Putting up a brave face

Women pick up the pieces after unfair party primaries
Kenya will be going to the third general elections since the promulgation of the Constitution of Kenya 2010. However, very little is being done to ensure that the two thirds gender rule is achieved.

While Article 81(b) of the constitution provides that not more than two thirds of members of elective public bodies shall be of the same gender, Parliament has failed to enact a law to operationalize this provision of the Constitution.

A high court ruling in 2017 that sought to ensure that two thirds is realized in the August polls through political parties has been suspended. Justice Anthony Ndung’u also suspended a decision by the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (IEBC) to blacklist political parties that do not comply with the two thirds gender principle in their nomination of candidates for the August General Elections.

The move came shortly after IEBC had rejected party lists that did not reflect the two thirds gender rule. This forced parties to move to court.

IEBC was acting on another directive by Justice Chacha Mwita issued in April 2017, directing the electoral body to ensure that all political parties align their nomination lists with the two-thirds gender principle.

The ruling applied to the nomination of candidates for the 290 constituency-based elective positions for members of the National Assembly and 47 county-based elective positions for members of the Senate.

Although this initial ruling had renewed hopes to attain the two thirds gender rule in both the Senate and National Assembly, the actualization of this aspiration remains a pipe dream.

Recently, Elizabeth Yogo, a senior official with the Orange Democratic Party intimated that save for the few women candidates who have been given direct party tickets, majority had a rough time during the primaries.

Yogo says that a comparative analysis by the party’s women league reveals that the country is far from meeting the two thirds gender rule during this election. “We have lost the gains garnered prior to the primaries. We had registered a large number of women for the different elective seats but majority lost during the primaries while others dropped their political bid in favour of their male counterparts.

Key among those who have lost during the primaries include the ODM’s Deputy Secretary General and the current Busia Woman Representative Florence Mutua who lost to Paul Otuoma in the battle for the Azimio ticket for the Busia gubernatorial seat.

Other notable figures include Dr Pamela Odhiambo, the Migori Woman Rep who lost in her bid for the Governor’s seat while Peris Tobiko lost to Katoo Ole Metito in her quest for the Governor’s seat on a UDA ticket in Kajiado County. The list is endless as we move to the single member constituency as more and more women fell at the height of political machinations and tribal arithmetic in favour of their male counterparts.
Winfred Wambua, a programme officer with the National Gender and Equality Commission (NGEC) shares similar sentiments and indicates that women did not fair well during the just concluded primaries.

Mulle Musau of Election Observation Group (ELOG) blames this partly to the issue of consensus building.

“These were boardroom decisions, it was about money, who can push what wallet, envelops, who can support the other. The question is: between women, People living With Disabilities (PWDs) and seasoned male politicians, who has the resources to be able to make and move the tables when consensus is being done?”

“Majority did not have the kind of money that was required to be able to influence decisions at the political party level. They ended up forfeiting opportunities to the much more resourced contenders who are men,” says Musau while releasing a report on the just concluded party primaries where ELOG had deployed over 102 observers across the country.

The ELOG official says that very few seats in regards to the single member constituency, senate and governors positions were contested, majority were settled in the board room.

He says the situation was further aggravated by direct tickets. While some women benefitted from direct nominations, this approach also disfranchised many women.

The other problem was voter bribery. The influence of money in the entire electoral process, voter bribery was one of the biggest issues. There was rampant voter bribery across the entire party primaries.

According to Musau, the political parties (Amendment) Act of 2022 give parties an opportunity to be able to nominate directly and indirectly and therefore you cannot fault them for using the direct nomination vote because it is provided in the law.

“Prior to the primaries, we had suggested that one of the ways we can be able to achieve the two thirds is by allowing parties to identify strong women in their strongholds and offer them direct ticket.”

This is because Political parties have the power to ensure gender balance since they are the ones who give party tickets to their candidates. This can be done through positive discrimination.

But upon conclusion of the party primaries, IEBC had to reject the party lists because many political parties did not comply with the two thirds gender rule. Political parties had to go and prepare the lists again.

