



WOMEN LEADERSHIP BRINGS HOPE AND TRANSFORMATIVE CHANGE



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Kariuki promises major transformations if elected Nyandarua governor

SICILY KARIUKI

She has made her name as a performer who is able to change the fortunes of ailing institutions. Her track record in the public sector is replete with transforming and reforming some of the country's key Ministries.

This is Sicily Kariuki, a former Cabinet Secretary who came

to the national limelight when she was appointed a Cabinet Secretary in the Ministry of Public Service, Youth, and Gender at the height of National Youth Service (NYS) scandal.

Within a couple of months, she had initiated changes that would later reform and restore sanity at the NYS. "By the time I was leaving the Ministry, the

enrolment of young people into NYS had gone up to 12,000 from the 4,000 youth when I joined. Equally important was, during my leadership, the youth across the country established Saccos that have become a lasting imprint in the Ministry," she says with a lot of satisfaction.

Her impact was later to be felt at the Ministry of

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« **FROM PAGE 3** Health where she was instrumental in developing the Universal HealthCare (UHC) model which is currently being implemented in the country. The UHC is going to transform access to health services and improve the quality of life of many Kenyans, especially the underprivileged.

Her move to the Ministry of Water, Sanitation and Irrigation was designed to help the Ministry improve its performance on the key indicators especially around access to water and improved sanitation. She did not disappoint. During her time at the Ministry, she introduced new business models and managed to complete 113 water projects across the country that are likely to change the lives of many Kenyans.

It is this experience, knowledge, and skills Kariuki wants to use to change the fortunes and improve livelihoods in her Nyandarua County. That is why in February 2022 she resigned to vie for the Nyandarua County Governor's seat in the August 2022 elections.

But her entry into the race is promising to ignite intense political battle for the position currently held by Francis Kimemia, both of them towering figures who served in the Jubilee government.

Kariuki's political fortunes are highly pegged on her ability to marshal support from the networks she has built over the years both at the county and the national levels. She will be banking on the immense support she draws from the church, youth,



professionals and village elders.

Widely known for being impactful and pragmatic, the former CS is not new to community work and her career pathways have always given her an opportunity to serve grassroots. As a gubernatorial candidate, Kariuki brings with her unrivaled leadership experience of over 30 years in the private and public sector.

Indeed, her transformational leadership did not begin as a Cabinet Secretary. It is a journey that started many years ago after she graduated from the University of Nairobi with a Bachelor of Commerce, and joined Ken Invest Now, as an investment promotion officer.

"I rose through the ranks to become a promotion manager. This is a space where I engaged with both local and foreign investors and encouraged them to invest locally and create job opportunities."

Kariuki later joined Fresh Produce Exporters Association of Kenya where she worked as

an export manager rising to the position of General Manager and then the Chief Executive Officer. In this position, she managed to initiate changes in the sector that are being felt to date.

"When I joined, horticultural exports were at a very nascent stage in Kenya. I saw markets opening up after I had championed the first Code of Conduct for good agricultural practice to improve acceptance of products at the international market. This and other interventions resulted in a steady growth of the sector, which today is one of the leading export earners for the country."

Her shift to public service happened in 2013 when President Mwai Kibaki appointed her as the Chief Executive Office of the Kenya Tea Board. When she took over, the Tea sector had an annual income of Ksh 47 billion. But by the time she was leaving, the earnings had almost tripled to Ksh 130 billion per year, making it the largest contributor to Kenya's Gross Domestic Product (GDP)."

Kariuki believes

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« **FROM PAGE 4** her abilities and approaches to managing and transforming both private and public institutions will greatly help her to transform her county. She says that studies have shown an institution run or headed by a woman performs better from a profit point of view and return on investment.

She hopes the voters will evaluate her performance and give her an opportunity to take the county to another level in terms of economic, social, and political needs.

“I start with a solid foundation in understanding what the county needs to flourish. And therefore, one of the things am taking to Nyandarua is ensuring that we have investors both local and foreign coming in the county to create employment opportunities and add value to the raw materials that we produce.”

In addition, she promises prudent management of devolved funds to ensure that residents get value for money. “I have served in positions where within a short time I have made tangible impact and I promise to use the county’s resources well to make it self-sustainable.”

She has the knowledge, the expertise, and team leadership skills, all that are critical in delivering positive results. She further plans to use economic and social models that have proved successful at the national and international levels to change the fortunes of people in Nyandarua county.

