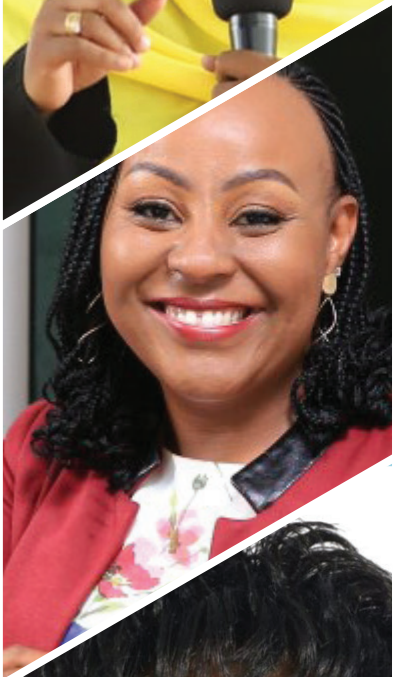


It is a Do-or-Die Battle for Women Candidates



Achani a heartbeat away from becoming the governor of Kwale County

BY FAITH MUIRURI

With less than two weeks to the election date of the 9th August 2022, the prospects of Fatuma Achani becoming the next governor of Kwale County are very promising. Opinion poll after opinion poll shows she is the candidate to beat in this year's election.

Currently the Deputy Governor of Kwale County, Achani is known to many as a performer and naturally, the best fit to succeed the outgoing Governor, Salim Mvurya.

She came to the political limelight after the 2013 General Elections when she was named the Deputy Governor of the county, a position she has served over the last ten years.

Vying on a UDA ticket, she will be the first woman in the County to join the political fray for the gubernatorial seat. Her candidature is largely motivated by a desire to solidify the gains already made by the incumbent who she deputized.

"We have a solid legacy for development set by governor Mvurya and as he exits from the office, I am the only other person who is better placed to further this development agenda in the county."

"There is still a lot to be done in



the present, including tackling issues of access to education, health, clean water, infrastructure, and women empowerment."

On education, she plans to increase the number of students covered under the ongoing elimu ni sasa initiative.

"We have done very well in education. Under this initiative, we are sponsoring 4,000 students in national schools. We have already given full sponsorship to 3,000 students in universities."

For women empowerment, the county has established village savings and loans associations. "We started small but now we have 6,000 groups currently being supported by the county government."

According to Achani, the initiative has seen women pool their money as a group and then give each other loans at a low and affordable interest rate.

"It is a simple but sure way to empower rural women. Anyone able to contribute something can access a loan from among her peers."

Achani and her team have gone ahead and trained the women on how to form companies so as to benefit from the lucrative government tenders. "We now have several groups that have formed companies and therefore will benefit from the 30 per cent of all public procurement opportunities in the county reserved for

PAGE>>3

<<FROM PAGE 2 youth, women and persons with disabilities.”

If elected, she plans to enhance newly established health facilities and to equip all dispensaries with maternity wings and staff houses “We have started an oncology centre at the Kwale referral hospital which is yet to be completed. I will not only complete the centre but will ensure the renal unit is fully equipped.”

To respond to the perennial water problem in the area, Achani plans to do more dams in dry areas of Kinango and Lunga Lungu. So far, the county has covered many homes with piped water, but she is afraid that the sustainability of such water is very low.

“I am planning to do more dams in Kinango, parts of Lungalunga and other areas so that people can engage in irrigation and become self-reliant on food production.”

In addition to dams, Achani has huge plans for the infrastructural development. “We will tarmac more roads in a bid to promote personal and regional development, and enhance access to services and markets.”

“We need to make sure there is continuity, and therefore I am the only candidate who can forge ahead with this agenda. I have the experience having served as the first deputy governor in the county.

I know where Kwale was, where it has reached and where it is supposed to go. I have traversed the entire county and I know what needs to be done. I have participated in all the budget processes from 2013 to date.”

But to succeed, Achani believes

she has to work with the people of Kwale. She pledges to operate an open door policy and incorporate the views of all her electorate. “We have units at the village level run by village administrators. I plan to set up village councils to work with the village administrators and ensure every voice counts.”

She is banking on her track record and says most of her opponents have nothing to show despite holding senior positions in the public sector.

It is this development record and the overwhelming support from women, the incumbent, local MPs and most of the community members that is contributing to her high ratings in the opinion polls.

Perhaps ability to make time with her constituent despite her busy schedule is another factor endearing her to many voters. Her humble demeanor has also made her appeal to the electorate and enabled her to relate well with the communities and issues affecting them.

She easily walks into ceremonies and joins women in cooking without anyone noticing she is a deputy governor, appearing like any other woman in a rural setup.

This, Achani says, gives her an edge in having advanced knowledge and first-hand information on issues affecting the people of Kwale. “My happiest moments are when I am with other women sharing ideas and discussing our issues as women and mothers.”

Many are not happy with her popularity. She says her opponents and their supporters are subjecting her to verbal abuse and

online violence. “My opponents have always spread unfounded propaganda and rumours about me, organizing people to heckle me whenever I address public gatherings.

It is very disappointing but being a lawyer and having trained women candidates through FIDA-K, I know this is an old gimmick that has always been used to intimidate female candidates.”

According to Achani, her opponents have also been using the mosque to propagate a narrative that a Muslim woman should not be allowed to seek leadership position.

“They have been using sheikhs to spread the same messages but I have looked for other sheikhs and church leaders to counter this narrative.” But she has managed to get Council of Imams, Kwale County, to denounce this narrative.

