
 - 1999-2001: Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Co-operation.
 - 1998-1999: Permanent Secretary, Office of the President.
 - 1992-1998: Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Co-operation.
 - 1986-1992: High Commissioner, Kenya High Commission in the United Kingdom and Ambassador Ireland and Switzerland.
 - 1986: Permanent Representative, Kenya Mission to UNEP, Nairobi.
 - 1985-1986: Counsellor, Kenya High Commission, Harare, Zimbabwe.
 - June 1983: Acting Head, Africa and OAU Division, Ministry of Foreign Affairs.
 - July 1981: First Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Kenya Mission to HABITAT.
 - 1978 -1981: Lecturer, History Department, University of Nairobi.
- Education
- 1980: PhD in African Economic History, Stanford University, California, United States.
 - 1975: Master of Arts in African History, Stanford University, California, United States.
 - 1974: Bachelor of Arts (Hons, University of Dar-es-Salaam (History/Political Science)
 - 1968-1970: Cambridge School Certificate ('A' Levels), Alliance Girls' High School
 - 1965-1968: Cambridge School Certificate ('O' Levels), Alliance Girls' High School
 - 1961-1964: Aldai Girls' Primary School
 - 1957-1960: Serem Primary School

Kosgei, Lina Jebii Kilimo and Margaret Kamar are women who exceeded expectation in their performance as MPs and cannot be compared to their male counterparts some of who have performed dismally.

Knowledgeable people in ODM say that Kosgei developed a close rapport with Raila Odinga, the ODM leader during the brief period he served as cabinet minister in Moi's regime.

Successor

The relationship suffered a setback when Raila ditched Kanu and quit the Cabinet towards the end of 2002 after former President Moi nominated Uhuru Kenyatta on Kanu as his chosen successor at a time when Raila (and other Kanu stalwarts) were covetously eyeing the presidency.

Quite naturally, Kosgei could not have continued relating closely with a politician who had rebelled against her boss, President Moi, in his hour of greatest need.

She maintained her distance from Raila until after Narc swept Kanu out of power and Moi handed over to Mwai Kibaki at the end of December 2002.

It takes more than a party number to win nominations

Continued from page 1

get loans. In some circumstances they stand a huge chance of their families breaking should they lose something that does not befall men.

Many of the candidates who were being given preference are those who having been making huge payments into the party's coffers. "What some candidates did was to contribute generously to the presidential campaigns and this worked in their favour," explains Masheti.

Other candidates had an edge because they were bribing voters. Even though enticing voters is outlawed, it is said that many candidates came up

with some challenging ways of handing over the money. In these hard economic times, a loaf of bread was very welcome among the electorate especially when it had money stuck at the sides.

The same applied to bottled water being supplied to voters who had stood in the sun for a long time in queues as they waited for the voting materials to be organised.

Voters

Women therefore, lost because they failed to meet voters' expectations through the handouts.

According to Farida Salim who was aspiring for the Kisumu Central

parliamentary seat but lost, handouts were the women's main undoing.

"Politics is all about money. I walked around selling my issues and policies but in the end I would be asked 'what are you giving us,'" says Salim who spoke during a Women's Media Encounter in Kisumu under the Peace Initiative Kenya project.

Salim says the electorate was rude and she would receive innuendos like 'if you women have nothing to give us then you should stay at home'.

"People are not interested in policies but how much money you are going and the highest bidder wins," notes Salim, adding that if female politicians can be empowered economi-

cally, then they would make a huge difference in politics.

Her sentiments are echoed by Nadhifa Yusuf Hamis, who was also aspiring for a county representative seat in Kisumu but lost in the nominations. "It is high time women politicians especially those who are starting got funded for campaigns and other activities."

Advise

According to Dorothy Bonyo, Maendeleo ya Wanawake Chairperson Muhoroni, women must engage with the party. They must have money and women aspirants must learn how to fundraise Bonyo reiterated at the Me-

dia Encounter meeting that.

"While money issue played a big role in the nominations, women aspirant must also learn to engage with other women's organisations like Maendeleo ya Wanawake," reiterates Bonyo. She notes; "women must come together and women's organisations must come together to support fellow women.

If women are to win nominations in parties, and especially in big parties they must learn to engage with the parties in more strategic ways. They must learn to play politics like men. Like novelist Steve Harvey wrote, they hey must learn to act like ladies but think like men.

Changing slum life is Edra Mbatha's agenda

...By Duncan Mboyah

Edra Mbatha's entry into elective politics is all about the desire to change the lives of people living in Mathare slums, Nairobi County where she has lived the better part of her adult life.

She is contesting the county representative seat, Mlango Kubwa Mathare Ward on a Social Democratic Party (SDP) ticket against five male aspirants from different political parties.

In this battle her agenda is huge and she hopes that the electorate will give her an opportunity to represent them.

Challenge

Coming from the slums where retention in school is a big challenge, Mbatha intends to have all ongoing school drop outs back to school. She notes that poverty forces parents to keep their children at home for several months.

"Many children in this slum are out of school due to lack of fees yet public bursary funds are misappropriated by the officials," says Mbatha, who is married with four children. "This is one area that I will change to benefit the needy only."

Mbatha, a graduate of fine art with a diploma from Banana Hill Art Studio intends to engage the youth in environmental conservation. She notes that the area has poor drainage system and heaps of dirty smelling garbage.

Besides education and sanitation, Mbatha intends to advocate for zero eviction of slum dwellers. Slum residents have faced forceful evictions particularly where they are accused of occupying other people's land.

Health is a big challenge in the slum and Mbatha intends to look into ways of empowering community health workers as well as start a counselling centre that will offer advice to drug addicts, couples and teenagers.



Mbatha challenges women to stand out and go for more elective seats.

With unemployment being her, Mbatha is looking forward to sensitising the people to be independent and engage in self-employment as opposed to relying on white collar jobs. She will engage micro finance institutions to open up in the area to enable the area residents access loan facilities to start small scale businesses.

Having come to Nairobi in the early 1990s, Mbatha came face to face with poverty which forces women to idle the whole day as their children beg for food from the rich in the surrounding neighbourhood.

"This habit really irritated me and I was forced to form Mugambo Women's Group with the objective of sensitising women on the importance of engaging in business and taking their children to school," she explains during the interview.

School

The group members ended up starting small scale businesses in the area and through this effort they have managed to take their children to school away from sending them to beg for food.

Mbatha then started a rehabilitation day care centre within the slum to help cater for the street children who were idling the whole day while other children went to school.

She challenges women to stand out and go for more elective positions instead of waiting for opportunities to be given appointments.

"We must stop complaining and go for more seats besides what the constitution has given us," she advises.

In her hunt for votes in the sprawling slum, Mbatha conducts door-to-door and small group campaigns as opposed to public rallies in selling her policy to the over 10,000 voters.

She is relying on her work within the area that has endeared her with women's groups, the youth and parents to win the seat.

Rural women's pathetic lifestyle pushes Agnes Awinja Okong'o into political arena

...By Duncan Mboyah

Rural women work so hard but get little attention, yet they have the drive to excel in their day to day activities despite living in areas where modern facilities are non-existence.

They start by doing their daily morning chores that includes cooking breakfast and preparing their children for school. Later in the afternoon they prepare meals for their school going children.

Male

But come in the afternoon, they attend political meetings addressed by male politicians who promise to change their lives. And this has been the trend every electioneering year since Kenya got independence 50 years ago.

However, one woman, Agnes Awinja Okong'o, a retired educationist wants to change all this through entering elective politics with the sole aim of solving the problems women undergo in Awendo Constituency, Migori County. The constituency is new having been carved out of Rongo.

"I want to help women of this area start a women finance trust to help them acquire loans locally and start their own income generating projects that are not tied to politicians,"

says Okong'o who will be contesting through Labour Party of Kenya for the parliamentary position in the coming General Elections.

Okong'o observes that the existing status of women in the area and other parts of the country requires women leaders to save them from singing and dancing for their male counterparts, a habit that started at independence and has grown with time as if it is one of the main roles of women.

Okong'o, 52, intends to embark on provision of quality education that will include adult learners as well.

"This is the only way to minimise the girl-child school dropout rate and retain them in school and through to colleges," she explains.

Classes

Okong'o who graduated from Kenyatta University with a first class honours in early childhood education plans to have all high schools in the area start computer classes to enable students gain knowledge on information technology.

Upon her election, Okong'o plans to introduce a bill in parliament to force sugarcane firms to weigh the cane on the farms unlike the current trend where they are weighed at the factory, something that makes farmers lose a lot of cane that drops off

from tractors on the way to the plant.

Okong'o intends to mount civic education on the importance of having a medical scheme and social security savings among sugarcane farming community that for a long time have been living from hand to mouth.

She also hopes that the opportunity will enable her improve health facilities and infrastructure to save people from travelling long distances in pursuit of medical services.

Food

Okong'o who was at the forefront in settling Internally Displaced Persons who were ejected from Naivasha during the 2007-2008 post election violence that rocked the country, says she built 25 houses for the IDPs. She also provided them with food and other effects.

Above all, Okong'o notes she has contributed immensely in nurturing young women to becoming responsible women in the society.

"I have helped built churches, pay school fees for the less fortunate students and also empower youths start income generating projects," she explains.

Okong'o started her education career as an untrained teacher, before proceeding to Asumbi Teachers Training College for her P 1 course.



"I intend to provide quality education to all"

— Agnes Awinja Okong'o

She was then posted to teach in Nanga, Victoria and Xaverian primary schools. She recalls how the pupils excelled in her Swahili subject with high grades.

She was later on transferred to

Kibuye Mixed Secondary School and Aga Khan School before being promoted to become a Tac Tutor and, later Programmes Officer on Early Childhood Education in Nyanza province.

Naomi Cidi joins the race for Kilifi County senate seat

...By Faith Muiruri

She is among a handful of women who have waded through the murky political waters in the country to make sure that their names are on the ballot paper come March 4, General Election.

Naomi Cidi who is vying for the Kilifi County Senate seat on Shirikisho Party ticket is confident that she will clinch the ticket.

The seat, which has attracted a significant number of male contestants among them former powerful Cabinet minister Noah Katana Ngala, is promising to be a bruising battle.

Cidi is not new to public service. She has served as a General Manager in charge of sales at the Kenya Airways where she was instrumental in developing and implementing marketing strategies for Kenya. She has also served in the same capacity at the Tourism Foundation where she assisted in the setting up of a tourism data base for Kenya. Cidi has also served as the Deputy Managing Director of Kenya Airports Authority.

Expertise

With a Master of Arts degree and a Higher Diploma in Marketing from the McGill University in Canada, Cidi brings with her unrivalled expertise in corporate governance and she hopes to transform Kilifi County from being one of the poorest regions in Kenya to an economically vibrant region.

"Kilifi County has lagged behind in development over the years due to lack of an aggressive political representation which I am promising to deliver once elected," she says.

She cites the glaring poverty levels in the County which she says have become synonymous with the area in spite of the fact that there are huge resources which remain untapped.

Just like in most other regions, Kilifi is ready for a change of guard. "The County is ready for a rebirth through the new constitution to ensure that policies developed at the national level fully address development needs of the Kilifi people," she says.

Cidi notes that time has come for leaders in the area to spell the rules of engagement and stop playing second fiddle to presidential con-

tenders who have over the years used them to deliver the Coastal voting bloc.

"We must identify like-minded political parties and spell the modes of engagement to make sure that we remain relevant even after the elections," she expounds.

Cidi says that most people in the County have been marginalised in government affairs with power being consolidated by a minority group who are insensitive to the plight of the region.

She cites the Rural Electrification Programme which is currently being implemented successfully in different parts of the country yet the County has not received a single penny to aid in jump starting the project.

Micro

Further Cidi notes that the Women Enterprise Fund (WEF), a micro finance flagship project rolled out by the government in 2007 to improve socio-economic status of women across the country has not had the envisioned impact on the lives of thousands of women in Kilifi who continue to break their back as they struggle to put food on the table.

"My leadership is primarily about bringing the development of the County at par with the rest of the Country," she asserts adding that the first step in improving the economic status of county is to improve the economic status of the communities.

Her political prospects are hinged on her ability to marshal support from like-minded leaders who are vying for complementary seats as well as potential voters in the community.

Patron

As the patron of the Coast People's Forum, Cidi has been instrumental in organising meetings that bring together local investors.

She is credited for having initiated the Malindi Woman Development Trust to help women in the area establish small scale businesses and exploit available nature resources



Cidi Promises to reduce poverty and promoting development.

such as the Neem tree which grows wild in the County.

Cidi has been instrumental in driving civic education especially around the current Constitution particularly in creating awareness around the women's gains.

She takes credit towards the establishment of Mekatilili Memorial Primary School.

The candidate says that she is best placed to articulate the aspirations of Kilifi people and is willing to use her unrivalled expertise in management to restore the county's position as one of the most economically viable regions.

"Kilifi though endowed with natural resources, largely benefits other counties. For example, Kilifi County is one of the biggest producers of cashew nuts but nuts are transported to Thika for processing," she explains.

For years, residents of Kilifi County have cried foul due to the fact that raw materials are extracted from within the county and exported

to other countries and counties for processing.

Another resource is the salt that Kenyans consumes. This is extracted from Magarini, Kilifi but processing industries are outside Kilifi. This has been one way of killing the livelihood of Kilifi residents.

Priority

Cidi further explains that while there are many commercial enterprises such as manufacturing companies in Kilifi County, locals rarely get the first priority in regard to employment opportunities.

It has been proven that Kilifi County has the highest number of tourist hotels and although this is a seasonal product, it is yet to benefit residents in any significant way.

She says that education remains key to emancipation of local people and plans to push for laws that are beneficial to the community if elected.

Loans given out to women are well spent

...By Boniface Mulu

The women in the Kitui County are doing well in responding to the borrowing, utilisation and repaying of the Kenya's Women Enterprise Fund (WEF) money.

WEF Eastern Provincial Regional Credit Coordinator, Mr. Joseph Oyowo, disclosed that currently there are 646 women groups in the Kitui County.

He said that those groups are 210 in Kitui Central constituency, 142 in Kitui West constituency, 87 in Mutitu constituency, 78 in Mwingi South constituency, 69 in Kitui South constituency and 60 in Mwingi North constituency.

Money

He disclosed that the Ministry had loaned the groups a total of Kshs 35,000,378 with the Kitui Central constituency leading by borrowing Kshs 11,000,135 shillings.

Oyowo said that the Kitui Central is followed by Kitui West with Kshs 7,000,340 shil-

lings, Mwingi South with kshs 4,000,760, Mutitu with kshs 4,000,280, Mwingi North with kshs 3,000,953 and Kitui South is the last with kshs 3,000,910.

The WEF official was speaking at a meeting of sensitising some 35 women groups from Kitui Central and Kitui West constituencies on formation of cooperatives organised by the Kitui District Cooperatives Office.

Oyowo said that Nyanza and Rift Valley Provinces are where few women groups have been formed in Kenya.

Repayment

He said that the women in Kitui Central are the ones leading in Kenya in borrowing and repaying the WEF money and urged the rest of the women in the country to emulate their Kitui Central constituency counterparts.

He said that the WEF was initiated in the country in 2007 by the government for the good of the country's women.

He said that the repayment period of the loan from the WEF is one year and all benefi-

ciaries are expected to repay to enable others to benefit.

"There are some groups that we lent money in 2008 and have not yet ended repaying the loans to us," he revealed.

Oyowo said that the Ministry is helping in looking for the markets for the groups for their business products. He asked the women groups that have not got money from them to apply for the same from them to benefit themselves.