“What did the parties do because they had already done their nominations? Most of them went back to the drawing board and came back with a compliant list. They looked at all places that they did not have any candidate and put the women. They passed the test but placed women in areas they were very clear they were not going to win.”

The ELOG official blames this on inconsistencies coming from the judiciary. “We need the judiciary to be put on the spot, we cannot make gains on the one hand and then take them on the other hand. There must be a way judiciary must interpret the mood and directions of the country in terms of trying to attend to some of constitutional requirements.

The two thirds gender provision has been problematic, we need to encourage any attempts to resolve it and although we allow the court to make final decisions, we have strong reservations.”

Beth Syengo, the President of ODM’s women league concurs with ELOG findings and points out that the playing ground is not level for women because Kenyan politics is about who has money to induce voters.

She says that besides using un-orthodox means to slow the campaigns of their female counterparts such as violence and propaganda, men massively bribed their way into getting their party tickets.

She cites cases where strong women candidates both at the national and county levels were pushed out of the race with no alternative.

Paul Masese of Centre for Enhancing Democracy and Good Governance (CEGG) is emphatic that the two thirds rule is likely not to be achieved in this election.

“If the people elected through universal suffrage have been awarded the certificates, what guarantees do we have that two thirds will be achieved in this election?” -SS

<<FROM PAGE 2 counterparts.
Money, political intrigues, impend women’s political success

BY JOYCE CHIMBI

After a long hard fight to make through the tough and grueling nomination process, the journey has only started for women.

One of these women is Alice Ndegwa, who is a former nominated Member of the Laikipia County Assembly. Her attempts to clinch the Jubilee ticket to vie for the Senate position in Laikipia County were unsuccessful.

She says her failure is partly blamed on the commercialization of politics that makes it very difficult to penetrate certain political positions. To her, women must find strategic ways to acquire political mileage even without a financial muscle.

“Active politics is a very tough and uneven ground for women and at times even those closest to you are the ones out to make money out of you in big and small ways,” she laments.

Josephat Mukaru, a political analyst says that at every level of political participation, money matters. First, money is critical for political party operations and the amount of money an individual contributes to the party defines their place, position, and status in that party.

“Political party financing is the current mountain that women who made it through the nominations processes have to climb. It is very difficult for women to compete on an equal footing if they do not put their money where their mouth is.”

Catherine Njoki agrees. She unsuccessfully vied for a ticket for the position of Member of the County Assembly in Kiambu County.

“I am in the jua kali industry and like many...”
I am barely making ends meet. But at the community level, they told me ‘thie ukiumaga’ (go drying) a rude way of dismissing someone who is of no benefit to you. I had no handouts to give so I was told to ‘go drying’,” she says.

Research conducted by the Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy says “money plays a critical role in the electoral process in Kenya.”

Titled Women’s Access to Political Finance in Kenya, the study notes that elections are highly competitive because Kenya’s political leaders are the highest paid worldwide, relative to per-capita Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

“Demographic reality is not reflected in the participation of women in the electoral process or in politics more generally. Women have been able to vote since independence in 1963 but despite laudable efforts to outlaw discrimination on the basis of gender, Kenya remains a patriarchal process,” the institute finds.

While agreeing with these sentiments, Njoki says that even community’s that are largely viewed as matriarchal, the ghost of Wangu wa Makeri now haunts women in competitive active politics.

Wangu wa Makeri was a fiery woman leader who became the first and only female Kenyan chief in 1902. Many other women chiefs have since taken position in various parts of the country.

Wangu sat on the back of a man while addressing a baraza meeting and men have, decades later, use that to dissuade people from voting for women. Money is used to compound this problem.

“The conversation is that these women will ‘sit on us’ so the men and more so the youth have to be lured with handouts. This is where money comes in. Women are expected to play the money game. They say, well you are a woman but if you have something to be eaten then umetosha (you are capable),” Mukaru says.

The Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy says the political landscape is largely skewed against women due to the lack of adequate measures to ensure women's representation in the national assembly.