To women seeking elective positions, Achani says that their only weapon is to be closer to their communities. “If elected be available and deliver on election pledges.”

She wants women not behave like men while on the campaign trail. “Calling it a day at 6 p.m. as a woman may seem like a disadvantage since men go on campaigning way into the night. But the idea is to concentrate on what works for you.” “The strategy can protect you from physical violence.”

With a win a heartbeat away, Achani wants Civil Society Organizations to deploy more observers in counties where female candidates are running.

-WL

You can bank on me to deliver, says Dr Makira



BY JOYCE CHIMBI

After many years working in the civil society and education sectors to empower women and her community, Dr. Judy Njoki Makira, has now entered into politics to help shape the destiny of her Kiharu

Constituency, Murang'a County, from a position of influence and power.

She believes that many of the problems her locals are facing can be traced back to the kind of leadership and the decisions that leadership takes.

Dr Makira believes if she wins

the Kiharu MP position, which she is vying for on Usawa Kwa Wote Party, she will advance equality and equity for all.

"I am giving the people of Kiharu the mother figure they have not had since independence. Just like a mother's program, my program I am proposing to them is an inclusive one that leaves no one behind. I have a plan for men, women, youths and children."

An educator, politician, community leader and mobilizer, her supporters call her Mama Kiharu. They trust that she will bring a motherly touch to the Kiharu seat, because her political agenda is centered on strong economic empowerment programs for all.

Already, she has shown this is doable through the Center for Women Empowerment in Technology (CWE-Tech), which she co-founded, and Dr. Judy Makira Foundation, a non-profit charity that supports community empowerment.

CWE-Tech intervenes with programmes in Murang'a, Homabay and Migori areas. These include table banking, goat rearing and rabbit keeping programs. She also does vocational training and medical camps in partnerships with other stakeholders.

"I a few days before the elections, and in partnership with Murang'a

PAGE>>5

<<FROM PAGE 4 C o u n t y government,

we will be rolling out vocational training targeting both men, women and youths to pursue short certified courses such as dress making, yoghurt making, baking and detergent making to promote self-employment and financial stability.”

Her plans and projects are preceded by an assessment of existing gaps to ensure they respond to the needs of the people.

“I tailor my community projects to the needs of each Ward. Some Wards are very close to town and others are agricultural, so I anchor my response to the specific dynamic in each ward.”

Makira holds a Bachelor’s degree in Education from the University of Nairobi, a Masters degree and PhD in English Language Education. Up until February 8, 2022, she was a lecturer at the University of Embu before she left to make her maiden entry into politics.

With her CWE-Tech and foundation, Makira has penetrated every corner of Kiharu with self-help projects targeted at uplifting the standards of Kiharu residents.

“There are people in Kiharu who are not reached by opportunities and their vulnerability levels are very high. You can only reach these groups by designing interventions that target to

empower people at household levels.”

For example, through the organization, we started by addressing menstrual poverty that entails providing sanitary pads to vulnerable girls. We have learnt that there are girls who miss two to three days of school a month due to lack of menstrual products.”

Challenges of education are high on her agenda. “There is a crisis of a lack of school fees. Right now I am in more than 20 WhatsApp groups where we are raising school fees. This is a reflection of a community that is hard pressed for lack of socio-economic empowerment. I have a plan to address the root causes because every child deserves to enjoy all their basic rights.”

In addition to education, another successful programme she is running is the goat rearing one that started in 2018 with an initial 19 households as beneficiaries, each receiving one goat. These goats delivered other goats which were distributed to other households. At the moment, more than 180 households own at least one goat.

As she campaigns for the Kiharu MP seat, Dr Makira says there are several challenges she has to address. One of them is the financial needs to transverse the expansive Kiharu constituency.

“Unlike a man, a woman will

rarely sell a piece of land to raise campaign finances, but a man will do it. Women will rarely expose their family’s resources to political risk so they have problems mobilizing funds for campaigns.”

She is however happy that despite the challenges, there is a soft ground for women in certain ways. For example, wWhere the people expect large hand-outs from men, it is not so much for women. There is a perception that women do have resources the same way that men do.

“If you really focus, you will notice that the reception for women has significantly improved. The 2022 campaign trail is different and women are making inroads because people are beginning to appreciate women leadership. They can see there is notable value that women bring to the table.”

Dr Makira says she has also learnt to listen to the ground because “what you think is often very different from what the people want. That is why voters pull surprises at the ballot.”

Her call to the political parties is not to abandon those women who might lose. “The women who win and those that lose should receive first priority for nominations in political spaces and other decision making organs. No woman who has gone to the ballot should be left out there.” -WL

I am the Change you are looking for, says Patience Nyange



BY FAITH MUIRURI

When Patience Nyange declined an attempt to force her to step down in favour of a male candidate for the Taita Taveta Gubernatorial seat, she knew the odds were against her.

She quickly decamped from Wiper Party and joined the National Rainbow Coalition (NARC) which gave her an opportunity to vie for the gubernatorial position.

Today, Nyange is among a handful of women who have waded through the murky

political waters in the country to make sure that their names are on the ballot paper come August 9, General Election.

She strongly feels that she is best placed to articulate the aspirations of Taita Taveta County and will use her expertise in Public Relations and Communication Management to rebrand the county and make it attractive to investors.

Top on the list of her priorities is to create alternative sources of revenue for the county. "We want to bring investors into our community to expand our revenue base. We will be

targeting the unique features in each sub-county to generate alternative sources of revenue."

She says that her team has already mapped out investment opportunities available in each sub-county and if elected, she will focus on those key areas to deliver on her election pledges. Indeed, she has managed to do a good analysis of problems and the opportunities the county faces.

