

# SautiSasa

Promoting the rights and position of Kenyan women in decision making

SEPTEMBER-OCTOBER ISSUE, 2022



**Ray of Hope as  
Women triumph in  
the 2022 elections**



Pamela Ateka (left), one of the candidates who vied for the Nairobi Senatorial position but lost.

# Women recount their elections tribulations

BY FAITH MUIRURI

**W**hen Pamela Ateka decided to run for the Nairobi Senatorial position, she did not anticipate the grueling task ahead.

Unlike other candidates, Ateka who was vying on a DAP-K ticket, did not enjoy any kind of support from the party. "In fact my party leader had announced that they were supporting the ODM candidate as DAP-K was among political parties that had formed the Azimio coalition."

"This gave my opponent an edge in the tightly contested race. I was unable to put up billboards across the counties which denied me visibility as a new entrant in the political arena."

In addition to Party troubles, she was also not able to mobilize enough resources to sustain her campaigns throughout the electioneering period.

Then came the polling day and she did not have agents in the polling stations. She was only able to hire one agent to represent her at the constituency tallying centre. "Some of my agents were also working for different candidates and therefore were unavailable during the tallying process despite having paid them."

Her tribulations are not an isolated case. Gloria Orwoba shares a similar story. Orwoba who was vying for the Bobasi parliamentary seat on a UDA ticket says that apart from resources, women candidates were also harassed on both online and offline, which hampered their ability to move freely and sell their agenda to the voters.

"Many women candidates were subjected to verbal abuse and other acts of psychological violence from both male and female opponents and their supporters during the polling day and at the tallying centres," adds Orwoba, who has been nominated in the Senate.

She recalls how she narrowly escaped

PAGE>>3



<<FROM PAGE 2 an attack from a rival group when the votes were being tallied during the party primaries.

“Police officers came and told me that there was a group inside the hall that was planning to attack me. One of the officers then threw a sweater and asked me to cover my head and walk straight ahead. He accompanied me to safety but I could hear the mob saying how they will burn my vehicle before they attack me.”

She had to hide in the building at the tallying centre for three hours to allow the mob to vacate. She came second in the hotly contested race and says the attempted attack was a tactic to keep her out of the tallying centre.

Her experience is captured in a report by the Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA-Kenya) which indicates that scores of women were sexually assaulted while others suffered verbal abuse before and after the General Election.

In the report titled ‘Kenya’s Electioneering period: Election, Sexual, and Gender Based Violence’, the organization says 157 cases of violence against women were reported in seven days before and after the General Election. Eight were recorded on the voting day.

The study analysed events a week before the election when the campaign mode goes a notch higher, during the election, and post-election when tension is higher as Kenyans await election result announcement.

Kajiado County topped in physical assault, while Kitui had the highest number of sexual harassment cases. Cyber bullying was highest in Siaya, and organised crimes in Nairobi.

Across the country, verbal abuse and hate speech against women during public gatherings and campaign rallies was the most prevalent. Verbal abuses before and after the elections stood at 67 per cent and 45 per cent of the cases respectively.

Cyberbullying was the second most prevalent form of abuse pre-election but third after the voting day.

During the pre-election reporting of cases, Kiharu constituency in Murang’a reported the highest cases of violence before the election, which stood at 11 per cent, with the rest reporting less than four per cent. On August 9, and seven days after elections, Lamu East constituency recorded the majority cases of violence, which calculated to 9 per cent followed by Karachuonyo and Mogotio.

Before the elections, assault cases stood at 4 per

cent and rose to 7 per cent after the polls. One week to the elections, Fida also observed that online meetings reported the highest number of violence cases at 60 per cent, which dropped to 37 per cent after elections.

“Though the percentage cases dropped, it can be concluded that most cases have been reported through online platforms simply because of the higher uptake of using an online platform like Social media live streams and virtual meetings,” says the report.

On offline platforms, verbal abuse and hate speech were the highest number of cases reported in political rallies seven days to elections, recorded at 12 per cent. “No cases of sexual assault were reported on the election day,” said Ms Ireri.

The study and other anecdotal evidence show that violence against women was high before election, indicating it was being used to intimidate them. During the months of May and June, Siaya County registered the highest number of election-related gender violence cases.