“I have created rapport not only

with the technical people but also the policy makers at the national level, the UN family, the World Bank, and Africa Development Bank. I will use this social and institutional capital to transform the County.”

Her priorities include revamping the healthcare system by making sure health facilities are equipped with basic medicine and personnel. She is also going to diversify earnings by targeting the export market. “I will make sure farmers access planting materials, water for irrigation, enjoy accessible roads, and extensions services to enable them produce high value products for export.”

To increase earnings from tourism, she plans to refurbish Lake Olbolosat and settlers’ homesteads which are currently in ruins. Her eyes are also trained on reviving the livestock industry and ensuring it diversifies into production of products such as cheese. “There is no reason why we cannot look at the breeds of the livestock that we have and ensure we have extension services that will help us diversify our livelihoods and create employment opportunities.”

On access to water, Kariuku takes credit for being able to desilt thousands of colonial dams in Nyandarua County. “What I did was to sink several boreholes that are now providing clean water even during this dry spell.”

In addition to water, her impact is being felt in the health sector where she helped the establishment of the City Scan Centre, which has earned her

accolades, with Nyandarua residents no longer required to travel to Nakuru County to seek this service. This went hand in hand with the expansion of two hospitals in the county. “

But this illustrious career has not been without challenges. She has experienced violence on social media. “If you visit some of the sites, you will find all manner of names labeled at me.”

She acknowledges that online violence is not unique to her since female colleagues vying for political offices are experiencing the same. Disruption of her rallies, threats to her supporters, and destruction of her campaign materials, are other violence acts she is experiencing.

Fortunately, these acts have served to strengthen her resolve to soldier on and not be cowed by such intimidations and threats.

“We have trail blazers who scaled the political leadership ladder when it was extremely difficult. Right now with the 2010 constitution, women must get out of their comfort spaces and join political leadership. We have what it takes to withstand the ridicule, the dirt, the politicking and the intimidation.”

Her message to fellow women is that “Women need to get out in large numbers because we did not go to school to then sit, watch and complain. If you sit and yet you can make a good political leader, as a woman you are committing an offense of omission. Stand up to make a difference” ■

Politics not for the faint hearted, says Dr Gogo

BY ODHIAMBO ORLALE

When Rangwe Member of Parliament Lillian Gogo was elected in 2017, few people thought she will emerge a force to reckon with.

The five years she has served as Member of Parliament has given her the opportunity to transform her constituency, and secure her place in the political space.

It is because of her practical solutions to difficult issues that her residents have nicknamed her Alili Panadol, meaning like the drug, she is the cure for their education, health, infrastructure, and water needs, among others.

“The challenge for me to deliver was massive. Being my first time in parliament, the expectations were high and I have tried my level best not to let down my constituents,” says Dr Gogo.

True to her nickname Alili Panadol, Dr Gogo has managed to help the women, youth and other groups in her community to overcome so many obstacles.

One of them was the huge arrears the youth and women groups had accumulated after they failed to repay moment borrowed from the national government’s Uwezo Fund, Women and Youth Development Funds.

To address the problem, the MP initiated sensitization and empowerment programmes which led to the arrears being cleared, with more women and



Dr Lillian Gogo

youth being able to benefit further from these funds.

In the financial year 2019-20, KSh 20 million was allocated by the National Youth Fund to Rangwe constituency. Out of this, Ksh 14 million was dispersed youth led projects. The balance of six million shillings is pending because of what the MP describes as: “Poor intake and sensitization.”

Besides sorting out the arrears issue, Dr Gogo’s efforts have been felt in the education sector. She used the National Constituency Development funds (NCDF) to buy and equip one school each in

the 17 locations with a school bus.

This ambitious project has helped to promote education, educational trips, sports and extra curriculum activities as well as addressing the transport needs of the students, teachers, and outlying communities. She has further used the CDF to upgrade school buildings and putting up four classrooms, a laboratory and dormitory in all the 17 locations.

Her tenure has witnessed the building and equipping of the Rangwe sub-county headquarters, whose objective is to bring services

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« **FROM PAGE 6** closer to the people. The projects has also created job opportunities to the locals. Once complete, the offices will save the residents the time and pain of traveling to the county headquarters in Homa Bay, over 20Km away to seek services. The buildings are 70 per cent complete.

Dr Gogo is also happy of the success of her street lighting project which has increased security in major trading centres, a development that has encouraged traders to work late in the night and reap benefits from their businesses.