She will also focus on diversifying livelihoods by targeting the export market. "We have four Constituencies in the county namely Voi, Mwatate, Wundanyi and Taveta. We have mapped all of them and identified key areas to improve on livelihoods. For instance, we plan to turn Wundanyi into an agricultural hub by revamping factories and embarking on value addition."

In Mwatate, there are a number of minerals that are mined and exported in their raw form which means locals do not benefit from these resources. "We will build mineral factories to start producing our own minerals and exporting finished products."

In Voi Sub County, her government will create an Export Processing Zone and provide **PAGE>>7**

<<FROM PAGE 6 employment opportunities to the young people.

This approach, she says, will open up the economy and pave way for huge infrastructural developments including roads, water and electricity.

“The whole idea is for us to rebrand our County and make it attractive to everyone.” Nyange will also make sure health facilities are equipped with basic medicine and personnel. For hard-to-reach regions, she will deploy mobile doctors.

Her other priority area is education where she plans to introduce computerized schooling right from Primary school level to secondary education. In addition, students who get admitted to national schools will receive full scholarship from the county.”

On governance, she promises a government that communicates. “Currently development in the county is spontaneous and not sustainable. The electorate has been denied and deprived of meaningful platforms and spaces for engaging and interrogating budgetary procedures, processes and development priorities of the county government.”

In addition, she promises prudent management of devolved funds to ensure that residents get value for money. “I have a track record. I have served in positions where

within a short time I have made tangible impact and I promise to use county’s resources well to make it self-sustainable.”

She will not do all these alone. She will lean heavily on public participation through Baraza’s and use of an open door policy. “I will pursue a proactive, efficient, effective, transparent, accountable, and people-centred leadership.

Widely known by her slogan Aminia mama (believe in a woman), Nyange is upbeat that she will emerge victorious.

Nyange says she will use her academic gains for the benefit of the county. She has a Master’s Degree in International Studies and Diplomacy and another Master’s Degree in International Public Relations and Global Communication Management from Cardiff University, United Kingdom.

Nyange’s political fortunes are also pegged on her ability to consolidate her support base. She will be banking on the immense support she draws from the youth, women and professionals from the county.

But things are not as smooth as they sound. She has had to confront a number of challenges. “I come from a very patriarchal community that does not believe in women leadership. The first thing when they look at you is: Oh she is a woman, is she able, where is she married, if she is married elsewhere we cannot trust her

with leadership. T

The questions around women are questions that already place a woman at a place where she cannot. She cannot because she is a woman, she has children or she has no children. The list is endless.”

Lately, Nyange has had to deal with critics who say the county is not ready for a woman governor, while others feel she should have contested for an MCA seat. But this has only served to strengthen her resolve. “We are saying it is time for women and no one is ever ready for anything.

She says financing her campaigns is expensive. “Everyone has an expectation, if you don’t help me today, how will you help me tomorrow, we may never see you after elections. So help me now. There are a lot of expectations pegged on how much can you give before the elections.”

Her advice to women seeking elective positions is: Yes it is tough but stay the course. Always ask yourself why you are in the race, what prompted you to get here, make sure your Why is what pushes you because every time it gets tougher, your Why will keep you going.”

“I am hoping many years down the line, Taita Taveta will be looking behind and appreciating my role in helping the community to change.”

-WL

Dr Tum banks on her development record to win the Emgwen MP seat

BY JOYCE CHIMBI

If there is one thing that Dr Tecla Tum is acutely aware of, is that politics is not for the faint hearted and you have to keep holding there even when things get tough.

Her 2017 win of the County Women Representative did not come easy. This was after working on the useful lessons she learnt in the 2013 contest.

This time around, she is using her experience of the two elections to compete against very strong candidates for the Emgwen MP position as an independent candidate.

Her slogan is *mama wa ukweli* and 'Ngolilii Emgwen koutaet' which means 'let Emgwen shine like a star'.

"People are feeling my presence in Nandi. I have analyzed myself and can confidently say I have done 91 percent of what I promised to do. I have changed the environment in Emgwen."

Her development record speaks for itself. She has improved the housing structure by ensuring that at least 145 grass thatched houses were replaced with iron sheets.

"I prioritized women headed



houses of widows, single mothers and women with disability."

On bursaries, she has issued hundreds of them to needy students in the most

transparent, effective and efficient manner. Those who have benefited most from the initiative are children with disability, children from homes where a parent has a disability, and orphaned children.

PAGE>>9

<<FROM PAGE 8 Every year, she says, 760 students in the County receive bursaries. She has distributed funds to women, youths and persons with disability and she intends to increase the amounts and number of beneficiaries when elected as the next MP.

“I have spent about one million shillings on 43 persons with disability.” Tum says she has another Ksh800, 000 to spend on additional 40 people with disability. One thing she has done for them is buying 42 calves for persons with disability to promote their self-sustenance.

Overall, her support from the Affirmative Action Fund to 20 groups ran by persons with disability is more than two million shillings. Further, she has also used the resources from the Fund to distribute 300 tents to the women, who rent them at Ksh3, 000 per tent per day.

Not only is her bursary scheme targeting those in high school, her focus is also on higher learning. Tum fundraised 4.2 million shillings to be distributed equally among 30 students to undergo a Master’s degree program at no cost. One of them has graduated and another seven will graduate in 2022.

Her other area of success is distributing 300 Meco gas cookers to needy homes. She says that children in beneficiary households go to school on time because their mothers

can cook them breakfast in a matter of minutes.