“The weakness of internal political party initiatives to encourage women's participation and the struggle female candidates face to enter the political field and compete with their male counterparts all explain women’s low level of participation,” the institute finds.

The Institute further notes that in Kenyan politics “the lack of access to financial resources and the bias of political party candidate selection processes have been identified as major impediments to the women’s participation. In addition, Kenya’s patriarchal culture excludes women from electoral politics.”

Mukaru confirms that the political terrain is marred by many challenges targeting both men and women. But women face challenges that are specific to them.

“Too much is expected from women leaders, and money that they do not have. When men were freely going to school and pursuing education and opportunities to the highest levels, women were held back by culture and their reproductive and caregiving roles,” he says.

“These are important considerations that need to be introduced in the discourse around political leadership. It is only recently that women have gathered themselves and are aiming for high voltage politics. And we as a society, must give them a chance because women leaders are progressive and they will accelerate development.”

In all, the institute recommends an assessment, reform and transformation, at both formal and informal levels, the barriers that “impede and discourage progress on gender equality and women's political rights.” SS
Roselyn Ochieng’ had just been cleared by the Orange Democratic Movement (ODM) party to vie for the Embakasi Central parliamentary seat when devastating news hit her like a thunderbolt. She was not going to run. Her party was not fielding any candidates but was instead going to support the Jubilee candidate.

The constituency had been zoned off as part of the agreement between the coalition partners. A distraught Adhiambo says this was not communicated to her, and the information only came when she incurred losses running into millions of shillings.

“I had paid my agents on the previous day and spent lots of monies in preparation for the elections only to be told very late in the day that the party had decided to support the Jubilee candidate.

Gloria Kabiru is another aspirant with a sad story. Her political career was nipped in the bud when the party primaries turned into her biggest political nightmare. Kabiru who is the ODM’s deputy party leader did not vote and was not allowed to vote as the electronic register indicated that she had already voted.

“Worst still I had even voted for my opponent. Even in a worst case scenario that cannot happen but this is the reality in the murky political world.

Her cries for justice fell on deaf ears as elections were done electronically and therefore this could not be reversed.

A similar predicament befell Perpetua Mponjiwa who was vying for the Kileleshwa ward seat. Mponjiwa who was making her second attempt for the seat had a shock of her life.

Opinion polls indicated that I was leading but by the time I arrived at the polling station things had changed.”
Most of her supporters were not able to vote because they had already voted in absentia. “Someone entered their details electronically and sealed my fate”.

Although Mponjiwa managed to vote, she lost the seat, garnering a paltry 300 votes.

In 2017 she won the primaries after defeating the then minority leader but was prevailed upon to step down in favour of the party official on the promise that she will be nominated. However her name was missing on the party list. She moved to court, won but was never sworn in.

In Nyamira, Violet Omwamba was one of the strongest candidates but was prevailed upon by elders to drop her bid in favour of a male candidate. “I was forced to step down because the community cannot be led by a woman. I was told if I wanted to vie, I should focus on the woman representative seat.”

Narok’s Agnes Siteiya was also called by elders and asked to step down as consensus building took centre stage during the party primaries.

Negotiated democracy among the nomadic communities also disfranchised women. Dekar Ali was vying for the Mandera East parliamentary seat. She was given the Azimio Certificate but her name was missing in the list submitted to IEBC.

According to the ODM’s women league’s leader Beth Syengo, this is the tragedy that befell most female aspirants across the country.

“The process was undemocratic with men massively bribing their way to win the party tickets. We were voting electronically but most male candidates were able to manipulate those presiding the exercise to feed in details of all those who had been registered by the party as voters in respective polling stations.

“They were able to access party registers and vote electronically on behalf of unsuspecting women candidates and their supporters.

She says that most women candidates were not able to cast their votes at the ward level. “Their details had already been captured electronically and the damage was irreversible,” adds Syengo during an interview with Sauti Sasa.

But all is not lost. She says they advised the affected aspirants to apply for nomination. “I am hoping that they will be in the party list and get their rightful share through nominations.”