“We have flood lights erected at Asumbi trading centre, thanks to the partnership with the the national government. These lighting is also helping to enhance security for our girls at Asumbi Teachers Training College and Asumbi Girls,” says Dr Gogo.

On legislation, she moved a private member’s motion in 2021 to have an amendment to the Children’s Act to define “what is the best interest of the child.” But the initiative was taken over by the government.

Says the Rangwe MP: “The Government hijacked my Bill and moved it as a Government Bill; it is still pending after the second reading. It aims at interpreting what it means to have the best interest. This had been left in the hands of the judges to interpret.”

The highlights of the amendment include: to get the age of criminal liability raised from eight years to 12 years; provide how children are to be handled in the criminal justice system; and how adoption of children can and should be done. The Bills are still pending in parliament.

Still, the credit for initiating such amendments goes to her. Dr Gogo is equally happy she has achievement many of the promises she made to her constituents in her manifesto.

She hopes her performance in the past five years has endeared her even more to the over 52,000 voters.

Says a confident Dr Gogo, former Food Safety lecturer at Egerton University: “My electorates know that I am a no pushover, I say what I do and do what I say. In the past five years since I was elected, I have achieved so much for them as per my 2017 manifesto. The major one has been getting 85 per cent of the youth and women to access devolve funds.”

In 2017 when she was elected, she did not know much about politics. But the past five years at the heart of politics has taught her a lot.

“Leadership requires a lot of patience. I was taught to say no when something is wrong; and this has helped me to remain focused because there are many detractors out there. My strongest point is my integrity. I have had auditors visit my office to check on our accounts and left without finding anything fishy.”

Dr Gogo has also learnt how best to survive in politics. Being loyal to the political party that sponsored one to parliament and listening to wise counsel. “You cannot be a good leader if you cannot allow yourself to be led,” says the first-term MP.

Some of these lessons are as result of the challenges she has had to contend with. One of them is many people did not believe that a woman could lead them. Her performance in

the past five years has changed these negative perceptions and attitudes of locals to positive ones about women leadership.

She is happy that the challenge of political violence is not as prominent as in 2017.

“Political violence was a challenge then, but I am glad to report that it is no longer such a big issue thanks to the sensitization and empowerment programmes in the constituency. It is something I am still working on,” says Dr Gogo who is currently pursuing a law degree at University of Nairobi.

She has decided to conduct a clean campaign devoid of name-calling, hate speech and promoting the bad culture of gonya-gonya (giving handouts) to the public that are some of the things that trigger violence.

Funding, like in 2017, remains a major challenge to her and other women leaders vying for political positions. Unless someone comes to hold their hand, she says, it is a very difficult journey.

But Dr Gogo says despite of these challenges, she wants to change stigma on women leadership. “I want to change this narration and I am already supporting other women who have leadership qualities and would like to plunge into politics, like me.”

For now, even with this sterling performance and showing that women leadership transforms lives, Dr Gogo is not resting on her laurels. She is defending her seat against five male competitors. And she hopes, her constituent will give her another chance to redefine their lives. ■

It is all systems go for Muhia as she eyes the Kipipiri parliamentary seat



FAITH MUIRURI

Kipipiri Constituency Member of Parliament seat might scare some people when the names of people contesting for the position in this year's general election are mentioned. But not so for Wanjiku Muhia who is promising to put up a fight of her life to win the seat.

While the current MP, the National Assembly Majority leader Amos Kimunya, is one of the nine men eying the position, this does not scare Muhia the only female contender in the race.

"I feel I have what it takes to

win this seat," says the confident Muhia, who is a member of the East African Legislative Assembly (EALA). She says her manifesto, which outlines her priority areas, is going to transform the lives of the residents of Kipipiri.

Her key areas of focus include a radical approach to economic empowerment of people in communities. "I plan to make a lasting impact in the constituency by introducing a model where all Constituency Development Fund (CDF) tenders go to villagers so that they are economically empowered."

On farming, she plans to partner

with the government, NGOs and corporate organizations to introduce farmers to high value crops such as pyrethrum. This will help communities in Kipipiri diversify their sources livelihoods.

Her passion for education will see her implement a marshal plan that will result in construction of new classrooms and revamping of technical training institutions. "Most of this institutions are wasting away while young people compete for limited training opportunities in Nyahururu and Nakuru."

Electricity and road connectivity are also key things in the Constituency, where she says a significant percent of the constituency are yet to access this important commodity. She believes better roads will enhance the connectivity of the constituency to local and regional markets.

