

Unfiltered, uninhibited... just the gruesome truth

ISSUE 078

March 1-15, 2013

# Reject



A bimonthly newspaper by the Media Diversity Centre, a project of African Woman and Child Feature Service



## Youths join the country in rooting for peaceful elections

By HENRY OWINO

After experiencing the consequences of violence that happened five years ago, the youths in Kibera have vowed that never again shall they be part of a violent behaviour.

About five kilometres from Kibera in Uhuru Park, the Presidential were making the same plea to Kenyans at a prayer meeting attended by thousands. All major political players took a solemn promise to ensure peace prevails regardless of the election outcomes. The activities at Uhuru Park and at Kibera are some of the many initiatives mooted to ensure the country remains united and peaceful after the March 4th elections. One of the initiatives that have played an instrumental role in preaching peace is TUVUKE initiative. From peace concerts, Peace Caravans, establishment

of peace champions, training of media to be peace ambassadors to inculcating peace messages among communities, Tuvuke has transformed how people view and value peace. The initiative has and continues to address some of the issues that have triggered conflict in more sober manner. Such discourse has been very influential in contributing to the current restraint and mood prevailing in the country.

### Consequences

Peace is indeed very key if this election is to register high voter turnout, especially among women voters. If there is conflict, those likely to refrain from voting are women and the elderly.

Consequences of conflict are felt more by women than men as they have to after families as single mothers, to care for the injured, and to deal with the aftermaths

of sexual violence.

Back to Kibera, the post-election violence that rocked the country after the 2007 General Elections left the young people and residents poorer than before.

The residents say the losses they incurred were so massive that they have been unable to recover in the past five years. The young people in the area say the aftermath of the conflict were so dire that no one wants a repeat of the same.

Recalling the events of that time, the young women and men living in the area say that within the two weeks of conflict most people were starving. The politicians whose cause they were fighting for were sleeping on full stomachs.

Many lives were lost and several others injured, while other were permanently dis-



A crowd at Uhuru Park during the National Prayer and repentance meeting convened by David Owor. Presidential candidates pledged for peace ahead of the polls. Pictures: Reject Correspondent

Read more *Reject* stories online at [www.mdcafrica.org](http://www.mdcafrica.org)

# Initiative launches mobile phone for peace games

By DIANA WANYONYI

Over four million youth in Kenya who are participating in the General Election exercise for the first time are expected to be at the forefront in preaching peace and voting wisely through the new mobile phone game dubbed *'Haki 2 Chaguo Ni Lako'*.

Launching the unique mobile game in Mombasa that brought together youth from five counties, Dr Jennifer Riria, chairperson of Tuvuke Initiative urged youth to shun behaviour that is detrimental to peace during this electioneering period.

"The game targets the youth telling them that they are Kenyans and citizen by birth and that they should avoid being misused by politicians during and after the coming elections," explained Riria. She added: "The game also teaches the youth leadership skills that will enable them to make wise decisions on what to do and who to vote for."

Riria challenged the youth to keep off "dirty politics" and focus their attention in building the image of the country by shunning violence or looting during the election.

"As Tuvuke Initiative, we bring together 17 non-governmental organisations that preach peace in the country. The game comes to reinforce the work that is being carried out by two of our partners at the Coast namely Muslims for Human Rights (MUHURI) and Ujamaa Centre," explained Riria.

She noted: "We are working for a better Kenya for all and that is why we all have to respect the Constitution. The youth should vote wisely as the choice is theirs."

Riria called upon the youth to be carefully over who they will vote in the reflection *chaguo lako ni haki yako*. "It is your right to choose good leaders and also do not forget to vote for women because they are our mothers and family," she advised.

According to Ann Githuku of AFROES, founder of the mobile game, the phone will enable young voters make informed choices as they will be able to reflect and think about the

country's future.

"There is a section in the game that says 'I am the leader'. So we are challenging young people to look at themselves, each as a leader who can decide and make choices that will have positive consequences and positive outcomes on Kenya's future," Githuku explained.

She appealed to young people across the country to play the game so as to have a chance of reflecting and deciding as the country moves towards the General Election.

The launch was applauded by participants among them Ushi Abdalla Mohammed who sees the mobile game project as an eye opener to many youth as the country heads to the polls.

"After participating in the game, I have learnt that clashes during electioneering period can cause more harm than good. This game has brought together youth from different places and we have been able to openly discuss personality characters in the game without being biased," said Mohammed. She added: "I have already downloaded the game in my mobile phone and I am committed to being an ambassador of peace through the mobile game."

Vice chairman Tuvuke Initiative Prof Kimani Njogu urged politicians to stop politicising land issues during campaigns saying it is politically emotive and sensitive to the unity and peace of the country.

He noted: "Land remains critical to the economic, cultural and social development of this country."



Youths playing the mobile game during the launch in Mombasa. Pictures: Diana Wanyonyi

Since the reintroduction of multiparty democracy in 1992 there has been land related conflicts. The 2007-2008 election brought about unprecedented violence attributed to the underlying political and land issues. This was the basis upon which land reforms became a critical component of Agenda Four item of the National Peace Accord.

However, Njogu challenged politi-

cians to work hand in hand with civil society organisations in pushing the Government to fully constitute the National Land Commission, which is constitutionally mandated to resolve land issues in the country.

"Issues of land have caused displacement, poverty and lack of equity in allocation causing a lot of disagreement between people but now we have courts that are led by Dr Willy

Mutunga who has streamlined the Judiciary," observed Njogu.

Tuvuke Initiative has, however, applauded milestones that have been made by the Kenyan citizenry on land management, such as adoption of Sessional Paper No. 3 of 2009 on National Land Policy, promulgation of the Constitution of Kenya 2010 with a distinct Chapter on Land and Environment.

Others are the enactment of land laws such as the Land Act 2012, Land Registration Act 2012, and National Land Commission Act 2012 and Land and Environment Court Act 2011.

As non-state actors, while appreciating the current discourse on land question as a fundamental election issue, Tuvuke has strongly urged all Kenyans and the political class in particular to respect the constitutional foundation and policy framework in place and to hold political leaders accountable over the land issues.

***"The game targets the youth telling them that they are Kenyans and citizen by birth and that they should avoid being misused by politicians during and after the coming elections."***

— Dr Jennifer Riria, Chairperson Tuvuke Initiative

## Youths join the country in rooting for peaceful elections

Continued from page 1

abled in one way or another.

However, today peace has been restored and life is back to normal as though nothing happened between the communities living in the area. Business is in top gear, people are living in harmony as exhibited by the sharing of market, among many other things. Conversations in the slum is about peace.

According to Pius Owino K'Otieno, one of the local youth leaders, the 2007 post-election violence was triggered by unresolved long term historical injustices in Kenya. He noted that the disputed presidential results by then electoral body now the defunct Electoral Commission of Kenya (ECK) triggered the skirmishes.

However, K'Otieno says the lessons learnt in that electioneering year should help the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (IEBC) to pre-empt any violence from occurring. He called on government and politicians not to interfere with the

Commission but let it work on its own without getting directions from external sources.

"We want IEBC not to behave like the defunct ECK that plunged this country into melancholy and bloodshed. People who had lived together for years rose against each other and property worth millions of shillings destroyed for differences between two individuals," recalled K'Otieno. He added: "We now need to preach peace and unite Kenyans ahead of polls."

For reconciliation and cohesion to prevail in this country, K'Otieno urges political aspirants especially the presidential candidates to focus on their parties' manifestos and address issues instead of dwelling hate messages.

He challenged the National Cohesion and Integration Commission (NCIC) to be bold and deal decisively with those accused and found guilty of hate speech.

John Otieno, chairman of Kibera Kamukunji Pressure Group (KKPG), says the slum was one of the worst hit by the post-election violence in Nai-

robi. But luckily, none of the structures were torched by residents.

"In retaliation, the defenceless residents turned their anger and energy on the railway lines which they up-rooted," said Otieno.

The Kibera Pressure Group is made up of Kibera residents with a common agenda to provide assistance to members of the community, regardless of the ethnic background, in case of emergency. It is also a forum to discuss community development matters as well

***"We want IEBC not to behave like the defunct ECK that plunged this country into melancholy and bloodshed."***

— Pius Owino K'Otieno,

as politics of the day. Putting pressure on political leaders to deliver on their promises to the electorate is their other function.

Otieno noted that the sprawling slum has changed and no longer holds the face of hooliganism.

"Kibera used to be a no-go zone in late 1980s to early 1990s because every person living in Kibera was assumed to be a suspect. So, most people avoided renting houses in Kibera simply because of being mistaken for being thugs by police," Otieno explained. He observed: "Today, things have changed and even university professors and professional doctors of high calibre reside here."

He gave credit to community policing and the Kilimani Division police officers who have worked together with the residents to flush out thugs.

"Though some element of thuggery still exists, their days are numbered," said Otieno.

Otieno is confident that peace initiatives in Kibera will bear fruits. Most of the peace programmes are being

conducted by civil society.

He said although peace already prevails, it important to reinforce this message among the residents. According to Ochieng Jerra, Kibera is in peace, shall remain in peace and will always be peaceful despite the impression it has been given. He regretted that wherever there is tension in the country, especially in Nairobi, the first place police officers think of is Kibera.

Jerra who is also the ODM chairman, Langata Constituency called upon the police to change the perception and view Kibera like any other peaceful estate in Nairobi.

"I am asking the police boss and his team to change their perception about Kibera and if there is problem, let them approach us as leaders first," Jerra advised. He said: "There are leaders in Langata who are approachable and dialogue is also important in quelling tension. Should the matter go beyond the local leaders then necessary reinforcement will be invited through proper channels."

# Kaya elders endorse women's political leadership

By ANTHONY ZOKA

Cases of early marriages among school girls in Kilifi County and the Coast region in general are not new to the public with poverty being blamed for all the evil done to girl-child.

Numerous campaigns that have taken place asking the communities in the area to shun cultural practices that undermine the girl-child seem to be bearing fruit as gradually things are turning to the right direction.

The Constitution of Kenya 2010 has in a way opened a new chapter in this part of the country as women now have something to shield them from old and undesirable cultural practices.

For the first time in many years, women have presented themselves for leadership positions in all sectors, politics included despite it being considered as a dirty game.

The custodian of Mijikenda culture seems to be spearheading campaign to have equal treatment of boys and girls.

Kaya elders in Rabai said there is no harm in getting women in political leadership and any other leadership position in all aspects of lives to motivate more girls to work hard in schools.

Speaking on behalf of Rabai Kaya elders, Mzee Mkoba Gwashe, stressed on the need to consider all children as equal regardless of their gender.

In the new county dispensation, Kilifi County has attracted two women contesting with 12 men for the senate seat. Naomi Cidi Kumbatha is vying on Shirikisho Party of Kenya and Patience Mkambe Chome of Kadu Asili.

In the old days, women could not be allowed to vie for any leadership position in most African communities but the Kaya elders insist on changing the trend by prioritising women leadership.

"Of late we have seen women displaying leadership skills in various positions; most significant at the lowest level is in their own women's groups which are doing well compared to groups involving men. This is an indication that women can lead and it is in this regard that we are welcoming the initiative by these women to vie for senate seat. Their success is ours," noted Mzee Gwashe. He added: "Otherwise, why should we educate them if they cannot be given such opportunities?"

However, despite this 'permission' by the Kaya Elders, there are still fears among many women that politics is a dirty game.

Naomi Cidi admitted that despite the negative perception on women seeming to have changed, lack of adequate funds and other resources hinder many women from seeking political leadership because the campaigns involve a lot of travelling and holding of meetings with the electorate even at night.

"Initially I had intended to vie as an independent candidate but went to what people consider as small party which according to me will be a tool to salvage coastal community from our problems," Cidi said.

She is confident that soon women will be holding more leadership positions in this country as they have proved their capacity to lead.

The issue of security among women aspirants is also an issue of concern that needs to be addressed as they cannot campaign during night hours as men would do.

"For me, Kilifi County is large and I have about seven constituencies in which to meet electorate, one day I got home at around 11pm and said it will never happen again. Despite having male drivers and a few cars accompanying me from my friends carrying both men and women I still feel insecure campaigning and travelling at night," says Cidi.

She stresses on the need to have laws that are beneficial to women, adding that the 10<sup>th</sup> parliament was cruel, tactless and immature as far as leadership is concerned since they altered the bill on gender.

"I believe the electorate has changed and



Kaya elders during a past function. They have acknowledged the importance of having women in political leadership. Picture: Reject Correspondent

there will be very major lapses as witnessed, people are voting in people not parties. Parties are insensitive to women and issues as seen in the coalitions we have only Ngilu who has been squeezed into one of the alliances. This is coming to an end," said Cidi. She has promised to spearhead the making of laws that will help solve problems affecting women and social lives of girls at the grassroots level.

Despite the security problem and lack of funds, according to Patience Mkambe said women aspirants undergo microscopic scrutiny by the public, something that does not happen men.

According to Mkambe, women are made to clear the wave whether they are married and living with their husband and explain why if they are divorced.

"This is a major challenge that we have to face but I believe it is all systems go for women leaders. This is despite the fact that some of the women are called names just to intimidate them especially where a man is funding a woman aspirant," noted Mkambe.

She lamented that the society is yet to admit that women can work with men without having



**"We know many of our customs have been responsible for the position and economic status of not only Kilifi but the whole of Coast region but time has come for us to face the problem head on. Over the years, we have had our male colleagues in these positions but nothing seems to change,"**

— Patience Mkambe Chome

an affair of any kind, hence negatively impacting on their campaigns when male support is sought.

Mkambe, who is a management consultant, said women aspirants are forced to elaborate the source of their campaign funds so as to prove to the public that such funds are not from any other man apart from her legal husband.

She says it is time for people with the interest of the locals to focus on changing the lives of many through sitting on the possible position rather than leaders who only think of personal gains.