The month of July however posted the highest cases across the 47 counties, with Nairobi leading followed by Kericho. Siaya was also among the top five counties. Other counties listed in the report include Marsabit, Kisumu and Vihiga.

“There are no clear reasons for such patterns. However, considering the category of cases reported, it might be attributed to more aggressive campaigns experienced in those counties,” said Anne Ireri, FIDA Executive Director.

Similar findings were replicated in a preliminary statement by the International Republican Institute (IRI) and National Democratic Institute (NDI) joint international election observation mission (IEOM).

The mission collected reports of women candidates being physically attacked in Bungoma, Kirinyaga, and Mombasa counties. At various women candidates’ forums, women also reported being subject to intimidation, insults, and propaganda about their sexual morality, marital status, and age.

Section 10 of the Election Offences Act prohibits the use of threats, force and violence, including sexual violence. But it omits any mention of GBV and SGBV, which would allow the courts to more swiftly deal with offenses. The Sexual Offences Act of 2006 tackles many forms of sexual violence, including rape and sexual harassment, but fails to address modern online forms of sexual violence, which represented over 30 percent of the cases reported by FIDA-Kenya.

---SS---

# The elusive 30 percent



PIC FOR PAGE 2-Voters lining to cast their votes in Kenya's 2022 elections. Getting 30 per cent of women elected to National Assembly remains a tall order. By AWCFS

BY JOYCE CHIMBI

As voters went to the polls on August 9th in Kenya's 2022 elections, they seem to have been acutely aware that this East African nation cannot make critical socio-economic strides if women are not part of the political equation.

In this year's elections, the number of female governors elected increased from three in 2017 to seven in 2022, while for Members of Parliament it rose to 26 from the 23 who were elected in 2017.

"Looking into the future and defining the space for women in years to come requires that we take stock of where we are now. We need to determine which gaps need to be sealed and

strengths we ought to leverage on," says Ken Mwangi, a political party analyst.

"This is the time to audit and provide a report of where we are, what worked well for women and what worked against women so that the 2027 can bring us even better tidings."

Of the seven countries within the East African bloc, six have an electoral quota system similar to Kenya. It is only the Democratic Republic of the Congo that lacks this electoral quota. Yet, Kenya, the leading powerhouse in this bloc lags behind with the least representation of women.

"We have 30 women in the national assembly who were elected to represent single constituencies, add eight women at most, as nominated members to the national

PAGE>>5

<<FROM PAGE 4 assembly and we are looking at about 24 percent women representation in the national assembly,” says Mwangi. This is still below the desired at least 30 per cent threshold.

In the East African bloc, Mwangi says, “it is only Rwanda that can be considered a shining beacon of women representation. The country has 61 percent women representation, Burundi has 38 percent, and Tanzania has 36 percent representation.”

Uganda and South Sudan have 33 percent and 32 percent representations in their national assemblies respectively. Kenya is not likely to be near the 30 percent mark. Violence against women in elections is emerging one of the factors that is making achieving this target a pipedream.

“Kenya is without a doubt a leading democracy but women face many challenges within the political arena. Violence against women remains a serious issue and deterrence for women. We have heard of many cases where women are threatened to step down or they will come into grievous harm,” says June Wanjira, who vied for a Member of County Assembly (MCA) seat in Nyeri County, in 2017.

Wanjira says that there are female MCAs in Nakuru and Kiambu counties whose houses were torched to the ground because they won their seats.

“Women are easy targets for violence. Women are easy targets for harassment and social media bullying. We were all at the receiving end of sustained abuse on social media. We were called prostitutes and many other names. It is sad that

many of the abusers are our sons, young people who receive Ksh500 per week to wage war at women with viable political aspirations,” she laments.

“There are also family obstacles that we must overcome,” she adds. “Negotiating with our partners and in-laws is not an easy thing because if you stand your ground, you are likely to lose your family.

The price is too high for women with political dreams and many are not strong enough to pay the price. It is a brutal affair and women pay a price that is not demanded of their male counterparts.”

Against this backdrop, Peris Wanjiru, a leading political campaigner in Thika says that the future will only shine bright for women with political aspirations if the women in power deliver.

“Women are judged more harshly. People feel that politics is first of all for men and women have been ‘given’ those positions and they must therefore ‘prove’ they deserved to be ‘given’. Women must do more than men to please Wanjiku.”