"This WEF money is so much and one group cannot finish it and the Ministry know how to deal with groups and not individuals who are difficult to trace," Oyowo said.

He warned participants to desist from being members of more than one group adding that such individuals will not be loaned money in future.

Men

He told the group to give membership in their groups but warned that the number of men should not exceed 30 per cent and they should not be signatories in the group's man-

agement committees.

Kitui Deputy District Cooperatives Officer, Miss Rosa Kimotho, asked cooperators to have good relations with the other societies.

Kimotho asked the women in the Kitui County to have compelling economic objectives if they want to start cooperatives in the area.

Plan

She said that there is no cooperative of less than ten members. The officer said that the economic appraisal (business plan) should be written in the simplest way possible in order for any group member or person to be able to read and understand it.

She said that the loans given to co-operators must be insured through the societies.

Kimotho asked the cooperators to have close relations with the Ministry of Cooperatives and Marketing Development if they want to develop well.

She asked them to keep politics out of their societies for their own good.



Hamza Ahmed puts security as her number one priority

...By Duncan Mboyah

Throughout her stay in the sprawling Kibera slums where she was born 60 years ago Hamza Ahmed has seen the slum transform from a peaceful paradise to a den of robbery, family violence and rape.

According to Ahmed, security has collapsed paving way for criminals to roam the area freely.

This new lifestyle has led to the deaths of many innocent youths and to some extent innocent residents.

Ahmed is contesting for the county representative seat for Makina Kibera Ward in Nairobi County on a United Party of Kenya (UPK) ticket. This is her first stint in politics and she is driven by the desire to create peaceful co-existence in collaboration with the police, youth and residents in order to save innocent lives.

"Security collapses after 10pm in this area and it is at this time that gangs operating in the slums raid and kill innocent people," she says.

Criminals

Ahmed intends to scale up community policing by informing the police of the existence of criminals and disclosing criminal hot spots on condition that the police does not reveal the identity of the informers to the thugs.

"This is my sole aim of joining politics because as a mother I have seen many parents lose their children who could have been helpful to them and the society at large and yet previous elected leaders have never bothered to change the situation," she notes.

Upon her election, Ahmed says she will engage elders, tenants, landlords and youth in the area with the aim of uniting everyone.

In her bid to end insecurity, Ahmed plans to start a recreational centre where youth will have an opportunity to engage in sports and also attend vocational trainings.

She plans to start income generating projects like toilets and water points to help the youth earn a living instead of engaging in criminal activities.

Ahmed has been active in bring people together and she helped form Mchanganyiko Women's Group and Interfaith Women for Peace after the post-election violence in 2000.

"We helped cool down the struggle between tenants and landlords through peaceful engagements," she recalls.

Ahmed also helped form Vision Sisters for Kibera, a group that today has a plot, a rental social hall and toilets for all genders.

Upon her election, Ahmed intends to help develop a health facility adding that none exists in the area yet the area residents are forced to walk long distances at night to seek medical attention.

"Many expectant mothers have died in this area due to lack of affordable public health facilities since the existing ones are private and costly," she notes.

Ahmed plans to increase environmental awareness and start a local cooperative society to enable the residents acquire loans at a low interest rate

Married with six children, Ahmed was born 60 years ago in Kibera and attended a local primary school where she left in class eight.

She intend to sponsor trainings on business and help women learn how best to manage loans.

She is the only female candidate in the area in a race that pits her against seven male aspirants.

"The area has been represented by men for a long time and nothing has been done in solving problems affecting residents. As a woman, I am going to make changes and create an environment of development," she reiterates.

From humble beginnings, Faith Kawira wants to be the people's representative

...By Martin Murithi

An evangelist, a businesswoman, party owner and politician all rolled in one. That is what sums up the description of 40-year-old Faith Kawira aka Mwangaza.

She was born as the second child in a family of six and she is In the coming General election, Kawira will be on the ballot paper, courtesy of her Mwangaza Party. She will be vying for the Buuri Constituency seat and will battle it out against a team of men and female opponent.

Kawira, an evangelist began her education at CCM Ontulili Primary School between 1980 and 1988 before moving to Moyale Girls' Secondary School in 1989. She completed her secondary school education in 1992.

Kawira grew up under difficult circumstances and was brought up by her mother after her father died when she was still young. While growing up she would work as a casual labourer in neighbours' farms to supplement the family income.

Siblings

"This was meant to boost my mother's income so that we could raise enough money to feed my younger siblings," she explains.

Completing her high school was not easy and it took a lot of struggle. Immediately thereafter, Kawira started a small business at Kiirua, baking cakes and selling for a little profit. This later expanded and materialized into hardware merchandise which spread to various other parts of Meru County and the country.

However, started engaging in business at a very young age, Kawira has always been involved in one business or another. Currently she is a prominent investor and a successful business lady in different towns trading under the Mwangaza Holdings, an enterprise which started from very humble beginnings and propelled to success.

The hunger to move to higher levels of education never left her. She always aspired to get a degree. After raising enough funds, she enrolled herself to study for a marketing degree course at Kampala International University between 2009 and 2011.

Initiatives

Kawira was the first to indicate her interest for the Buuri Constituency seat in Meru County although the whole region has never elected a woman. She is has been behind a series of initiatives in the constituency which include supplying more than 2,000 reflector jackets to the boda boda (taxi motor bike) riders.

She also organised for the training of the boda boda riders to acquire licenses, a move which she says greatly reduced the number of motor cycle accidents that were being witnessed in the constituency.

She is also the brains behind Kawira Mwangaza Foundation, a non-governmental organisation that seeks to uplift and empower women and orphans in the community.

The organization currently educates more than 20 young people and offers credit facilities to women at low interest rate.

"This has greatly benefitted and helped them pick up the pieces of their lives even after the death of their husbands," notes Kawira.

"If we have to move our constituency forward it's by actions and not empty prom-



"It is action we need to move the area forward, not rhetorics"

— Faith Kawira

ises and rhetorics. I have been on the ground working with these people," she says.

These are what she believes will work to her advantage against her rivals because she has been on the ground interacting with local people and taking care of their problems.

"I wonder when the aspiring people say they will come to sit down with the people to analyse and seek ways of addressing their problems. If they are true leaders they should have known these challenges long time ago and need to come armed with solutions to the suffering of the people," she observes.

Kawira, a renowned business lady in Meru, commands a big following among the middle aged and young people.

Water

She has huge plans for the people of her constituency. Once elected to parliament, Kawira says, she will seek to provide water for the residents. This she notes will help in ensuring food security.

"Availability of water will give the residents an opportunity to think of other mechanisms of generating wealth and supporting other activities like education," she says.

Considering the need for water, she has also initiated a project where more than 6,000 residents of Timau area benefit directly from access to clean domestic water.

She notes that the residents of different areas of Buuri have lacked clean water and have always depended on purchasing water from a non-governmental organisation which sells the commodity at exorbitant prices that is unaffordable to most people due to the high levels of poverty and low economic empowerment within the constituency.

Similarly Kawira has been behind the force behind the construction a bridge that connects Timau town and Riverside area which is currently the headquarters of Buuri.

Mid last year, a mock election carried out by a group of youth projected her as the most popular candidate in the constituency. Her interpretation of this is that the residents are ready for a woman's leadership and this gave her the courage to soldier on.

On matters of education, Kawira has been at the forefront in championing for adequate facilities and infrastructure in schools. Last year through the Mwangaza Foundation, she

built toilets for Timau Primary School and three other schools at a cost of KSh600,000.

"We expect our children to perform adequately in national examinations but how will they do so effectively if their toilets are a health hazard?" asks Kawira. She observes: "Timau Primary School had been closed by the Public Health Officer but on seeing the plight of the children and the passion I had for education, I decided to build them the toilets and we extended this gesture to several other schools which were having similar problems."

Kawira believes that once elected she will have an opportunity to extend her development achievements to reach more people in Buuri Constituency where she plans to focus on improving infrastructure and enhancing better health facilities.

She says many roads which had earlier been tarmacked were left without maintenance and turned into an eyesore. The roads are currently impassable.

Kawira attributes this to poor leadership and lack of concern from the leaders whom she says have deserted the electorate who gave them the mandate to preside over their development.

Market

"Many of our farmers cannot take their produce to the few available markets, making most of the farm produce to go to waste," observes Kawira. She adds: "We have also had cases of people being carried away by floods during the rainy season due to lack of proper roads."

Further on, Kawira promises to revive all the health facilities that have stalled due to lack of enough funding and personnel.

She also challenges her opponents in the race to familiarise themselves with the problems facing the residents of Buuri before promising what they cannot deliver to avoid derailing the constituency development further.

Kawira is urging all of them to uphold peace. She is also appealing to young people to desist from hate politics orchestrated by use of alcohol. She cautions the youth against being misused by politicians who use them to ascend to power but dump them immediately.

Alice Wahome

Holding TNA's spotlight in Kandara

...By Ryan Mathenge

After failing to capture the Kandara parliamentary seat narrowly in 2007, Alice Muthoni Wahome is not leaving anything to chance. This year she has been strategic in her planning within the political process.

Wahome won the nomination for the March 4, General Election. She was strategic in her selection of party. She polled 27,602 votes during The National Alliance (TNA) party nomination with her main rival Maina Kamau managing 10,000 votes.

According to area residents they selected Wahome and voted overwhelmingly for her because she is a leader who has been with them on the ground.

Being a board member of several organisations in the region, Wahome was seen as one who easily identified with the people on the ground.

Direction

According to area residents "she has always been on the ground and has also given direction of issues of human rights".

Those who voted for her were keen on a visionary leader who would deliver and her gender was not an issue.

Wahome is leading a crop of women in Murang'a who are vying for several positions with the assurance to win and make history in the region that has been male dominated.

With determination and not put off on ground that she is a woman, Wahome, a lawyer by profession has proved to the world the worth of her leadership skills. Having been educated at the University of Nairobi she graduated with honour in law in 1984. She was admitted to the bar in 1985 after completing her Diploma in Legal Practice from the Kenya School of Law. With this she became an advocate of the High Court and is also a Commissioner of Oaths.

In 2003, Wahome furthered her education and graduated with a Diploma in Teaching and Training.

Wahome boasts to being a member of various professional organisations such as the Law Society of Kenya and the Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA) in Kenya.

While conscious that the elections will not be easy, Wahome has already outlined her strategic plan for Kandara Constituency.

She says that her agenda is for things that are practical and lists the problems facing Kandara as lack of sustainable water programmes, education, health and security among others.

"I am focussed and ready to transform Kandara by initiating development projects and working with the community's leaders," says Wahome who believes in teamwork. "I am looking for cooperation from local leaders as well as the county government to ensure that we take Kandara to the next level."

She is looking to upgrade the constituency's health facilities. Wahome says she will push for the Kandara Health Centre to be upgraded to a district hospital.

"As the Kandara MP I will work it hard to ensure I help solve many of the historic problems facing the locals," said the female candidate.

One of the major problems facing the area residents is water shortage. Despite bordering the Aberdare Mountains, Kanda, which is in Murang'a South region suffers from water shortage.

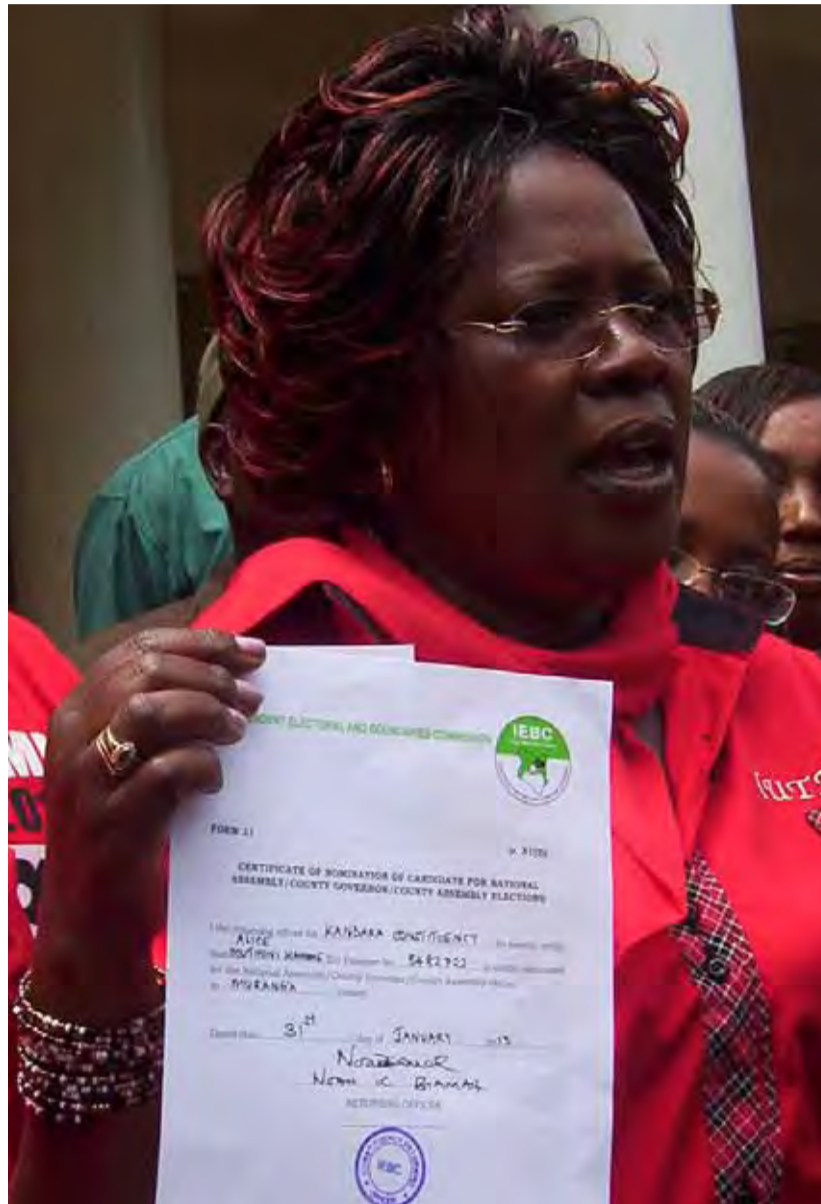
Agenda

Wahome says that the region's education standards have been low and her main agenda is to ensure that levels of education are raised.

"Education is a key pillar towards development and a lot will have to be done in my tenure to improve standards," she says.

After losing in 2007 Wahome lodged a petition in the High Court challenging the election of Maina and demanding a recount of parliamentary votes that were casted in the constituency. The suit is still pending within corridors of justice and has not been determined.

This time around, she will face the



Alice Wahome holds her IEBC clearance certificate after winning party primary.

for all. She is also a member of the Kenya Women Political Alliance and Kandara Women's Group.

Wahome also serves as the vice-chairperson of the Centre for Multi-Party Democracy (CMD), an organisation that seeks to promote the institutionalization of vibrant and democratic political parties capable of enhancing and perpetuating multiparty democracy in Kenya.

"Nationally I serve as the vice-chairperson at the Centre for Multi-Party Democracy (CMD) which is instrumental in civic education in line of promotional of peace and cohesion," she explains.

Membership

In Murang'a South region, she is virtually a member of all the programmes. She serves as a member of the District Road Committee, District Health Board, District Development Committee, District Project Development Committee and Area Advisory Council.

With over 18 years in legal background, Wahome engaged in researching drafting and advocacy work of the Equality Bill, Family Protection (Domestic Violence) Bill, Criminal Law Amendment Bill and Affirmative Action Bill.