"We know many of our customs have been responsible for the position and economic status of not only Kilifi but the whole of Coast region but time has come for us to face the problem head on. Over the years, we have had our male colleagues in these positions but nothing seems to change," observed Mkambe.

She vowed to change the perception of women in terms of leadership in the African traditions and is now ready to battle it in KADU Asili party.

According to Mkambe, there is a solution to all the problems facing human beings under the earth, only that those in leadership positions fail to think beyond coming up with the appropriate way out.

Mkambe warned men against discouraging women from taking up leadership positions saying that they should be given chance to unleash their potential and give them the chance to weigh the difference.

"I believe in what I know will be the solution to our problems as Kilifi residents. Our people are looking for someone with the integrity who will be held accountable to their suffering not the cash for vote," Mkambe said. She added: "We are looking for a solution to improve the economic being, food security and equal rights of all people in the county."

However, the idea of viewing women's responsibility in the community as increasing the population is now past as many prefer to get them in leadership position.

"Gone are the days when a woman's role was modelled and looked at as just bearing children. Things have changed and both boys and girls are entitled to equal rights. We need to be responsible by ensuring that our girls excel in all aspect of lives," said Kittu Gwengwele, KNUT secretary general, Kilifi County.

He called on the need to vote in women and leaders who have an interest of having the young generation excel in education and life at large.

## Women candidates blamed for poor media coverage

By WAIKWA MAINA

As campaigns draw to an end, women candidates have it on record that the media gave them a raw deal.

Some of the reasons given for the poor coverage is that most of them were ignorant on how to handle and deal with the media. Others were said to have a negative attitude towards the media.

With the exception were Narc-Kenya presidential candidate Martha Karua; Narc's Kitui Senate candidate Charity Ngilu, ODM's Bishop Margaret Wanjiru and TNA's Othaya parliamentary candidate Mary Wambui most women who are aspiring for the various political positions hardly featured in the media.

While their male rivals used the media effectively by issuing statements and/or calling for press conferences, most women tended to shy away and requested for more time to prepare for the interviews.

Most of the affected are women plunged into the murky waters of elective politics for the first time and were forced to open up their lives to the public for scrutiny.

"Some women candidates asked for up to two weeks to prepare for an interview, they were not aware of the fact that most times, the journalist requires that information to meet a set deadline," noted Jane Mugambi, a journalist from Kirinyaga County complained. She added: "When we try to explain to them the urgency of news they switch off their phones and never answer our calls again."

According to Mugambi, this is the opposite of men who walk into newsrooms uninvited, even after attending a rally or other businesses. During a media forum organised by the Africa Women and Child Feature Services under the Tuvuke Initiative for free, fair and peaceful elections in Nyeri. The meeting was attended by journalists from Nyeri and Kirinyaga counties who complained that women were uncooperative and this forced reporters to prefer dealing with male candidates.

### Challenges

They complained that most women candidates were media shy and did not respond to telephone calls.

The other challenge is that most of the candidates did not have public relations officers while others hired arrogant PR officers who were not conversant with media operations.

Some of the participants lamented that the candidates ignored the media and opted to first clear with their supporters and deal with journalists.

"If they are not cooperative, why should I waste my time begging for a story from them while we have many other news sources? posed Eutyca Muchiri, editor of the County Voice Newspaper. He added: "We just ignore and blacklist such women."

Muchiri noted that it costs time and money to trace and attend their functions even in the rural areas and sometimes without facilitation from media houses.

"They are ignorant of our working conditions. No reporter can wait for a candidate to finish with her supporters so that he or she can get the story late at night yet they rely on public transport to get home or go back to the newsroom."

However, the journalists admitted that commercial journalism and quacks were also a major challenge and this affected their relationship with women candidates.

Those quacks have given the media a bad image and the candidates are convinced that they must compromise the media in order to get a positive coverage.

According to Muchiri, no journalist will refuse to do a good story or kill it just because they were not given a brown envelope.

"They should give us the information, a good story and then wait and see if the story will be killed just because they refused to give the brown envelop. This will in fact be to their advantage as they will be able to identify commercial journalists," explained Muchiri.

However, the final decision on whether the story will be published or aired on radio or TV rests on the editor who has a right to use his discretion professionally.

# Nothing short of a win as Serah Waithira Kahiu scales the ladder of politics

By JAYNE ROSE GACHERI

For Serah Waithira Kahiu, nothing will stop her from her ambition to be the first Senator for Kiambu County.

Waithira's dream has always been for the day when she will have the opportunity to participate in governing Kiambu county and is ready to serve the area residents.

At 31, Waithira is confident saying: "I have what it takes to be not only a grassroots politician and a national one too."

An alumni of Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology (JKUAT), Waithira graduated with a Master of Science in Biotechnology.

At 31, Waithira believes that youth are not a barrier to leadership. She believes that time is now ripe for the youth of this nation to be drawn into leadership and governance of the country.

Waithira says there is a difference between knowing the path and walking the path, which is why she has invested her time in analysing the needs of the residents of Kiambu.

She says her vision is to translate the county's wealth into sustainable community development projects for personal, county and national gains.

## Why Senator

"You may have a fresh start any moment you choose, for this thing we call failure is not falling down but staying down," says Waithira, who is vying on a Party of Independent Candidates of

Kenya (PICK) is inspired by her motto that "If not now, when? If it is not us (youthful women leaders), then who else?"

She notes: "I am convinced the *job description* of a Senator is one that I can handle perfectly."

## Her experience

Waithira sailed through the primary nominations for the Kiambu County senatorial position after she took a break from education in 2010 to pursue politics.

During her stint at both the University of Nairobi and JKUAT, Waithira's leadership development grew tremendously through exposure and self-motivation.

At 24, Waithira was board secretary for Youth Agency for Development Science Technology and Innovation (YADSTI), a science youth non-governmental organisation.

While serving there she learnt that science and technology are key to attaining Vision 2030.

"I will harness this to ensure that

*"For 50 years, our brothers have led our great nation. It is time to see what change a sister can bring. It is time for women to contribute on equal if not more share to the leadership of their country."*

— Serah Waithira Kahiu,

Kiambu retains its economic relevance as well as take the wealth to the depths of villages," she says. In 2007, she served as a volunteer project manager at the Thika-based Integrated Community Empowerment Community, a community based organisation, and two self-help groups, namely Community de Talents and G-Three. Working at the village level helped her understand issues in the depths of the villages. She also learnt that political influence determined who sleeps hungry.

While working for the Aberdares Water Limited Company in 2006-2007, she rose through the ranks from a laboratory technician to the operations manager within six months.

In 2009-2012 she worked as a part time lecturer at the Kenya School of Adventure and Leadership (KESAL), teaching leadership and experiential learning while training the Kenya Army and members of the disciplined forces on survival tactics in the jungles of Mt Kenya. She also taught them how to achieve "peak performance" by scaling



Lenana point (the highest peak of Mt Kenya).

Waithira has held various leadership positions in Rotary Clubs at University of Nairobi and JKUAT. The clubs mainly focus on volunteer community service. She says these have taught her that the best and most sustainable leadership is through service. This is the kind of service she is offering Kiambu County through the senatorial position.

## Priorities

Top on the list of priorities on her development plan for Kiambu include cottage and manufacturing industries, modern high-value agriculture, relevant skill-based training, health (pharmaceutical production) and culture of dignity among others.

She would want to see peaceful co-existence among the various residents of her county. Kiambu suffered the effects of the 2007-2008 post-election violence and she believes this should not happen again.

"It is not enough to talk about peace. One must believe in it but it is not enough to believe in it one must work at it," says Waithira.

"For 50 years, our brothers have led our great nation. It is time to see what change a sister can bring. It is time for women to contribute on equal if not more share to the leadership of their country," observes Waithira. She notes: "Women must rise up to the occasion and know that one does not deserve the right to lead if you will walk away from your God-given assignment because of negative critics."

# Prof Margaret Kamar ruffles feathers for the Uasin Gishu governor position

By RAY LIMO

Born and brought up in poverty and hardship in Keiyo District, Prof Margaret Kamar defied all odds to become an accomplished academician and politician to reckon with.

Although Kamar went into teaching after her post-graduate, education, she later quit and plunged into politics. In 2001 she was nominated to the East African Legislative Assembly and served until 2006. After her term she quit to vie for the Eldoret East Constituency seat and was elected in 2007 on an Orange Democratic Movement (ODM) ticket.

Kamar attended Moi Girls' High Eldoret for her 'A' levels and Kapkenda Girls' Secondary School in Elgeyo Marakwet for her 'O' levels.

After her Masters in Agriculture from McGill University in 1986, she joined Moi University as a tutorial fellow, and from 1989 to 1999, rose up the ranks of assistant lecturer, lecturer and senior lecturer. She earned her Doctorate in Soil and Water Conservation from the University of Toronto in 1992.

## Career

Her teaching career has been entirely in Moi University, Eldoret.

Politics aside, Kamar is an achiever too in the area of academia, in her chosen field of soil science. In December 1999, Kamar was appointed associate professor of soil science. From 1997 to 2002, Kamar was the principal of Moi University's Chepkoiel Campus after which she was ap-

pointed the university's Deputy Vice Chancellor in charge of Research and Extension, a position she held between 2002 to 2006.

Having weathered the world of politics and represented Eldoret East Constituency since 2007, Kamar now seeks to ruffle feathers with her male counterparts in this year's polls. She seeks to become the first governor of Uasin Gishu County, which literally controls the politics and economy of the North Rift region.

Although Kamar's opponents say she rode on the ODM wave to become an MP, the legislator says she has what it takes to become the governor of Uasin Gishu.

She has called on her challengers to prepare for a bruising battle even as she expressed confidence she would beat them by landslide.

To show her determination and resilience, she refused to join United Republican Party (URP), which is the popular party in the region and instead chose to remain in ODM.

Many opine that she knows how to make calculative moves especially when it comes to political decisions and many things that bothers the people.

Unlike her educated politicians, her humility nonetheless overshadows the academic giant that she is.

Kamar who is also the Minister for Higher Education is considered among those who have maintained sober political values with education remaining her top priority.

Though she admits that a deeply chauvinistic society and lack of adequate facilities has locked

many women from elective offices, Kamar believes she could demystify the notion.

She says that politics must not be a preserve of men especially at the time when the country is going through difficult times.

Kamar reiterates that Kenyans should look with envy countries like Rwanda where more than half of legislators are women, more than anywhere in the world.

In Rwanda women have pushed through reforms granting them equal inheritance, property and citizenship rights.

The lack of women in Kenyan politics, Kamar explains, means that women's and children's rights rarely get a proper hearing in the rowdy parliamentary chamber.

Kamar notes that the desire for power and money as well as political office tends to bring into Kenya violent attacks and threats of violence against women.

## Brave

However, the minister says she has stood her ground and would never at time allow such dirty games to cow her from pursuing her dreams and ambitions.

Indeed, Kamar is among the few who will battle it out against men for the governor's seat in



coming elections.

She expressed concern that many women have focused their attention to the women's representative seat yet they have the energy and zeal to compete with their male counterparts.

Kamar is determined to shatter the common belief that Kenya is not ready for a female governor come March 4.

She says that sidelining women from politics when they make up more than half of Kenya's 40 million population is not an option.

The minister says she is focusing on empowering the people through education and securing employment opportunities.

Given that Uasin Gishu is the country's grain basket, Kamar says she would give attention on improving the agricultural productivity.

# Penina Malonza banks on gender balance to clinch gubernatorial position

By NZINGA MUASYA

When county governments are formed after the March 4 General Election, Kitui County might have a woman at the top echelons of the county's leadership.

Penina Malonza, 39, has been nominated running mate to governor candidate Dr Julius Malombe who is gunning for the county top seat on a Wiper Party ticket.

If their joint ticket carries the day, Malonza will be one of the few female deputy governors elected in the country as most candidates as most men have picked fellow men as deputies.

The position of a county deputy governor is key in running the affairs of the county and the person elected to such a position, alongside the governor as stipulated in Article 180 of the Constitution will wield executive powers.

Other candidates for Kitui county governor's seat are Nzamba Kitonga and Kiema Kilongo both of whom have nominated fellow men as their deputies.

Majority of male candidates for the seat operate on the premise that women have been given their slot under the women representative seat.

However, according to Malonza this line of thinking is flawed. She says apart from the reserved women representative seat, women should be adequately represented in other competitive positions.

She notes that Malombe's decision to choose her as his deputy was a game changer since it will woo the women electorate who are majority voters to their camp.

## Balance

It is also a sound decision for regional balancing since Malombe comes from Kitui Central while Ms Malonza comes from Kitui South. She says this arithmetic will play to their advantage.

"Malombe chose me as his running mate because he has faith in the work I have done for the community for years. I am prepared to go all the way and deliver the women votes in our camp," says Malonza.

She says their leadership will be people driven where they will seek to eradicate poverty and hunger as well as improve education standards in the region.

Malonza was born at Uae Village, Mutomo District in Kitui South where as a young girl she bore the brunt of the rigours



**"Our candidature does not have political baggage. Our main interest is to serve the people of Kitui and improve their welfare."**

— Penina Malonza,

of harsh weather and terrain.

She attended Ikutha Girls' Secondary School until 1992 after which she joined the University of Nairobi for a degree in community development. After leaving the university in 1998, she worked with several organisations before going back to the same university where she graduated with a Master's degree in Project Management and Public Health in 2009.

Until recently she was the training and support manager at Compassion International, an international non-governmental organisation with several projects in the county geared towards alleviating the suffering of poor and orphaned children through education and other programmes.

Her outstanding work with the community gives her a good entry point to seek votes from the community. Like Malombe,

she is making a debut in politics and the two are being touted as the front runners for the seat. She was named running mate in the wake of party nominations where Malombe floored his closest competitor for Wiper ticket with more than 30,000 votes difference.

Malonza says their ticket offers the best chance to turn the fortunes of the county where job opportunities will be created for all.