Wanjiru, a graduate in political science, asks advocates of women equality and gender empowerment not rest on their laurels. “Let us not wait until 2026 or 27 to start drumming support for women. Encouraging communities to support women and normalizing women in power should be a continuous process.”

“We must do more civic education to help us hold on to what we already have even as we look into the greener pastures of 2027.”



**“Women are easy targets for violence. Women are easy targets for harassment and social media bullying. We were all at the receiving end of sustained abuse on social media**

June Wanjira, (MCA) aspirant Nyeri County, 2017



---SS---





Some of the women who vied on independent tickets address the media after the General Elections.

# Women find it rough competing as independent candidates

BY FAITH MUIRURI

**T**he 2022 elections saw many women candidates vying for various elective positions as independent candidates. This was either as result of being unable to get tickets of various political parties, exorbitant nomination fees, or unfair nomination process that was done by various political parties.

An independent candidate is a candidate that does not affiliate themselves with any political party.

During the just concluded General Elections, there was a dramatic surge in the number of candidates vying for political office on independent tickets.

The Office of the Registrar of Political Parties (ORPP) says that over 40 Kenyans had expressed interest in the presidency, the highest the country has ever recorded over the years. They were going to run on independent tickets. About six of the 40 presidential candidates were women running on independent tickets but were not cleared by IEBC.

ORPP however cleared a total of 7,177 independent candidates to run for five elective positions-Governor, Senate, MP, Member of County Assembly, and Women Representative-, marking 64 percent rise in the numbers compared to the 2017 General Elections where 4,648 independent candidates were cleared.

According to the registrar of political parties Ann Nderitu, the increase was mainly due to awareness on how to run as

PAGE>>7

<<FROM PAGE 6 an independent candidate as compared to 2017 polls.

In a gazette notice dated July 1, 2022 in which IEBC listed candidates who were vying for the elections, the number of women contesting as independent candidates was impressive.

But that move to run as independent candidates did not work for many women, who say they found it very expensive and difficult to run campaigns that are outside established political party systems.

Apart from Kawira Mwangaza who beat seasoned politicians among them Kiraitu Murungi and Mithika Linturi to bag the Meru Gubernatorial position, the rest of the women found it rough.

Susan Odongo, an independent candidate who vied for the Lang'ata parliamentary seat, but lost, blame this on the strong political waves in the strongholds of various political parties.

"Most voters opted to vote for candidates in political parties that were popular in their respective areas regardless of whether they could deliver on election promises."

This was evident when voters demanded that independent candidates indicate which political party or coalition they were supporting or were aligned to. "The side of the political divide you affiliated yourself with, either Azimio or Kenya Kwanza, as an independent candidate determined whether they will support you or not."

She says that the directive by major political parties to their supporters to vote six-piece for all positions that were being vied for also complicated matters for women who were running as independent candidates.

The situation was compounded by voters' inability to identify slogans, colors, symbols used by independent candidates at the ballot.

Lack of finances to hire and cater for agents was another challenge. "Some of our agents were bought by competitors at the polling stations and therefore we did not have anyone to protect our

votes as expected."

Similar sentiments are shared by Wanjiku Thiga who contested and lost an MCA seat in Theta ward, Juja Constituency. Thiga was initially in a political party but was edged out during the nominations. "The political party opted for consensus building and settled on my opponent and therefore I decided to vie for the seat as an independent candidate."

According to Thiga, fighting party machinery was never easy. "One of the major political parties came with a lot of machinery, money and did a lot of road shows which gave their candidate a lot of visibility, which is very key when you are campaigning."

"But as an independent candidate, it was all about me and whether I had a strong presence on the ground. For independent candidates, instead of fighting an individual, you have the entire party against you. And it gets worse when contesting in areas perceived as party strongholds."

She also points out that the Independent Electoral Boundaries Commission (IEBC) and ORPP did not integrate independent candidates in their official communications and dealings.

"For instance, IEBC and the ORPP convened several meetings prior to the elections and in most cases asked political parties to send their representatives but they did not invite independent candidates."

Eunice Mukai, who contested but lost the pipeline ward seat on an independent ticket concurs and says that IEBC did not offer any kind of support to independent candidates.