Renowned for her political slogan Wanjiku4Wanjiku, the aspirant is not new in the political arena. She made her first step in the political arena in 2013 when she vied and won the Nyandarua County Woman Representative seat.

As a Woman representative, she is remembered for successfully pushing an amendment to the Persons with Disability Act of 2003. This amendment is credited for the inclusion of sign language in the TV stations news bulletins that we see today. She says this was to ensure the deaf persons have improved access to information as outlined in the Bill of Rights.

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« **FROM PAGE 8** She has sponsored a similar bill at EALA and hopes that once enacted all Television stations in the region will be include sign language in their news bulletins.

Muhia was also instrumental in the lifting of a government directive that had outlawed the fitting of cargo carriers on all public service vehicles, a move she says endeared her to the electorate.

As Woman Representative, she is one of the those instrumental in the establishment of the Affirmative Action Social Development Fund, which has revolutionized the role and contribution of County MPs. "This fund has enabled the County MPs who do not have any funding structure to initiate development activities in their respective counties."

A holder of a Master's holder in Business Administration, Muhia prides in empowering scores of women through self-help groups, and by training them on various income generating skills. "I partnered with Equity Bank and trained scores of women on entrepreneurial skills and majority now are running their own businesses."

The legislator is also credited for initiating a cancer centre in Kipipiri Constituency. "This centre stalled after I lost my seat in 2017 but the electorate know I financed the project singlehandedly using a loan I had acquired from the bank. If elected I will complete this project to serve the community."

For her, the 2017 General Elections, which she believes

she won, stalled her many other plans. She is sad even after political party tribunal, high court and Court of Appeal said the nomination should be repeated, this did not happen as her party said it did not have money to conduct repeat elections. It opted to interview candidates, a process Muhia gave a wide berth. Her consolation was nomination to the East African Legislative Assembly where she is a member.

Prior to joining politics, Muhia worked at several flower firms in Naivasha and rose through the ranks to become Human Resources Manager. She is credited with bringing several social changes to the flower industry, among them the creation of a day-care centre for breastfeeding mothers, a SACCO, and medical and insurance care for the workers.

From the flower industry, Wanjiku joined Equity Bank, where she worked for six years before resigning to join politics. She says that working with different people in these positions sharpened her leadership skills.

Muhia will be contesting on a UDA Party ticket and is confident that she will garner landslide victory in the August poll. "UDA Party's manifesto is great. It is development conscious and focuses on a bottom-up approach which is what I have been selling to the electorate."

If elected, Muhia plans to operate an open-door policy and incorporate the views of all her constituents.

But just like other women candidates, Muhia too has suffered maligning of her

character by her opponents in an effort to intimidate her. "I have refused to be scared by my opponents. For verbal violence, which women aspirants get in abundance, my thick skin has done the trick. Instead, I have focused my energies to winning the poll."

In the past couple of months, her opponents have tried all tricks to dim her visibility. Two months after she launched her bid, her bill board that was placed at a very convenient place in the market was stolen. She put another one. Again, it was stolen. "Up to this moment I have not put a billboard again. This may not be verbal or outspoken harassment but that is money lost. Each bill board had cost me Ksh50,000."

Knowing that her competitors would want to use every opportunity to cause violence or intimidate her, Muhia makes sure her meetings end by 6pm. "This may seem like a disadvantage seeing that men go on campaigning way into the night, but the idea is to concentrate on what works for you," she says notes. "The strategy can protect you from physical violence."

She feels the political environment is still harsh for women but they should not give up. "Ignore the negative energy, focus, move, purpose to where they are headed. Distractors will always be there. If you are married let them not ask about your husband, if you are not married they will not marry you and therefore do not let them weigh you down with domestic issues." ■



Prof Jacqueline Oduol

Politics is not a game for me; it is an opportunity to change lives

BY ODHIAMBO ORLALE

As the August 2022 elections beckons, Prof Jacqueline Oduol is banking on her performance as Nominated Member of Parliament to win the Alego Usonga parliamentary seat.

Prof Oduol believes that the many development and legislative achievements she has recorded in the past five years are what she needs to endear herself to the over 100,000 voters who will decide the next Alego Usonga MP in the August polls.

Says Oduol, an Associate Professor of Linguistics and African Languages: “I have been tried and tested and proved that I can deliver for the people of Alego Usonga.”

As nominated MP and a member of the Parliamentary Committee of Sports, Culture, and Tourism, she played a key role in the building of a Sports Academy in her Constituency. She has used her networks to assist, empower and build capacity of her people, especially those categorized as special groups.