Still, Dr Tum believes there is much that needs to be done. She says if elected on August 9th, 2022, the projects that she will give priority includes infrastructural development with a special focus on schools. Education is a key area of focus in her manifesto, which speaks to the issue of raising the standards of education in her constituency.

This includes acquiring buses for schools that have none; building the best sanitary facilities especially for the girl child to ensure that not only do they have sanitary pads to promote menstrual hygiene and school attendance; but that they have access to a safe, clean and private toilet facilities.

Tum intends to initiate an alumni program that will see those who have succeeded in life mentor those who are still in school.

On electricity, she wants to see every home connected to the national grid. “I want to see Emgwen shine in terms of Last Mile by connecting every household to the national grid. I have plans to improve roads in the area so that the area is more accessible. Having interacted with young adults, I have a solution for our young people and I intend to pioneer a sustainable program for youth empowerment.”

Other issues she is focusing on are: women empowerment,

increasing the number of people with title deed, and addressing climate change that is impacting negatively on her people.

At the national assembly, she represents the people of Nandi County in the Departmental Committee on Administration and National Security and the Department Committee on Sports, Tourism and Culture.

Tum holds a Bachelor’s degree in Sociology from the University of Nairobi, a Masters’ degree in Environmental Studies, Human Ecology from Moi University and a PhD in Social Work from University of Denver in the United States.

She has worked as a lecturer in Kisii University and Moi University where she taught in the School of Arts, Department of Sociology and Psychology. Before her tenure as a lecturer, she was the Director of Social Services and Housing at the Eldoret Municipal Council.

One of the challenges she is experiencing in campaigning for the Emgwen position is insults. “The insults are there and especially on social media. There is also de-campaigning going on but I have made a name for myself teaching your children and as a County Women Representative, my track record cannot be erased.”

Nevertheless, Tum is confident that her track record speaks for itself and although she is vying against men, she will emerge victorious. -WL



Hamida crosses her fingers as Kibra goes to the polls

BY ODHIAMBO ORLALE

Although she did perform to her expectations in the 2018 by-elections for Kibra parliamentary seat, the contest prepared Hamida Malasen well for the 2022 elections.

Five years later, Malasen

believes she is up to the task of winning the seat in this year's elections on Amani National Congress (ANC) ticket.

The founder of Mazingira Women Initiative, a Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) that addresses issues around environmental justice, women and human rights;

Malasen is the first woman Nubian aspirant to get the blessings and nod of the Nubian Council of Elders and the Nubian religious leaders to plunge into politics.

"Gender is no longer an issue, thanks to the Constitution of Kenya which has a clause on affirmative action

PAGE>>11

<<FROM PAGE 10 and two thirds gender rule. I believe that the next Parliament will have more women elected and one of those will be me.”

Malasen has made a name in Kibra in the past five years, thanks to the work her NGO does. Her work has seen her receive a United Nations award for her environmental programmes. Her project has also been recognized by Council of Governors.

So far, Malasen, whose nickname is Mama Mazingira, and her team have been on the ground campaigning in the five wards going from door to door and holding Town Hall meetings to woo the over 118,000 registered voters in Saran’gombe, Woodley, Makina, Laini Saba and Lindi villages.

Her main campaign issues are climate change and environmental matters.

“I am into Climate Change and environmental issues. I am determined to serve my people, as I have done in most of the five wards. I am also a critical thinker and through my NGO we have held many capacity-building forums to empower our women, youth and people living with disabilities.”

Her community programmes on waste management and disposal has created employment opportunities to many youth and women. This has increased their source of income under the slogan “waste is wealth.”

Some of those programmes in Kibra have been done jointly with the National Youth Service, the Nairobi Metropolitan Services, and international NGOs.



“I am into Climate Change and environmental issues. I am determined to serve my people, as I have done in most of the five wards.

HAMIDA MALASEN



Malasen has also partnered with local and foreign well-wishers to implement her ambitious project of planning over 500,000 fruit seedlings in the capital city starting with Kibra. So far, they have planted 7,000 seedlings mostly in schools, river banks, and public hospitals.

But her quest for the MP position has come with its share of challenges. She has had to face rivals in big national political parties who are well resourced and have vibrant support machinery.

Without such support, Malasen is focusing on lobbying for support from donors to fund her campaign and take her through capacity-building programmes around

fund raising, mobilization and strategic engagements with voters and opinion leaders.

So far, she has set up her campaign teams, made several media appearance to sale her manifesto and also brought key players like women, elders and youth leaders on board.

One of the major challenges she has faced is lack of funding. Others are poor media coverage and a culture of handouts.

The culture of handouts has been worsened by the recent Covid-19 restrictions and regulations by the national government which left hundreds of people jobless, leading to rise in poverty level and dependency syndrome

Malasen also believes that “most women fall by the road side because of lack of funds, lack of political strategies, know how on networking, and how to woo voters.”

“I am ready to be part of the change, we don’t have to give handouts but convince the people that their problems can best be addressed once they elect me and I implement my manifesto. But they tell me off saying: “you have a good manifesto, but we cannot eat it here and now!”

But all is not lost. She is happy there is shift in thinking about women leadership and a focus on electing leaders who are progressive in their thinking and not those who give handouts. -WL

My track record will see me win the Bahati Parliamentary seat, says Njoki

BY FAITH MUIRURI

When Irene Njoki began reaching out and helping people who were in need, little did she know that such help would pay dividends many years later.

Now a candidate in this year's election vying for Bahati parliamentary seat, Nakuru County, on a Jubilee ticket, Njoki is receiving a lot of support and positive reception from the electorate.