She cites cases where agents representing female independent candidates were denied access to the polling stations because they were filled up with agents representing political parties and their candidates. "We are in a democracy, and all candidates should be allowed equal chance. But when you prioritize party candidates, then you create unequal playing ground."

---SS---

# Media improves coverage of women politician, but has work to do on portrayal



Media interviewing MacDonald Mariga, who vied for Kibra MP seat. Media lauded for giving women airtime in 2022 elections and not only men. .  
By AWCFS

BY JOYCE CHIMBI

**W**hile the media is said to have performed much better in coverage of women and their issues in the 2022 general elections, concerns are emerging on the portrayal of women who were covered on these platforms.

Dr. Grace Gakii, an expert on gender matters says there is evidence media still perpetuates stereotypes, archetypes and negatively gendered connotations.

“We have heard of Kirinyaga queens. The use of queens for women and kingpins for men with significant political influence is something that the media has fed us for sometime now. It is also the media that tells us that this politician or that politician is being encouraged to vie for affirmative seats now and seek greater things in future,” says Gakii.

By providing a platform and perpetuating the view that women are only good for affirmative action seats reinforces the belief among voters that this is true.

Recent studies have shown that this portrayal and conversations when repeated severally on media platforms, hurts women. Research findings by Mary Mwachu's confirms this. In her thesis titled 'Perceptions of female legislators in the 11th Parliament found that even when it covers women, the media uses uneven standards of scurrility when covering female and male politicians.

The research assesses the experiences of women politicians with regard to how the media covers them and factors that influence the coverage of women politicians. It recommends specific policy guidelines for gender sensitive language use in media houses.

One of the key interventions she proposes

PAGE>>9





<<FROM PAGE 8 is gender training for media workers and women politicians. She notes that various stakeholders have set the ball rolling on training in gender sensitive reporting and developed guidelines on the same.

“However, in the tricky dance between gender sensitive reporting and profits, women get the short hand of the stick. Social reality has it that sensational stories and more so those involving well-known women is the order of the day.” This focus becomes more intense as happened in the 2022 election where there are sensational stories on influential women, especially on the online media.

Sera Kagiri agrees that women are still struggling for fair coverage in the media.

“The media coverage of women has increased and improved a lot but still needs to be done. Even where two women are brought in for a debate, there is a deliberate effort to chose either two combative women to increase chances for a combative encounter and therefore increase viewership. Rarely will you find two level headed women sitting to debate each other, one has to be combative.”

Kagiri observes that in the run up to the 2022 general elections, there was sustained profiling of women in non-affirmative seats by the Nation Media Group, and some coverage by other media houses. The only problem is, she says, these media houses leave out women when important national issues are being discussed during or even after the elections.

“Women voices are still faint on issues that affect and define our country. When the budget is read or something equally significant has happened, rarely will you find women politicians being invited to give a non-political take of what transpired.

Critical analyses are left to men and yet we have women governors and MPs. These images shape how we view male and female leaders.”

Gakii concurs adding that the media is the most powerful tool in either addressing gendered imbalances

or in propagating them.

“There is some progress and some media houses and journalists are doing better in covering women than others, but we are still performing well below par. The media fraternity needs to address its own biases.

She feels that journalists and all other actors in story production must be trained to increase their awareness of concepts around gender and related stereotypes because failure to do so will cost this country.

“We have some serious and blatant gender stereotypes that includes showing women dancing in rallies and men selling their political agenda; or women politicians standing behind male political figure heads as the latter address crowds.

Women must break these barriers and the media must find a healthy balance of profits and decent representation of women.”

But Gakii admits that finding this balance is not always easy especially where certain stereotypes are conferred and steeped deeply in certain communities. She cites Central Kenya as a leading example.

“We had the ‘miji miji’ (peas) political wave. Peas are a much-loved delicacy in Central Kenya and the name was given to politicians who were considered very appealing, especially physically. The miji miji wave saw many women who embrace the term rise to political prominence. We also have the 24-year-old Toto as the Bomet Women Representative and this is a name that was given to her by the community”

What concerns Gakii is that “there were young male politicians in the same age group but nobody called them ‘toto’. It is therefore a case-by-case situation and there is room for sustained discourse around media and women politicians.”