Her support to Abedo Women Group through table banking (kungogihola) and training women on strategic plans, financial management and marketing farm produce and products has seen their livelihoods change for the better.

In parliament, she sponsored two Bills that address issues close to the heart of many Kenyans: Good governance and land. One of the bills is the Public Finance

Management Bill 2020 that seeks to introduce provisions that engender the policy, planning and budgetary process in the country. The other is the National Land Commission (Amendment) Act, 2021 that seeks to establish County Land Management Boards for purposes of managing public land.

In addition to this, she has assisted in the development of various projects in constituency through partnerships with Non-Governmental Organizations, national and county government officials.

“If I am elected, I will ensure that if the CDF is not enough to help school fees for the vulnerable, orphans and the destitute, I will go out of my way to use my networks to get

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« **FROM PAGE 10** well-wishers and donors to chip in. Education is the best weapon to help the children to have a bright future.”

Her performance has endeared her to the constituent who now fondly refer to her as ‘Min Alego Usonga (Mama Alego Usonga).

Prof Oduol believes her experience in the government, academia, and social spheres will be very valuable in delivering even greater things for the people of Alego Usonga.

She served as Principal Secretary in the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Development between 2008 and 2013, a position that helped her to contribute to policies and actions that have impacted positively on women, children and other vulnerable groups. In parliament, she sits in two parliamentary committee

At the global levels, Prof Oduol is the President of the High-Level Advisory Group on Counter-Terrorism and Violent Extremism Committee of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU). She also serves as the Africa Geopolitical Region representative and previously was Vice President of the High-Level Advisory Group

Even with such enviable standing in the society, politics has not been easy. Like many other women leaders, patriarchy, culture, attitudes and perceptions of her community about women leadership remain challenges that need to be surmounted.

Says Prof Oduol: “We still

“I have learnt from my previous elections attempts that I must learn where my weakness and strength lie, who my viable opponents are, and then develop effective strategies to win voters to my side.”

Prof Jacqueline Oduol

have people who tell me that they recognize my leadership competence, but they would rather vote for me for the Siaya Women Representative’s position!

I don’t believe leadership has anything to do with gender. Leadership is about solving problems, developing relevant policies, and serving the people.”

She is however happy that a lot is happening, and the society is slowly becoming receptive to women leadership.

The recent trend where scores of women have been elected as Governors, Senators, MPs and Members of the County Assemblies by right not because they are women is a pointer to that. She cites Homa Bay and Muranga Counties where in each of the county, three women were elected as MPs in 2017.

In Homabay, these are: Milly Odhiambo (Suba North), Lilian Gogo (Rangwe) and Eve Obara (Kabondo Kasipul), while in Murangá is Alice Wahome (Kandara), Ruth Mwaniki (Kigumo) and Mary Njoroge (Maragua).

Still, funding her campaigns, the culture of gonya-gonya (handouts), and electoral violence remain in her biggest headache in the 2022 elections. Indeed, in addition to gender stereotypes, these challenges have been weaponized to deter women from competitive politics.

But Prof Oduol says these challenges have offered her opportunities to learn useful lessons. “I have learnt from my previous elections attempts that I must learn where my weakness and strength lie, who my viable opponents are, and then develop effective strategies to win voters to my side.”

The other lessons is to derive inspiration from her role models who include Dr Achola Pala, a former employee of UNIFEM now UN Women, former Karachuonyo MP, Phoebe Asiyio, and her late grandmother Rosa Mlal, when things get tough.

Prof Oduol strongly believes these lessons, the experience, and the success she has recorded as a leader, have prepared her well to serve and provide effective leadership to the people of Alego Usonga.

“I have been in government, academia and in politics, and I feel I can lessen the untold suffering among the people of Alego Usonga, give hope to the youth and other vulnerable groups. Politics is not a game for me; it is an opportunity to change the lives of the people of Alego Usonga. ■

Chief who wants to be an MP

BY ODHIAMBO ORLALE

Juliana Kamwara is a woman on a mission. After serving Mathare residents as a Chief and helping to transform lives; she now wants to serve them as Member of Parliament for Mathare Constituency.

Kamwara says while the journey to winning this seat looks tough, she is confident her track record will help her win the hearts and souls of the electorate in her constituency on a Wiper Party ticket. She boasts of a list of successes she has recorded while in service.