Her fame and political career started shaping up in 2018 when she mooted an initiative called mrembo care. Under this initiative, she has been able to feed hundreds of people in the constituency especially old men and women aged between 75 and 80-years-old.

"Hundreds of people would turn up anytime I distributed food in the constituency. To date, with the help of the provincial administrators, I have been able to support about 50,000 people through the programme."

So successful was this initiative that she started another one known as mrembo educare which is a bursary kitty that supports needy students from the Constituency.

"I decided to spend my



campaign money towards this noble initiative where about 2,000 students in both secondary and tertiary institutions have benefitted from the kitty."

At the tertiary level, she partnered with Vera Beauty College to train hundreds of young people. This arrangement has seen about 1,400 students equipped with technical skills ranging from catering, pastry, barbering, hair dressing, events and management, fashion and design, and electrical and plumbing.

These initiatives increased her visibility and the impact of her

work in the community. Soon, her constituency started asking her to take a leadership position in politics to help them get even better benefits. But she was a novice in politics.

Luckily, Njoki says, her exposure at both the Ministry of Health and Transport where she worked as a personal assistant prepared her well for her political debut.

"As a personal assistant, I saw several leaders come to the Ministry to lobby for projects but I never saw my Member of Parliament."

From this experience, she decided use the

PAGE>>13

<<FROM PAGE 12 same strategy to help her community. “I approached the Kenya Rural Roads Authority and together we have been able to do 80 percent of roads in the constituency. We have tarmacked three major roads and murramed link roads.”

She also got funding from the Ministry of Water that supported implementation of community projects. “We drilled four boreholes, one in Ahero, two in Kiamaina because it is densely populated and another one in Bahati.”

At the constituency level, she has been able to partner with other corporate organisations to enhance the livelihoods of her people.

Njoki who is widely known by her political slogan, Mrembo na kazi, is the only female candidate in the race among male competitors.

Despite this positioning, she is confident that she will garner landslide victory during the August polls. Her advantage over competitors is based on the overwhelming support she enjoys from the women, youth and the elderly.

Her campaign manifesto clearly articulates issues facing these groups and the entire constituency which she hopes to address during her first five-year term.

These include empowering the women, the youth and people living with disability. “I will lobby for more youth empowerment programs from the national government and this will be complemented by

empowerment programs from partners who have been of assistance in the past.”

Njoki also plans to initiate sports programs by working with relevant sports bodies in the country and the county to ensure that talented youths have platforms where they can showcase their abilities

On road network, she plans to open up more roads to ease transportation of agricultural products. Her other agenda is to improve school infrastructure and ensure equity in bursary allocation because currently deserving students from poor backgrounds have been sidelined.

Another issue on her in-tray is the water problem. “While this is a devolved function, we will still implore the national government to help in ensuring a steady supply of water by drilling more boreholes in all the five Wards of Bahati Constituency.”

She plans to set up structures and platforms that will guarantee her community views on these projects are taken on board. “I want to ensure I have an advisory committee in every ward because each ward has unique needs. This will make sure all views from my constituents are integrated in development matters.”

Njoki holds a Master’s Degree in Strategic Management from Daystar University and a Bachelor’s Degree in Marketing (First Class Honors) from Africa Nazarene University.

Those who know her describe

her as a self-made, charismatic, outgoing, ambitious and a resilient fighter, who does not hold back when pursuing a goal.

These attributes have seen her wither the tough campaigns. “People think they can harass, send goons or hurl all manner of insults at you just because they are your opponents. But such actions have only served to strengthen my resolve to forge ahead with my political journey.”

“Recently, my opponents pulled down all my posters and billboards from the constituency. But I went ahead and put up more because I have refused to focus my energies on distractions.”

She is intent on disapproving a perception in the constituency that women cannot finish the race. “I will be the first woman ever in the constituency who will finish the race in terms of going through the nomination and to voting day.”

Njoki feels this is the time women should put their best foot forward. “This is the time for scores of women to ascent to leadership positions. God has presented for us an opportunity to lead through Azimio la Umoja’s nomination of Martha Karua as the running mate to presidential contender Raila Odinga.

“I am sure we shall succeed. Power is not given, power is taken. Do not focus on the negative or allow anyone to derail you, just forge ahead to the finishing line.” -WL

I am the biblical David of Mathioya race, says Njeri

AWC CORRESPONDENT

In the hotly contested Mathioya Parliamentary seat in Murang'a County that has attracted 11 competitors (10 men and one woman), one of them is Eva Njeri Mwenja, the only woman in the race.

Vying on the Amani National Congress (ANC) ticket, Mwenja likens herself to David battling competitors who she refers to as Goliath.

"I am the David of Mathioya politics, and I am calling out to the people of Mathioya with a clear manifesto, a blueprint of how I intend to transform the sub-County. The people are listening."

This is not her first attempt at elective politics. Njeri made a bid for a Member of County Assembly seat in Kamacharia Ward 2017, but was unsuccessful.

Since then, she has done a lot to endear herself to the people of Murang'a County. She says she is banking her chances on her good social development work in her community to win in August 2022 elections.

PAGE>>15



<<FROM PAGE 14 Her vision is to deliver programs that are centered on socio-development by bringing quality and inclusive education within reach for many underprivileged children.

Under her leadership, she says, every single child who calls Mathioya home, including those abled differently will access information and knowledge to help them seize several opportunities.

She says education is still the key to success especially in keeping with a fast moving, fast changing world, be it in formal education or technical skills. "Only an educated society or a society where youths are armed with technical skills will accelerate towards sustainable development."