The party however registered gains in areas where women were issued with direct tickets.

Among those issued with direct tickets include Gladys Wanga (Governor Homabay County, Lilian Gogo (Rangwe), Millie Odhiambo (Suba North), Eve Obara (Kabondo Kasipul) and Beatrice Elachi- Dagoreti North.

Direct tickets were also issued to MCAs who won seats during the 2017 General Elections. Rose Ogonda (Kware ward), and Cecilia Ayoti (Laini Saba). “The Direct tickets are meant to safeguard the women gains registered in the previous elections. We also saw women win in cases where they had been assimilated to male campaigns. Women who had also initiated projects in the community, resonated with the voters and therefore won party tickets.”

Syengo says that women in this country still have a long way to go before they can register major wins in the political arena. She cites the cases of strong women who participated in the primaries like Florence Mutua (Busia Governor) and Dr Pamela Odhiambo (Migori Governor) but lost.

She however notes that the nomination of Martha Karua as the running mate for Azimio’s presidential flag bearer will help tilt the equation and increase women representation in leadership positions.

In future, she says, women must also be involved in coalition building processes. “That is why a woman would spend a million only to be told that there are no elections.” -SS
American Observer Team Raises Red Flag on barriers to women’s success in 2022 elections

BY ODHIAMBO ORLALE

The forth-coming General Election is likely to be one of the hottest contested in the country’s history with women candidates having to fight double or even triple to win respective political seats.

According to the International Republican Institute (IRI) and National Democratic Institute (NDI) pre-election assessment mission to Kenya, a lot more needs to be done to make the playing field level for gender, youth, and persons with disabilities candidates in the August 9 General Election.

In a statement, the observers note: “While Kenya’s constitution provides a framework for an inclusive political process, barriers to increasing the representation of women, youth, and persons with disabilities as political actors continue to exist.”

While numerous challenges continue to exist for women candidates, the announcement of former Cabinet Minister and Nark Kenya chairperson, Martha Karua as Raila Odinga’s running mate could result in Kenya gaining its first ever...
female deputy president.

The Mission also noted that there were a number of challenges – including a lack of goodwill from members of the political elite, insufficient voter outreach and education, financial barriers, and entrenched patriarchal norms and political elitism – that prevent the meaningful inclusion of nontraditional candidates in the electoral process.

They however praised the 2010 constitution saying it was very progressive and pointed out it’s establishing a groundbreaking gender quota, requiring “not more than two-thirds of elective public bodies shall be of the same gender.”

The sad news is that, over a decade later, and after several attempts, the parliament is yet to enact legislation to fully implement this constitutional requirement.

Says the report: “The lack of implementation underscores the significant barriers that continue to impede the full and equal participation of women in all spheres of political life.”

On April 28, 2022, the IEBC ordered all political parties participating in the general election to adhere to a two-thirds gender quota for all the elective posts.

The observers praised the IEBC’s efforts to support women’s representation and the spirit of the constitution, but noted that the court later suspended the IEBC decision, noting that political parties were not provided enough time or guidance to adhere to the quota.

As a result of that move by the courts, the six elective seats that have been dominated by men are a hard nut to crack for most women candidates nominated in the recent chaotic party nominations. The six are: President, Governor, Senator, County Women Representative, Member of Parliament and Member of the County Assembly (MCA).

“The continuation of male-dominated political parties, along with the emergence of mega-party coalitions, has crowded out space for less established aspirants, spurring many women to seek nomination on smaller party tickets or as independent candidates to gain a spot on the ballot,” said the observers.

The campaign trail is not laughing matter and most women aspirants have to contend with violence directed at them, their families, and supporters, as well as an unbalanced political party nomination processes.

Indeed, a post-election evaluation of women political participation in the 2017 general election established that women candidates were subjected to various forms of violence, including harassment, intimidation, physical assault, and economic abuse as well as threats, coercion, and abuses via social media platforms.

The interim report by IRI/NDI Stakeholders was compiled from May 16 to 20, 2022, as part of their overall observation of Kenya’s 2022 general elections.