Through the League of Kenya Women Voters she been instrumental in conducting civic education targeted at enhancing awareness around the electoral process, combating violence during elections, reiterating the importance of voting, how to vote and right to vote. Through this she has ensured people's participation in the political process as part of democratization.

Democracy

"I embrace the principals of democracy, rule of law, supremacy of the Constitution and strongly believe in the separation of powers of the three arms of Government," says Wahome.

As she holds the TNA spotlight in Kandara, Wahome remains one of the few women who were daring enough to vie for an elective parliamentary position that would pit her against men.

former MP Maina and former county clerk Mr PMG Kamau who have been cleared to run for the seat on March 4 General Election. Wahome believes that she has advantage of her competitors because she has been nominated on a party that has Murang'a as its stronghold.

Human rights issues have been the epitome of her life and she has been fighting for the rights of the marginalized, women and children.

Wahome is the chairperson of the League of Kenya Women Voters, an organisation that lobbies for inclusion of women in all spheres of life. She serves as the District Chairperson of Maendeleo ya Wanawake for Murang'a South, the oldest and largest grassroots women's organisation that believes in uplifting and empowering women as a means of alleviating poverty and creating a better environment and quality of life

Women make the highest numbers in political parties' membership roll

...By Boniface Mulu

Kenyan women are doing very well in political parties because their registration for party membership is big.

According to Violet Mavisi, an advocate of the High Court of Kenya this makes it important for women candidates to understand the Elections Act and the Constitution because they direct how the elections are going to be conducted.

Violence

She observed that the 2007 post-election violence occurred because people did not acknowledge the position of the Electoral Commission of Kenya (ECK).

"Women candidates must not

to do things that will make them to be disqualified by the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (IEBC) of Kenya," Mavisi advised.

She was addressing women candidates from Kitui County during workshop on political leadership organised by the UN Women in partnership with the INADES Formation, a non-governmental organisation.

Mavisi asked the aspirants to be in the know of political issues in the country through reading newspapers, listening to radio and watching television.

"The IEBC is going to give us a lot of information between now and the elections date through the media," noted Mavisi.

She also appealed to the women who are candidates to conduct

peaceful campaigns.

"Using abusive languages is part of political weakness. Your weaknesses always work on your weaknesses," she observed.

She asked the women candidates to be very careful about the tactics of their opponents who are fond of chaos.

Security

"Arrange your security throughout the day. You can even arrange to get government security," she advised.

Mavisi urged the women to report cases of insecurity to the police since as political aspirants they have many enemies trailing them.

She made it known to them that it is an offence to transport or bribe voters as it could land one in a court.

"You must condemn violence,

hate speech and intimidation. That is your responsibility," Mavisi reiterated.

She said that the money used by the government in funding the political parties in the country will be audited like any other government expense.

She said that if the women candidates in the country will not be trained on constitution and political leadership they will be violating the law without knowing.

Speaking at the same event, Boniface Kavulu, a civil society practitioner, said that women in politics face a lot of challenges and should be trained to overcome them.

"We want women to acquire skills to compete competently with men in politics," Kavulu said.

He noted that women should go for elective seats and compete with

men on the same positions.

Paul Kasimbu of UN Women said the organisation was fully prepared to empower all women including aspirants should seek assistance from the agency.

Kasimbu noted that posters, flyers, billboards and other publicity materials are important in politics to woo voters.

Websites

Laura Kimwele said that the Kenya Women Political Candidates Programme's database/website gives the female aspirants coverage free of charge.

"The programme allows you to interact with voters by getting and responding to comments. Liking or disliking of your page among other benefits," Kimwele explained.

Cut out for the people, Isabella Lenah Nzingi fights for Highridge Ward

...By Mercy Mumo

She has relentlessly fought for the rights of women and children without fear or favour. In 2012 she mobilized parents from Visa Oshwal Primary School to protest against the alleged sale of the school, a fight that she has put up since 2007.

Last month, she managed to obtain court orders with the help of the immediate former Makadara MP Gideon Mbuvi to uphold the public status of the school in line with the Government's stipulation since 1954. She says this is not the first time that public amenities had become subject to controversy.

Nominations

Isabella Lenah Nzingi who is vying for the county representative Parklands Highridge Ward under the National Vision Party. She was unopposed during the nominations.

In 2010, Highridge Dispensary, the only public health facility in the area was brought down in a case of fraudulent deals.

"A nurse at the facility who is also my good friend called to inform me that they were bringing down the hospital. When I went there, the bulldozers had already started demolition work. I tried to seek audi-

ence with the then sitting councillor but my plea fell on deaf ears," she narrates.

That was the only public health facility in Westlands Constituency. It was serving a huge population of the Dipsy slum. The facility provided ante-natal services, family planning, HIV testing and counselling, immunization, tuberculosis treatment and other outpatient services.

"As we speak, nothing has been constructed at the site even after being promised that a bigger health facility would be put up in the plot. The property was allegedly sold to Garam Investment. This is the reason why I will fight for a hospital in the area," she says adding that this incident was the beginning of her political walk.

Nzingi has been at the forefront of advocating for people's rights. The first born in a family of five, she is confident that women, if given a chance can make a big difference in the society.

"I believe that political interference is a key player in the sale of public amenities in my area," she says.

Her walk in the political landscape has not been an easy journey. She observes that financial challenges and patriarchy have played a big role in denying women leadership.

"Men have become resistant and

have gone as far as intimidating female aspirants. I have received death threats twice and had to stand firm in my quest for justice," she reveals.

Nzingi holds a Diploma In Application Software and Data Development from Uptech Computer College and a certificate in Information Technology from Inoorero College, formerly Kenya School of Professional Studies.

Business

Besides politics, she runs Bella Enterprises that deals with supplies, property management and sales as well as land consultancy. She also runs three boutiques in the city centre.

"I also run a support programme for people living with HIV and Tuberculosis at Dipsy slum with my friend Edna Ratemo. Every two weeks we donate rice, flour and milk to the survivors," she explains.

Most of these people used to get the support from the dispensary that was demolished. If funded, Nzingi says, she would be able to run the programme on a full time basis. However, she promises to support it with her salary once elected.

Nzingi is passionate about healthcare that is accessible and affordable for her people. She says the area needs a well-equipped referral

hospital with 24 hour casualty, mortuary and maternity services will ease the strain of the residents.

"It is possible, it is practical, we pay taxes and if we cannot get basic public amenities, then I think as a government we are failing in our obligation to the people," notes Nzingi.

Some of the key issues that she hopes to deal with include access to health care, affordable education and unemployment among the youth.

Parklands Highridge comprises of upper middle class dwellers. There is a huge gap between the rich and the poor. Casual workers in the area cannot access affordable housing due to poor earnings.

"I hope to push for affordable housing for the low income earners as there is plenty of land in the area," Nzingi assures.

She would like to see a primary boarding school constructed in the area for the low income earning parents. She believes this will promote quality education.

"The schools also need to have staff housing quarters, this way the students are able to get extra help as the teachers will be readily available," observes Nzingi. She adds: "I will also push to have more day secondary schools in the area."

Parklands Highridge Ward is rich

in labour. A government sponsored youth polytechnic would be ideal to train those who do not qualify for university education and will help in promoting specialization of hand skilled labour.

"The youth can enhance their skills in specialised labour. I will ensure that a bureau for specialised skill is in place in the ward. We shall then have a database for employment with standardized payment rates for different services. This is my strategy of doing away with cheap labour," affirms Nzingi.

Expansion of public bathrooms and toilets and more established market structures to cater for the growing population in the area is key in her agenda.

Choice

"Westlands market has not been completed and this is interfering with trade in the constituency," she says.

Nzingi is certain she is the people's choice. On what makes her stand out from her competitors is that, she has negotiating power and is always ready to fight for the people.

"I am keen on uplifting the lives of the community by bringing a balance between the rich and the poor. In one word, I know I am a woman of the people."

Faith Maumoh set to battle it out with giants in Busia

...By Leonard Acharry

She is one of the few women in Kenya who have come out to exercise their constitutional right and vie for an elective seat.

And because she believes in herself, Faith Maumoh did not go for a lesser seat but decided to gunner for the top most, the Senator's position in Busia County.

She is the only woman in the race among two gentlemen, former Attorney General Amos Wako and the outgoing Nambale MP Chris Okemo, both of whom boast of financial muscle, many followers and big names.

In several of her rallies in the County recently, Maumoh took issue with the duo whom she accused of failing to develop the region while in their previous capacities and championing 'money politics' without putting County and its people at heart.

Retire

She called on them to retire and allow youthful leaders like herself to take up leadership and the County to the next level.

"The people I am contesting with are like my father. I want to tell them it is prudent they go home and rest and leave us take up leadership," says Maumoh. She notes: "Every day they tell us youths are leaders of tomorrow and I think tomorrow is now and we are ready to lead."

Maumoh stresses that Kenya's growth blue print, Vision 2030, lies in the hands of young people across the board and that for any country and county to grow economically, socially and politically, young people must contribute.

"My own contribution to the implementation of both the Constitution and Vision 2030 for a greater Busia County and a greater Kenya

is for me to represent these great people as Busia County Senator," she observes.

Studies

A widow with three daughters, Maumoh was born on December 27, 1972. She attained her secondary education at Mukumu Girls' High School then pursued her post-secondary studies at Kianda College and later Strathmore University where she learned leadership and management.

She has worked in various capacities in the private sector as an administrator and programme officer, and in the course of her work experience, she has set up and strengthened institutions within and outside Kenya to increase their capacity to receive and account for donor funding.

As a business lady, Maumoh has interacted and provided employment to hundreds of young people for a long period, an experience which has confirmed to her that the youth of this country have immense passion for work, are able and willing but lack opportunities, mentorship.

She notes that the youth need to grow their level of education and capacity if they are to compete on local or international platforms.

This has also given her a chance to sell her manifesto to Busia residents, which is to create more jobs for the youth and empower the people economically and socially.

"In August 2010, Kenyans promulgated a new Constitution which created counties along with their respective governments. As the Senator of Busia County, I pledge to act as the people's watchman in ensuring that the Central Government pays adequate attention to the counties," she explains.



"I will ensure that Busia County receives sufficient funds from within

and without the Government to enable development in the county. Fur-

thermore, I pledge to keep a watchful eye on any and all revenue that is allocated to Busia County for its development and ensure that it is spent for the intended purpose, which is for the service and betterment of the people's lives," she notes.

As Senator of Busia County, Maumoh pledges to keep the interests of the people of Busia at heart, to act as a guide and mentor towards political, social and economic development.

Youth

"With the help of the youth as well as men and women of Busia County, I would wish to tap into the innovativeness, talent, experience and energies of all in order to transform Busia to be the model county of Kenya," Maumoh explains. She observes: "We can only prosper when we are all in it together, when hard work pays off and responsibility is rewarded, and when everyone from Busia to Mombasa does their fair share and play by the same rules."

However, just like other young people and women aspirants, Maumoh has faced a number of challenges including chauvinistic mentality from men who believe a woman should and can only run for the Women Representative position and not the senate or governor.

However, the Narc-Kenya aspirant appreciates that many people have listened as she sells her policies in the rallies especially those that she organised when Martha Karua, Narc Kenya Presidential hopeful toured Busia County last year.

"As a Senator, I pledge to be truthful and faithful in executing my duties and uphold the Constitution of Kenya," She states. "I vote for a better Busia, a better Kenya and a generation that makes future generations proud of what we do and this is the very first step."

Rebecca Otachi:

Only woman standing for National Assembly in Kisii County

...By Ben Orok

Rebecca Kwamboka Otachi is running for the seat of Member of Parliament for the newly created Kitutu Chache North Constituency in the Kisii County.

She will be on the ballot paper in the forthcoming General Election on Farmers Party ticket.

Otachi is not new to the Kitutu Chache parliamentary politics. She first contested the parliamentary seat in 2007 on Kenya African Democratic Development Union (KADDDU) party ticket.

Today her strong campaign points are based on the fact that she is the only woman competing for Member of Parliament seat against 13 male candidates in Kitutu Chache North Constituency and the whole of Kisii County.

Representative

"Majority of the candidates for the other five elective positions are men. I trust that women can be keen to have one of them as their representative in the 11th Parliament through their vote," observes Otachi.

She attributes her academic qualification on sociology (study on human behaviour) and rural community development as one of her strong campaign points arguing that a member of the National Assembly's role besides legislation shall involve assisting the community to come up with viable development projects.

"My past contribution to the constituency and county at large cuts across the community's issues that need to be addressed through the three pillars of Kenya's Vision 2030," Otachi explains. She adds: "I strongly believe that if I have done so much on my own initiative, given a chance, and with the participation of all the constituents, together, we shall take the community to another level of development."

Otachi is focusing on poverty alleviation through creation of wealth, youth unemployment and job creation to reduce the rising culture of dependency among majority of the constituents.

Education for children and youth from poor backgrounds are also featuring in her campaigns as part of the efforts towards enhancing human resource development in the constituency.

Another area of focus is access to quality health care services to all residents in the constituency. She argues that a growing and developing nation depends on a healthy population to provide the required manpower for sustainable socio-economic development.

Otachi's leadership qualities cut across many fields. Her interaction with people from other cultures in Africa and international community places her in a position of a local leader with a global vision.

Her position, as the national chairperson of a women's network that addresses human dignity of the disadvantaged groups in society gives her the advantage of handling the leadership role of the Constituency with confidence.

Accessible

Citing Chapter Six of the Constitution, Otachi says, she passes the integrity threshold as provided for in the law, since she is trustworthy, committed, reliable, honest, humble, compassionate, sociable and can be accessed by all the constituents regardless of their status in society.

Otachi is the Executive Director of Linkages for Integrated Community Services (LINKS), a local non-governmental organisation (NGO) that focuses on capacity building and economic empowerment for groups in rural and slum settlement areas. She brings to the constituency a proven leadership experience of over 25 years.

Prior to joining LINKS, Otachi

was the regional project administrator overseeing 30 projects at Pathfinder International African Regional Office, a donor agency providing services in the area of family planning as well as HIV and Aids.

A trained and qualified secretary, she has widely travelled in Africa and attended Commonwealth development conferences during which she been recognised as one of the "women's change agent" in Kenya.

Otachi is seeking leadership based on her long cherished dream of delivering a promise of servant leadership and alternative voice of reason to the community.

Vulnerable

"I am seeking political leadership, to offer an alternative leadership to the community considering that among Kenya's development stakeholders, women are considered among the vulnerable group that include children, youth, persons with disabilities as well as marginalised and minorities in society," explains Otachi.

She challenges women to exercise their constitutional right and exploit opportunities coming with the new constitution to vote for fellow women seeking various leadership positions to enhance their chances of representation at all levels of leadership and governance.

"I strongly believe, I have the development experience and academic qualifications that will enable me transform the constituency's development agenda," reiterates Otachi.

Otachi, 58, started her education Mosobeti DOK Primary School before proceeding to Ogade Girls' High School for her "O" levels from where she attained second division. She then joined Kipsigis Girls' High School for her "A" levels. She was admitted for a Bachelor of Arts (BA) degree in Sociology and Communication at the University of Nairobi (UoN), from where



she also acquired her Master of Arts (MA) in Rural Sociology and Community Development. She is currently working on her doctorate proposal in Social Planning.

Professionally, Otachi is a community development consultant with over 25 years in project management and gender issues in the civil society.

She holds several certificates in financial management, monitoring and evaluation, planning and capacity building, social budgeting and monitoring, transformative leadership, governance and advocacy, para-legalism, rule of law and human rights concepts.

Leadership

She is encouraging women to actively participate in seeking both elective and appointive positions provided for in the constitution. She observes that shying away from those constitutional leadership positions translates to gender inequalities in elective and public appointments.