Mwenja believes the education sector is facing monumental challenges, and many vulnerable children have been left behind. If elected, her first agenda will be a program on special needs children who are farthest left behind in the education system.

"It is an unfortunate situation that many children with special needs remain out of school. In Mathioya we do not have a school for children with special needs and setting up such a school

will be a top priority for me."

As the Chair of Mathioya Technical and Vocational College for the last six years, she has a career-focused plan to equip young people with quality and relevant skills, ensuring that their competencies match the demands of the labor market and more so, towards self-employment.

"I have been a teacher for many years. Since 1991, I have taught in both primary and secondary schools. Before my entry into politics, I was teaching at Murang'a Teachers College, so I have taught across board and I understand the education system in and out."

The teaching profession has taught her to be visible, alert, consistent, persistent and a good listener. But Njeri, who holds a Bachelor's degree in teaching and a Masters degree in leadership and management from Mount Kenya University, says improving education and other areas of development needs a new leader.

"We need a change in leadership in Mathioya and I am the change they are looking for. There is a gaping leadership gap and based on what we have seen women do, we need a woman at the

driving seat

One of the challenges she is encountering in her quest for the seat is intimidation by political opponents. "You know what happens when a woman is vying for a political seat; people intimidate you, talk ill of you and it is very hurtful. There are threats here and there that somebody is organizing this or that against me. But for me the ship has sailed and there is no stopping it."

"I put God first and I have a team that prays with me and provides me with much needed emotional support." Her financial support comes from friends and well-wishers.

Indeed, her social capital is paying off. Njeri has been Chair of a Kanorwe Welfare Group of 350 people, for more than six years. It is largely a group whose members include small traders such as hawkers. It is these social networks and door to door campaigns that she believes will propel her into political leadership.

Her message to other women: "Keep moving forward one step at a time. Women need to persist, work hard and be consistent. The ground has shifted and women leadership is within reach. Push until something happens." -WL

I will work for your interests, promises Teresa Chebet



BY JOYCE CHIMBI

If the opponents of Teresa Chebet Maina popularly known as Terry thought the results of the primaries would kill her spirits to continue with competitive politics, they were wrong.

Coming second in a contest for the United Democratic Party

(UDA) that she was tipped to win, saw her shift to run as an independent candidate for the Ainabkoi MP position in Uasin Gishu County.

She is confident that the electorate will choose her since they have done the same in the past to other independent candidates such as Hon. Janet Sitienei and the sitting MP

Ainabkoi constituency.

“Ainabkoi people will make the right decision, I have remained visible undertaking community work and my track record speaks for itself. I was born and married in Ainabkoi and I have witnessed the deterioration of the socio-economic sector.”

She boasts of a wealth of experience both in private and public sector. She has served on various organizations as a member of the Board of Directors. They include: the National Social Security Fund (NSSF), Agriculture and Food Authority (AFA), Kenyatta International Convention Centre (KICC), University of Eldoret, and ACT! a leading NGO. She is currently the National Chairperson for the Kenya Girl Guides Association.

“We need a new crop of leaders that is principled about the people and for the people, leaders that work for the common and shun self-interests. I am bringing this type of leadership to the political table.”

Her manifesto includes addressing a myriad of challenges that bedevil her constituent. Key among them is access to quality health services, education, **PAGE>>17**

<<FROM PAGE 16 water, food security, and creating a conducive environment for young people to explore gainful opportunities.

She particularly decries the bulging and unemployed youth population saying that not only is it a ticking time bomb, but that the society cannot and will not progress when its most youthful, energetic, resourceful, creative and innovative section of the population is unemployed. She promises to invest in education and vocational training and other forms of investment to uplift young people.

“We need an education system and capacity building opportunities that instil a work ethic in our children. This includes focus, persistence and consistence, and an ability to think outside the box and to see opportunities even outside their primary areas of interest.”

She wants to tap the youth dividend using her skills as human resource expert. Having worked as the head of Human Resource in the banking sector, she believes she has what it takes to make this a reality.

“I took a higher diploma in Human Resource Management course from the Institute of Human Resource Management. I know that that the human resource of a household, a country and even the world is the only resource that is so dynamic that if you invest in it,

you will get limitless returns.”

Chebet strong feels that there is no reason why young people should exit the education system and sit at home. This is an issue that should outrage all of us.

On agriculture and livestock keeping, she plans to introduce new knowledge and techniques that will help farmers double or triple output from their investments.

“We need a leadership that sees the opportunities we have, the untapped wealth in resources and human capital. I have the skills and capacities to harness these resources and find a market for our produce.

She is promising to provide structures to small and medium size enterprises so that they operate at an optimum and to ensure they are sustainable.

Maina hopes the platform at the National Assembly will give her great reach and latitude that she can leverage on to transform the lives of people in her constituency.

One of the challenges she has faced in her campaigns is insults from supporters of her opponents, something she says women have to not let them kill their ambitions.

“They open social media pages under your name and post very vulgar and provocative things. Then they screenshot and share on social media groups claiming that

these are the things you have been writing about. But have developed a thick skin and I remain focused on my goal.”

Maina, who holds a Bachelor's degree in political science from the University of Nairobi and a Masters degree in International Relations, says campaign or political financing is another major issue for her like many other women candidates. So is inability to campaign at night which male opponents are able to do with much success and cover a lot of ground. For women, the risks are just too high to engage in such a strategy.

Her hope is that the electorate is aware that they need to support people on leadership qualities and their development track record not based on the handouts they give.

“We need women in decision making processes because they are able to see the urgency in addressing social problems and in promoting social development. It pains any mother to see a young man sitting in town centres and by the road without jobs. Truly, this is an untenable situation for any woman.”