"Our candidature does not have political baggage. Our main interest is to serve the people of Kitui and improve their welfare," she says.

## Campaign

The deputy governor to be is not waiting to be handed the seat on a silver platter. She has rolled her sleeves and hit the ground running to seek for votes, especially in the vote rich Kitui South where she comes from. Malonza's appeal to the locals has been to support Malombe for governor.

"He is the only man who values women input in leadership. That is why I have come to beseech you to give him and myself your vote so that we can serve you. Here is a man who knows that what a man can do, a woman can do it too," she told a rally in one of her campaigns.

Malonza cherishes virtues of honesty and transparency adding that fear of God is key to excellent service to the people.

"I am a born again Christian and I request the people to trust me in whatever I say and do. Genuine and honest leadership is what I promise the people of Kitui County. Under our leadership, women will feel adequately represented in the top county leadership," she notes. Malonza adds that her experience dealing with marginalized groups puts her in a good position to undertake duties as deputy governor efficiently.

She notes that Kitui County has immense natural resources such as limestone and coal deposits as well as game reserves and a national park, which if fully exploited will set Kitui County as an economic giant in the region.

"All that the people of Kitui County need to do is to vote for our joint candidature. We are bringing on the table new ideas for prudent management of the county resources. The seat of governor and his deputy cannot be gambled with," she reiterates.

# Mary Angima breaks cultural barriers the political seat

By MUSA MARANGA

Many women aspirants in Gusii region have joined the political arena after promulgation of the new constitution. Until recently leadership was presumed to be for men only.

One of the women who has plunged into political leadership is Mary Angima. She ventured into politics after serving as the treasurer in Constituency Development Funds (CDF) committee in Nyaribari Chache constituency.

Angima cites that her development record that helped her to win Kegati civic seat in 2007.

Under her leadership she managed to initiate many remarkable projects in the ward in Kisii County.

Angima boasts of tangible projects such as the water one that has been witnessed as the major challenge for women.

Wells was the first project she established at the sub-location levels of Kayati, Nyosia, Kabwori 2, Riadandi, Rianyamaiyo, Enchoro and Nyachenge. The projects have lessened the time wasted by women in searching for water.

## Projects

She has initiated many other projects that include schools and village polytechnics which were her first priority.

A major challenge to the residents of her ward was unemployment but these projects have empowered and they no longer depend on hand outs. "Cases of gender based violence have also dropped drastically," says Angima.

Born 61 years ago in Bogetutu Chache at Nyangoko, Kitutu Chache South Constituency, Angima joined Nyanchwa Primary School and later Nyanchwa Government School. On completion she joined Gusii Institute of Technology where she pursued certificate course in Public Relations and then certificate course in Human Resource from Jomo Kenyatta University.

Two kilometres from Kegati Ward, Keumbu market which is busy on a 24hr economy Kisii-Keroka-Nairobi highway. Most women have are now bread winners in their families due to the support that she has given them.

Getting the nomination certificate was not easy because of the culture aspects among the Gusii who believe that women were meant to operate behind men.

Angima says during the campaign period and on nominations' day men from different parties ganged up against her and the battle was not an easy one.

However, she managed to beat Lazarus Mayaka on the nomination day. She will now face 8 men for Bobaracho ward.



# Women and youth are semi-prepared for elections

By ELIZABETH AWUOR

In as much as electing the right representatives is the secret to getting a number of problems solved, it is also disturbing that many voters have not had enough civic education less than a week to the general elections.

Women and youth are worse off with most of them having no idea of who the contestants for the various positions are apart from not being sure of what the elective positions are.

Even as the party nominations take place, a good number of registered voters in Mombasa lay blame on Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (IEBC) for not carrying out civic education early enough.

Others claim they are too pre-occupied with their daily activities that they may not have sufficient time for civic education.

Candidates for various elective positions in Mombasa are worried that if proper civic education is not carried out within the remaining time, then

people are likely to vote in wrong leaders.

The Coast region chairperson for Maendeleo Ya Wanawake Organization Sureya Hersi says she has to explain to people the position she is contesting for and teach them about the other five.

## Procedure

"I have gone round Mombasa county and realised that even the educated working class group of voters do not understand how the county government will be formulated," she adds.

Hersi who is vying for the women representative seat in Mombasa County under Republican Council party is concerned that women and youth in the rural areas might not have the chance to clearly understand how to vote come March 4.

She says every citizen who wishes to see a better Kenya should embark on civic education regardless of his or her political affiliations.

According to her own assessment, Hersi believes Radio can be an effective tool in carrying out voter sensitisation at the Coast.

A university student Antoinette Mwitta only knows that she is supposed to vote for a president, governor, senator and women representative. She is yet to understand the other two positions of a county ward representative and that of a member of parliament.

She believes it is the mandate of IEBC to effectively carry out voter education.

Antoinette is worried that the remaining time will not be enough for the commission to reach all the voters who are still in the dark regarding elections. She is also against the reliance on media as the only channel of carrying out the education process.

"IEBC should just go and meet the people instead of using the media only. We might assume the media reaches everyone but in most cases the education in media does not allow

for question and answer sessions," she claims.

The Mombasa head of Caucus for Women's leadership Amina Zuberi is concerned that women form the highest number of voters in Mombasa but they are likely to make mistakes come elections day.

## Credibility

She cites the party nominations saying that women turned up in large numbers to vote but were not conversant with the political positions on the ballot papers.

"We had a difficult time explaining these positions including the women representative one," she says.

Zuberi claims most women in Mombasa do not understand how important it is to elect credible people to serve in the county government.

"If those in the urban areas are not sure of how the county governments will run, then those in the rural areas are in the dark," she adds.

She shares similar sentiments with

other women leaders at the Coast, that there is need for vigorous voter education and is calling on organisations with that capability to carry out the process.

A college trainer Abraham Mabachi says his preparedness for elections under the new constitution is as a result of his own efforts to know.

He is aware of the representatives he is supposed to vote for and understands how the county governments will work.

Mabachi is worried that women and youths who do not have access to the media especially the newspaper may never know issues surrounding elections and are likely to blunder come voting day.

He jokes that he knows of voters who think the president and gubernatorial positions are the most important.

Under the new constitution, voter will be expected to elect the president, governor, senator, Member of Parliament county representative and women representative.

# Jane Kihara seeks to lead the way for Nakuru through a Senatorial position

She is one of the most aggressive women political leaders. While many presume that Jane Kihara got into Naivasha politics as a token by the Naivasha community towards her late husband, in an interview with Jayne Rose Gacheri, the former Naivasha legislature puts those misconceptions to rest. Here are the excerpts from the interview.

**QUESTION: How did you get into politics?**

**ANSWER:** I had been working in the private sector before my election as the Member of Parliament for Naivasha. The last company I was working with was Orbit Chemicals which I left after my election.

**Q: Is there an actual incident that created an in-road for you?**

**A:** My husband was sick. He was unwell for the whole of 2002 so I was the one who used to go to the ground to campaign for him and I delivered the seat. When he died, my constituents requested that I offer myself for the seat. It was a challenge for me, but I took it up and was not surprised when I won.

**Q: Would you say you were ready for leadership then?**

**A:** Women are always ready for leadership. It is only that they never have the confidence. Even now if you ask Naivasha people, they will tell you that I am as a good leader as my husband was, if not better.

However, leadership is God given. When you look at a child, you can al-

ways tell one who is taking leadership roles. Most of my siblings, for instance, rode on my back to become what they are today. In addition, even after my election, I made sure I worked with all councillors whether they elected me or not. Therefore, I am a team player.

**Q: Would you consider your late husband as having influenced you into joining politics?**

**A:** I could say yes and no. Initially I was very upset when he joined politics. I had a young family and you know how politics is very involving. I was working in Nairobi and I did not want to come to Naivasha because I could not stand the crowds that visited all the time. I tried to convince him not to join politics to no avail. Of course, you know he was my husband I could not turn against him.

**Q: In 2007, the voters of Naivasha denied you the chance to lead them in the 10th Parliament. What is your reaction?**

**A:** First Naivasha people did not deny me the vote. Naivasha people voted for me overwhelmingly. Just like there was rigging almost nationally, my election was rigged. I filed a petition here in Nakuru. We went through the petition, all the witnesses gave evidence, and we were to give our submissions. There were no results in Naivasha because the results have not tallied even to this day. The fact is, I did not have results, and neither did my opponent. He was not able to say how he had won.

**Q: You are going for a higher seat, the Senate that is a big seat; you have to do campaigns in all the 11 constituencies in the county. What inspires you?**

**A:** There is a position called the Senate, created by the Kenya Constitution, 2010 that I campaigned for rigorously, without necessarily knowing that this is where I would want to be. Again, I should take up the challenge. Do not forget before we used to belong to the larger Nakuru District. Just the county as it is. It is big. However, it is big for all of us. So in essence I know this county, I should take up the challenge. I come from up there in Kinungi but I shall serve Olgururuone and other areas. In addition, I consider myself qualified for this position. We need women in leadership.

**Q: Do you feel Nakuru is ready for a woman Senator?**

**A:** I do not know what that question is aiming at because I have been there as a woman leader even though in Naivasha. Naivasha constitutes a good chunk of women's aspirants and I am sure they are able to influence the others to look at women's leadership as the best that there is.

**Q: So what is your vision for the people of Nakuru as a Senator?**

**A:** One we have to improve our livelihoods and we have to work against poverty. Jane only leads. When you want to reach leadership, ask me to show the way, because you know what you want. Peace is important.



We need to build peaceful coexistence among the people of Nakuru.

For me no matter what the politics in Nakuru is all about, peace is vital. Again, inclusivity is very important. Leadership is about caring enough for your community to want them to climb this ladder with you.

**Q: Would you say we learnt a lesson like Rwanda following the post-election violence?**

**A:** We cannot say we learnt a lesson because so many things were not resolved. If we had learnt a lesson, we would not have seen Tana Delta going the way it is going. In addition, there is too much hypocrisy in the leadership when someone stands on a podium, takes a microphone, and says we want peaceful elections. What are you doing about it, other than just talking about it? Why did we fight? Did we fight because someone did not become the President or because someone felt we needed to chase some people from this place? These are the issues.

**Q: What makes you feel that you are going to make it, why are you telling the electorate in Naivasha you are the best?**

**A:** I am saying I have the experience and I have proven that I can lead. I have been there before. The problems ailing leadership in this country will find a solution only through the election of a credible leadership team. I am a team player and I will have a team to work with.

**Q: Let us finish with this, what are the challenges you are going through in this campaign?**

**A:** The biggest challenge is security. The chaos like was witnessed in Kiambu has also been witnessed by women in Nakuru. Women do not even have the capacity to mobilise people to cause chaos. So I am planning to mobilise women to go and meet the Provincial Police Office) and demand for security. Women also do not have the financial muscle like men. We need to come together and see how we can overcome these challenges.

**Q: What is your parting shot?**

**A:** We need to change this country for the better. Everyone needs to be involved. You do your job and I will do my job. I am confident that I can do the job of a Senator in Nakuru.

## Profile for Sophy Wali Kibai

By RENSON MNYAMWEZI

Although she is one of the youngest gubernatorial candidates in Taita Taveta, Sophy Wali Kibai is a force to reckon with.

She believes she has the ability to lead the County to greater heights of development if elected as the first governor of the region.

"My age should not be a factor at the moment. Voters should look at my leadership qualities and I have what it takes to be a governor," says 38-year-old Kibai.

She promises to supply water from the Mzima Springs to transform the lives of the poverty-stricken residents of the County who had been impoverished for years for lack of proper representation.

She says the region needs generational change and is the only one ready to address challenges facing the community like the thorny squatter menace, high rate of unemployment among the youth and inadequate health care in the region.

Noting that the region is the bread basket of the Coast Province, Kibai

says she will improve rural access roads to enable farmer's access markets for their farm produce.

Further, she promises to ensure that budget of the County is shared equitably. The Ford Kenya candidate says she will create income generating activities to supplement the KSh2.34 billion budget to be allocated by the government to the County.

"I have previously managed KSh14 billion in my former employment adding that it will be easy for me to manage KSh2.34 billion to be allocated to the County annually," observes Kibai.

"I will work with the County Assembly to make policies which will benefit the local community. The policies should align with the new constitution," she notes.

Kibai would like to focus more on the provision of quality service to the community once elected.

"I will prioritise education, health, agriculture, water and the rehabilitation of poor roads infrastructure as key pillars to economic development," says Kibai. She adds: "I will also focus more on youth and women empowerment and improvement of food security."

Kibai pledges to ensure that devel-

opment, stability and prosperity are achieved through performance contracting with the locals.

Kibai will face it off with John Muttu Mrutu (ODM), Elijah Mwandoe (SDP), Ambassador Mwanengela Ngali (Narc-Kenya), former Central Bank of Kenya Jacinta Mwatela (Wiper Democratic) and former District Commissioner Wisdom Mwamburi of URP.

### Squatters

The region that hosts thousands of squatters and at the same time hit by persistent human wildlife conflict taking into account that 65 per cent is occupied by Tsavo National Park, 24 per cent by private farms and the local community only occupies a paltry 11 per cent.

It is one of the poorest Counties in the Country despite vast natural resources like wildlife, water and minerals. According to the community initiated Strategic Plan, out of 284,000 total populations in the region, 187,440 are living below the poverty.

"We need to generate enough money to supplement the government's limited revenue. My County

government will make by-laws that will enable the County to collect money from the vast commercial farms like the sisal estates, potential mining fields to improve the revenue base," says Kibai.

The government must make sure that sisal estates plough back their proceeds for rural development to help fight poverty.

"My priorities will be driven by the needs and aspirations of the people. I must make sure that I fully involve the local community and professionals to develop solutions," she observes.