Her key goal and commitment to the constituency, Otachi discloses, is to encourage a culture of transformative leadership that will enhance quality of life for her fellow constituents by

ensuring accountability, transparency and community participation through community monitoring and social budgeting process.

Women

Otachi is the chairperson Kenya Women of Faith Network, treasurer Kenya Women Empowerment Organization since 2010 and served as coordinator to the Truth Justice and Reconciliation Commission (TJRC) in statement-taking in Kisii and Nyamira counties.

Otachi participated in sensitising the Kenyan citizenry on the current constitution in Kisii, Meru, Ukambani, Kuria, and Siaya.

She established a revolving fund for four social support groups for Persons Living with HIV and Aids (PLWHA) and a Sacco for a women's group in Kayole Nairobi known as Naomi Self-Help Group in Nairobi Kayole Slum.

Through her initiative, members of the women's group bought land on which they intend to build a multi-purpose centre that will also include a vocational training school and home for the sexually abused children from Nairobi's informal settlements.

Wavinya Ndeti ready to make history for the second time

...By Liz Nene

The "never say die" rightly applies to Sports Assistant minister Wavinya Ndeti, who is out to make history for the second time round in five years.

Ndeti, who is the outgoing MP for Kathiani in Machakos County has now turned her interest in the race for the Governor's position against a handful of men some of whom are seen as a force to reckon with.

In 2007, the tough-talking MP made history by beating nine male rivals to clinch the coveted parliamentary seat bordering with Nairobi County though a little known party while Orange Democratic Movement - Kenya (ODM-K) wave was pushing in the Ukambani region.

Bold

Her supporters and admirers describe her as "bold and straight forward" going by her results-based management style of politics.

Indeed, Wavinya has lived up to that description and is the only female candidate for a Governor's seat in the entire Eastern Province.

For past five years that she has been in politics, Wavinya has shown that she is no push over. When things did not go on as per her plans, she always looks for an alternative, which more often than not turns out in her favour.



In the run up to the 2007 General Election all indications were that she was going to clinch the ODM-Kenya nomination ticket for the Kathiani Parliamentary seat. However, the ODM-Kenya leadership had other plans for

the seat and opted to give the ticket to the then sitting MP Peter Kyalo Kaindi.

For Wavinya, this was betrayal and although it devastated her, it did not kill the resolve to make her dreams come true in politics.

"I knew that the electorate wanted me and I vowed not to let them down, so I looked for an alternative and God opened the window for me on the other side," she says.

She knocked at the door of the Chama Cha Uzalendo (CCU) and it gave her a ticket. Armed with that ticket, Wavinya plunged into the campaign trail and confronted nine male aspirants including Kaindi.

ODM-Kenya, which was then associated with Vice President Kalonzo Musyoka was the party of choice in the region and many thought that Wavinya was fighting a losing battle since Musyoka was also a presidential candidate.

However, the 'never-say-die' leader defied the odds and the Kalonzo-led ODM-Kenya wave and went ahead to win to become the first woman ever to be elected MP in Machakos County since independence.

The ever-confident Wavinya, was born in November 6, 1967 and is determined to score another first by becoming the first woman Governor in Machakos County.

During the recent political party's nominations, she faced off with six male candidates

but lost the slot to former Government spokesman Dr Alfred Mutua.

Also competing for the nomination is former cabinet minister Mutua Katuku who was seeking the Governor's seat on the Wiper Democratic Party ticket.

There is also Jimmy Mumina of the UDF party, Engineer Titus Ndundu and a former Deputy Governor of the Central Bank of Kenya, Thomas Kibua.

Expert

Wavinya who is a London trained Information Technology expert, who was among the very first women to introduce ICT in the country. She says she is not yet through with politics because "leadership is in my blood".

Wavinya is a member of the Kenya Women Parliamentary Association. She has been an Assistant Minister for Youth and Sports since 2008. Before joining politics, she was the Managing Director of Onix Computer Services.

Shea holds a Master of Science degree in Business Analysis and Design from the City University, United Kingdom. She also holds a Master of Science in Business Administration and Marketing, from Heirotwatt University, United Kingdom. She received her BSc in Computer Science in 1994 from South Bank University.

Alice Maitha banks on women to win Mombasa Senate seat



...By Liz Nene

Alice Mbozde Maitha plunged into politics after the death of her late husband former Local Government Minister and Kisauni MP Karisa Maitha.

It was from him that she learnt the game of politics and views him as her political role model. She says he motivated her in his advocacy for the rights of Coast people at large mostly on issues of land and other violations directed to indigenes people.

"This alone made me her admire his politics and nurture the dream of wanting to become a politician one day," says Maitha.

Maitha is vying for the position of Senator in Mombasa County under The National Alliance (TNA) party to fulfil the goals of her late husband.

Gender

Maitha has no doubts about winning the position as long as women will endorse their own gender by turning up in large numbers to vote.

In the next five years, she sees herself as a mature women's leader with great exposure in politics to qualify for a second term.

Maitha believes that by then she will have transformed the lives of her people.

"I am asking my fellow women, youth and men to scrutinise all leaders and ensure that they vote those with integrity and leadership skills for the progress of our county," she says. She urges: "I also appeal to everyone including my opponents to maintain peace and sobriety before,

during and after elections."

According to Maitha, women should not be threatened or shaken by anything and must not turn back but match forward to display their prowess and ability to rule.

"Women lead with motherhood but most men often change from being fathers to dictators," she notes.

Maitha has done a lot of work within her community which she believes should make her a favourite.

Health

She was involved in the refurbishing Utange Health Centre in Kisauni to a maternity and dental clinic and handed it over to the City Council of Mombasa. She also financed the rehabilitation of Shanzu Good Hope Orphanage and equipped it with utensils.

Maitha has successfully flown over 2,000 women to work in a fish industry in Seychelles where they making a living and are able to assist their families back home.

She has also helped several needy students in Mombasa to pay their fees.

"Education will be my first priority mostly for the less fortunate followed by security, infrastructure and poverty eradication. I hope once I succeed with those priorities other issues will flow by themselves," says Maitha

She notes that the biggest challenge for any woman aspirant in Mombasa is resources. She observes that most people are still in the bondage of bribery and corruption.

"It is likely that people will be bribed during election and vote for wrong representation locking out dedicated women,"

observes Maitha.

"There are those who say they cannot be ruled by a widow because she may become unruly, run away from home, and despised her husband's family. This, I think is extreme because for me I did not run away since my husband died in 2005.

Again, I did not plan to become a widow, so why should I be denied my constitutional rights because of being a widow?" she poses.

Maitha registered a non-governmental organisation by the name Palm International that deals with processing of Coconut products.

"Through the organisation, I was among those who lobbied for the formation of Kenya Coconut Development Authority in 2007. Now the locals can benefit from mnazi (coconut) unlike before," she says.

Maitha is a professional secretary with a Diploma Certificate from Coast College of Commerce. She also holds a diploma in Project Management and Community Development.

Infrastructure

"Currently I am in business and manage my private audit firm in Malindi. I have a good understanding of city modification, infrastructure development, governance and leadership that I attained while attending educational tours with my late husband in Seychelles, Britain, New Jersey, France, China, South Africa and Cameroon," she explains.

With that expertise, she is confident it will assist her to serve Mombasa residents and help the city of Mombasa regain its lost glory.

Charity Kaluki Ngilu upsets political waters in the Senatorial race

...By John Syengo

Narc party leader Charity Kaluki Ngilu is causing political ripples in the race for the Kitui Senatorial position.

Since her belated entry into the race for the Kitui Senator's position she has joined the defence assistant minister David Musila of the Wipers Democratic Movement Party as the front runners in the duel. Ngilu had initially expressed interest in the presidency before backing out and joining the Jubilee Alliance where she was offered position of leader of Senate.

Although there are other two contestants for the seat Joseph Mwongela Mulwa of Narc-Kenya and Elijah Mui-mi Kilonzi, it is instructive that Ngilu's entry, who has been the longest serving member of parliament for Kitui Central has literally transformed the duel for the senatorial to a two horse races.

Contest

Ngilu faces off with Musila who is a popular politician in the local circles as he has also served as the MP for the Mwingi South Constituency for the last 15 years.

As members of parliament both Ngilu and Musila are rated as top performers having initiated and implemented various development projects that are beneficial to their respective

constituents. Ngilu joined politics in 1992 and has remained MP for Kitui Central until now.

Both are credited with good performance with Musila being nicknamed Bwana Meko in the local lingo that translates to "a gentleman of true action".

Ngilu on her part is alluded to by her constituents as "Mama" to denote her motherly efforts to improve the lot of the constituents through projects that are beneficial to them.

Projects

However, Ngilu appears to enjoy an assailable advantage over Musila for taking the full advantage of her ministerial docket to launch projects across Kitui County and the Country at large. She has held the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Water and Irrigation between 2003 to date.

In her campaigns for the Kitui senator's position, Ngilu has not shied away from proclaiming that she made good use of her docket as Cabinet minister. She has often times pointed out that in the 10 years she was in the opposition side in parliament; she did nothing tangible for her people.

She has openly touted herself as the best performing minister from Kitui (County) especially in delivering development projects to the area.

"In the 10 years I was an opposition MP I did nothing in terms of de-

velopment or lifting the welfare of Kitui people. It is a lesson I have learned and I, therefore, do not want us to be out of government for voting wrongly," Ngilu says.

Ngilu argues that since she was appointed to the Cabinet minister by outgoing president Kibaki, she has channeled resources to Kitui to improve the lot of the local residents. She has pointed that her stay in the Ministry of Health had seen mortality rate reduce.

"I initiated a programme that saw all homes get mosquito nets to ward off the spread of malaria. In the hospitals across the county drugs became available and affordable and the distances to health facilities reduced as more were put up in remote areas," Ngilu argues.

Another of Ngilu's strong campaign point is that as the current Water and Irrigation Minister, she has initiated various water projects across the county. She says that each part of Kitui County has a borehole, water dam or a pipeline project courtesy of her efforts.

Education

Also on her cards, Ngilu has often argued that she has been instrumental in the establishment of the South Eastern University College (that will get its own charter next month) and a constituent college of Kenyatta University. Both are located in Kwavonza area.

Ngilu prides herself with the establishment of a Kenya Medical Training



College in Kitui, Kitui Teachers' Training College and the Kenya Meteorological College.

She says she has used her ministerial influence to have the institutions in Kitui.

Ngilu noted that not only have the institutions of learning helped avail

learning opportunities for the locals but they have also improved the economy for the locals. She says the circulation of money in Kitui has improved as locals do business with the institutions.

Looking at her achievements, Ngilu says she will do much more across Kitui County if elected Senator.

Women seek to safeguard gains in nominations

...By Faith Muiruri and Ruth Omukhang'o

As Kenyans gear up for the March 4 General Elections, questions still abound on how to harmonise on-going strategies to increase the level of women representation and ensure their protection against electoral violence.

While approaches to increase the level of women representation in elective positions have been intensified, harmonisation of on-going efforts is critical to avoid dissipation of impact. With only seven per cent of women cleared by the Independent Electoral and Boundary Commission (IEBC) to contest for parliamentary seats, the need to safeguard these gains is extremely essential to ensure women do not lose out because of violence.

"Statistics have shown that only seven per cent of women candidates have been cleared by the IEBC to compete for parliamentary seats. This leaves us with very few women compared to the nine per cent in the last parliament," explained Deborah Okumu, Chair of the National Women Steering Committee.

Peace

Okumu was speaking at the launch of the Women Situation Room, an initiative which aims at monitoring, highlighting and addressing electoral violence. For the first time, Kenya is replicating a Women's Situation Room (WSR) for the March 2013 elections having been implemented under the Angie Brooks International Centre (ABIC) during the Liberia Presidential and Legislative Elections in 2011 and replicated in Senegal and Sierra Leone.

According to Barbara Bangura, the International Coordinator of the Women Situation Room and Peace and Conflict Expert from Sierra Leone, the Women Situation Room is a peace building process that mobilizes women and youth to play an active and direct role in sustaining peace during elections through observation and rapid responses to incidents as and when they occur.

"Although this initiative will address the gender disparities, it does not function alone but complements traditional observation mechanisms by analysing data and information coming from the field and providing early warning and, most critically, response to election related incidents," said Faith Kasiva, National Coordinator Women's Situation Room Kenya.

Kasiva emphasised that being a process, the Women Situation Room will, therefore, bring together various stakeholders who include the National Women's Steering Committee, team of eminent persons, government institutions as well as the media.

According to Bangura, uniqueness of the Women Situation Room is rested in the fact that this initiative goes beyond merely observing elections to responding rapidly to threats or incidents of violence as and when they are reported as well as the fact that it uses a two level of diplomacy through which its eminent women can reach the powers to resolve issues or threats of violence as and when they are reported.

Professor Jacqueline Oduol, Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Development, lauded the noble initiative but said there is need for the Women

Situation Room to be owned by the women themselves.

She emphasised the need for focussed coordination as critical in ensuring the success during the electioneering period.

She reiterated that although Kenya has made tremendous progress in terms of legislation, regulation and creation of institutions, this has not translated to any meaningful outcome. In this case, the Women Situation Room called for deliberate and strategic roles that determine direction in the best interest of Kenyan women. "There is a general feeling that although Kenya has made tremendous progress in the area of legislations, demonstrating outcomes are still wanting," noted Oduol.

In order to address the interests of the dynamic regions, she called for the Women Situation Room to be established in other parts of the country to ensure efficiency and effectiveness in monitoring the elections.

Oduol mentioned that unlike the other countries within the East African region namely Uganda, Tanzania and Burundi who are exploring ways of coming up with a National Women Council, Kenya not only has a Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Development but also a constitutional framework which gave room for creation of the National Gender and Equality Commission.

Despite these gains, she cautioned women's organisation to make strategic moves by making use of the already existing institutions to avoid disjointed efforts which are likely to yield sparingly low numbers.

"We cannot create a machinery and indicate like it is important then we look like we do not

want it," observed Oduol.

She recalled that in 2001 during the Constitution review, women were able to organise and influence the constitutional making process.

"For instance, they would meet with different leaders of political parties and religious organisations to push for the inclusion of women gains in the Constitution," she adds.

Issues

"During the constitutional making process, when there was an impasse, women were able to coalesce and organize around issues but they were extremely strategic because they were aware of the delicate balance that needed to be filled," explained Oduol.

The same sentiments were echoed by Winnie Lichuma, Chair of the National Gender and Equality Commission (NGEC) who emphasised on the need for Kenyan women to set up their own agenda and hence strategic and focussed coordination.

She added that some of these strategies included the need for mechanisms to support women candidates in order to realise the desired numbers. "If we do not realise numbers, we will not have achieved our goals," said Lichuma. She added: "We must align our priorities towards the realisation of our goals. At moment we have fragmented our efforts and we are doing worse than before."

The National Gender and Equality Commission mandate includes promoting gender equality and freedom from discrimination in accordance with Article 27 of the Constitution which promotes the equality and freedom from discrimination principles.

Aspirants lament use of huge funds in campaigns

...By Yusuf Amin

Women aspirants in Kilifi County have expressed fear of being locked out of leadership positions if voters place more value on monetary gifts during campaign periods.

Following the recent political parties' nominations, women say men were using huge amounts of money compared to women aspirants who did not have resources for their campaigns.

According to Ephie Chari, who is aspiring for the Kilifi North Constituency seat through Kaddu-Asili, this campaign period has seen women facing a lot of challenges including lack of funds for their campaigns. She urged human rights organisations to intervene and assist in exposing the vice.