The high-powered delegation comprised of Jean Mensa, Chairperson of the Electoral Commission of Ghana; James Lahai, the National Coordinator of National Election Watch (Sierra Leone); Nicole Rowsell, Acting Vice President of the National Democratic Institute (USA); and Yomi Jacobs, Resident Program Director of the International Republican Institute in Kenya (Nigeria).

The delegation conducted its activities in accordance with the Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation, which was launched in 2005 at the United Nations, and in compliance with the laws of the Republic of Kenya.

During the assessment, they met with a wide array of election stakeholders, including: the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (IEBC), political parties, civil society, business associations, media representatives, religious leaders, the judiciary, and government actors.

NDI and IRI will conduct a second pre-election assessment mission to assess progress toward key recommendations before Kenya’s general elections scheduled for August 9. -SS
The journey of Kenyan women towards gender equality, women empowerment, and fair representation in social-economic and political spheres remain one of the biggest challenges they need to surmount. The upcoming elections offer them the greatest opportunity to bridge the gender gap.

The spirited fight women and male who champion gender equality have put up in the past years can be credited for the creation of institutional frameworks that now inform the mainstreaming of gender. Other gains include policies and legislation that address unfair representation of women in decision-making spaces. The climax was the 2010 Constitution which gave women more opportunities into leadership through elective and appointive positions, thanks to the Affirmative Action.

The August, 2022 General Elections presents another opportunity for women to scale the heights into higher levels of leadership and decision making. Currently, in the 290 single-member constituencies, only 24 women MPs were elected compared to 266 men. In the Senate, only four counties elected women Senators, with three female governors being elected out of the 47.

The nomination of Martha Karua as a first ever female running mate...
for a major Presidential candidate and frontrunner Raila Odinga of Azimio La Umoja Coalition is a great milestone in uplifting women leadership.

In his Speech, Raila noted that after 60 years of independence, there is no excuse for the male dominance in the executive and decision making spaces. “History is calling us to close the gender gap in our country.” This is a critical statement towards this noble course.

According to the 2019 census, women account for 51% of Kenya’s population, with the Constitution requiring that not more than two-thirds representation by one gender in all elective posts. However, the challenge remains in its implementation.

According to Kagwiria Mbogori, Chairperson of the Kenya National Commission on Human Rights (KNCHR), women of Kenya have fought heard for over 50 years and there is now light at the end of the tunnel that change is coming.

“There is evidence of change in key sectors such as the Judiciary, an example is in the just concluded Law Society of Kenya Elections in Nairobi where all women won the elective posts, a thing that has never happened before,” says Mbogori.

Former Chairperson of the National Gender and Equality Commission, Winnie Lichuma noted that “we are at the doorstep with a woman as the front runner in major political formation. The excitement across the board indicates time for change.”

“The decision to rally behind a woman could trigger a shift in the mind of voters to support and vote in women candidates in the coming elections.

But is also important to note that male leaders have a role to play in promoting women in leadership. Men are expected to help women surmount some of the challenges that remain great obstacles in achieving their political aspirations. These include: culture and traditions that continue to socialize the society to vote for men.

Other key challenges include complex electoral laws and gender-based violence. According to Nancy Baraza, former Deputy Chief Justice, even though Kenyans have not fully embraced women leadership, there is need to be awake to the fact that the Constitution has changed the way of doing this in this country.

One of these is ensuring that campaigns are free from violence. Mbogori notes that there were notable incidents of sexual violated that were document in the 2017 General Elections which intimidated many women candidates and also prevented women from voting for their candidates of choice.

The 2022 elections have to show and bring some difference if Kenya is to get more 30 per cent of those elected being women. Currently, the country lags behind in women representation compared to other East African Countries. Kenya’s women representation in Parliament – National Assembly and Senate – stands at 23 per cent while Rwanda, Uganda, Burundi and Tanzania, have passed the 30 per cent threshold.