Kibai does business in Mombasa. Born in 1975, she holds Master of Science Procurement and Logistics and Bachelor of Purchasing and Supplies Management, Diploma Purchasing in Supplies Management all from JKUAT.

Kibai has thrown herself into the gubernatorial seat with a vision for de-



velopment, stability and prosperity.

She says the issue of handouts remains a major challenge to women candidates since women do not have enough money to dish out to the voters.

"The culture of handouts that has been entrenched in our society by unpopular candidates should end. Everywhere you go people demand money," she notes.

# Education forms top priority for Susan Katusya's agenda

By BONIFACE MULU

For Susan Mwendu Katusya, politics is in her blood and she believes that she has what it takes to be a ward representative in Kitui County.

The 56-year-old educationist has been a community mobiliser in the far flung County for the past decade after calling it quits as a civil servant.

Katusya worked as a civil servant from 1992 serving in different capacities. Her last position was in the Electoral Commission of Kenya where she served as a returning and presiding officer in Kitui and Nairobi respectively.

Indeed, she has also worked as a presiding officer in the Kitui Central constituency during the 1992 general elections and in 1997 in Mutito Constituency.

She worked as a presiding officer in Dagoretti Constituency, Nairobi, during the 2002 general elections and worked as an assistant returning officer in Kitui Central constituency in 2007 and as a census exercise supervisor in Kitui District in 1999 and 2009.

Katusya was among the first wom-



en in Kitui to declare interest in the women's representative's seat. However, she later realised that she would be better serving in a smaller area and switched to the County representative position after sailing through the chaotic party nominations which swept

away her rivals.

The retired teacher's decision to abandon the Country women's representative post for the Country representative was informed by the changes in the political arena including the formation of coalitions; the Supreme Court ruling to the effect that the two third gender principle will not apply in the General Elections; and the emergence of political heavyweights like Water minister, Charity Ngilu and Nyiva Mwendwa.

## Agenda

"My aim of becoming a leader is to ensure that there is no orphan who will be denied education because his or her guardian cannot afford school fees," she says.

Katusya hopes to achieve this through bursaries and fund-raisers. She is also prepared to help women and youths overcome poverty among other problems. Katusya's development agenda includes wooing investors to set up factories in the County to absorb the army of jobless youth and women so that they can have a source of livelihood.

"The factories I have in mind include bakeries, bar soap production and maize milling among others," she explains.

She is appealing to voters to elect corruption-free leaders like her during the General Elections.

Katusya is an educationist who has had a humble beginning having started her schooling at Yumbisye Primary School in Kitui District where she sat for her Certificate of Primary Education (CPE) national examination.

From there she joined the Machakos Girls' High School for secondary education and then passed and proceeded to New Era High School in Mombasa District for her A-Levels.

She is an alumni of Meru Teachers' Training College where she graduated with P1 certificate.

After graduation, she was posted by the Teachers' Service Commission, on behalf of the Government to several primary and secondary schools in Kitui District.

Among the schools where she taught at are her old school, Yumbisye Primary, Nzambani Boys, Sombe Girls and Yumbisye Mixed Girls' Sec-

ondary.

"I studied special education at the Kenya Institute of Special Education where I graduated with a diploma. I have a degree and a Masters in educational psychology from the University of Nairobi and Kenyatta University respectively."

## Volunteer

She also does counselling and testing for HIV at her stand-alone clinic in Kitui town.

Katusya retired voluntarily from the civil service in December 2011 to vie for the Kitui County Women Representative seat but she later decided to vie for the Nzambani Ward's county representative seat in the Kitui East (Mutito) Constituency after having campaigned so much for the County Women Representative seat.

She worked as a Teachers' Advisory Centre (TAC) tutor-cum-AEO in Nzambani, Katulani and Kisasi Districts within the Kitui County.

"While working in Kisasi District, I organised funds for orphans and established an orphans' foundation where about 40 pupils have so far benefited," she says.

# Dr Christine Ombaka seeks to promote gender equality in all sectors of Siaya

By OMONDI GWENGI

When she was the Principal at Sin-yolo Girls' High School in Nyanza, she saw a lot of girls dropping out of school because they could not afford school fees. She witnessed how hard parents were struggling to raise funds to provide basic needs to their families.

This is how Dr Christine Ombaka realised that there is a huge gap between the rich and the poor in Siaya County.

"I realised that there was a huge gap created by poverty. This was affecting all aspects of life and there was need to midwife a change that will see the people of Siaya getting some of the values needed in all aspects," says Ombaka.

These are the reasons why she decided to throw herself into the political field hoping that from there she would be able to bring change. Ombaka is vying for the Women's Representative position on an Orange Democratic Movement (ODM) party ticket. She brings into politics a huge package of experience and has the skills in gender issues that will enable her offer better leadership in Siaya.

## Experience

Ombaka has a vast experience in transformative leadership at the community, national and international levels and has advocated for the advancement of women and youth for a long time through training, capacity building and advocacy.

Ombaka, has focused her cam-

paigns on three issues that she believes are really affecting the socio-economic growth of Siaya.

"It is a right of every citizen of this country to have access to quality education. This has not been realised because there are still some families who see education as a luxury they cannot afford," notes Ombaka.

In order to provide education for all, Ombaka says, it would be important to make available funds to needy children from the beginning until the end of their schooling.

"Most funds like bursaries are sometimes given to the needy children for only one term in school and thereafter they end up being abandoned. This kind of child will automatically drop out of school," she observes.

In terms of facilities, Ombaka says that Siaya is still lagging behind but nobody has ever bothered to save the situation. She adds that most of the schools lack books and classrooms as well as teachers.

According to Ombaka the state of health in Siaya is wanting. She regrets that Siaya is still experiencing high child mortality rate yet it is something that can be controlled not to mention maternal deaths that are equally worrying.

"There is need to have accessibility to healthcare for all citizens living in this country," she notes.

Ombaka says time has come to make sure that there is wealth in the hands of the people in order to end the poverty that has really affected the people of her county.

"It is because of poverty that we

are witnessing the electorate viewing political campaigns as money-making venture," Ombaka notes.

She observes: "Campaign has become a money-making venture for the electorate. It appears that people are being paid to listen and because women have no money, they tend to back off politics."

When she was resigning from her job as Director of the Institute for Gender Studies at Maseno University where she taught and carried several researches on gender issues, exploring the critical issues of life, Ombaka says that many people suggested that she continue with teaching instead of plunging into the murky waters of politics.

## Reception

"Even though some people thought that I should have continued with teaching, they were later convinced that with the experience I have in gender issues, I would cope well with the position of the women's representative," she explains.

Even though she did not get a negative reception in her political bid, Ombaka admits to encountering numerous challenges.

Although the current law is good, she notes that it is somehow scaring for some women who are going to serve many constituencies.

"There are some counties that have more than five constituencies and, therefore, it requires a lot of resources to move around all the constituencies looking for votes," notes Ombaka.

Another challenge that she cites is the poor road system in some of



the constituencies. Some areas are inaccessible and making it difficult to reach the electorate.

Coming to party nominations, Ombaka admits that the process has for a long time been unfair. She says that some individuals have been receiving favours during nominations because they serve the interests of those who handpicked them.

Ombaka's life is packed with ground breaking insights into the amazing life of women and men, girls and boys. Previously; she was the Chairperson of Communication

and Media Technology at Maseno University.

Ombaka is also a consultant on Gender issues, HIV and Aids and Behaviour Change Communication. She has consulted for international organisations including World Bank, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and National Aid Commission among others. She is currently a member of the African Women Research and Development, International Society of Poets and African Women Writers' Association.

# Betty Kitsao wants to be the formidable force behind rural women

By CHARLES MGENYI

She is little known in the political circles but has received an international accolade for being a champion for rural women's empowerment.

However, in the General Election she will be vying for the Women's Representative Seat in Kilifi County on Kenya National Congress Party led by Peter Kenneth as presidential candidate.

She received the World Women Summit Forum Laureate prize for women creativity in rural life in 2011 for being at the forefront advocating for the women capacity building in Kilifi in the bid to eradicate poverty in the region.

Betty Munga Kitsao knows well the trauma the rural women in Kilifi undergo as mothers and housewives.

Women from Kilifi County depend on small businesses which can barely raise KSh200 per day, they trek long distances but in the evening the day's income goes to the husband for budgeting.

"We are talking of women who never had possession of KSh500 and yet the little they earned was all taken by husbands who did the budgeting but

as we are speaking some have accounts with over KSh20,000 in savings," says Kitsao.

Coming from one of the smallest Mijikenda tribe, the Kauma, Kitsao observes that something needs to be done to save the Mijikenda families from absolute poverty.

Most of the Mijikenda families care little about the girl child education and she is fortunate to be among few of the girls from the community to get a degree. She graduated with a Bachelor in Education Science with the Upper Second Class Honour in 1980 from Kenyatta University.

## Teaching

Immediately after graduating she started teaching at Tudor Day Secondary School then later Nakuru Day Secondary School. Later she engaged in education and career consultancy before joining the International Federation of Red Cross working with the refugees in Kenya in 1993.

Refugees' camps were located in Utange, Shanzu and Marafa in Malindi before they were relocated to Daadab in North Eastern Province.

She had to relocate to the hardship

area to keep her job but opted to quit because two of her children were doing their final primary and secondary exams respectively.

"My daughter was just about to sit for her KCPE examinations, while my eldest son was beginning his final year in secondary school. I just couldn't pack up and leave, they needed my support," she explains.

Kitsao got into business when she started buying rice from Mwea and selling it to Kongowea market to sustain her family with additional help from her husband.

Her husband Ringstave Kitsao supported the family as he was also working as a chief accountant at MP Shah Hospital Nairobi but they both confessed life was never the same as it used to be.

In 2006 Kitsao joined Act Change Transform (ACT) after receiving information that this organisation was looking for people who were interested in working with poor women in Kilifi County.

She attended a one week training in Kitui where they were taught about a self-help group approach which encourages women to form groups and

meet every week where they would be contributing small amounts of money.

This money is then loaned out to them to cater for their immediate needs, such as food, shelter, school fees and eventually, starting small businesses.

She came back and sold the idea to the local women in Kilifi who she was to work with under ACT. She first told them to form groups of 15- 20 women and agree on what time and day they would be meeting every week with each coming with KSh20 for weekly savings.

She had first to identify the poor women in the society who were ready to change their living status by working together in groups.

A living testimony of a single mother who joined one of Kitsao's groups with nothing but tattered clothes, bare feet and an emaciated baby on her back.

"You could see that she was em-



barrassed over her situation. She could not even afford soap to take a bath and the other women did not want to sit near her because of the odour," Kitsao recalls.

*Continued on page 9*

## West Pokot County Women Aspirants

By KAKAI MASEGA

Five women in West Pokot County have been nominated in various parties to vie for the women representative seat. Most of the women have rolled up their sleeves for the position. Women failed to contest for civic seats in all the twenty civic seats in the County because of culture and traditions behind the few numbers. Lack of education, retrogressive cultural practices, lack of finance and resources hinder women from contesting for political seats in the area.

With tradition having played a major role where women are not recognized, many of the women now have decided to join politics. Lilian Janice Plapan was nominated unopposed on an ODM party, Teresa Lokichu nominated on Federal party of Kenya, Rejina Nyeris nominated unopposed on URP ticket, Roda Rotino nominated unopposed on a KANU ticket, Leah Chebet Psiyah nominated on the Wiper Party unopposed. Many women in West Pokot have been shying away from elective positions, thanks to the new constitution dispensation and creating of women representative positions in 47 counties.

All the women aspirants are new comers in the political arena except Roda Rotino who challenged the former Kapenguria member of parliament and cabinet minister Francis Lotodo. So far no woman has indicated interest in other big seats which have attracted the political giants from the area. The Deputy governors seat has attracted only one candidate Night Cherop.

So far, male politicians who have been nominated for the Governor and senator have not named their running mates and women in the area have vowed to support any candidate who will pick a woman as his running mate.

### Teresa Lokichu -Women Representative Nominee on Federal Party

Business woman, Teresa Lokichu, was born in the year 1961 in Chepareria. Though she did not continue with her education after being Circumcised

. As the point person of Nuru Africa in Pokot land, she has helped many girls join secondary school. Teresa who was an adviser to the late cabinet minister Francis Lotodo has been instrumental in starting many development activities in the area. She got married in 1977 to his late husband.

Lokichu promises to raise the



education standard, improve health facilities. She hopes to establish a bursary kitty especially for the needy children so that they can't depend on government funding. Promote health.

### Women Representative Aspirant. Lilian Janice Plapan [ODM Nominee]

She is among the women who went to Beijing in the year 1995, for a meeting to discuss issues affecting women. Lilian Plapan is among the first two women to join university in West Pokot. She has a masters in Rural social development from the university of reading in Britain. Plapan, 61 is one of the few women engrossed in fighting out Female genital Mutilation [FGM], early forced marriages thus promoting girl child education in Pokot. Apart time lecturer at the University of Nairobi, extra neural centre in Kapenguria.

In 1989, attended a meeting "Inter Africa committee on traditional practices that affects women and children. In 1985, we started the National Committee that affects women and children.

She is the chair person of zones 5 and 6 in Northern and Eastern Africa sub region on FGM. She is the Executive Director NGO called Setat Women Organization based in Kapenguria and chairperson of Af-



rican coalition on traditional practices. Went to Kapsabet girls. She went for external degree Nairobi university [Bachelor of education, joined Nation wide training, diploma for secretaries at National Youth Service secretarial college, worked as a clerical officer, worked with junior travels assistance united states of America Embassy. Plapan is a retired Government officer, after working as a town clerk in various towns i.e Pokot, Webuye, Eldoret and Nandi hills town councils.

.She is also completing her PHD and currently researching on effects of cattle rustling and educational development in West Pokot.