To her, such coverage indicates that there is greater need for sustained training of media practitioners on gender sensitive reporting as well as empowering women and other people to be critical consumers of the media



**“Women voices are still faint on issues that affect and define our country. When the budget is read or something equally significant has happened, rarely will you find women politicians being invited to give a non-political take of what transpired.**

-Sera Kagiri



# What did not work for women in 2022 elections



Key women leaders at a media roundtable. From left to right UN Women's Hellen Muchunu, Njoro MP Charity Kathumbi Chepkwony. By AWCFS

BY ODHIAMBO ORLALE

**T**he just concluded General Election presented mixed fortunes for the women's movement, politicians and candidates.

A record number of women candidates for Governor, Members of Parliament and for Members of the County Assembly emerged winners; with an impressive performance recorded for the governor's seat. Seven women gubernatorial candidates clinched seats.

The seven women Governors are Kirinyaga (Anne Waiguru), Homa Bay (Gladys Wanga), Nakuru (Susan Kihika), Embu (Cecily Mbarire), Kawira Mwangaza (Meru), Machakos (Wavinya Ndeti) and Kwale (Fatuma Achani).

For the parliamentary seat, 30 women were elected and 115 female MCAs were elected among the 1,450 in the 47 counties.

Says National Gender and Equality Commission chairperson, Dr Joyce Mutinda: "Thirty women were

declared elected MPs spread across 18 counties. This is an impressive increase in the number of women elected in single constituency Member of Parliament compared to 2017 where only 23 were elected."

But the big question is what factors contributed to women not doing very well in some contests despite the huge numbers who competed for various political positions.

## Impact of political wave

According to Hamida Malasen, who failed to clinch the Kibra Constituency seat on Amani National Congress (ANC), one of the biggest challenges at nomination and at the general elections for women aspirants was the political party or coalition waves. In her Constituency, for instance, majority voted for Orange Democratic Movement (ODM) party.

The other factor was zoning. Says Malasen: "The zoning was an issue; the decision was made few days to election and had one candidate to be elected within the coalition; yet I was on the ballot already."

PAGE>>10



**<<FROM PAGE 11** In their bid to woo voters and get more of their candidates to win elective seats in the 47 counties in the country, the two major political party coalitions, Azimio La Umoja and Kenya Kwanza through their presidential candidates had divided the country into their strongholds. In the latter, they went further to give priority to their so-called stronger candidates, most of who were men, at the expense of women aspirants. This happened at both the party primaries and candidates at the August 9th General election.

Gender and electoral violence too affected women performance. Malasen says it hurt her and fellow women's chances because it was difficult for them to compete fairly. "I did not experience electoral violence but received some insults, which was not a threat."

Turning to the media, Malasen notes that the media coverage was equally a challenge because there was bias in favour of one of the coalition parties that left some of her supporters feeling aggrieved.

But Dr Lilian Gogo who retained her Rangwe parliamentary seat says media worked for her. She says like fellow women, her major challenge was resources.

Says Gogo: "We are a patriarchal society where most of the resources are with men and for instance in my Constituency, my biggest competitor was well-oiled and had no problem dishing out large sums of money."

These resources also played a role in trying to influence the outcome for the elections for various seats. Dr Gogo says there were cases not just in her constituency but across the country of some candidates attempting to or bribing election officials to influence the outcome.

In addition to resource constraint, Dr Gogo notes that electoral and gender violence was another big factor that affected participation of women in the polls. In Rangwe constituency, for instance, some of her agents were threatened, roughed up and badly beaten at the polling stations.

"The matter was reported to authorities and I hope appropriate action will be taken to mitigate this in future elections. One person died a day to elections.

One of my opponents was physically assaulted my supporter."

On her part, Jane Anyango, Chief Executive Officer of Polycom Development Project, a Community-Based Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) based in Kibra Constituency, says issuance of direct tickets in many other instances worked against very competitive women aspirants.

"In areas where securing a particularly party ticket was a guarantee to being elected, women were mostly not favoured," says Anyango, who was also an elections trainer and observer.

But it was not all gloomy. Dr Gogo and her colleagues in Orange Democratic Movements are happy that the use of affirmative action worked for them and made things much easier. The party gave direct nominations to former Homa Bay Women Representative, Gladys Wanga, to vie for the Governor's seat, and four women, including her to vie for parliamentary seats in Nyanza region.