Chari noted that men outran women in the campaigns by having many people attend their meetings because they have a lot of money to organise rallies and this will enable them get more votes.

Intervention

"The Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (IEBC) should intervene by controlling the amount of money being spent in the campaigns so that women can also have a chance to equally ask for votes in the county," urged Chari. She added: "Organisations advocating for women's leadership should also come out and help women battle with men to ensure good leadership."

Her sentiments were echoed by Rachael Dzombo who is vying for the Kilifi South parliamentary seat through Narc Kenya.

Dzombo urged the electorate not to vote for the money factor but to consider credible leadership.

She said that the nominations were faced with a lot of irregularities because voters in the area were being lured with money.



CHARI: Women aspirants have good campaign strategy but lacks money

"If voters focus on money, good leaders will be locked out of county governments," observed Dzombo.

She is battling with Ken Chonga, Wanyepi Mrima, Shedrack Lewa and Ben Gunda among others and is confident of winning the elections.

Addressing the media after attending a political rally, Chari who has initiated various community development projects in the constituency said she has the potential to engage her constituents in projects that will reduce poverty that has been a major bottleneck in the county for many years.

Through her leadership experience which she has exercised since she was at Kenyatta University from where she graduated Bachelor of Education degree, Chari is confident that she will also emerge winner in the elections.

"In this battle, I am the only wom-

an who has come out to compete with six men who are using a lot of money in their campaigns," she says.

Born in 1956, Chari's dream has been to be a leader who will represent her people in Parliament. She is confident that this will come to pass through the support she is getting.

"Men who are traditionalists say that a woman should not lead the constituents but women's groups and village elders have ganged up to support me as it is my constitutional right," she says.

With the little resources in her hand, Chari has been conducting door-to-door campaigns searching for votes daily. She has not shied away from doing the same at night although her main worry is insecurity.

"Women face challenges with night campaigns compared to men. I urge

security personnel to monitor and give us security so that we can compete fairly with men," she reiterates.

The aspirants urged voters in the county to lock out leaders who have been in leadership positions for too long time without rescuing the residents of Kilifi from extreme poverty.

An aspirant for county ward representative Linet Shaha noted that top leaders do not regard councillors as important and asked them to unite since it is them who are close to the local people.

Shaha who is vying on a Kaddu Asili party ticket asked Sokoni Ward residents to vote for her so that she can fight for their rights. She promised to change the face of Kilifi.

She blamed men for luring voters with money and urged human rights organisations to come in and tackle the

problem in time.

Naomi Cidi, who is battling for the Senate position through the Shirikisho Party said that although men were using a lot of money, she will beat them in the race.

Cidi who has been campaigning in Kilifi County said that the nominations were just an indication of the beginning of new leadership under the new constitution.

She is battling it out with Prof Chenje Mwachiro, former Cabinet Minister Noah Katana Ngala, Morris Dzero and Stewart Madzayo among others.

She urged Kenyans to support women since they can tackle many problems that they have been facing within their families.

Cidi urged voters not to be mesmerised by men who have a lot of money but will fail to deliver when in power.

Judiciary assures women candidates on election related violence

...By Waikwa Maina

The Judiciary in partnership with other stakeholders has initiated a number of programmes to protect women against any form of violence during the electioneering period.

Among them is protection of witnesses who will testify in court on elections related crime and dispute cases. Judicial officers are also under instruction to be more gender sensitive while handling political gender violence cases.

"We have no specific laws protecting women in political violence but we have the criminal penal code which will be applied together with other election law and acts," said Lady Justice Helen Omondi, a member of the Judicial Working Committee on Elections Preparation.

Rights

"Our officers have been trained on gender and election matters and they are fully prepared to protect the rights of the women including aspirants, their campaign agents and supporters," Omondi explained. She added:

"The law and courts will protect them against any discrimination and they are encouraged to campaign without fear of intimidation from anyone."

Omondi noted that the Judiciary, office of the Director of Public Prosecution and the police are working as a team to ensure that security of women was guaranteed during the electioneering period.

"We are also discussing on modalities of witness protection. Many women get scared of pursu-

ing their cases after their witnesses are threatened. This has remained a major challenge in dispensing justice, which encourages political violence against women," said Omondi. She reiterated: "I can assure women and perpetrators of such crimes that it is no longer business as usual, they will all get justice and I encourage them to pursue justice when aggrieved."

Constitution

Some legal technicalities that have been overtaken by time have also been addressed and judicial officers including researchers have been trained on how to handle and address such technicalities in accordance with the Constitution.

Any political disputes and violence related cases must be handled and determined before the elections date, which will give the Judiciary enough time to handle electoral disputes arising from the General Election.

Hearing of all election disputes will be settled within six months after the elections and some judicial officers have been appointed for this purpose.

The judiciary posts magistrates and judges to all parts of the country to handle the disputes and other elections related cases including the marginalized areas to ensure effective and timely dispensation of justice.

Omondi said that women are more vulnerable especially due to primitive social cultural practices during the electioneering period but the Judiciary will be more keen and extra careful on gender related violence during the electioneering period and thereafter.

Among the challenges that the Judiciary ex-



Judicial officials from Nyeri Law courts attending a pre-election training. Inset: Lady Justice Helen Omondi.

pects to face in elections related matters is increase of a number of cases due to increased number of political positions to contested. The number of aggrieved parties seeking legal redress could also rise due to increased public confidence in the Judiciary.

According to Omondi, the Judiciary anticipates to handle a minimum of 500 elections related cases.

Gichugu Law Courts principal magistrate Muraguri Mwangi said unlike in the past, judicial officers are now fully prepared to handle election matters.

"Judicial officers have undergone compre-

hensive training on elections issues which will be very useful in dispensation of justice. We are fully prepared for the elections even at the constituency and county levels," noted Mwangi. He added: "Involvement of magistrates in handling the disputes will ensure that electoral matters are heard in good time and this will save a lot of time and resources and no one has any reason not to seek legal redress now."

Gichugu in Kirinyaga County is among hotspots due to the re-emergence of Mungiki criminal gang, which normally takes advantage of election campaigns to harass, intimidate or engage in other criminal activities.

Technology ropes in citizens in election monitoring

...By Faith Muiruri

Kenyan citizens can now actively participate in the entire electoral process through a citizen powered electoral monitoring tool that responds to observation.

The tool dubbed Uchaguzi is being coordinated through an ICT platform which enables Kenyans to keep an eye on the vote. It provides avenues through which they can report any incidences significant to the election.

The platform has been designed to allow the public to use a wide range of technology at their disposal, from mobile phones to send information to Uchaguzi via text on 3002, Twitter: follow@uchaguzi and through Face book page facebook.com/UchaguziKenya2013.

The initiative seeks to promote free, fair, peaceful and credible general election and will help to increase transparency and accountability through active citizen participation in the electoral cycles.

The election monitoring tool is a joint initiative between the Social Development Network (SODNET), Ushahidi, CRECO and Hivos Foundation with support from the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA).

Space

"Uchaguzi seeks to expand the space for free expression and freedom of speech and to strengthen citizen engagement as essential ingredients for an open, democratic and pluralistic society," says Gregg Mwendwa, Coordinator of ICT Election Watch Africa, Hivos.

The platform perceives the electoral process as a permanent and recurrent cycle in which every stage and not just the Election Day counts.

Uchaguzi facilitates collaboration between the citizens, election observers, humanitarian response agencies, civil society, community based organisations, law enforcement agencies and digital humanitarian agencies to monitor elections in real time.

Mwendwa says that the goal is to extend the common practice of the traditional election observation by engaging the

mwananchi in election monitoring as they are a valuable source of information.

"With tools and information available, the Uchaguzi platform transforms every Kenyan into an election observer and in turn election observers will be able to verify the information depending on the locations," stressed Wambua Kawive, Executive Secretary, Constitution and Reform Education Consortium (CRECO).

According to Daudi Were, Projects Director at Ushahidi, by amplifying the voices of ordinary citizens, Uchaguzi allows citizens to continue to play a positive role in elections before and after voting.

"Uchaguzi mobilizes citizens to be directly involved in protecting their vote and electoral process," Were explains.

He says that measures have been put in place to verify information received and transmit the same to the relevant government agencies and monitor the response.

Approach

The Uchaguzi has roped in civil society organisations, the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (IEBC), Elections Observers Group (ELOG), peace and youth networks, global humanitarian digital agencies and volunteer community groups through the stand by task force.

The law enforcement agencies, international organisations and diplomatic missions will also be engaged in the initiative.

Uchaguzi technology has been built by Ushahidi which is a non-profit technology company in Kenya which develops open-source software for information collection, visualization and interactive mapping.

Ushahidi builds tools for democratizing information, increasing transparency and lowering the barriers for individuals to share their stories.

Following its launch in 2008 during the post-election violence in Kenya, the initiative has been used in 159 countries which include Uganda, Tanzania, Zambia, United States of America, India, Lebanon and Mexico among others.

The March 4 General Election will be the second time Uchaguzi will be deployed in Kenya. The platform was first piloted during the Constitutional referendum in 2010.

Lack of civic education to blame for political party nomination failures

...By Valentine Atieno

A group of women aspirants in Kisumu County have urged the electoral commission to roll out civic education in various Counties ahead of the coming March 4th General Elections.

The women who lost seats they contested for during the party nomination primaries said that the biggest challenge they faced was lack of knowledge by their audience on the various posts that the devolved government brought forth.

Farida Akhmed Salim who lost the seat for ODM Kisumu Central parliamentary also a civic educator for Shaurimoyo ward said that in her constituency, majority of people were not aware of what a Governor or Senator means though they were interested in voting.

Initiative

She said that leaders who are running for Governor and Senator seats in different Counties should take the initiative of educating the people they are to serve on what it all entails so that those who vote will vote wisely and make informed decisions.

"I had a big challenge running as parliamentary aspirant and at the same time doing civic education for the people at the grassroots. Despite the time I spared to educate people in my Constituency on civic matters, the male rivals still dominated by bribing voters on the election days, a thing which is unheard of amongst women aspirants."

According to her politics is very clean game but people in it tend to make it look dirty because for one if you are money minded and thinks that all to do with politics is money then people will pursue it that way.

"I always want to give credit where it is necessary because when

we sit back and cheat ourselves that all is okay then we shall be lying to ourselves, we believe so much in money more so in Nyanza regions where money and politics are inseparable," Salim.

Another factor that makes it impossible for women to secure political seats is enmity amongst women. Women do not like other women prospering and this makes them not vote for.

"The challenge that women aspirants overcome is that they are competing with male opponents who have money and this really brings women down because whenever they go for a rally, the peoples expectation is that at the end of the rally you dish out money and if you don't give they will tell you that them they deal with those with money," Salim adds.

Nadhifu Yusuf Hamis who was vying for Kaloleni Shaurimoyo Kisumu Central Ward on an ODM ticket said that the party officials on the ground categorised aspirants into three hence some were viewed as non-performers.

"There were members, owners and followers. Women were categorized into followers and I was one asked what I have done for ODM as a party to qualify me as a ward representative," says Hamis.

Confusion

According to her this made matters worse on the ground as the alienations confused the voters more with some voters confusing women aspirants for ODM campaigners.

Both the aspirants said that being Muslims was a challenge to them as their religious leaders called them aside and urged them to back off for the male competitors who were also Muslims.

"Civic education can help enlighten residents and religious leaders on gender disparity so that they are informed that women can also

serve as good leaders," she notes.

The nominations were total sham since most people were rigged in by voters who were transported from one place to the other to vote for the well to do male opponents.

"I had to stop activities at one of the polling stations from conducting the business because the returning officer was removing voters from the queue to go act as the clerks in the exercise which was against the rule of the exercise," Hamis notes.

Entry

She observes that on the day of the nominations when she was walking in with her body guards, they were discriminated against and denied entry yet no male opponents have experience this before and they too have bodyguards.

The aspirants were speaking during a peace meeting organized by Peace Initiative Kenya (PIK) for media encounter between women aspirants and journalists in Jumua Hotel, Kisumu.

The meeting helped women aspirants who lost in nominations to air out their challenges and find a way of forging forward despite their loss.

According to PIK Coordinator Ms. Jane Godia, the women aspirants were frustrated because Independent Electoral Boundary Commission (IEBC) officials were not alert on the grounds where male aspirants threatened some women and even gave out handouts to voters so that they could be voted in.

Godia urged the public to change their attitude towards female aspirants because they too have space in the society.

"The issue of voters asking a female aspirant the whereabouts of her husband should stop because some male aspirants are in the race but such questions are not posed to them and they too are not married," she adds.

Grassroots leadership has been Orwenyo's platform

...By Ben Oroko

"Since my election to Maendeleo ya Wanawake Organisation (MYWO) Nyamira District as the chairlady, my leadership prospects have been on the winning streak and this has given me an opportunity to reach grassroots women directly in addressing their problems," states Mary Orwenyo.

Due to this leadership position, Orwenyo is today contesting Nyamira County Women Representative's seat on the Progressive Party of Kenya (PPK) ticket.

Orwenyo began her leadership responsibility by leading a local community-based organisation, Ritii Women Group in Kiabonyoru location.

Elected

It was out of this leadership at community level that grassroots women in the area identified her potential and elected her to the post of Maendeleo ya Wanawake Organisation district secretary in 1991, before she rose to the position of district chairperson.

Her service to women through the Maendeleo ya Wanawake Organisation gave her a perfect opportunity to package herself for the current



Orwenyo set to offer unique leadership by empowering women

political dispensation.

"My desire to run for the newly-created position of women representative's seat in Nyamira County was driven by my grassroots leadership skills which gives me an advantage over my competitors," observes Orwenyo.

She blames the conservative Gusii community customary traditions and values which have for many decades denied women from the community a chance to occupy various leadership positions in the society.

If elected, Orwenyo promises to continue pursuing her dream of ensuring that local women occupy their rightful place in society.

"The time when women's role and responsibilities were perceived to be in the kitchen and taking care of children are long gone. The world has changed fast, revolutionizing the way things used to happen during my grandmother's lifetime," she observes.

Orwenyo notes its time every woman used opportunities offered in the new constitution to provide their communities with the long-cherished community leadership.

"I do not regret choosing to lead local women, something I enjoy doing in my daily life to ensure they get out of political and socio-economic bondage that they have suffered over the years," she says.

Orwenyo decided empower women after retiring from teaching when she realised that women needed her leadership skills to move to the next level.

Orwenyo's campaign is based on six pillars that include education, social justice to women, children and vulnerable groups, unemployment among the youth, healthcare, security and food security in the county.

Born in 1953 at Monga village, Bomagacho of West Mugirango constituency in Nyamira District, she attended Gekomoni Primary School in West Mugirango (1962-1966) before moving to Rigena Primary in the then Wanjare South Mugirango Constituency in Kisii District (1967-1969) from where she sat for her Certificate of Primary Education (CPE).

Education

She was admitted to Nyanchwa Mixed High School in Kisii where she sat for her 'O' level examinations, attaining Division III, before joining Shanzu Teacher' Training College for her P1 teacher training from 1977-1979.

She was posted to Nyangoge Primary School in North Mugirango-Borabu Constituency in Nyamira County and taught in several primary schools in the area until her retirement in 2008. Since her retirement, she has been pursuing leading and empowering women.

The road to the ballot has not been smooth

...By Joyce Chimbi

Although the Kenyan woman earned her right at independence, sooner than many other countries including the developed ones, the power to exercise that right has not always been hers.

In a country where for many years men have delegated themselves as custodians of the woman's National Identity Cards and only releasing it to her keepings under very extenuating circumstances, the road to the ballot has been anything but smooth.