### Leah Chebet Psiya - Women Representative Aspirant [Wiper Party]

Leah Psiyah is vying for the seat on Wiper Party. She was an opposed in the nominations. Born in Kacheliba, West Pokot 1960, Daughter to Rev. Canon Daudi Chebitwey, church prelate and Salome Chemasuet Chebitwey. Got married to the late Chemonges Nelson they are blessed with two children.

Joined Katikit primary school in Amudat (Uganda), proceeded to Nasokol girls secondary. Joined Kericho teachers college. Joined Anglican church of Kenya for a course in community development and secured a job. She went to Goibe Christian centre in 1989, as an associate fellow of the Christian churches Education association.

Like her quest for humanitarian proportionality, she championed for gender issues that affected retrogressive cultural practices such as; Female Genital mutilation, early customary marriages and girl-child discrimination.

She pioneered for the establishment of women groups that focused on gender empowerment, human rights vio-



lations in West Pokot and community development initiatives. After leaving teaching, she started teachings on human rights violations, girl child education and women empowerment. Joined an international NGO, Sentinnels which deal with FGM campaigns, early forced marriages.

Currently working with Kamanat CBO and The Pokot community cultural center (PCCC).

She promises to economically empower youths who are unemployed and idle. Tackle Insecurity, illiteracy, poor health services and improve the infrastructure.

### Regina Changorok Nyeris -Women Representative Aspirant[Ur]

Will be vying for the seat on URP ticket. Passed unopposed in the nominations. Born in Pser, location in Kapenguria. She went to Pser primary then joined Ortum Girls secondary. Went to Nasokol Girls secondary then joined Mosoriot teachers college.

Graduated in Nairobi University for Diploma in Adult Education and community development. Resigned as a teacher in Nasokol primary last year to joined politics.

Married to Mr. Phillip Nyeris Lopyto with four children.

Empowering women with knowledge not money. She promises to empower people in many ways through education. Use resources like mangoes in Chesogon for them to get money. Zero mostly in women and youths, help girls



take up education as a key to their lives. Create job opportunities for youths.

Push for the factory cement factory in Ortum for youths to get employment, bring Cooler plants to help farmers and use alovera and mkwaju in making juice. Drill water for residents..

Continue preaching peace along Turkana, Pokot, marakwet and karamojong area, in uniting the wrangling communities



# Anne Chemitei to spar socio-economic development for Uasin Gishu

By ROBERT WANJALA

Anne Jeruto Chemitei is vying for the position of County Women's Representative and she has huge plans for Uasin Gishu.

In her position if she wins, Chemitei envisions empowering both women and the youth in Uasin Gishu County in terms of their rights, education and social-economic empowerment.

She says that while traversing the county working with women folks, emerging issues that they want addressed include fixing health facilities, improved education, women and youth who are empowered economically and sustainable peace building efforts.

"The girl-child is still disadvantaged and we need to increase and improve public schools to make it both affordable and accessible by all children in society," says Chemitei.

Health facilities across the county are in dire state. If elected, Chemitei who is the Chairperson Maendeleo Ya Wanawake Organisation in Uasin Gishu County says she will mobilise resources to equip, maintain and improve health dispensaries and other facilities across the County to enable women who for a long time have suffered and even died while seeking healthcare services.

"I will engage the county governor to ensure all health facilities in the region are well equipped and facilitated," says Chemitei. She adds: "Equipping these facilities will reduce the heavy economic burden on many poor people seeking healthcare service at the Moi Teaching and Referral Hospital, Eldoret."

The hospital is supposed to only handle only referral and critical cases and if other facilities have the capacity, Moi Teaching and Referral Hospital will be decongested and this will enable it offer quality and affordable medical services not just in the county but across the western Kenya, parts of Uganda and Southern Sudan.

Chemitei is promising to tap youth talents through initiating programmes geared at imparting life skills and experience.

Youth and women form the bulk

of the population in the region. "Empowering women and youth through trainable skills and financial management experience will be among my priorities," reiterates Chemitei. She adds: "Giving them both professional and financial skills will help them grow and multiply their efforts for economic development."

Cohesion and integration is also her precedence. "Communities fight because of resources. Empowered women and youth with economic self-reliance will glue communities together and allow them fight hunger, poverty and diseases which are the common enemy," she says.

Chemitei who is also the chairperson Catholic Women Association notes that a peaceful environment is what will accelerate development. She says she will fight for peaceful co-existence in the County.

According to Chemitei, women and children bear the greatest brunt during conflict and therefore, without peace no meaningful development will be realized.

## Development

"My desire is to see every resident in the County enjoy peace and focus on development issues," she reiterates.

Chemitei was born 45 years ago in Keiyo/Marakwet County and later married in Uasin Gishu County where she is aspiring for women representative position on Mzalendo Saba Saba Party ticket.

Chemitei studied Community Development at the Tropical College of Management. The knowledge gained from the college is what has endeared her with the community in the County.

Both her achievements and community development span way back in early 1990s. She started off her public life 23 years ago when she joined the Ministry of Agriculture as cateress. After 15 years she left and ventured into private farming and church matters.

In 2004 she was elected as secretary to Maendeleo ya Wanawake Organisation and later succeeded the late Ruth Sauna in 2006. As the grassroots organisation boss in the region she has been on the road empowering

women both socially and financially with emphasis to build their homes and making their marriages strong.

"The association has empowered the women through encouraging them to form strong merry-go-round groups to assist one another in times of difficulty. The group also has been at the forefront in encouraging women to be peace agents," she says.

As MYWO chairperson, Chemitei has spent the better part of life traversing the county mobilising women to form Saccos so that as a team they are able to overcome social challenges for a better society for all.

"I have held different positions in my community tackling gender issues and because of that I understand most of problems facing women in this region," Chemitei says. She adds: "Through various women forums we brainstorm on projects that will generate income for various groups and ultimately improve families' incomes."

Chemitei is knowledgeable on most issues affecting women in the region and this gives her an upper hand because together with other women they have been working towards emancipating the community from food insecurity and economic impoverishment.

As chairlady of the Catholic Women Association, Chemitei says: "We encourage women to be involved in income generating activities to help them increase household incomes. Many women have learnt keeping chicken husbandry and small scale farming activities that have helped them improve family resources."

For 13 years as Catholic Women Association chairlady, Chemitei says many women have been both spiritually and economically transformed and more will come if the electorate entrust the women's leadership position to her.

Her key leadership strategies will be to ensure women's access to financial services at affordable interest rates.

"I founded MOINAP SACCO which has grown significantly and is helping women save and borrow loans to boost their small businesses. We are also encouraging other wom-



en in the County to form SACCOs and through them they will be able to get loans at very low interests," she says.

If elected, part of her salary will facilitate opening up of offices for women in every constituency to bring services closer to the community, majority of whom are youth and women.

## Peace building

In an all-inclusive leadership, Chemitei says peace building has been her other business of choice.

Mrs. Chemitei is the USAID programme county coordinator on peace building and reconciliation. "I have used my position to help my fellow women understand that our diversity is actually the strength needed to achieve our life goals. Peace is all that we need to succeed in whatever we wish to do," she explains.

Chemitei sits on District Education Board. For three years now she has contributed significantly through giving valued experiences learned while working with various women's groups.

She is a board member of Equity

Bank 'Wings to Fly' Foundation. She helps in identifying bright children from poor family backgrounds to benefit from the scholarship opportunity by the bank

Chemitei has worked with World Vision to bring water tanks to homes in her Moiben Constituency, Meibeki Ward. She says many homes have tanks that enable them harvest rain water. The community has also been trained to be environment conscious by planting trees which has improved rainfall level in the area for agricultural activities.

Through World Vision she says the area has established a school to aid young girls who have dropped out of class to continue with their education. The school — Kemeliet Secondary — is now serving the whole County.

Chemitei says the leadership experience, skills and network she has is what will unlock the County's unexploited socio-economic, educational and political opportunities.

She says if elected, she will use her networking experience to woo investors in the County to spar socio-economic development.

# Kitsao wants to be the formidable force behind rural women

Continued from page 8

A few months after joining the group however, she was a transformed woman. She and her child had decent clean clothes and she had a small business that made enough money to sustain them. She also had new-found confidence and had made new friends.

"This is one of the incidents which keep me going and working to change the lives of fellow women," she notes.

Kitsao explains that in these forums, every woman gets a chance to chair the meeting, take the money home and return it for group in the next gathering.

Once accountability, trust and cohesion are recognised, the women who are taught business and communication skills by the supporting organization then started to borrow loans.

"Imagine a woman who was afraid

of borrowing KSh200 can now fearlessly borrow KSh20,000 and repay within the specified period of time," Kitsao explains.

From 2006 to November last year she managed to have 150 groups of women with about 3,000 members across the whole Kilifi County.

## Recognition

Her inspiring work has not gone unrecognised. In 2011 Kitsao won the Women's World Summit Foundation laureate for Creativity in Rural Life. She was among 10 women, (the only one from Kenya) to receive the award.

As she walked up to the dais to receive her award on 15th October, the International Day of Rural Women, hundreds of women wearing T-shirts inscribed with the words "Tushirikiane Tuangamize Umaskini", (let's unite to eradicate poverty) warmly applauded her achievement for the award which

had come all the way from Geneva, Switzerland.

"From the work I have been doing with these local women, I can now boast I am a Laureate just like the late Wangari Maathai," she says.

Unlike the late Nobel peace laureate Wangari Maathai who had media coverage all over the world when receiving her prize, Kitsao says she received the award with simple ceremony from the organisation and the women she works with.

Immediate former Bahari Member of Parliament Benedict Gunda gave the award to her on behalf of WWSF in the ceremony organised in Bahari Constituency, Kilifi County.

Kitsao thinks that to accomplish her mission in women empowerment she needs to be in the government and that is why she is vying for the women's representative seat.

"Kilifi women need someone who

has been working with them and I am certain that I fit well in that position," she says.

She explains that for the six years she has been working with the local women, she has helped raised standards of those who were languishing in extreme poverty with no idea where tomorrow's meal would come from.

She wants to vie for the women's representative seat so that she is able to source for funds for the women, fight for girl child education and make Kilifi a poverty free county.

## Financing

The biggest challenge she faces in the race is the finances and vastness of the county which needs a lot of resources for one to transverse the whole of it.

Kitsao opted for the grassroots campaigns because she has observed that the people at the ground are the ones who usually vote compared to the

middle class and urban residents.

Kitsao's husband says his wife is the champion of the local women and he fully supports her bid to be their representative at the national level.

"She has worked with them, she can write good funding proposal for the County's development. She has all that it takes to be their leader," he says.

Kitsao says she has what it takes to empower the local women socially, economically and politically.

"Women who were dimmed as illiterate are now members of CDF boards, some are village elders while some are in local land board and majority are running their own businesses," she said.

She will be battling it up with nine other women to make the number of contestants to 10 and she is very optimistic that she will clinch the seat for the good work done in women empowerment.

# Dinah Awour wants to change the face of Nairobi

By JOYCE CHIMBI

Dinah Awour is among the scores of women who are reaping the benefits of a gender sensitive constitution.

Unlike in previous general elections where there were only three seats to be contested for, the political landscape has improved for the better.

As a result, Awour is among those turning the heat in the race for the Nairobi County Women Representative Seat.

"I am very clear about my agenda for the Nairobi County. While this is a women's seat, it is only so in as far as vying is concerned but once a person is elected, you are a leader for everyone," she explains.

Awour who is also the Vice Chair of Safina Party, whose Presidential candidate is Paul Muite, says that her campaign is about experiences that people go through on a daily basis.

"It is about access to water, security, housing, food security, a solid education system, issues that sound simplistic but affect us in very significant ways," she explains.

She adds: "I have grown up in Nairobi County and understand the problems that we face. I also understand the solutions."

Awour joined Ngara High School after completing her primary education in Pangani Primary School in Starehe Constituency.

She left Ngara High School in 1993 and by that time, she had no doubt about the contribution that she wanted to make to the society.

"I have been out there, I never shy away from speaking my mind when it matters even when my life is and has been in danger," she explains.

## Demonstration

Awour was among scores of women and men, most of them from the slums who spent the 2009 Christmas at the Central Police Station for persistent demonstration against the misappropriation of the Free Primary Education Kitty.

"Education is one thing that is very close to my heart. It frustrates to me to see children going to school and interacting as if they are in a consecration camp and cannot wait to go home," Awour explains.

"Education is no longer happening in a fun filled environment because playgrounds have been grabbed, these are the issues that I am agitating about," she expounds.

She says that according to the Ministry of Education in Nairobi County alone only three schools can be considered to have a pupils' friendly learning environment. These are Nairobi, Ayany and Bidii primary schools.

"Education should be a fun filled experience," Awour reiterates.

She further explains that the education system has little room for sports "and the sports that are there mainly focus on the boy child. Girls also have what it takes".

Awour says that the lack of a strong sports foundation in the education system has far reaching effects.

This, she says is because sports instils discipline in young people and a sense of duty. "People learn from a very young age to push themselves to the limit," she says.

The married mother of four who has nothing but good things to say about the support she has received from her husband and family explains that having worked in the slums has given her insights into the problems bedevilling this country.

"It pains you to see people suffering and have no power to intervene. You walk around the slums and find women being battered, you want to intervene but lack the backing of a strong institution," she notes.

Consequently, if elected, she says "it will be easier to step in because I will have the backing of the office".

Due to her community work, Awour has en-



rolled in numerous courses particularly those on leadership, Gender Based Violence and reproductive health.

"I have pursued courses to improve my skills to respond to the ills in the society. For instance, no woman should die while giving birth hence

***"Education is one thing that is very close to my heart. It frustrates to me to see children going to school and interacting as if they are in a consecration camp and cannot wait to go home."***

— Dinah Awour

the need for community awareness creation around health issues," she says.

Awour has worked in the slums for many years. "In places such as Kosovo, Nigeria (an area within Mathare slum) and many other such informal settlements and life is a daily struggle here. I intend to change that," she explains.