The coming General Election offers an opportunity for Kenyans to vote for women in high office to help achieve this target. As elections draw close, there is need to safeguard the gains made, and work very harder to achieve even more. Perhaps if this happens, Kenya will soon have a Suluhu of their own. -SS
On March 28, 2022, Mercy Mathai shared a most disturbing text message exchange between her and her party leader. Her intentions to vie for the Kiambu national assembly seat hit a wall when she was asked to drop out in favor of her male opponent. She was promised a county government seat in exchange for that ‘small’ favor.

She was also required to remain an active member of the party and continue funding the party in the hope of getting other political goodies.

“Given that this request is coming from you in your capacity as a (male) party leader, it puts us in an awkward situation because it is evident that you had a pre-determined mindset in regards to who if at all the party will be nominating as the MP candidate in Kiambu constituency,” Mathai responded in a text message to her boss.

The use of Negotiated democracy to distribute political positions ahead of an election
is the new pitfall for women participating in political leadership and decision making positions.

“There is nothing like negotiated democracy. Take a look at the process and you will find that it is a group of big boys in a big boys club sharing the big cake of political leadership amongst themselves,” says Vescor Moraa, of Bunge la Wananchi, Eldoret.

“Negotiated democracy is not anchored in the constitution, it is very much an unconstitutional process. It is not even meant to prevent conflicts or tensions, it is a tokenism process where you scratch my back and I scratch yours.”

Moraa says negotiated democracy is flawed in more ways than one. First, it is not the political party members that decide but political leaders and their cronies. Second, even when the political party members have a say, they are all largely men who control the decision making processes within political party structures. “You see it in the media every day, women standing behind men as they address the nation. Do you ever see men standing behind women addressing the nation?” she asks.

“I have been involved in politics in campaigns, as a mobiliser and later agent since 2007. I have seen a lot. Many of these women you see appearing to be absorbed in political parties, when they have a problem, they are usually blocked for accessing any decision maker and sometimes they are even blocked from accessing political party offices. That is a story that you will not hear but it happens and women keep quiet because there is nothing they can do?”

“The Supreme Court also stated that “the rights under article 27 (6) and (8) could only be fully realized using legislative as well as other measures and over a spaced period of time by means of policy and other measures.

The Court further advised that a framework giving effect to the two-thirds gender principle should be in place by 27th August 2015.

The country is about seven years behind from implementing this directive. Will the 2022 elections offer any comfort? Time will tell.” -SS
If the recent party nominations that denied many women a chance to compete for political seats are anything to go by, then the number of women candidates in the August 9, General Election, especially for highly competitive seats, is likely to be low.

For the Governor and Senate seats being contested, there are just a handful of women who sailed through the party nominations.

Some of these women were given direct nominations by their respective parties as part of the affirmative action to increase women representation in the political sphere.

In the presidential aspirant’s...
category, we have about three including Esther Waringa Kihuha and Faith Wairimu Ngigi.

One of the challenges that make women not to perform better in elections is the financial constraints required to marshal a quality campaign.

A recent study shows that the average cost of campaigns for the six elective seats is as follows: President Kshs 4 billion; Governor (Ksh 50 million); Senator (Ksh 35 million); Women Representative (Ksh 22.8 million); Member of Parliament (Ksh 18.2) and County Member of Parliament (Ksh 3.1).

The other is the new political culture of “negotiated democracy” and coalition politics in the form of consensus-building. The political parties used opinion polls to determine who among the contestants is the most popular. It worked against women candidates.

As a result of these approaches, many high profile women leaders fell by the way side as a result of the above: they included former Cabinet Minister Prof Margaret Kamar, who is the outgoing Uasin Gishu Senator, who was vying for the Governorship, immediate former Water Development Minister, Sicily Kariuki, who resigned to contests for the Nyandarua Governor’s seat, former Ambassador to China and Chief Executive of Salaries and Remuneration Commission (SRC), Sarah Serem, and Prof Jacqueline Oduol who was eying the Alego Usonga parliamentary seat.