She urges women to stand firm and for the voters to consider the many benefits that societies will reap if they increase the number of women in decision making positions.

-WL

Popular musician sets her eyes on Murang'a Senate seat

AWC CORRESPONDENT

After enriching and transforming people through her Gospel music, Hellen Kigia now wants to do the same by vying for a powerful political position that will see her influence public decisions that affect her people.

She is running for the Senate Seat for Murang'a County on the Farmers party with a clarion call of transforming how things are done in her county. Popularly known as ngwanirira (I will say it loudly), Kigia says her major focus is to address inequalities within her county, and she believes the Senate is the best platform to do so.

The Senate, she notes, is where inequalities and inequities can be tackled exhaustively by bringing leaders at the county and national government to account for allocated public resources.

"We are not short of resources in this country. What we need is to close the loopholes that have created an enabling environment for leaders not to perform or deliver to their people as promised in their campaign bids."

Kigia further **PAGE>>19**



<<FROM PAGE 18 believes the Senate is better placed in helping address issues of unemployment in her county and country. "We teach children to be better and to thrive to their fullest potential. But something happens after we have done our work and it is this 'something' that we must figure out. The Senate in its oversight role can hold people in public office accountable to ensure that every penny counts."

A teacher by profession in a career spanning over two decades, in which she was a head teacher for 10 years, Kigia speaks highly of education and her lifelong calling to build a formidable human capital that can efficiently and effectively meet the needs of the job market.

"I have taught in the classroom and through my music. I now want to influence at the national level, advocating for and lobbying for the people of Murang'a. I bring a leadership that is sensitive to the needs of the people, that is attentive and responsive to their needs."

She also brings her managerial skills that include serving as the chairperson of music industry in Murang'a County and the vice chair of the Ministry of Education's Central region. In more than two decades, Kigia has taught in Murang'a County in a total of

eight different schools where excellence has been her driving force.

Although it is her first attempt at competitive politics she is confident that Murang'a people will give her chance to lead.

"First, I am interested in helping meet the two-third gender rule at the Senate. It is very important that the political space gives us a representation that is gender balanced. Both women and men are needed in political decision making processes because they play a very complementary role."

In the absence of a balanced representation, she notes, it is women who are left out and they remain at the peripheral of decision making processes that define the county and country's direction.

"In the Senate, the few women who are there are able to talk for men, women, youths and children because more often than not, men are not effective in addressing issues that affect them."

Kigia believes women's approach to issues is all encompassing and does not leave behind people with special needs.

But getting into decision making positions that will help women address some of these issues is not easy. Kigia says

women face a lot of challenges on their political journey.

One of these is the negative portrayal of women seeking political power. They are labeled as "women with loose morals and are accused of relying on and living off men. People also say that if you give women a little power, they become unmanageable and too proud."

The financial demand of competitive politics is another challenge, which is compounded by the culture of handouts.

She is however happy that attitudes and perceptions about women leadership is shifting. More people in her community and countrywide are showing receptiveness towards women in the political sphere. They see women are better managers of resources.

"There is significant misuse of resources. Women are transparent, they are legacy driven and highly accountable, and these are the qualities that I intend to bring to the political table. I have been an administrator and my record speaks for itself.

Kigia says when you pull a woman up, everyone goes up, "you will not find a society that is successful where women are excluded from leadership or are pushed to the corners and most invisible parts of the society." -WL

From USA to Kenya, Muthoni Wachira's promise to Tetu



BY JOYCE CHIMBI

After 12 years living in the United States, Mary Muthoni Wachira also known as Njore believes it is time to bring the expertise she has gained to change the lives of her people in Tetu Constituency.

She is vying for Tetu MP position on a PNU ticket. Muthoni, who is head of the

Kenya Diaspora Forum believes Tetu needs her leadership.

"I first travelled to the United States to find out why businesses were failing in Kenya. What is in the US that is not in Kenya? What can be done for every family to take every child to school without struggle? Do we have to leave the Country in order to make it."

Based on her learning, improving business and

agricultural production are some of the areas she promises to transform using the knowledge she has gained in the USA and other parts of the world. Muthoni has extensive work experience in Kenya and United States spanning over the media, banking, business and health sectors.

In her business endeavors, she was a frequent flyer in China, Hong Kong, **PAGE>>21**

<<FROM PAGE 20 the Middle East and the Far East, where she has learnt so many business lessons. To date, Muthoni runs businesses in Kenya.

Her job abroad of taking care of a Governor's wife in Washington for five years, before working for another Governor and later on for Senator, have improved her understanding of how to deal with many problems.

"I have learnt from the best in a country where systems work, where you cannot fight, cheat or remove the system. If you are removed from the system be it for a driving offence or credit, you have to work very hard to get back into the system. Here, people manipulate the system or remove the system because corruption is widespread."

This and her vision for Tetu are some of the positive experiences she wants to inculcate in the residents of this constituency.

She says her entry into politics is to help improve the wellbeing of people in Tetu. She plans to advance education in the constituency by providing scholarships, build a fast world library and provide free internet for Tetu children to be connected to the tools they need to access quality education.

Another big area she is focusing on is the health needs of Tetu residents. Top on her agenda is to establish a Chronic Diseases Center that will address the many underlying diseases afflicting the people of Tetu.

"There is no Level 3 or even Level 4 hospital in Tetu. We

have dispensaries. In fact we had areas where COVID-19 cases were high because of the underlying conditions that many people in the constituency suffer from."