All the four: Wanga (Governor), Millie Odhiambo (Suba North), Rosa Buyu (Kisumu West) and Eve Obara (Kabondo Kasipul) won.

She is also happy that there was improved media coverage of women at the county level. "At the County and Constituency levels, media coverage was very good. But I would say there is room for improvement."

There is no doubt that the local media has in the past been gender-biased, blind and unfair to women leaders and politicians and in most cases perpetuated myths, stereotypes and propaganda about women leadership.

But, says Dr Gogo, thanks to the Beijing, China, international women's conference, and the stand taken by the UN Women, the media has been brought on board to promote a gender agenda as an affirmative action and human rights issue.

Anyango too is happy that there was a lot of improvement in regard to electoral environment with less cases of violence against women being reported compared to the 2017 general elections.

----SS----

# A new dawn for women in the political space

BY JOYCE CHIMBI

**K**enya's electorate has made history by electing many women to political positions, with some counties such as Nakuru putting in office an all women cast. The number of women elected in the 2022 elections is inspiring compared to the previous elections.

Besides the seven women governors elected including Cecily Mbarire in Embu County, Wavinya Ndeti in Machakos County, Kawira Mwangaza in Meru County, Gladys Wanga in Homabay, Susan Kihika in Nakuru County, Ann Waiguru in Kirinyaga and Fatuma Achari in Kwale County, another 30 women were elected to the national assembly, according to the National Gender and Equality Commission.

"Women made history, breaking the glass ceiling to ascend to one of the highest offices in the country. The governor's seat has always been a male dominated affair. It is a very powerful seat because the holder is in-charge of an entire county," says Allan Jack Omondi, a political analyst in Nairobi.

"Notably, these are rural counties where fidelity to women rights remain a big challenge. But the numbers are showing a new dawn not just for women but for the country."

Omondi says that for the country to accelerate progress towards UN's Sustainable Development Goal five, active participation of women "not just as electorates but players in high stake politics is much needed.

He adds that the win they have registered is not an end in itself but a beginning to much greater things for this country and a moment to behold.

Nduta Kaiga, a political activist and member of Maendeleo ya Wanawake says the 2022 elections show that the political ground has shifted.



Hon Beatrice Elachi speaking to media after voting in the 2022 General Elections. She won the MP seat for Dagoretti North. By AWCFS

"Not as much as we would like it to, but it has shifted enough for women to penetrate active politics. We still have our 47 women representatives on top of the other women who came out strong in seats that are non-affirmative."

The campaign period was significantly defining, she says, as the women agenda took center-stage and leading coalitions fought tooth **PAGE>>12**



<<FROM PAGE 13 and nail for the women vote.

“Women are a constituency and it is a vote rich constituency of the young and older women. Every political formation was fighting to appear to be ardent supporters of women rights,” Kaiga says.

As result of the elevated position of women, three of them made it to the ballot as running mate for three respective presidential candidates. It was also the first time that a major political formation chose a woman as a running mate.

“There are many factors that worked for women. First, it is important to note that credit goes to any woman who put their bid forward to be considered for office. We are still very much a patriarchal society and we must applaud all the women who made an attempt,” says Beatrice Kamau, a member of the Bunge la Wananchi, Nakuru Chapter.

“Choice of political party was of course significant. There are places where winning a certain political party ticket is equivalent to winning the actual seat. We have political party waves and many women managed to position themselves very strategically and, in the end, the wave worked in their favor.”

Kamau says that in Central and Rift Valley regions, there was a pull towards younger women with the entry of 24-year-old Linet Chepkorir alias Toto as the Women Representative of Bomet County. Others were Cynthia Muge and Jane Maina.

Muge and Maina are the women representatives of Nandi and Kirinyaga Counties representatives respectively and are both under the age of 30 years.

“It was also a very expensive political affair. Many of these women have spent a lot of money to capture their seats. However, there are those like Toto and Kawira Mwangaza who placed themselves in a position where they could amass supporters without digging deep into their pockets,” Kaiga notes.

Toto is for instance on record saying that she spent an estimated Ksh100,000 for the entire

campaign and much of the support came from well-wishers.

“Toto represented a new dawn for her people, and she was able to endear herself because she is young, organized and has brilliant ideas that she articulates with great confidence. Parents could relate to her as did young people because this is the Kenya we want, where anybody with a good idea can become somebody,” Kaiga observes.