"The power to vote is inextricably intertwined with the right to have an identity card. Men do not just keep these identity cards, but they have for many years made the decision regarding when a woman can register to vote, where to register, whether to vote or not, and for whom," explains Jane Gakii, a gender expert in Nairobi.

Women empowerment is all encompassing and speaks to such critical matters as to whether a woman can be heard, through her vote or not.

Voting is a critical exercise in any country, it is how citizens get heard, understand and make decisions that affect their lives in significant ways.

Although Kenya held its first multiparty general election in 1992, there had been other elections before under the highly controversial one party rule.

In 1963, Kenya held its first ever election that gave the country its first government. Under the supervision of the British colonial rule, in May of 1963, Kenyans were heard and Mzee Jomo Kenyatta became the country's first president.

"Under the one party rule, voting was not a secret. It was during the at times comical Mlolongo system where the shortest queues often won. During this era, although women were allowed to vote, there was no way they could defy their husbands. If women have been having it rough under the secret ballot, how harder was it then?" poses Dan Ndicho, a teacher in an adult institution.

The year 1963 was not exclusive to the only open air democracy as the Mlolongo system came to be known. In 1969, 1974, 1979, 1983, and 1988, Kenyans queue to cast their vote. Women included, although they largely endorsed the candidates that their husbands chose.

Men have for many years had their hold on the women in their lives when it comes to casting the vote. This is especially so in rural areas.

"While in a rural area, if you ask women to produce their national identity card, they will tell you that their husbands have it. Men walk around villages with their wife's identity cards in their breast pockets," Ndicho explains.

Over the years though, women empowerment messages have continued to penetrate villages and more and more women are to some extent able to exercise some level of autonomy.

At the wake of multiparty democracy in Kenya, both men and women, were becoming alive

to issues political, though to varying degrees. And the political regime of the day was having sleepless nights.

"In the run up to 1992, the country's political atmosphere was beginning to change. People were agitating for change and challenging the much feared government of the day," Ndicho emphasizes.

Ndicho explains that he remembers his grandmother joining other voters at 3 am.

"It was a 3 Km journey to the polling stations and she was in her late 70's. But that didn't deter her. I was not old enough to vote, but I remember thinking, when I become of age, I shall never miss an election. If my old grandmother could do it, so can I," he says.

During this period, more and more women begun to present themselves to the electorate to be elected leaders. There are those who made it. In 1974, the Kalenjii community elected Philomena Chelagat Mutai, then a 24-year-old student at the University of Nairobi to parliament.

Although the woman politician was fairly rarer as many shied away from defying a society that was strongly patriarchal, the woman voter begun to emerge.

Leadership

"During those days, a woman vying was seen as a bad example to other women. Men were anything but welcoming to women with political ambitions," Gakii explains.

Still, these women send a strong message to the society and to their fellow women.

Women began making a connection between the standard of living, their plight, and the challenges that faced them, and political leadership.

"The pace was slower than expected, but as the number of women in politics begun to grow, so did that of women voters," Gakii explains.

In 1997, to cope with a society that had become progressively political and more aware of the kind of leaders they wanted, the number of Registration Centers doubled to 12,500 from half that number in 1992.

Data from statistics by the then Electoral Commission of Kenya (ECK), mandated to oversee the general elections show that the total number of registered voters was 8,967,569. The number of men who registered to vote and that of women showed a very small disparity.

Of them, 47.9 percent were women while 52.1 percent were men. During this year, two women joined the presidential race. In 1997, among those aspiring for president was Prof Wangari Maathai, her bid to capture the top seat was a reflection of the fact that women were breaking out of the patriarchal cocoons.

She had been joined by Hon Charity Ngilu who became popular with her catchy phrase 'Masaa ni ya Ngilu.'

Ndicho says that he remembers attending Ngilu's rally. He was a teenager and talks of



People registering for the coming General Elections. Women have had it rough in choosing leaders of their choice.

a young woman running for president were everywhere in their sleepy Ikinu town, Kiambu County.

"Although the number of women voters, or rather registered to vote had skyrocketing, the power to decide who to vote for was not at the woman's discretion. Men exercised a significant amount of power over the women in their lives as it appertains to voting," says Gladys Nzioki, a community leader.

In the 2002 general elections, Kenyans seemed to have had their fill of the government of the day. Politicians came together under the NARC dream wave. While women presented themselves for elective positions in large numbers, the woman voter seemed to have stayed at home.

The number of women who registered was not as high as expected, especially since women have always accounted for more than half of the population.

Since politics are largely about numbers, it was expected that women would take the opportunity that a general election presents, to vote in leaders who stood for their issues.

Leaders who were gender sensitive and had clear strategies on how to address the challenges of the Kenyan woman, whether in rural areas, or urban.

There were 4,985,905 female (47.7 percent) and 5,827,111 male (52.3 percent) voters. There seemed to be a lull, the numbers were reflective of 1997. In fact, fewer women were registered as voters. There was a 0.2 percent drop, which went to the male voters.

According to data by ECK, now defunct, the percentage of registered women was particularly low in Nairobi province where at only 307,851 registered voters, only 34.8 percent were female.

In the 2007 general elections, ECK registered 14.2 million voters. The country had 36 million people at the time. Close to half of them were

women. While 7.5 million were men, women accounted for 6.7 million. This time, the women came out in large numbers.

Since electoral processes are not simply about the general elections, but also referendum exercises where Kenyans make decisions regarding critical issues of national interest such as to accept or refuse a proposed Constitution, in the 2011 referendum to vote for the Constitution that is now in place.

Out of the 12.6 million registered voters for the referendum, 49 percent were women. Men took the remaining 51 percent.

This was announced by the then Interim Independent Electoral Commission (IIEC) chairman Ahmed Issack Hassan when he released the final tally of voters, who have registered to vote.

Although a majority of voters are still men, it is not lost to those alive to the women struggle to break away from deliberate and sustained patriarchal systems and other forms of oppressions entrenched in traditions and culture, that the Kenyan woman voter has come a long way.

While women make up an estimated 53 percent of the population, the woman voter remains still stands at 47 percent which is an indication that although the women are moving in the right direction, a lot more needs to be done.

With the Constitution demanding for gender equality and equity, there is certainly a need for the Kenyan woman to make a choice.

Times have changed in favor of the Kenyan woman, the socio-political environment has become more receptive to her views, the secret ballot allows her to exercise her choice without fear and or intimidation.

It is a powerful tool for her to quietly send a resounding message about who she wants to have as her leader.

The road ahead for the woman voter is not yet smooth, but it is smoother than it used to be.

Campaign to stop gender based violence ahead of the elections launched

...By Faith Muiruri

Use the ballot, not my body is a slogan that the Coalition on Violence Against Women (COVAW) has coined to campaign against gender based violence ahead of the elections.

The slogan is in recognition of the events that followed the 2007-2008 General Elections in which 1,500 women were raped and infected with HIV.

According to Saida Ali, Executive Director COVAW, women's voices are critical ahead of the elections as they bore the brunt of abuses during the post-election violence.

"The violence and horror that ravaged the country at the height of the 2007-2008 post-election skirmishes remains in our minds, vibrant and chilling," said Ali during a ceremony to mark the One Billion Rising Dance campaign to stop violence against women at the Central Park in Nairobi.

She said the One Billion Rising campaign offers a platform for Kenyan women to send a strong message on the need to have mechanisms in place to prevent and respond to sexual and gender based election violence.

"The overwhelmingly negative psychological, emotional, physical and economic impact on all Kenyans and more specifically on women during the last elections has not been forgotten and has also not been addressed," Ali reiterated.

Petition

The Coalition has petitioned the Government to establish mechanisms to prevent the recurrence of sexual and gender based election violence during the March 4, General Election.

The petition which seeks one million signatures calls on President Mwai Kibaki, Prime Minister Raila Odinga, Chief Justice Willy Mutunga and Attorney General Githu Muigai as well as



Gender activists demonstrating in the streets of Nairobi against violence against women.

the Independent Electoral Boundaries Commission, Office of the Registrar of Political Parties, the National Police Service, Media Council of Kenya and all political parties to ensure that no woman or girl is violated during this period.

The UN Women has already issued a red flag that violence is likely to erupt with a statement from the Country Director Zebib Kavuma expressing fears that the violence witnessed during the 2007 General Election is likely to recur.

Similar sentiments have been shared by the Team of Eminent persons headed by former member of Parliament Phoebe Asiyu.

Speaking during a meeting organised by the Women Situation Room-Kenya, Elizabeth Mayieka who spoke on behalf of the team said that there are genuine fears that the violence witnessed during the last elec-

tions may recur.

She said that large numbers of people who were affected were mostly women and children who are still languishing in camps hosting internally displaced persons.

"The real threat and the emerging trend of violence is not limited to physical violence but is being perpetuated through inciting statements and propaganda," noted Mayieka.

Hotspots

The Women Situation Room in Kenya has listed Nairobi, Mombasa, Eldoret, Naivasha, Kisumu, Nakuru, Tana River and Kwale among hotspot areas where violence is most likely to erupt.

Mayieka called for a cohesive approach by political players to prevent election related violence.

She said the Team of Em-

inent Persons will use mothers to prevail upon the youth not to be used as agents of violence during the elections.

"We are also appealing to political players to embrace dialogue to resolve any disputes that may arise from the poll," reiterated Mayieka.

The Team of Eminent Persons is a key component of the Women Situation Room which seeks to provide guidance and advice during the electioneering period to ensure that issues with potential to polarize Kenyans are dealt with promptly.

According to Faith Kasiva, National Coordinator of the Women Situation Room, the initiative plans to use the eminent women to reach political players to resolve issues and threats of violence as and when reported.

Kasiva noted that the Women Situation Room seeks to lobby political parties, state entities, civil society, media,



students and youth to promote peaceful elections

Esther Passaris an aspirant for the Women Representative seat in Nairobi who attended the launch of the One Billion Dance campaign wants mechanisms established to support women emotionally, physically and psychologically ahead of the elections.

A review conducted by UN Women in 2009 of 21 major peace processes since 1992 showed that women participation in peace building is strikingly low.

Only 2.4 per cent of signatories of peace agreements were women;

No woman has been appointed chief or lead mediator in UN sponsored peace talks and women's participation in negotiations delegation only averaged a mere 5.9 per cent.

This is despite the fact that sexual violence against women and girls continues to be a plague in conflicts and post-conflict situations.

Mixed challenges bar the path to women's leadership

...By Robert Wanjala

The path for women candidates in the upcoming general election continues to be murky, tearful and brutal. In the recent party primaries, many women came face to face with the reality of male-dominated politics that left most women locked out on technicalities.

In Uasin Gishu County many women were elbowed out of the electoral race through perceptions and attitude about women's place in leadership, stereotyping and repressive culture and high requirement from election body to limited access to funds among other factors that only seemed to favour their male counterparts.

"Despite clinching party nominations we are faced with many challenges stemming from un-receptive community regarding our ambitions for elective positions," says Lillian Kiptoo, who is vying for county representative seat on a Wiper party ticket in Uasin Gishu County. "Male aspirants fear my candidature and have labelled me as 'stubborn' woman who does not respect the culture."

Although she has the backing of most eligible electorates, Kiptoo says her rivals who lost in the party primaries have opted to support other fellow male competitors.

"Some have chosen to deploy unorthodox tactics like peddling propaganda and hate campaign against my bid for ward representative," she claims.

Another candidate on United Republican party (URP) ticket Mary Kipkeu claims she was beaten up by her husband when she told him that she was seeking elective post.

"My husband beat me up after hearing I was

in political race," says Kipkeu. "Although I have since asked him for forgiveness, he is still reluctant to allow me campaign freely."

Party popularity has also made it difficult for many women to venture into politics. For example, United Republic Party (URP) is regarded as the party of choice in Uasin Gishu County. Women candidates vying with parties perceived to be unfriendly to URP have had a backlash, criticism and resentment from the electorate in their respective areas.

"My support suffered soon after switching to another party considered to be unfriendly to the community. I lost my bid in URP and since then the community is a bit hostile with the party I am vying on," says another women aspirant. She did not want her new party quoted because of loyalist issues.

Abuse

Although most women say they have not encountered physical abuse in their quest for elective positions, many are experiencing intimidation, repressive culture and stereotyping from their male rivals.

Women aspirants in the region are also grappling with will power and other relevant machinery to put up a vigorous fight to counter their male rivals who have heavy financial muscle.

According to Anne Chemitei, an aspirant for the Women Representative vying on Mzalendo Saba Saba ticket says resource mobilization to fund campaigns is posing a serious challenge for most women.

Kiptoo says: "Our male competitors are well resourced and are giving out money to influence votes and this has made it hard for some of us to carry out our campaigns free. Everywhere I

go people are asking for handouts." There is also the issue of electorate animosity that they have to contend with. Kiptoo notes that some of the electorate turn violence when they do not get handouts from them.

This factor, she says, has made many eligible women shun elective positions. It has also scared women voters from attending political meetings to hear what they propose to do for them.

According to Rural Women Peace Link the stage for electoral malpractices was set by the last Parliament after it failed pass legislation that would have made it possible to achieve the gender rule and avoid unnecessary budgetary burden on the county assembly.

"This County had about 30 women aspirants vying for various positions but after the party nominations less than eight women other than women representatives captured the positions of governor, senator or MP," says Liza Akinyi, programme officer gender and governance at the Rural Women Peace Link.

The Rural Women Peace Link which has been training women on elections says most of them were short-changed in party primaries.

"Uasin Gishu County has few women aspirants because many were shortchanged during the party nominations. Some were lured by their men (husbands) to vie on parties chosen for them only to end up losing to their rivals," explains Akinyi.

The organisation is holding training for women in the region aimed at equipping them with campaign strategies and action plans ahead of the General Election.

The training further hopes to equip women with important campaigning skills and strategies to market their agenda to the electorates. It also

aims to ensure the constitutional women rule is achieved.

The Constitution 2010 stipulates that not more than two-thirds of the members of the elective bodies shall be of the same gender.

According to Peace Initiative Kenya past elections in Kenya indicate that the number of women who are likely to win through the ballot will be extremely low.

"In 2007, only 16 women got elected as MPs yet there were over 200 women on the ballot papers. The list of women cleared by Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (IEBC) to vie for MP is less than 40," says John Ndeta, Media and Peace coordinator Peace Initiative Kenya.

Violence

Women bore the brunt of the violence during the primaries and it is not surprising that they performed dismally and instead chose to take refuge in the 47 seats reserved for women," notes Ndeta.

Over 100 women will be battling it out against each other for a chance to clinch the 47 positions reserved for them in every county.

Ndeta says there is need for creation of safe space for women and their supporters to monitor and report gender based violence during elections.

He adds: "It is incumbent upon IEBC and the security agencies to ensure full compliance to electoral laws as well as the laws of the land including the Constitution."

With nominations behind and elections barely a month away, the verdict is out: the goal of increasing the number of women in political leadership will remain a mirage unless the principle of affirmative action is respected and implemented.

Fate of immediate former women MPs hangs in the balance

...By Sam Kosgei

While in 2007 General Election, the Rift Valley region accomplished an incredible feat by electing the highest number of women to the tenth parliament since independence.

The women from a region deemed to be patriarchal, defied social norms which have for long regarded them as children after seven of them quashed the male dominance in elective politics storming to the august House in style.

However, concerns are now emerging that the next parliament might not have even have a third of women after majority of them were swept out in the party primaries across the region.

Bribery

The nomination exercise were marred by cases of voter bribery, violence and lack of democratic and fair process of elections which left majority of the women hopefuls falling by the wayside.