Awour is nonetheless aware that she cannot bring about this change singlehandedly.

"I will work with like-minded leaders, we must all complement one another, working as a team," she says.

Regarding the Constitution she says: "I will guard it. I am fearless, I believe in the cause, I will not be swayed."

Having served as president of the *Bunge la Mwananchi*, the arguably strongest social movement in the country, Awour has committed herself to representing the voices of the people.

"For me, I see leadership in very simplistic ways. It is about what I see every day, the things that people go through that touch my heart are those that affect people on a day to day basis. I am speaking to those things," she says.

## Grace Kipchoim aims for the for the newly created Baringo South Constituency

By JOHN KINYUA

As the party primaries for the United Republican Party (URP) kicked off in Baringo County, all eyes were focusing on the newly created Baringo South seat to determine who will finally carry the day in the contest.

Two aspirants had set their eyes on the constituency and expected to win on the ticket on the URP, believed to be the people's party choice for anyone running for a parliamentary seat in the Rift Valley region.

The aspirants, Dr Daniel Kandagor and Grace Kimooi Kipchoim were the only two set to battle it out to win the highly lucrative party ticket for the general election.

Voters turned in large numbers to vote in their preferred choice despite it being only a nomination. They turned up to vote as if the final leg of the election had come for them to exercise that right.

## Vote

Though the nominations commenced late, at least a sizeable number turned to vote in their choice to carry on the URP parliamentary ticket.

Kipchoim, is the immediate treasurer for Baringo Central Constituency before it was hived off to create Baringo South.

After the rigorous campaigns conducted by the two earlier, the nominations were to be a sure proof of popularity and especially with the electorate in the entire constituency.

In the end, Kipchoim triumphed over her erstwhile rival and competitor for the ticket with a landslide.

Kipchoim victory came from the fact that she was perceived to be easily accessible to the locals in the constituency.

She also had the advantage of having carried out various projects in the area.

Her humility and generosity to those seeking help even in form of school fees could otherwise not have played to her favour. She has seen through a number of students from humble backgrounds make it in their education due to her contribution. Her humble mien could probably have made others feel at ease.

Kipchoim previously worked at Kenya Medical Training College (KMTC). She studied at KCA University.

## Trustworthy

Seen as one to be trusted with the leadership of the new constituency, Kipchoim is set to face off with other aspirants in the elections from other notable parties that include Kanu, The National Alliance (TNA) and Wiper among others.

It will remain a bruising battle in the end and what remains to unfold is whether she will keep the tempo and win the seat as she remains as the only woman parliamentary aspirant in all of the constituencies of Baringo County.

Kipchoim has, however, endeared herself to the electorate and looks forward to them casting the ballot in her favour. This would make her the first woman parliamentarian in the new constitutional dispensation.

# Caroline Ng'ang'a wants to bring change in Kiambu County

By NJENGA GICHEHA

The battle for Kiambu County women representative seat has taken shape with a number of women ar-raigning themselves boldly showing their might to clinch the first time seat.

Among these is the 55-year-old Caroline Wambui Ng'ang'a who is an ex-banker, seasoned trade unionist, politician and an activist for labour issues and human rights crusader and a trainer on the new Constitution.

As a politician, she has been very active in party politics and held senior positions such as acting Secretary General of the Labour Party of Kenya and Assistant Secretary General of the same party between 2002-2005.

Between 2005 and June 2012, Wambui was the Lari branch chairperson of Democratic Party of Kenya (DP). She was the interim organising secretary of The National Alliance (TNA) in Lari before she lost the nomination on January 18.

Ng'ang'a is not new in politics. She vied for Lari parliamentary seat in 2002 and 2007 which has deepened her understanding of the challenges facing the people of Kiambu County.

As a county woman representative, Ng'ang'a envisages a county that will carry on board the youth, women, persons with disabilities and the elderly in the development of their capacities and involve them in resource utilization for self-reliance.

Kiambu County, she notes, is endowed with enormous rich natural resources, beautiful landscape and hardworking people.

## Resources

"We have tea and coffee as the main cash crops. Pineapples, vegetables and fruits are also common agricultural produce and I will work towards lobbying for funds to boost the sector," says Ng'ang'a.

The county is home to Carbacid gas, which is used for preserving soft drinks, dams that supply water to Nairobi, Kiriita Forest which is home to different wild animals and many bird species, unexplored natural caves and beautiful landscape.

"However, the past political leadership in the area has remained blind to the potential and, therefore, failed

to take advantage of all the riches to the detriment of the populace," she says.

Ng'ang'a asserts that she will improve the welfare of the people of Kiambu, making them self-reliant by urging them to use the available resources as well as improving education.

"We shall form education committees in every constituency which will work hand in hand with the divisional education," says Ng'ang'a. She notes: "We shall also lobby the government to repair the tarmacked roads and also tarmac others and work closely with the County Assembly Members in the utilisation of Local Authority Transfer Fund (LATF)."

Ng'ang'a was instrumental in having the country get the new constitution. Born in a small village of Gatitu, Kagaa Sub-location, Lari Division of Kiambu, she is a formidable woman vying for the seat on a Safina Party ticket.

She started schooling at Dr Livingstone Primary School in Nairobi before joining Ngandu Girls' High School for her 'O' levels and Limuru Girls' High School for A-levels.

## Work experience

She then joined Newport International University where she graduated with a Bachelor's degree in Business Administration and Turin College in Italy where she received a diploma in Social Security.

Ng'ang'a has worked as a consultant trainer and facilitator on Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) and social economic issues from 2005 to date saying that it serves her well to run the county.

She has been a civic educator and coordinator with the Committee of Experts on the Constitution of Kenya 2010. She was the National Deputy Secretary General of Banking Insurance Finance Union (Kenya) from 1992-2005.

Ng'ang'a was also the director of organisation for Banking Insurance Finance Union from 1986-1992. She worked with Bank of Baroda from 1978 to 1985.

As a trade unionist she won many awards for the workers at the Industrial Court of Kenya as well as sustained contribution in the fight for



the rights of the oppressed and the marginalized groups in the labour market in Kenya for over two decades.

Ng'ang'a recalls how she almost lost her job fighting for the employees in her company when she was barely 20 years but rose to the ranks as the union treasurer for the branch in 1980.

Later in 1985 formed banking insurance and was the first director of Organization of Banking Insurance and Finance Union.

## Took action

The bank, she says, had a section of people who did not abhor sexual harassment and one day the company employed four young girls. She was angered by the acts of the officials. "One day one of the girls was taken by a man who was representing her in the bank. When she refused to have a relationship with her, she

was dumped in Karura forest," recalls Ng'ang'a.

She notes: "It was from that incident that I started fighting for our rights in the institution and one of the officers was transferred after investigation."

Later, there was a serious issue and many people were sacked but Ng'ang'a rose to take the mantle of being the manager.

She says that in 1982, they staged the biggest bank strike in the country and the employer tried to seduce her, being a union leader, to sacrifice her colleagues but she refused.

"Later the employer told me that he had taken care of the people who matter including the Minister for Labour and the Attorney General. I told the people to walk out but the then Cotu Secretary General Boy Juma Boy came to our rescue," says Ng'ang'a.

As chair convener of the Repre-

sentation of the People Committee at Constitutional Review Conference in Bomas, she ensured integration of gender issues especially the creation of the county woman representative seat and headed a delegation of women to Rwanda.

She says during this time, she battled for her life. A draft constitution was brought to her and she was told to read. She was also ordered to influence her team but she refused to pass the draft saying that it had been interfered with.

Ng'ang'a says she was very instrumental in having the women's rights being respected and they passed everything that women wanted including the creation of the county seat.

Ng'ang'a has travelled to many parts of the world including USA where she was a state guest as well as Cameroon where she chaired an international conference.

# Efforts to speak tranquility hit the highest point

By DAVID NJAAGA

As the country braces itself for the forthcoming election day, a lot of weight has been put on the need to uphold peace throughout and after the ballot vote so as to steer clear a replicate of the aftermath of the year 2007/2008 skirmishes.

To ascertain this, different civil groups have been on the road spearheading peace and also making sure those encroaching the law are held accountable without favor or unfairness.

However the big question remains, whether the government will keep its word to retain peace during and after the election or will let the repeat of the post election violence hit Kenyans again.

The government in an effort to hold back hate speech amongst bloggers and sites has

been on the vanguard in tracing and reporting messages that could otherwise elicit mixed reactions from the public.

With the peace campaign, Bitange Ndemo Permanent Secretary (PS) in the Ministry of Information says the government has achieved success in the awareness creation and sensitization across all publics on hate speech.

## Strategy

"The government strategy has been to keep up relentless and sustained communication against hate speech from all quarters, our target being all media, social media, pollsters, politicians, civil society, university students, political parties and the general public," he says

Ndemo notes notwithstanding the U-turn in trends, in some hate blogs continuing to

revive the social media sites by creating new accounts in a cat mouse game with the industry, a lot has been achieved in building peace and reconciliation and in the nation building endeavor.

He says more effort will be put in making out the hate speech bloggers and sites through their internet Protocol address(IP) a for ultimate prosecution as the communications act will seek to regulate the weak points in the media convergence and the cyber cafes.

The Ps expressed fears that the outlawed Mungiki Sect could be using some of the said hate sites to spread the hate speech but said investigations are being carried out to ascertain the truth of the issue cautioning the sect that the government will not give chance to anyone with evil state of mind.

To assert the public on the stretched tight

measures to curb violence, the police assistant spokesman Charles Owino cautions the public against group discussions on topics pertaining to election especially on the streets and pubs saying this could set off sentiments of hostility against the said parties advising Kenyans to stay put not letting exploitation overtake them.

"It is very important to forewarn Kenyans against discussions topics that may end up triggering emotions amongst Kenyans especially now the country is in the mood of elections. We urge people to stay indoors not accepting or allowing prolonged talk that may end up eliciting fights or hatred among themselves," he explains.

Owino says measures to reinforce safety before, during and after the election are in place and there should be no reason for fright.

# Esha Karisa wants to continue fighting for the Takaungu land

By YUSUF AMIN

In the recently concluded party primaries, Esha Jumwa Karisa clinched the ODM party ticket for the Kilifi County women representative seat.

Karisa is not new to the community and has managed to endear herself to them by engaging in numerous development activities including crusading for the land rights of squatters in her remote home of Takaungu village in Kilifi District.

Her leadership skills date back to her secondary school days where she headed various students' clubs at Bahari Girls' High School in Kikambala division.

After completing her secondary education, Karisa worked as a human rights activist in Takaungu. Among her achievements was pushing to have the Mazrui community cede community land.

The Mazrui Community claimed ownership to all the land in Takaungu because of the Mazrui Trustee Land Act of 1914.

Karisa has helped families in Takaungu acquire title deeds to help resolve the squatter problem in the area.

This did not go unnoticed and residents unanimously endorsed her bid for the Takaungu civic ward. She was thus able to effectively represent her community at the Kilifi Town Council.

## Rights

Karisa joined politics because she believed that she would be able to articulate aspirations of the community and defend their rights.

"The Takaungu community was faced with a myriad of challenges including being able to own land and thus want to be in politics to defend

their rights," says Karisa.

She adds: "My late father always encouraged me to venture into politics because he believed it was possible for communities in Takaungu to live equally. The natives were always treated as third class citizens by the Arabs that had settled in the area during the Arab trade. This is why I had no option but to follow my father's advice and from then there was no turning back."

Her father has been her main political mentor when she first clinched the Takaungu Ward seat.

Karisa has managed to win the hearts of many in the village through her track record in development.

"I was able to convince investors to come to Takaungu and other areas within the jurisdiction of Kilifi Town Council and create employment and foster development," she says.

## Support

Karisa also supported education programmes as most schools were performing poorly due to lack of basic infrastructure.

"I also sponsored many students from poor families to continue with higher education in my bid to promote education in Kilifi," she says.

She is credited for having convinced the district adjudication officer to subdivide land in Takaungu after Parliament nullified the Mazrui Trustee Land Act.

Her fortunes are highly pegged on her ability to sustain the overwhelming support she has enjoyed in the area over the years.

According to Kazungu Chengo, an elder in the area Karisa's track record is unrivalled and commendable and thus the voters will endorse her at the ballot.

She has played a critical role in uniting women and has been able to initiate various women empowerment projects in Takaungu and neighbouring locations.

"Women are an essential ingredient in the family and whenever empowered most of the family problems are well dealt with and that is why my biggest area of concern was women not because I am a woman but I believe women can do better than men," explains Karisa.

During her helm as the chairperson to the Town Council, she became the first chair to successfully build a bus park in Kilifi.

Her post gave her enough political mileage and she managed to invite more investors in Kilifi town especially in the hotel industry.

"More investors started to flock my office when I served as the Kilifi chairlady because I created a conducive environment for investments," she says.

During the referendum she strongly supported the Constitution because she believed it was the fountain of women empowerment.

Karisa has been campaigning in the whole of Kilifi County. "I will make sure that I convince my people to vote for me in the General Election," she says.

## Pledge

She will vie for the seat on an ODM ticket and promises to deliver to the community and fight for the rights of the people of Kilifi County and enhance development.

Karisa says she will ensure that she has won the race so that she can



continue with the development projects she initiated mainly focusing on poverty alleviation.

Though the government has assured aspirants that security will be provided during the electioneering period, she has asked the government to make sure that women aspirants get enough security during their cam-

paings.

She says women's rights have been violated during electioneering year and asked the security personnel to be very keen.

Karisa has been preaching peace in her campaign rallies and calling on the youth to shun aspirants who incite them to violence.

# Mombasa women cry foul as Campaigns enter the final lap

By BENARD OCHIENG

With six days to the elections, women candidates continue to face hurdles among them intimidation from supporters believed to have been sent by their male counterparts.

Recently in Kisauni, Mombasa County, women aspirants decried of harassment. They demanded round the clock security during campaigns.