Kawira is also on record saying that when she first came onto the political scene in 2013, her campaign cost her Ksh 20 million. She did not win. The useful lessons she learnt informed her bid for the governor position in 2022.

This time round, she notes, she did not spend money to capture the seat. Having been a women representative, her projects were tangible and spoke louder than any words.

Her husband, a well-known musician in the County, was another asset. During campaigns, she did not print any campaign materials. She said that her husband would first perform songs tailored to her political bid to warm the crowd and she would come in with her agenda.

This, she says, is how she maneuvered the very stormy waters that defined any governor race across the country. Kawira’s experience is a tale for folklore, a masterclass in political campaigns because she run and won as an independent candidate, overcoming the Kenya Kwanza and Azimio political waves.

Omondi says that Kawira’s story is without a doubt unique as the political bid was a costly affair for many other women and very few could have survived without a strong political party. He lauds organizations that supported women with either capacity building or IEC materials as this helped to propel them forward.

“In Homabay County, I saw reflector jackets for boda boda riders and T-shirts urging the electorate to give women leadership a chance. I believe that women have indeed received the chance they sought, this is not a time to say we wanted more but a time to say the glass is half full,” he equips.

----SS----

# Nakuru shows how to empower women politically



Susan Kihika defeating the then Governor Lee Kinyanjui.

**BY: JAMES MBULO**

If there is one County that indicated that it preferred women to be its leaders and to drive its development agenda in the next five years, then is Nakuru County.

The county entered in Kenya's books of history as the first one to vote the highest number of women in elective leadership making it to acquire

new name "Nakuru Girls".

The voters elected Susan Kihika as the first ever woman Governor, Tabitha Keroche Karanja as the Senator and Liz Chelule as the Woman Representative. At Member of Parliament level, out of 11 Constituencies, four women were elected to the national Parliament: Charity Kathambi of Njoro Constituency, Martha Wangari of Gilgil, Irene Njoki of Bahati and Jayne Kihara **PAGE>>14**



<<FROM PAGE 15 of Naivasaha.

But this performance was not strongly reflected at the Ward Level, where only eight women or 15 per cent were elected as Members of County Assembly out of the 55 members.

Still, the results the county posted are very encouraging. The question on many people's lips is why voters preferred women leaders in this county? Were the women leaders in Nakuru County elected because of the Party popularity or the Nakuru residents believed that they (women) can bring change to the county?

There are mixed views on this. Kennedy Wanjala from Kiamaina, Bahati Constituency believes that more women leaders were elected by Nakuru residents because they believe in women leadership and that women have the capacity to do more development in the county than their male counter parts.

"It was not by default that people from Nakuru elected more women leaders. It is because they believe in their leadership and that they can do a lot in terms of development."

Mary Akumu, a vendor in Gilgil thinks it was a way of fulfilling the two-thirds gender rule since the parliamentarians mostly men, are reluctant to pass the bill into law. The voters had to do it.

"Male members of parliament have refused to pass two-third gender rule as required by the constitution. So people from Nakuru saw it was wise to do so through electing women."

Peter Njoroge, a boda boda operator and a resident from Kaptembwa in Nakuru West argues that some of the women leaders such as Jane Kihara- Naivasha, Charity Kathambi-Njoro and Martha Wangari-Gilgil, were elected because of their development record in their constituencies.

"Member of Parliament Jane Kihara, Charity Kathambi and Martha Wangari were not only elected because of the party but because of the development they had done in their constituencies

and they are also veterans in politics."

But for other women who won, he thinks the popularity of the United Democratic Alliance (UDA) party in Nakuru County compared to other parties was the main reason.

"Susan Kihika, Tabitha Karanja, and Liza Chelule who were in UDA party were elected because the popularity of UDA. while Irene Njoki who vied for the Bahati seat on Jubilee ticket was elected as a way of punishing the former Bahati Member of Parliament Kimani Ngunjiri," he says.

Gladys Kamureen who vied for member of parliament for Rongai in Nakuru County differs with those who argue that the elected women in Nakuru County succeeded because of party popularity.

According to her, the elected women leaders worked hard and fought for those positions. She feels that some of the elected women were already empowered since it is not their first time to vie for political seats.