Apart from the flawed primaries there are other issues that have immensely contributed to the downfall of women involved in active politics: Party popularity and the introduction of the special seats reserved for women by the constitution.

Apparently the male politicians have used the introduction of women representative seat to lock out women from vying from other positions.

Elected

Those who were elected to Parliament in the last Parliament are Prof Margaret Kamar (Eldoret East), Jebii Kilimo (Marakwet East), Dr Sally Kosgei (Aldai) Peris Simam (Eldoret South), Beatrice Kones (Bomet), Dr Joyce Laboso (Sotik) and Prof Hellen Sambili (Mogotio).

Laboso, Kilimo, Kosgei, Sambili are defending their seats while Kamar has upped her gam and is going for the Uasin Gishu gubernatorial seat. Simam and Kones succumbed to the party nominations.

Laboso who secured a ticket to defend her Sotik seat argued that the women actively advocated for the adoption of affirmative action which guaranteed a third women representation, the misinterpretation had worked against them.



"The women actively advocated for the adoption of affirmative action which guaranteed a third women representation, the misinterpretation had worked against them."

— Dr Joyce Laboso

"There is a gross misinterpretation of the one third women representation clause which is currently working against the women. Deceptively the men are using all means to lock out women from vying for other elective seats instead urging them to concentrate on the women seat," said Laboso.

She expressed fears that if the trend continues the National Assembly will have less women representation adding that the last general elections had given women a fair share of politics against their male counterparts.

On the other hand, the party wave in the Rift Valley region played against the women as menfolk used all the barbaric means to ensure that

they get nods from the party to vie for the seats.

The United Republic Party (URP) is the most popular in the region and those who secured tickets have one foot in front towards clinching the seats. It will be interesting to see whether those vying outside URP will weather the storm to get elected.

Parliament

A handful of women did not manage URP tickets to vie for MPs seats meaning that riding by the current party popularity, few if not none of them will be elected to parliament.

Kosgei is defending the Aldai seat on an ODM ticket while Kilimo is angling the Marakwet East on TNA ticket that has since entered an alliance with URP. Sambili is defending the Mogotio seat on a Kanu ticket.

Kilimo has since waded through such tides. In 2002, she swam against the Kanu wave across the Rift Valley region to get elected on a Narc ticket. She achieved a similar feat in 2007 vying on a Kenda ticket.

However, it will not be an easy ride for the anti-female genital mutilation crusader since under the Jubilee Alliance agreement that some areas were zoned off and among them was the Marakwet region and it will be intriguing to see if Kilimo will marshal as many votes to allow her back into parliament.

Kamar and Sambili are of the view that party popularity will not propel anyone to power and those who subscribe to such ideology are democratic dwarfs.

The duo instead believe that this year's elections will be issue based and leaders will be elected according to their development records.

"This election will be purely issue based where leaders will be judged on their agenda and development scorecards rather than their party affiliations. Those riding on party popularity to ascend to power are in for a shock," said Sambili.

Although the women are alive to the fact that the URP wave will tilt the outcome of the upcoming elections, they rallied women to always remain steadfast and focused in their quest for leadership in the country.

Women make the highest numbers in political parties' membership roll

...By Boniface Mulu

Kenyan women are doing very well in political parties because their registration for party membership is big.

According to Violet Mavisi, an advocate of the High Court of Kenya this makes it important for women candidates to understand the Elections Act and the Constitution because they direct how the elections are going to be conducted.

She observed that the 2007 post-election violence occurred because people did not acknowledge the position of the Electoral Commission of Kenya (ECK).

"Women candidates must not do things that will make them to be disqualified by the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (IEBC) of Kenya," Mavisi advised.

Leadership

She was addressing women candidates from Kitui County during workshop on political leadership organised by the UN Women in partnership with the INADES Formation, a non-governmental organisation.

Mavisi asked the aspirants to be in the know of political issues in the country through reading newspapers, listening to radio and watching

television.

"The IEBC is going to give us a lot of information between now and the elections date through the media," noted Mavisi.

She also appealed to the women who are candidates to conduct peaceful campaigns.

"Using abusive languages is part of political weakness. Your weaknesses always work on your weaknesses," she observed.

She asked the women candidates to be very careful about the tactics of their opponents who are fond of chaos.

"Arrange your security throughout the day. You can even arrange to get government security," she advised.

Insecurity

Mavisi urged the women to report cases of insecurity to the police since as political aspirants they have many enemies trailing them.

She made it known to them that it is an offence to transport or bribe voters as it could land one in a court.

"You must condemn violence, hate speech and intimidation. That is your responsibility," Mavisi reiterated.

She said that the money used by the government in funding the political parties in the country will be audited like any other govern-

ment expense.

She said that if the women candidates in the country will not be trained on constitution and political leadership they will be violating the law without knowing.

Speaking at the same event, Boniface Kavulu, a civil society practitioner, said that women in politics face a lot of challenges and should be trained to overcome them.

"We want women to acquire skills to compete competently with men in politics," Kavulu said. He noted that women should go for elective seats and compete with men on the same positions.

Paul Kasimbu of UN Women said the organisation was fully prepared to empower all women including aspirants should seek assistance from the agency.

Kasimbu noted that posters, flyers, billboards and other publicity materials are important in politics to woo voters.

Laura Kimwele said that the Kenya Women Political Candidates Programme's database/website gives the female aspirants coverage free of charge.

"The programme allows you to interact with voters by getting and responding to comments. Liking or disliking of your page among other benefits," Kimwele explained.

Women pray for peaceful elections

...By Carolyn Oyugi

As campaigns for the March 4, general elections entered the homestretch, the team of Eminent Persons and the women of Kenya held a national prayer conference to launch the theme of using the institution of motherhood to connect to the youth to shun violence and use dialogue as a means of solving political issues.

The event that took place at Kenyatta International Conference Centre brought together hundreds of women who dedicated their Saturday morning to pray for peaceful elections.

The speakers emphasised on the importance of maintaining peace before, during and after the elections. While addressing the gathering Graca Machel, member of Commonwealth of Nations Eminent Persons Group and wife to former South African President Nelson Mandela urged Kenyans not to forget where they have come from.

"You learnt the lessons in 2007, you were in shock, you have been traumatised and definitely in 2013 you cannot say you do not know how bad it can be," said Machel who urged women to help fight tribalism and ethnicity in their communities.

She also encouraged every woman and all Kenyans to shun tribalism and burn ethnic bridges. "When we say we are praying for peace and we have said it here, that peace begins with me," she stressed.

Machel warned Kenyans that if the tribal and ethnic differences are not resolved, then Kenya will find itself in a situation worse than the 2007-2008. She urged voters to respect each other's opinion and their right to vote for their preferred leaders.

"A peaceful election means ethnic voting is discouraged. Respect each other's choices and their right to vote even if you don't agree on opinion," Machel advised. She further asked politicians to shun hate speech, noting that some use their vernacular to spread it.

Genocide

She encouraged Kenyans to reject tribal politics and ignore hate speech as these can lead to genocide. Women, Machel noted, should take up leadership positions in the society and use the power positions to change the way politics is conducted in the country.

Chairman Commission for the Implementation of the Constitution, Charles Nyachae, reminded Kenyans that for peaceful elections to happen all institutions involved should ensure fairness, democracy and peaceful atmosphere.

He emphasized that the commission expects free and fair elections and they are working hard towards achieving successful elections.

Her excellency Nkozasana Dlamini-Zuma, Chairperson of the African Union could not make it to the event but sent her speech which was read by the former Maendeleo ya Wanawake chairlady Zipporah Kittonyi.

In her speech, Dlamini-Zuma told Kenyans that the gathering was important because it reminded them the importance of peace.

She also reminded Kenyans that they are responsible for the kind of history they would like people to read in future and that has to be made now.

Kittonyi emphasized on the important position held by women in society and more specifically when it comes to peace.

"In the house we are the mothers, sisters, aunts and grandmothers. We also have a special place in everyone's life because we are the ones who give birth. Let us use that special position to preach nothing short of peace," Kittonyi reiterated.

Kenyan women marked the occasion as other women prepare to mark The World Day of Prayer which is an international ecumenical Christian laywomen's initiative. It is run under the motto "Informed Prayer and Prayerful Action" and is celebrated annually in over 170 countries on the first Friday of March. The movement aims to bring together women of various races, cultures and traditions in a yearly common Day of Prayer, as well as in closer fellowship, understanding and action throughout the year.

Social fabric threatened as gender based violence eats families

...By Robert Wanjala

The war against gender based violence is far from over. Rural Women Peace Link has raised concerns over increased gender based violence cases with Nandi County leading in Rift Valley.

According to Mary Chepkwony, Deputy Director of Programmes at Rural Women Peace Link, the rise in gender based violence was due to deep rooted tradition and cultural practices.

"Factors such as culture, poverty and lack of support from local leaders have let to increase of the vice," Chepkwony said.

Barriers

She noted that Nandi County register's at least one case of defilement and rape every day.

"Some girls have been impregnated by their father. Many of these cases are never reported due to fear and cultural barriers," she said.

Chepkwony was speaking in Eldoret during a media and grassroots women encounter organised by African Woman and Child Features under the Peace Initiative Kenya project which sponsored by USAID.

Women participants shared the untold stories of defilement and rape.

"Rape and defilement cases are on the increase and this message should be taken to grassroots where such vices are rampant," said Judith Jerebet, a participant.

According to Jerebet perpetrators of these acts are known people in our communities and they don't even spare disabled who are always helpless.

"Many disabled women are suf-

fering at the grassroots. They are unable to come and attend this kind of forum and, therefore, we should take these peace meetings to rural areas to benefit the whole community where such acts mostly take place," Jerebet noted.

Her sentiments were echoed by Violet Anyango who noted that because of fear and stigma many people, especially women, are not coming out to report cases of such indecent acts.

Conspire

In case where a father is involved, Anyango said, parents conspire to hide these acts or negotiate compensation away from the public and legal systems.

"In the rural settings parents conspire to compromise and agree to better have one child suffer than allow the whole family destroyed," she observed.

Similarly, other participants shared that many homes especially where father is the breadwinner, a wife will choose to cover her husband rather than take him to the authorities for fear of exposing the entire family to economic hardships.

The forum also heard that most women fear rejection and being thrown out of their marriage by the relatives of in case the husband is the one at the centre of vice.

In Uasin Gishu County, the meeting was told gender based violence has also been on steady rise. Available statistics at Moi Teaching and Referral Hospital- Centre for Assault Recovery (CAR-E) shows over 4,100 of new cases of sexual violence survivors.

According to records at the centre about 250 cases are reported monthly. Girls below 18 years top



Mary Chepkwony addressing a media workshop on gender based violence in Eldoret.

the list at 63.4 per cent followed by women above 18 at 36.6 per cent.

During the meeting, media was criticized by various participants who accused them of not doing enough to highlight issues of social decadency.

"Media plays a critical role of educating people and giving the community a platform to share the social issues. We need to have the media traditional platforms and programmes where people can talk sexuality openly," said Beatrice Kimani, of Rural Women Peace Link.

The situation is particularly worrying especially in this era of HIV and Aids. It was noted that as fathers defile their daughters they also infect them with HIV. Of particular concern was the fact that many young people born with HIV are not aware of their status and therefore, stand a higher chance of infecting their boyfriends or girlfriends.

Reiterating on sexuality education Anyango, community health worker said young boys are pursuing young girls without knowing that some were born with the HIV.

"I know a case where a wife was sleeping with her herds' boy and at the same time the herds' boy was sleeping around with the woman's daughters," Anyango shared. This situation left a whole family infected as the woman was also still having sex with her husband.

Virus

Another participant also shared how her neighbour was sleeping around with the house girl who was also and the having sex with his three sons and the man was already infected with the virus. This is a situation that would leave a husband, wife and sons infected with the virus.

Participants raised concerns that sexual gender based violence was

eating up the society and that some drastic action needed to be taken to avoid a generational gap in future.

According to Jane Godia, a gender and media expert with African Woman and Child Features, women must engage with the local media to amplify the collapse of society's moral fabric.

Godia noted that it was high time media adopted local programmes to foster education and awareness campaign around sexual and gender based violence especially where a father was going against custom by seeing his daughter's nakedness.

"Engage and use local media to amplify these issues. There is also a need for local oriented programmes to increase education and awareness and we can only succeed through involving the community's elders to allow them share their perspectives on culture and taboo," Godia observed.

Chiefs, police cashing in on gender based violence

...By David Kirui

While violence against women and children continues unabated in the Rift Valley Province, existence of outdated cultural believes makes it difficult to mitigate against the vice.

In most communities wife beating is normal business while rape and defilement remain taboo topics. While the communities refuse to let the law take its course, police and provincial administrators have been accused of being a stumbling block to containing case of violence against women as well as rape and defilement of children.

Enrich

A number of chiefs and the police have been accused of taking bribes and perpetrating the vice instead of providing protection to the victims. They have been accused of turning a blind eye to the abuses and protecting the perpetrators who end up walking away scot free and repeating the same offences but on different women and children.

According to Joseph Sawe from the Child Care and Clinic Organisation in Eldoret some chiefs and

crooked police officers use violence against women and children to enrich themselves by getting huge bribes to conceal the truth.

Sawe noted that several cases of children who had been defiled went unreported because a number of chiefs working in cahoots with corrupt police officers protect perpetrators.

"I have spent about five months pleading with a chief and police in one station in Nandi to bring to book a suspect who defiled a young girl in church but I am always being told that the suspect has run away from his home," explains Sawe.

He was speaking during a media roundtable meeting organised by African Woman and Children Features under the Peace Initiative Kenya Project. The Meeting brought together senior newsroom managers in Eldoret and stakeholders to discuss peace, electoral violence and gender based violence.

According to Sawe rampant cases of violence and child abuse happen under the nose of some officers and chiefs who instead of bringing suspects to book, opt to ask for bribes which are given in kangaroo courts and the suspect walks home free man

yet the survivors are left traumatised.

Sawe narrated the story of a couple that had gone to work in Sudan but left the children to suffer at home with no responsible care. When he confronted the couple, they attempted to bribe him with KSh300,000 so that he does not take the case of child abuse further.

His sentiments were echoed by Irene Magut, a woman leader with Rural Women Peace Link organisation who noted that Nandi County is among the counties in Rift Valley where violence against children and women is rampant.

According to Magut, records from the police and Judiciary indicate that Nandi County registered more than 1,800 cases last year and some of those involved are old men, church leaders and teachers.

"Nandi County had lost its former glory and was now known for bad things yet it is the region that used to be known for producing world class athletes," Magut said.

She called upon religious and opinion leaders to take time and teach youths against engaging in all kinds of violence including those against women and children.

"Kalenjin cultural beliefs are to-

day ignored yet in the old days men and women strongly observed traditional values. Unless the vice is stopped, the girl child remains under serious threat," observed Magut.

She pleaded with local communities to protect young children and girls who are sexually abused to satisfy personal ego from amorous men.

According to Marusin Kogo, coordinator Nandi Council of Elders, the senior citizens are not happy with rising cases of violence. They have asked parent and all stakeholders including church leaders and teachers to expose such cases.

During the judicial week held last year, Kapsabet Principal Magistrate, Margaret Mosiria noted that the County was leading in Kenya when it comes to violence, rape and defilements against women and children in Kenya.

Guardians

The magistrate said in the past eight months Nandi County had registered 1,600 case of rape and defilement noting some of which involved guardians who were supposed to give protection to the children.