"I have learnt from the best in a country where systems work, where you cannot fight, cheat or remove the system"

MARY MUTHONI WACHIRA



In this regard, she has plans to start a dialysis center and to improve access to hospitals to enable the residents to undertake check-up and timely diagnosis and treatment.

"I am in the health sector in the United States and I am able to mobilize volunteers to help set up quality health care system and, provide and expand access to affordable and quality health care."

Wachira holds a diploma in marketing, a nursing degree from a community college in the United States, and a degree in business management. She has undertaken a series of courses in areas such as mental health and psychology.

"There is a lot of money in the United States and no one is asking for it, these are resources

that can help transform our societies."

She says the America of today is not the one of yesterday where immigrants could only be janitors. Today, Kenyans are working as engineers at Boeing and others in Microsoft and leading hospitals. Muthoni wants the country to tap in the knowledge of people like her and others.

"We need to stop looking at the dollars they are remitting and focus on the intellectual resources they have to offer with their experience of having worked in most advanced, efficient systems in the world. The diaspora population is more than four million, brilliant minds with a lot to offer but they do not know where to start."

According to Muthoni, those in Diaspora are not looking for jobs here, but how to donate their expertise and competences in various sectors. This is what she wants to tap into to benefit Tetu residents.

Work and ambition is also inspired by her father. "I am driven by my father's, Njore's legacy. He was the chairman of Tetu Coffee Growers and showed people how to plant coffee. My father and a group of men build many of the primary and secondary schools that are in Tetu today.

She feels something was lost between that generation and this one. "I have the answers and I can continue with this legacy." Only what she is asking the Tetu voters is to give her a chance by electing her. -WL



I have what it takes to be the Governor of Kiambu, says Dr Kimemia

BY FAITH MUIRURI

The old adage that politics is a dirty game and one that is best suited for men has for ages contributed to the disenfranchisement of women on matters politics.

But for Dr Juliet Gathoni Kimemia, this saying has had an opposite effect. It has instead strengthened her resolve to play the political game even better and prove that politics is also a competition where women can be effective players.

Kimemia is vying for the Kiambu gubernatorial seat on a KANU ticket. The seat has attracted political bigwigs among them the incumbent James Nyoro (Jubilee), former governor William Kabogo (Tujibebe WaKenya party), Gatundu South MP Moses Kuria (Chama cha Kazi), Thika MP, Mwende Gatabaki (independent), and Patrick Wainana (independent).

She is not new in the political arena. Kimemia contested for the senatorial position in 2017 but lost. She

was however appointed as a County Executive Committee (CEC) member by Ferdinand Waititu's administration and served in both the Ministry of Infrastructure and Industrialization, and Trade and Tourism dockets.

In addition to this experience, she believes her academic work, performance in public space, her networks, and the support she has marshalled from women and young people will see her emerge victorious.

"My illustrious career as a

PAGE>>23

<<FROM PAGE 22 lecturer at the Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology (JKUAT) also prepares me for this seat."

As a CEC, Dr Kimemia was instrumental in the creation of public private partnerships in the County which brings together different stakeholders. "I managed to mobilize private sector investments across the county and signed memorandum of understanding with foreign missions like USAID and Canadian Embassy.

She was also able to fast track the implementation of multi-billion shillings Muguga Agro City project. Although the project stalled after the governor was impeached, Kimemia believes she had laid a solid foundation for the nine (9) billion project that was premised on the big four agenda. The project targeted several value chains including beef production, dairy production, horticulture, pig and poultry farming.

"The project was to be implemented in phases and I was able to push the Kenya Agricultural Research Institute to allocate the county 500 acres. KARI gave us 100 acres for the first phase but unfortunately the project stalled when the governor was impeached."

If elected, she plans to revamp the Muguga Agro City project. "At the design stage, I had profiled 30,000 households to benefit from this initiative which is set to immediately

have impact on livelihoods and increase income for our people and grow the county."

Dr Kimemia was also instrumental in creating synergy among different sectors which helped to improve on coordination and planning within the County.

If elected, her other focus will be on renewing the MOU she signed with the USAID government on supporting Cooperatives. She says a similar project has been implemented successfully in Makueni County where farmers are able to reap highly from their produce through value addition.

But to achieve even greater development, Kimemia wants to domesticate international agreements in the programmes of her County. "There is lack of understanding that we have shifted to Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Without addressing and localising of the SDGs in Kiambu County, we will not be able to report at the national level.

One of the strategies she wants to use to achieve higher development and realization of these goals at the local is by creating a County Investment and Development Authority. "This is a semi-autonomous government agency that will help to harness and improve investor confidence."

Her political journey has not only given her the opportunity to excel, but to also learn important lessons. One of them is the virtue of being

tolerant. "There are people who will support you and others will oppose you but you must be resilient to overcome this challenge."

To fellow women in politics, she says the most important thing is developing a strong support system. "My family is my greatest support. Once you get into politics, your life becomes public and therefore you will need people who will support you in every way."

In addition to the family, Kimemia says women need to "establish a small group of people you trust to work in your campaign committee with representation from all areas in your county or sub-county."

But her biggest challenge and to other women vying for various seats in this year's elections is the culture of handouts. "Most people expect that every time you appear to address them, you need to give them money. I am trying very much to convince people that aspirants do not contest for political seats because they have money but because they have a passion to lead.

Despite this challenge, Kimemia believes women have what it takes to lead in the political arena and cites the recent nomination of Martha Karua as Azimio la Umoja's running mate as a major boost for women seeking elective seats. She now calls on women voters to use their numerical strength, come out in large numbers and vote for women.

-WL