The revelations came at a breakfast meeting organised by independent elections and boundaries commission at a Mombasa hotel.

Republican congress party women representative aspirant Sureya Hersi said that she feared for her life as the campaigns enter the final lap.

Sureya said her banners and motorcade has been attacked several times in parts of Mishomoroni and Kongowea area. Her banners were also pulled down in Ganjoni and Maweni areas by rowdy youth purportedly hired by people who are contesting the same seat.

"Sometimes I am even shocked to see MP aspirants zone some areas for the governors and representatives they support. I am forced to move with caution. I opt not to use my car for fear of being attacked," said Sureya.

## Complaints

Her opponent on national vision party ticket Mariam Bashir alias Kuku Kali also stated similar complaint in Mishomoroni saying that it needed a hooligan-like candidate to campaign in those areas.

"When you go for campaigns in areas like Mishomoroni, people warn you of how they have been instructed to vote six-piece. We are worried because civic education has not even reached those sides," said Mariam.

Kenya national congress aspirant Naima Badhawi also demanded that IEBC and relevant organs provide adequate security for the women candidates.

IEBC south west coast regional

coordinator Amina Soud also admitted having received 11 serious complaints of election related violence but she cited lack of evidence could jeopardize their prosecution.

"I have received complains across gender concerning violence, posters being removed and threats against women. The problem is evidence but the civil society is documenting the evidence," said Soud.

Amina also mentioned Ziwa la Ngombe, Mishomoroni all of which fall under Kisauni and Makupa areas in Tudor as the key areas with recurrent candidates' intimidation.

Soud also revealed that Matuga and Likoni constituencies had also been marked as hotspots and enough security machinery had been deployed to those areas.

"At first we thought Matuga and Likoni will be hotspots but now Kisauni in Mombasa is proving to



be a headache for us. We are calling for enough deployment. I am sure OCPDs and police chiefs have been trained and are capable of handling that," Soud added.

Nahima Badhawi and Sureya Hersi at a past meeting in Mombasa.

Picture: Benard Ochieng

# Jane Kivati set to upstage old guard in Kitui County

By NZINGA MUASYA

The battle for the Kitui County women's representative is likely to be a two horse race pitting former Social services minister, Nyiva Mwendwa and newcomer, Jane Kivati.

The two candidates were cleared by the Independent Electoral Boundaries Commission to woo voters through their respective parties, Wiper Democratic Party and Chama Cha Uzalendo, respectively, which are all under the CORD Alliance.

Mwendwa is a household name having served as a Member of Parliament and Kanu branch chairman in Kitui.

On her part, Kivati, 43 years old says she is "young and energetic enough to upstage her main competitor". Other contestants for the seat are Peace Mulu, a renowned gospel musician running on PICK ticket and clinical psychologist Winnie Kitemu of Narc.

However, with only few days left to the Election Day, the battle for the seat has narrowed down to a two-horse race pitting Mwendwa and Kivati.

Kivati believes she has what it takes to advance the interests of Kitui County and that of fellow women in the 11th Parliament. She is banking on the support from the youthful electorate, majority of who, she says, feel fatigued by the old guard and who are yearning for fresh blood in leadership.

"Voting for me guarantees wealth creation with preference for women and youth who have been disadvantaged for a long time," says Kivati. She adds: "I will also champion education for all



*"If elected as the first Kitui County women representative I will ensure that all issues raised by all age groups are well addressed. I am in this race to win."*

— Jane Kivati

at various levels."

Kivati's dream is to see a county where women enjoy equal rights as men and are considered in all opportunities.

"Under my leadership, Kitui County will be gender sensitive where women and men will enjoy equal rights and opportunities for a dignified life," says Kivati.

Her campaign strategy is anchored on four principals; gender equality, fairness, participatory democracy and inclusivity. Her values are integrity, honesty, professionalism and commitment.

Born on January 5, 1969 in Kavuni Location, Kitui County, Kivati had a humble beginning growing up in the rural area.

Going to school barefoot and walking for long distances with gourds strapped on her back to fetch water was the norm rather than the exception.

She attended Mulango Girls' High School and then joined University of Nairobi for a Bachelor of Arts degree in Sociology and Geography. She later left the country for further studies in Ireland where she graduated with a second degree in Development Studies.

Kivati also holds a Master of Arts degree in Sociology and Advanced Disaster Management from the University of Nairobi. She is a member of the Catholic

Women's Association, and is banking heavily on drawing a huge chunk of her votes from the Catholic faithful. The Church is strong in the county and is a force to reckon with.

Initially Kivati sought the Wiper Democratic Movement party ticket to contest the seat but was floored by Mwendwa in the party primaries.

Being a greenhorn in the murky world of politics and lacking in resources unlike her competitor, Kivati stunned many people by launching an impressive campaign that gave Mwendwa sleepless nights.

Her efforts paid off since after the final tally, Kivati bagged tens of thousands of votes in her basket, coming close to Mwendwa who got the party's ticket.

After losing the Wiper ticket, she opted for CCU, whose leader is Sports Assistant minister, Wavinya Ndeti who is vying for the Machakos Country Governor's seat.

The recent announcement by CORD secretariat to their supporters to elect any suitable and credible candidate under the alliance may improve her chances of capturing the seat. The move was meant to stem discord in the alliance following the party primaries' debacle.

Kivati says she is in the race to win and will not leave anything to chance.

"If elected as the first Kitui County women representative I will ensure that all issues raised by all age groups are well addressed. I am in this race to win," reiterates Kivati.

She is calling on the residents of Kitui to choose leaders who are development conscious with capacity to propel the resource rich county forward.

# Why Esther Passaris believes she is the best woman for Nairobi County

By JAYNE ROSE GACHERI

To be the Women's Representative for Nairobi County is a daunting task that only the brave can dare vie.

Among the brave women who are daring to tread only where the lions dare is Esther Passaris who believes she is the best women's leader in Nairobi.

That is why she is vying for the Nairobi County women's representative seat on a Kenya National Congress ticket against Rachel Shebesh of The National Alliance Party (TNA), Susan Ming'ala of ODM and Tabitha Mutero of Narc-Kenya among others.

Passaris who is the Chief Executive Officer of Adopt-A-Light project is a household name. This is because of her decision to venture into an ambitious public-private sector partnership with the Nairobi City Council in 2005 to light the city's main streets and highways with creative billboards. *That experience taught Passaris a lot about good management and leadership.* She learnt that if she has to pursue her dreams to see transformation in society, then she had to be actively involved in leadership.

But why did Passaris specifically zero-in for the Women's Representative seat? "I could have run for MP of Embakasi again but it was split into five constituencies and I did not want to choose because I consider

all of Embakasi home," says Passaris. She notes: "The women representative position gives me a chance to address the issues that women face and at the same time serve all city residents."

She says if she wins the position, part of the issues that she will address is will include maternal health care and female reproductive health, women's empowerment, fight corruption and address security concerns among others.

## Maternal death

"I am saddened that in 2013, we still live in a country where close to 500 in every 100,000 children die at birth and I am horrified that one in 39 women risk death giving birth; that one in 39 babies will never experience a mother's love," notes Passaris.

Her intervention would include agitating for the Government to provide sanitary pads to girls from under privileged areas as well as lobby for improved funding for maternal health, better facilities for health workers and better pay by allocating at least 15 per cent of the budget to health to achieve Millennium Development Goals Four and Five which entail reducing infant mortality and risk to maternal deaths under control.

On women's empowerment, Passaris plans to rally a public-private partnership to raise money to build

markets in each of the 17 constituencies in Nairobi.

"With my experience in raising KSh500 million to light up Nairobi before, I am confident I will ably achieve this," she notes.

She also intends to push for legislation to increase funding for grants and loans to women entrepreneurs particularly single and young mothers. She will also agitate for incentives to employers to hire more women at equal pay.

On security, Passaris regrets that many women still live in fear of sexual and physical violence both within and without home.

"I was heartbroken to discover during my work with Adopt-A-Light in informal settlements that many girls are first defiled by a relative at a very young age but will often not report or speak up about it," she says.

Passaris hopes to use the position of Women's Representative to push for stern enforcement of legislation to act as a deterrent for crimes against women, as well as encourage "our men to do more to protect our women".

## Promises

Passaris holds a Bachelor of Law from University of Nairobi and is founder and chairperson of Adopt-A-Light Company Limited.

"Through the Women's Representative position I will articulate the concerns of women, as a parlia-



mentarian I will be there to serve all Nairobi residents, and it is imperative to have the support of men. I commit to keep whichever government," she says.

Passaris intends to deliver on campaign pledges particularly that

of keeping food prices and inflation low as well as provide opportunities to Kenyans not only because when times are hard it is the women who suffer most, but also because "as a legislator I will be there to serve all Kenyans".

## Aspirants sign peace charter ahead of polls

By FAITH MUIRURI

All aspirants in Nairobi have committed to maintaining peace ahead of the March 4, General Elections.

A member of the Nairobi peace committee Minicah Khamisi Otieno told a meeting convened by the Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA) that the aspirants have been attending peace charter forums convened at both constituency and ward level where they commit to uphold peace even after the elections.

"We have set up subcommittees at the sub locational level and we have been working closely with the provincial administration to make it a success. Most aspirants have complied by appending their signatures to maintain peace," she said during the meeting that brought together county peace platform members.

### Dialogue forums

"We have also been organising ethnic dialogue forums to share and promote cultural diversity in Embakasi, Njiru, Dandora," she explained.

She said during the forums, people from different communities come together and sample meals from each culture to promote harmony.

The representative said that they have been promoting a campaign that seeks to make sure there is no winner or loser after the elections and whoever wins is a Kenyan and losers must concede defeat.

Through the initiative, she says that leaders have been able to sensitise their supporters to vote wisely and whoever wins is a Kenyan and should not be aligned to their respective political parties or tribes.

She says that in cases of disputes after the elections, leaders and their supporters have been asked to embrace dispute resolution mechanisms.

"We have also been organising forums targeting tenants and landlords because most tenants refused to pay rent at the height of the Post-Election Violence," she said adding that such factors can trigger violence and must be reported to the relevant authorities.

Millie Odongo who is the vice chairperson of the NCIC said that women suffered greatly during the 2007/2008 General Elections and measures have been put in place to ensure the same does not recur.

Frank Waluhwe, a representative from FIDA said that measures must be put in place to ensure that the investigation procedure does not further victimise women or question their credibility.

"Abused women hardly report their experiences and thus there is need to push for procedures that ensure that victims do not remain silent but get justice as a precondition for reconciliation and peace.

# Georgia Okech seeks to represent the interest of the disabled

By OMONDI GWENGI

Although she had a very rough beginning being struck by polio at only three months, Georgia Margaret Okech has indicated that disability is not inability.

She is into politics full time having had an uncle who was a politician. Okech is nominated for the Siaya County representative for the disabled. In an interview with *Reject*, she says that given the full backing of the disabled and aspiration from her elders, she is optimistic that she will make the welfare of the disabled and that of the entire community good.

"My uncle Samuel Onyango Ayodo became the first Tourism Minister in the independent Kenya, what about me?" she poses.

In her quest to represent the disabled in Siaya County, Okech says that there are a number of challenges they face as persons with disabilities when it comes to politics.

Moving around campaigning is the biggest challenge that they face since it requires a lot of resources.

"As persons with disabilities, we lack finances to campaign and this, therefore, makes it difficult for us to carry out campaigns," she says.

According to Okech, fear of violence as was witnessed during the political parties' primaries is a great setback for the disabled in terms of exercising their democratic right.

"Having been subjected to violence in the past, some of us did not participate in the nominations. This should be looked into urgently in order to allow this group of persons to also participate in the election process," she observes.

Among the issues Okech intends to tackle are education of the disabled, health and security.

She says that there is shortage of special schools in the region making accessibility to education for the disabled very limited.

"There are some people who are disabled but have various talents. We should, therefore, think of establishing special schools that will make them nurture these talents," she says.

Okech notes that from what she has witnessed in the past towards the disabled in the community, something needs to be done to make them live like any other person despite their condition.

"The disabled have for a long time been shunned in the community especially women and girls who have no access to important things like sanitary towels," she laments.

Okech notes that a number of buildings are not disabled friendly because they have been constructed without have the physically challenged in mind. She says it is important for the Government and community to make life easy for the disabled and have them easily accommodated in society.

"It is very sad that our wheel chairs are charged whenever we board a matatu. These are our legs and we cannot do without them," she says.

According to Okech, there are a number of opportunities available for the youth that can be put to good use instead of them idling at home. "There are a few translators and sign language interpreters but most of the youths are complaining of unemployment. They should instead undertake such courses," she advises.

At only three months, Okech was stricken by polio in the hands of a house help, an incident that left her paralysed.

This is what marked an irreversible turn in the life of the now 39-year-old. "My dad passed away when I was only three months old and my mother travelled home for the burial and this is when I was stricken by polio," she recalls.

It was, however, hectic since this situation caught the family unaware. However, her brothers took her to hospital for physiotherapy, something she says was just too expensive for the family.

"I was going to the hospital daily and con-



sidering the costs, my brothers decided to hire a physiotherapist who would look after me at home," she explains.

The disability delayed her education and she started schooling at the age of eight. "I was able to move around and therefore started schooling albeit a little too late and it was cumbersome," she says.

However, with the support of her family, Okech managed to go along way through to secondary school.

"Even despite a bad beginning, I managed to go through to secondary school. Thereafter, I assisted my sister as a hairdresser," she explains.

**"As persons with disabilities, we lack finances to campaign and this, therefore, makes it difficult for us to carry out campaigns."**

— Georgia Margaret Okech

From hairdressing, she undertook a course as nurse aid and patient attendant where she managed to work in Nairobi Hospital and the Spinal Injury Hospital as a volunteer. However, this was challenging considering her situation.

"I later on tried to look for employment at various hospitals but was turned away because of my condition. Like in Kenyatta National Hospital, I was told that with my condition, I could not attend to emergency cases," she explains.