“One of my biggest achievements during my tenure was to promote the rehabilitation, vocational training and transforming lives of youth who had either dropped out of school, were jobless, or victims of drug and alcohol abuse.”

In conjunction with the Ministry of Education under Technical Vocational Education and Training (TIVET) and the Ministry of Youth under the Kenya Youth Employment and Opportunity Programme (KYEOP) they were able to reach over 5,000 youth aged between 18 and 35 years of age. This programme has significantly improved the lives of many young people, and helped them to turn away from crime.

Her campaign against drug abuse is another feather to her work. As a Chief, she led a major campaign against illicit brewers



Juliana Kamwara

and organized criminal gangs that were giving the residents sleepless nights. She managed to dismantle them, while others were arrested and prosecuted.

How did she do it? To fight the drug problem, Kamwara formed Mathare Youth Anti-Drugs Organization five years ago that spearheaded the war against the vice. The success of the programme impressed many, but a few were not happy.

“During a recent campaign and meet-the-people tour in Kosovo, some irate youth recognized me and forced me to apologize for driving them out of town saying

they will campaign against me. But I told them the move was not meant to destroy them, but to make their lives better,” says Kamwara.

True to her promise to better their lives, Kamwara has managed to link the youth, women, and the business community to devolved funds like Uwezo and Youth Fund.

Popularly known as Mama Mathare, Kamwara says access to such funds and education for the children in these low-income residential areas is the best gift to the people.

A former teacher and graduate

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« **FROM PAGE 12** of Kenya Technical Teachers College (KTTC) in Biology and Agricultural Engineering, she says it is for this reason that she started the Giant Step Secondary School in Zimmerman with about 200 students.

But the COVID-19 lockdown forced the school to close just a few months after opening. When schools were reopened, only half of the students reported back as she relocated the premises to a new site on a plot she owns to avoid stress and pressure of paying rent. She has never given up.

Kamwara hopes her diploma in psychology counselling from Moi University and a Bachelors of Arts degree in Community Development from National Christian University in the United States of America will come in handy to make this project a huge success.

Security is another big issue on her agenda. Under her Kamwara Initiative, she plans to ride on the Nyumba Kumi (Ten Houses) Initiative to use her model of having 10 leaders to represent every 100 households for purposes of knowing their needs and how to address them. This will involve bringing on board everyone, especially the professionals and business community to share their views on how to develop the Constituency.

Mathare has a population of over 200,000 people and is second biggest informal settlement in the capital city. It has 116,000 registered voters

in six Wards; namely Kiamaiko, Huruma, Ngei, Mabatini, Mlango Kubwa and Hospital Ward.

Like other women political aspirants, Kamwara has to confront many challenges while seeking votes in these Wards. One of them is political violence.

“As women aspirants, we want peace, and are not keen on hiring political goons to harass our male rivals because the same can be used against you. We want to be the change-makers,” says Mama Mathare.

Her competitors are using both online and offline tactics to intimidate her. She says the intimidation and harassment does not stop at the physical level; it has been extended to the cyberspace where some women aspirants have been lynched by hired bloggers. At one point, a blogger who had maligned her had to apologize when she confronted him.

“But my biggest challenge, just like it is for most women aspirants, is lack of funds. There are times I have traversed the constituency until the fuel in my car has run out forcing me to call a mechanic thinking that it is a mechanical problem!”

According to experts, the costs of running a parliamentary seat campaign is about Ksh10 million, and could be even higher in the capital city.

Understanding the inner workings of politics is another challenge. “I must admit that I am still learning the ropes as a green horn in politics. I was recently shocked to find out that my name

was not on the register of Wiper Party at the last minute! I had to call, protest and demand to know what was going on,” says Kamwara.

Her competitors have also tried to stop her from addressing powerful political forums that would enhance her visibility. Sometimes she is forced to demand for a chance to do so.

Kamwara revealed that such incidences and her gender sometimes make her feel scared when she is on the campaign trail. She recalls how some hired goons threatened to undress female aspirants in public for exercising their constitutional rights.

Even as things get tough, two things are her greatest consolation. She feels she has an upper hand over her rivals by virtue of having lived and worked in the area for more than 10 years.

The second one is the backing of her husband, children, extended family members and staunch supporters, who are standing with her every turn she makes.

“I am now more confident of myself and of winning the August 9 General Election.”

“I don’t believe in telling lies to woo voters; and the voters know me as their former chief who does what she says.”

Kamwara is banking on her good working relations with the residents, especially the youth and the women groups, to emerge victorious. ■