Others are Kajiado East MP, Peres Tobiko, who vied for the Kajiado Governor’s post. In Kiambu County, Mwende Gatabaki and Juliet Kimemia are eying the Kiambu Governor’s office while Patience Nyanenge is vying for Taita Taveta governor’s seat. In Muranga County, Hellen Kigia wants to be the next Senator.

On the eve of the party primaries, Mrs Kariuki shared her thoughts and fears in a candid interview with Sunday Nation, saying “Propaganda is what it is. The conversation around where I was born and where I belong has become almost irrelevant; there is no news about that. It is true I was born in Embu County. I didn’t choose nor and don’t deny that. But I have been a daughter of this place for the past 32 years. I have spent most of my life here. I tell them that is what it is. What does it matter? Are you looking for someone to lead you because of where they were born or are you looking for a leader who will make a difference?”

In 2017 Election, three women were elected Governors; they were former Cabinet Minister and NARC chairperson, Charity Ngilu (Kitui), former Cabinet Minister, Ann Waiguru (Kirinyaga) and the late Dr Joyce Laboso (Bomet).

While three others were elected Senators; they were Prof Margaret Kamar (Uasin Gishu), Lawyer Susan Kihika (Nakuru) and Dullo Fatuma Adan (Isiolo).

Sofar,thewomencandidates in the Gubernatorial race are: Kwale Deputy Governor, Fatuma Achani in Kwale, Nakuru Senator, Susan Kihika in Nakuru, former Assistant Minister and Runyenjes MP Cecily Mbarire in Embu, and Malindi MP Aisha Jumwa in Kilifi. The four are vying on a United Democratic Alliance (UDA) ticket.

On the other hand, Orange Democratic Party (ODM) has Homa Bay Women Rep. Gladys Wanga in Homa Bay and Wiper Party (Wiper) has former Assistant Minister and Kathiani MP, Wavinya Ndeti in Machakos County.

In the Senatorial race, Isiolo Senator,
Fatuma Dullo Adan is defending her seat, while in Nairobi, former Assistant Minister, Bishop Margaret Wanjiru, is back on the campaign trail on a UDA ticket.

A pre-election assessment by the International Republican Institute (IRI) and the National Democratic Institute (NDI) conducted from May 16 to 20, shows that the ground is not level for women, people with disabilities and marginalised groups.

Says the assessment: “The 2022 general elections have the potential to be a pivotal milestone for democratisation in Kenya as they take place against a backdrop of shifting political alliances and newly enacted and evolving amendments to the electoral law.

Kenyans have the potential to break the pattern of disputed elections and prevent election-related violence in 2022. However, all stakeholders, especially political parties, must work together to promote tolerance, peaceful elections, and respect for historically marginalized groups.”

Since their founding in 1983, IRI and NDI have collectively organized more than 400 international assessment and observation missions globally.

According to the NDI/IRI Observation Team, genuine elections are not merely a technical endeavor; they are a fundamental human right linked to a broad array of institutions and the ability of citizens to exercise other civil and political rights.

The report observes that elections are a periodic test of the strength of democratic institutions, and they illuminate the underlying nature of the competition for political power in a country.

Polls are also a vehicle for the participation of citizens in the democratic process, and they help to build capacities that are central to achieving accountable and democratic governance.

Indeed, elections are part of making democracy deliver a better quality of life by linking voters’ interests to the act of selecting a candidate, party or policy through public discourse and balloting.

As the clock ticks closer to the August 9th polls, Prof Karuti Kanyinga and Tom Mboya notes the following in a recent study titled “Cost of politics in Kenya – Implication for political participation and development,” and reveals the heavy toll that elections are exacting on the quality of democracy and leadership.

“Election is bad business; it is a bad draw between costs and returns. As currently configured, elections are vicious battles of ego and money, everywhere promoting voter bribery, electoral violence and other malpractices,” says columnist Peter Kagwanja, Chief Executive of Africa policy Institute.

These issues negatively affect women participation and position in the political and decision making spaces.

“The 2022 general elections have the potential to be a pivotal milestone for democratisation in Kenya as they take place against a backdrop of shifting political alliances and newly enacted and evolving amendments to the electoral law.”