However, this did not dampen her determination. "My brother had hostels and I decided to work there as a caretaker," says the single mother of two.

Back at home, her mother was ill and she came back home to assist her, something she still does.

Apart from her quest for representing the disabled in Siaya, Okech is also a member of *Walemavu Na Raila (WARA)* in Siaya County. This is a group of persons with disabilities that does campaigns for CORD presidential aspirant Raila Odinga.

"We visit various disabled groups and urging them to vote for Raila because of his fight for the new constitution that has given us an opportunity to exercise our rights," she explains.

# Tribulations of Kitui women aspirants

By JOHN SYENGO

A number of women candidates for various political positions in the March 4, election are crying foul over challenges they face in the race to secure the seats.

Right from those seeking the County Assembly Representatives seats to the legislative positions, they all cite demands for bribes from voters as one of the major challenges they encounter in the campaign trail.

Some of the women candidates have also allegedly faced sexual harassment.

Candidates interviewed said that since majority of them were political novices and were throwing their hats in elective politics for the first, they do not have adequate wherewithal to mount vigorous campaigns.

Some of the women candidates intimidated that they have not received any financial support from their sponsoring parties, as expected, complicating matters for them. The lucky ones say they have received campaign posters, caps and T-shirts from their political parties' secretariats.

The candidates said as they grapple with the logistical problems on how to cover their vast campaign areas, the biggest being areas covered by those contesting the Kitui county women representative position- menacing demands for bribes from voters make things more intricate for them.

Even as they face mobility problems, those challenging male rivals have had to make do with "bad mouthing" and unsavoury statements directed towards them. They also claimed that their personal security has not always been guaranteed with one citing an attempt on her life last November.

A youthful jobless electrical engineer Munanie Kalanza who has taken a shot at the Waita ward civic seat on a Narc party ticket claims that the going



MUNANIE KALANZO

had been tough for her since her party as not availed campaign mobilization funds.

Although she is facing it off with male opponents who are more seasoned in politics, Kalanza was optimistic that she would wither the challenges she was faced with and return victory at the polls.

However, she said in the mean time she feared for her security because she could not afford to hire body guards to accompany her during campaign rallies. She said her male rivals have shown open hostility towards her.

"Considering that I am highly educated compared to my male rivals, they have often hurled very unkind words. Even their ilk's who are seeking the positions of MP have ganged up with them to undercut me. They fear I would in future challenge them for the MP position if I won the MCA position," she said.

Munanie added that covering the entire Waita ward has been an uphill task for her not only for lack of reliable transport- she has had to hire Boda bodas- but due to the dilapidated road network. She said most access roads are hardly impassable.

The daughter of former Mwingi



WINNIE KITETU

north MP Philip Manandu, who was assassinated in 1985 by a police gunman, Zipporah Mueni, who is now out to reclaim his father's seat rues that the campaign trail has proved a very tough and expensive affair.

"I have had to mobilise resources from family and friends to whom I am very grateful. My party did not facilitate us with any funds despite a promise to support women candidates," Mueni explained her source of campaign funds.

She pointed out that she did not have serious problems with her male opponents only for a few who were going round telling the electorate not to elect her as MP because she was married in a neighbouring constituency.

The ODM candidate said the argument was baseless as her family owns land in Mwingi north where they were developing a home. She said constitutionally there was no problem with her candidature.

"The major challenge has been lack of adequate financial resources to conduct my campaigns the same way my male opponents are doing. However, despite their spending millions in this campaign I am confident of winning the seat," she said exuding confidence.



JANE KIBATI

She said that she feared for her life reminiscing that she escaped death narrowly last November when police sprayed her car with bullets as she came from a campaign rally at Kyuso trading centre where she launched ODM machinani.

"My car was sprayed with bullets by police at Nguni Market and my driver together with my security aide suffered serious gunshot wounds. It was only through the grace of God that I emerged from the car unscathed," she laments.

She said she has also had to wade off attempts to rig me out of the ODM primaries "through voter buying but I praise God that I weathered the storm and emerged the ODM candidate for the parliamentary seat."

Even the women aspirants running for the exclusively women Kitui county women representative have their share of tribulations. Human medicine doctor, Winnie Kitetu, said it has been an uphill task covering the breadth and length of the expansive Kitui county.

The Narc party candidate laments that no financial support has been coming her way from any quarter while majority of male voters had often confronted her with a lot of demands for money.



ZIPPORAH MUENI

"This is something strange because women are not used to giving money to men. Sexual harassment by men and use of bad language towards women candidates have not been absent in campaigns," she explained.

As she lamented lack of mobility to take her around the vast county and lack of money for campaign materials she further decried lack of adequate security for her.

"We are not given security even when we ask for it. Whenever we ask to be provided with police security we are told to write a letter and have been waiting for eternity for approvals," she lamented.

Her competitor from the Chama cha Uzalendo, Jane Mwendu Kibati, says the geography of Kitui is quite tricky while the county is pretty vast. She added that mobilising resources for effective mobility to ensure visibility across the county has been an uphill task.

Although she says she had not faced any notable hostilities in the course of her campaigns she laments lack of funding from her party. She said that although she has had to rely on fiscal support from well-wishers the demand for financial inducement from voter has stuck out as a serious challenge.

## Metropolitan comes to the rescue of poll frenzied Eastlands

By DAVID NJAGI

He had been celebrating the success of his preferred candidate during the party nominations all day, but Henry Gitau's joy ended tragically.

Gitau's friends had sneaked away as darkness replaced the simmering heat of the day, but he was still having his drink a few minutes to mid night.

High on chang'aa from Hamsa slum in Eastlands, he groped his way home, and just like many a drunk, he threw caution to the wind. There was a price to pay for the recklessness.

Police officers on patrol found him clinging to the last straws of life after a speeding motorist ran into him while he was crossing the road, leaving him sprawled on the sidewalk.

Were it not for the proximity of Metropolitan Hospital in Buru Buru, his name would have been added to the growing statistics of poll related deaths.

"We received quite a worrying number of poll inflicted patients during the party nominations," says Dr. Kanyanje Gakombe of Metropolitan Hospital. "This puts a lot of pressure on our facility because it is the only one here that the public have a stake."

Like most emerging middle class estates in the city, Eastlands embodies the growing pool of the urban poor who cannot access basic services like health.

Besides Kiambiu and Sinai slums, the youth continue to waste away at chang'aa dens in Ma-

kongeni, Bahati Shauri Moyo and Hamsa.

Health centers in this part of the city are raising concern at the growing disease burden they have to shoulder from the poor, even as accidents along Jogoo road continue to choke the facilities.

"Most of the poor are not able to raise transportation costs to Kenyatta National Hospital where they can get affordable treatment," explains Dr. Gakombe. "The well to do on the other hand can get treatment in hospitals such as Agha Khan."

Yet surveyors say the city's expansion design indicates that Nairobi is growing towards the East as free land continues to attract investors in real estate and industrial processing.

But it is the connection to political trade offs and their link to domination of Nairobi County that is causing jitters among residents.

For instance, two of the most alleged reckless politicians have their bases in Eastlands, and are said to be contesting for the Governor and Senate seats respectively.

### Rowdy youth

Their influence is already taking effect, as rowdy youth confidently bully innocent civilians, while bragging that Nairobi is already under their control through the goodwill of the politicians.

One Eastlands resident narrated how the youth are tricking commuters into boarding noisy matatus with cheap offers, only to be shocked into paying more than the agreed fare.

"In one vehicle they can be as many as seven,"



says the middle aged woman. "They intimidate commuters while bragging that Nairobi is now under a new order."

According to Dr. Dominic Kibigo, a consultant practicing in Nairobi, most of the health facilities in the city are preparing for a shaky post election in the March 2013 poll.

At the Metropolitan Hospital, an ultra modern facility is being established at a cost of KSh260 million, as part of a 15 months expansion.

Sitting on a five acre piece of land, the facility which is about eight kilometers away from the Mama Lucy Kibaki hospital in Komarock, is the only public and private owned hospital in the area, with about 560 shareholders.

In the 18 years it has been in existence, the facility offers free services in family planning, annual medical check ups and immunization, medics say.

Expansion

According to Dr. Kimani Wanjeri, a director



at the hospital, the expansion includes the establishment of a world class Information Communication Technology (ICT), modern wards and a consultant suite.

Among the planned operations include CT scans, dialysis, plastic surgery as well as IVF services, among others.

"We also have a training school for nurses," says Dr. Gakombe. "We are training them in advanced life support to deal with emergencies such as the ones we received during the recent party nominations."

# Toddler suffers consequences of nurses' strike

By TERYANI MWADZAYA

She is only one and a half years old but Esther Mwango has not been spared the agony that has characterised public hospitals following the nurses' strike that hit public hospitals four months.

Esther has endured excruciating pain ever since the nurses downed their tools and hit the streets demanding for the registration of their union.

According to Esther's mother, Anzazi Mwango, the last time her daughter saw a doctor was in September last year, at the Coast General Hospital in Mombasa before the strike paralysed public hospitals in the country.

"The nurses' strike hit me so hard because I was relying on them for the well-being of my daughter but unfortunately we were left with empty wards," she says while wiping a tear.

She has now resigned to fate and prayer as she awaits the medics to resume duty and attend to her angel.

Her daughter is in dire need of a surgery to correct a condition that has afflicted the child since birth.

Mama Mwango says she gave birth to a child without anal opening and this makes it difficult for the baby to pass urine and stool.

Visibly disturbed, the mother of two is calling on the Government to come to her aid and help her child get proper medical services to save her life.

"Since I gave birth to her I have not known any other home apart from a hospital as we seek to remedy the situation," she says adding that an initial operation did very little to change things.

She says that she has had to do casual jobs to facilitate her hospital visits.

Mama Mwango says that any time she is away her ten year old son has to take care of his ailing sibling.

## Instructions

Mama Mwango has to give instructions to her son on how to handle his baby sister while she struggles to fend for her family in Bofu village, Samburu area of Kinango District, Kwale County.

"Every day I wake up early to look for casual jobs in the neighbourhood with the hope people will sympathise with my situation and give me work in exchange for cash to enable me make ends meet," she says.

When her pain eases a bit, Esther plays with her brothers oblivious of her delicate state that has been giving her mother sleepless nights.

However, Mama Mwango now pegs her hopes on the nurses because surgery cannot be done if there are no nurses to assist in the theatre.

This hope notwithstanding, Mama Mwango is faced with many challenges that require her attention as well as taking care of her sick baby through odd chores. Sometime she cuts the aloe plant in the bushes for traditional medicine.

"Sometimes things get so hard that I am forced to use bush medicine to alleviate the pain my child is going through because I cannot afford the modern medicine," she explains.

Mama Mwango says the villagers in her neighbourhood have been gracious and she is in the food programme where she gets maize meal, cooking oil and beans twice a month to sustain her family.



**Anzazi Mwango and her one and a half year old daughter Esther outside their home in Bofu village, Samburu. Below: Esther paying with her mothers phone. She requires surgery to correct her condition.** Pictures: Teryani Mwadzaya



Her husband and the children also volunteer in taking care of Esther as she does other chores. "My husband is jobless but he volunteers to fetch water as I look after Esther," says Mama Mwango.

The villagers have helped her but she still needs more help so as to cater for the baby's medication. She is now appealing for help to enable her meet medical and operation expenses which are estimated to be over KSh500,000.

## Presidential candidates gave health care a raw deal

By JAMES ODHIAMBO

More than 8,000 Kenyan women still die from pregnancy related complications and a majority of Kenyans do not seek professional health care.

According to Dr Boaz Otieno Nyunya, chairman Kenya Obstetrical and Gynaecological Society, many sick Kenyans do not seek health care because of prohibitive cost of services.

Nyunya was addressing delegates at the 37th Annual Scientific Conference in Eldoret recently. He noted that available medical facilities are overcrowded and manned by poorly paid, de-motivated and overworked health care providers.

Nyunya noted that there was poor distribution of health workers with majority being located in urban centers at the expense of some regions having fewer medical staff than others.

"It is estimated, for example, that out of 5,926 registered doctors in the country, only 2,000 work in public health facilities. Likewise, only 17,347 nurses in the country out of a total 41,679 work for the Government," Nyunya revealed.

These are as a result of poorly funded health services as Kenya allocates less than eight per cent of its national revenue to the health sector which is way below the 15 per cent recommended by the Abuja Declaration.

"Underlying the preventable maternal deaths is poor access to reproductive health facilities, obstetrical care and gynaecological services as a result of poor infrastructure and long distance to health facilities," he said.

Nyunya sentiments were echoed by the Dr Anne Kihara, Vice chairperson Kenya Obstetrical and Gynaecological Society who noted that the Constitution was not clear to many Kenyans about how health as a human right would be addressed in the devolved system of Government.

Turning to the recent televised presidential debates, Kihara said she was disappointed by the way most of them were so general about how their Government, if elected, would deal with issues of health and health-care. "We have seen how difficult our Government has found it to resolve the industrial stalemate occasioned by the nurses' strike. I do not know how many countries can do without nurses' service in public health facilities for more than three months," Kihara noted.

At the meeting, the Kenya Obstetrical and Gynaecological Society launched a Strategic Plan that consolidates their current strategies and operational methods.

"It builds common understanding among members on issues related to women's health and is out to improve KOG's ability to address various neglected but emerging issues on women's health," explained Kihara.

She stressed on the need to advocate for and mobilise resources as well as increased commitment to the provision of all components of women's health, with special emphasis on maternal and new born health. "We need to address in very deliberate ways the disparity in women's health. Maternal mortality ratio differentials are unacceptable in this country," she noted. The theme of the conference was "Enhancing Quality Sexual and Reproductive Healthcare through innovative processes, innovative financing, and sustainability and public-private partnerships in keeping with Kenya's constitution 2010".