According to Mosiria an employee of a tea company in Kapsabet

was taken to her court and handed life sentence and when the man was asked for mitigation he pleaded for mercy claiming that his children will suffer since his wife was away.

Magut noted that some men who are perpetrators of violence use their influence to deny victims justice.

"Communities in this region have to stand up against the malpractices that go against the rights affecting women and children," reiterated Magut.

The main objective of the Media Roundtable was to get perspectives from experts on how the media can set the agenda in stopping conflict and gender based violence in Rift Valley. It would also see how they can come together to highlight issues of gender based violence and peace from the community's perspective.

The Peace Initiative Kenya project aims at creating grassroots networks that have the capacity to prevent and mitigate violence, including Gender Based Violence in Kenya's most conflictive zones during the pre and post-election period. It is being conducted in the Coast, Nyanza, Rift Valley, Western and within Nairobi's informal settlements.

ICC trust fund receives major boost from UK

...By Faith Muiruri

The Trust Fund kitty for victims of sexual violence under the jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court (ICC) has received a major boost from the British government following the disbursement of £500 million (KSh67,887,242,393).

The donation marks the third year in a row that United Kingdom has undertaken to support victims of sexual and gender based violence in conflict situations.

"The donation is in addition to another £500,000 (KSh67,889,585) by the UK to the ICC Trust Fund for Victims (TFV). We believe that Trust Fund for Victims is doing excellent work in supporting victims of sexual and gender based violence during conflict," said William Hague Britain's Foreign Secretary.

He noted that the contribution signifies that Britain has prioritised the assistance and reparation for victims of sexual violence under its multidisciplinary task force to support international and national jurisdictions in investigating and preventing sexual violence in armed conflict.

The move was lauded by the Trust Fund for Victims' Board of Directors which said that the donation was a clear affirmation by the United Kingdom that there is need for concerted international action in the fight against sexual violence in conflict under the United Kingdom's Presidency of the G8.

Progress

According to Kristin Kalla, a senior Programme Officer with the Trust Fund for Victims, the kitty has made significant progress in supporting over 5,000 survivors of sexual and gender based violence in the Democratic Republic of Congo and Northern Uganda.

"I believe that the contribution by the United Kingdom will allow the Fund to expand their assistance to other situations such as the Central African Republic," said Kalla.

The Trust Fund for Victims is the first of its kind in the global movement to end impunity and promote justice. At the end of one of the bloodiest centuries in history, the international community made a commitment to end impunity, help prevent the gravest crimes known to humanity and bring justice to victims with the adoption of the Rome Statute.

Statute

In 2002, the Rome Statute came into effect and the Assembly of state parties established the Trust Fund for Victims under article 79 of the Rome statute to benefit victims of crimes and their families within the jurisdiction of the Inter-



The ICC is faced with a challenge on the Kenyan cases. So far the Kenyan cases has consumed approximately KSh 2 billion in both handling the cases and protecting witnesses in foreign countries.

national Criminal Court (ICC). These crimes are genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes and in the future crimes against aggression.

The Trust Fund for Victims addresses and responds to the physical, psychological or material needs of the most vulnerable victims. It raises public awareness and mobilizes people, ideas and resources. It funds innovative projects through intermediaries to relieve the suffering of the often forgotten survivors.

Trust Fund for Victims works closely with NGOs, community groups, women grassroots organizations, governments and United Nations agencies at local, national and international levels.

By focusing on local ownership, the Trust Fund for Victims empowers victims as main stakeholders in the process of rebuilding their lives.

With the unique roles of implementing both court ordered and general assistance to victims of crimes under ICC's jurisdiction, the Trust Fund for Victims offers key advantages for promoting lasting peace, reconciliation and well-being in war torn societies.

The Trust Fund for Victims' mandate includes implementing court ordered reparation awards against a convicted person as directed by the court.

In addition, the Trust Fund for Victims uses voluntary contributions from donors to provide victims and their families in situations where the court is active with physical rehabilitation, material support and psychological rehabilitation.

Currently Trust Fund for Victims is providing broad range support to victims in Northern Uganda and the Democratic Republic of Congo including access to reproductive health service, vocational training, trauma based counselling, reconciliation workshops and reconstructive surgery to an estimated 80,000 victims of crimes under ICC jurisdiction and 5,000 victims of sexual violence.

Programmes

The Trust Fund for Victims plans to establish support programmes in Central African Republic and will focus on aiding victims of sexual violence and building systems to combat rape and other forms of gender based violence.

Most projects under Trust Fund for Victims have incorporated both gender and child specific interventions to support the special vulnerability of women and children.

There are currently eight situations before the ICC namely Northern Uganda, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Darfur, Central African Republic (CAR), Kenya, Libya, Cote d'Ivoire and Mali.

Vulnerable women and girls equipped with defence skills

...By Faith Muiruri

The fact that women need help now is an affirmation that aptly captures the voices of thousands of victims of gender based violence who have either experienced rape and other gender abuses in their lifetime.

Statistics on gender based violence in Kenya paint a grim picture with studies indicating that one in every six women aged between 15 and 70 years respectively has experienced physical and sexual violence in their lives.

Worse still is the fact that the level of violence against women is rising despite the Sexual Offences Act.

Abused

According to Saida Ali, Executive Director Coalition of Violence Against Women (COVAW), three out of 10 women in Kenya admit that they have been physically and sexually abused by their spouses and sexual partners with women in Nairobi being listed as more prone to rape and murder by their hus-

bands and intimate partners.

It is against this backdrop that the No Means No Worldwide (NMNW) organisation has undertaken to train women and children on effective rape prevention strategies in schools, churches, youth groups and other community venues free of charge.

According to Evelyne Odhiambo, a programme officer with by No Means No Worldwide, the initiative mainly targets slum areas as women living in informal settlements are highly susceptible to regular and in some cases extreme forms of sexual violence and deaths.

Studies

According to Odhiambo, studies indicate that self-defence techniques can increase a woman's ability to prevail in an assault by up to 85 per cent.

The initiative mainly targets schools in the slums and is currently being implemented in learning facilities within Korogocho, Huruma, Kibera, Mukuru, Dandora and Mathare.

"Each slum has a team of about six to 10 self-defence trainers. The trainers work closely with teachers and administrators in both primary and secondary schools in the area to equip students with physical fighting skills," Odhiambo explained to Kenyan Woman during an interview after the launch of one billion rising dance held at the Central Park in Nairobi.

She said the initiative was borne out of the need to equip young girls with defence skills after a baseline survey conducted by the organisation revealed that 25 per cent of secondary school girls in the area were being raped every year.

Odhiambo noted that the initiative had also incorporated young girls who have dropped out of school as they were more vulnerable to sexual attacks.

Impact

She observed that the programme has borne remarkable fruit with a recent research by the organisation pointing to drastic drop in rape cases by a significant

margin of 65 per cent.

"Over half the girls reported they had used self-defence techniques to prevent rape. It is very encouraging to see that such a simple low cost intervention had tremendously reduced the incidence of rape in the area," she explained.

Odhiambo noted that most girls reported using verbal skills which entails screaming for help or yelling 'No' to scare off the assailant.

She said the organization is also the force behind the training of the famous Fighting Grannies of Korogocho which was mooted to counter the high rates of attacks against grannies who were being raped and dumped along sewer lines.

Survivors

The organisation has also launched a Sexual Support Survivors Anonymous (SASA) programme which targets survivors of sexual violence or attempted assault and provides them with support during healing and recovery process.

According to Esther Nyam-

bura, a programme officer with No Means No Worldwide, the initiative seeks to make young girls more assertive and firm and this helps protect them potential assailants.

"Seventy four per cent of perpetrators in rape cases are known to the victims and the violence can be prevented," explained Nyambura.

Linkage

According to Naomi Wanjiru who provides post-care services to the victims, No Means No Worldwide has been able to link survivors with hospitals and provide them with legal services to ensure that justice prevails.

"We have also been working closely with International Justice Mission (IJM) which provides victims with free legal services to ensure that the assailants are brought to book," Wanjiru explained.

However, she noted that they are faced with challenges particularly in the cases of underage girls when some parents opt for out of court settlements which deny the victims justice.

Those blocking women's empowerment to be blacklisted

...By Waikwa Maina

Financial intermediaries that breach terms and conditions for the KSh1 billion plus Women Enterprise Fund will be blacklisted and have their contract with the kitty terminated.

At the same time, the fund has embarked on aggressive initiative to assist women beneficiaries of the Women Enterprise Fund in value addition and marketing of their products.

Among the initiatives are intra-county forums, inter-county forums and national forums where the women meet to exchange in entrepreneurial ideas as well as form and create business partnerships.

Practices

"We have started with intra-county forums where women from a given county meet and learn best practices from their successful counterparts. This is an inter-linkage exercise we want to roll out in all counties," says John Njogu, marketing and research manager women Enterprise Fund.

The purpose of these initiatives is to assist more women get markets for their produce and wares and also to network through interactions.

The kitty has also partnered with other players such as Kenyatta University and Export Promotion Council among others to assist in market research and quality products.

According to Virginia Kuria, the Women Enterprise Fund ICT manager, the management is taking stock of financial intermediaries that have made it cumbersome for

upcoming women entrepreneurs access the funds.

"We have conducted empowerment programmes with the intermediaries and those that continue to exploit women or fail to honour our terms and conditions will be blacklisted," warns Kuria. She adds: "We have also conducted a research on challenges facing both the women and the intermediaries and everything has now been harmonised."

Women Enterprise Fund has 105 intermediaries spread across the country. In a bid to monitor how the funds are utilised, each intermediary is required to submit its report every three months on how they have released the funds.

The minimum ceiling for group's applicants will also be increased from KSh50,000 to KSh200,000.

Launching of the intra-county programme in Nyeri was done at Rebecca Mwangi's farm. Mwangi has created an empire out of KSh35,000 loaned to her from the kitty in 2008.

In Central Province, land scarcity is a key challenge facing families. Majority of the homesteads rely on half an acre for subsistence farming, while in others it has become impossible to subdivide their land, with dwelling houses squeezed in the only available piece of land.

Framing

The land factor together with poor land management skills, lack of commercial farming skills and capital to engage in diversified commercial farming practices has contributed to increased poverty.

However, Mwangi from

Kangocho Village, Mathira Constituency, Nyeri County, is a testimony of how determination to commercial farming can change lives.

She has created job opportunities out of her less than one-acre parcel of land. On average, she is now earning between KSh750,000-KSh1.2 million from the farm annually.

Out of this farm, she has been able to educate her two children in universities while two of her other children are in private boarding schools.

The farmer admits that poor land management and lack of capital are key issues affecting many farmers.

"I was in a similar situation; I could not even afford to pay my contribution for women merry-go-round groups and I was blacklisted in most of them," explains Mwangi. She adds: "Eventually, I had to retreat in solitary confinement. Our small parcel of land could produce enough to feed the family and pay school fees."

But she had ideas on the type of farming she wanted to do, she was convinced that with proper management her small land could transform the family's lifestyle.

A ray of hope came to her when she attended a funeral where the chief talked about the Women Enterprise Fund. She consulted the chief for more information and then visited Taifa Sacco to apply for the loan.

"The branch manager could not trust me, It took a lot

of time to convince the manager that the fish farming project I wanted to undertake was able to repay back the loan," recalls Mwangi.

Due to that persistence, he advised me to do a proposal. "I told him I had never done one but he told me to put down whatever I have been telling him in writing in any language even if it was in Kikuyu," says Mwangi. "I did that and took it to him the following morning."

By this time, the manager had started to admire her courage and sincerity but he had more doubts when he visited the hilly location of where Mwangi wanted to do fish farming. However, finally he decided to take the risk.

She started with one fishpond and used its returns to invest in two more fishponds.

After repaying the loan, she applied for another one

amounting to KSh80,000 which she repaid and applied for KSh100,000 more and from that time life has never been the same.

Loan

Today Mwangi has six farming projects in her farm, dairy goats, bee-keeping, and rabbits. She is also into brick making and coffee farming each complementing the other for maximum returns.

Out of her 15 beehives, she is able to harvest an average of 365 kilograms of honey each selling at an average of KSh600 per kilo.

In the same farm, she has five fish ponds each producing an average of 500 fingerlings selling each at KSh10, while mature fish sells at between KSh80-KSh120 per harvest depending on market. On average, the fish farming

project brings her an average of KSh200,000 annually and normally harvests 75 per cent of the fish/fingerlings each harvesting season.

Depth

The recommended depth of a fishpond is normally three feet but the farmer says that with experience, she has learnt that best depth is five feet deep for water security reasons, giving the fish enough breeding and playing space among others. On mature fish, she says, the recommended weight for harvest is between 350grams to 400grams, a size most preferred by customers.

In the same farm, she has dairy goats that bring her between KSh80,000 to KSh120,000 annually. Rabbits occupy a small space in her farm but they rake in an average of KSh300,000 annually.



Women Fund ICT Manager Virginia Kuria during the launching of Intra County Linkage program in Nyeri County. Right: Rebecca Mwangi demonstrating commercial farming during the launch.

Women's seat seeks to balance the equilibrium in Kwale

...By Correspondent

Though the seats for the Governor and Senate had been shaped up ethnically in Kwale County, the race for the Women Representative has been open.

In an earlier arrangement, the seat of the Governor was to come from Kinango which is dominated by the Duruma while the Senator from either Matuga or Msambweni where Digos make the majority.

Equation

To complete the equation most Governor aspirants have picked the Kamba community who are majority migrants as their running mates.

However, in the background of

this the alliance picked will determine the winner as there circumstance where all the three contestants of a coalition are from one community.

There are six contestants for the seat of the Women's representative led by Zainab Chidzuga who previously worked as a director at the Coast Water and was chairperson Maendeleo Ya Wanawake, who is vying on an ODM ticket. There is Fatuma Masito a former councillor running on National Vision Party (NVP), Mwanakombo Gwerenya on United Democratic Front (UDF) and Ntembe Makoti a former Teachers Service Commissioner running on United Republican Party (URP).

Others are Catherine Njoki (Agano Party) and just recently an advocate Mwanaisa Shariff came in for

The National Alliance (TNA) party. Already rifts have emerged between TNA and UR. During the party primaries one prominent personality was accused of trying to block the issuance of a certificate to TNA aspirants.

"It was not easy to get the certificate as some prominent people are bent on ensuring that some of us do not participate," said Chidzuga.

Sell

On the URP side there are those who say that it will be difficult to sell it. Chirau Mwakwere, a Senatorial aspirant has an edge to clinch the ticket, making it difficult for Kassim Riga (Governor) and Ntembe Makoti (Women's Representative) from the same party considering that they are

all from the Digo community.

Just as it was in the party primaries, stiff competition will be witnessed between Chidzuga and Masito who were both initially in the ODM and although Masito moved to NVP before the start of the exercise and was able to garner a sizeable number of votes.

"My opponents have chickened out and are saying that I already had a certificate. I did not have any but the primaries were free and fair. I have hit the ground and let them expect a landslide victory for me," said Chidzuga.

Masito noted that despite the irregularities, she could win from any party. Although she wanted to register in a party under CORD alliance, time was not on her side forcing her to join

NVP.

Coincidentally both have been politicians compared to the rest. They both ran in 2007 with Chidzuga vying for Matuga MP on a NARC ticket while Masito vied for the Waa civic seat on an ODM. Unfortunately they both lost. Masito was then nominated by her party while Chidzuga got the position of being director at Coast Water.

Win

From the kind of hot adrenaline seen in their campaigns, it believed that any man who will align himself with them will definitely win.

So far Chidzuga is working with Salim Mvurya as Governor and Boy Juma Boy as Senator in the CORD alliance.



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