"I disagree with those who say that women in Nakuru were elected because of UDA popularity. Those women worked hard and fought for those positions. Women leaders such as Jane Kihara, Charity Kathambi, and Martha Wangari were already shining since it was not their first time in Parliament"

Political analyst Benard Omwandho concurs. He says that women leaders were not elected because of the party rather it was due to their political strategies and good positioning.

"Let nobody cheat you that Governor Susan Kihika and other female leaders from Nakuru were elected because of the party. They played their cards well and had a good strategy. UDA did not support only female aspirants in Nakuru but also did so to their male counter parts. So this proves women were smart this time around."

----SS----

# Women leaders give thumbs up to the media



Journalists covering the 2022 General Elections in Kenya. By AWCFS

BY ODHIAMBO ORLALE

**M**any of the women who vied in the 2022 elections are happy with the media support they received that gave them an edge over their competitors in the August 2022 elections.

Unlike in the 2017 polls, the mainstream and the other media outlets made a deliberate move to give many women aspirants and candidates positive and sustained coverage throughout the election cycle contributing to the heartwarming results that were recorded.

According to many women aspirants and candidates in the just-concluded General Election, the media was biased and favoured male candidates and those from the major political parties like United Democratic Alliance (UDA) party and Orange Democratic Movement (ODM) parties.

But whenever women candidates were covered it was either negatively or tokenism. On the flip side, it was not all that bad; some media houses made a deliberate effort, thanks to media training, where most major stories, face-to-face radio and television interviews embraced gender issues.

This support can be partly attributed to the capacity building forums that journalists benefited from.

Hundreds of reporters, correspondents, videographers and photographers benefited from sensitization and training programmes organized by media organization including African Woman and Child Feature Service. The organization trained over 80 journalists on gender sensitive reporting, engaged editors on the need to give more space and airtime to women candidates and their issues, engage media on positive portrayal of women and trained the communication focal persons working for women candidates on strategic communication.

PAGE>>17



**<<FROM PAGE 16** As a result of engendering the media campaign, many aspirants were exposed to the public and to their voters during the campaigns, party nominations and the General Election.

Most of the media houses focused on the women candidate's manifestoes and issues that they had put on the table and downplayed the negative stories and claims raised by their male rivals.

Impact of the efforts was seen by the record number of women elected as Governors (7), Senators (3), Members of Parliament (30) and over 115 as Members of the County Assembly according to results announced by the Independent Elections and Boundaries Commission.

According to Njoki Wamai, an Assistant Professor in politics and international relations at United States International University-Africa, the success of women in the recent polls is evidence that that the country "is now seeing the first gains of affirmative action."

On her part, Rangwe MP, Dr Lilian Gogo, who retained her seat for a second term; the media did a better job this time around compared to 2017 when she first vied.

Says Dr Gogo, who is a former Egerton University lecturer: "Media coverage is good for any person vying for office. The media coverage nationally could do better, though there was some of it. At the County level this time round it was better than last time and at Constituency level the coverage was very good."

Elsewhere, former Nakuru Senator, Susan Kihika, who was elected Governor, had the following to say in her victory speech: "We will look back and say this time it was really historical, but we are nowhere we need to be."

Governor Kihika is a perfect example of how a woman leader who knows how to use the media. She first vied for the Bahati parliamentary seat, in Nakuru county, in 2013 but she did not make it. Kihika did not give up and instead soldiered on and used the media effectively and strategically to campaign and rise to Speaker of the

Nakuru County in 2014 and then Senator, in 2017.

Judie Kaberia, immediate former Executive Director, AMWIK, says the organization was involved in many concerted efforts to boost the visibility of women in media through advocating for more coverage of women aspirants, training women aspirants on how to seize opportunities in media and training journalists on gender-sensitive reporting and safety.

AMWIK also lobbied for editors in newsrooms to grant women aspirants and candidates more coverage in radio and television prime time discussion panels, radio talk shows and expert opinions.

Compared to 2007, 2012 and 2017, there was highest coverage of women aspirants in the Kenyan media, thanks to the deliberate lobbying by the Kenya Media Sector Working Group, the umbrella body of media organisations in Kenya that called on media houses to grant more space and coverage to women.

Looking back, Kaberia is satisfied saying the outcome of more women being elected to governance positions is a testament that these initiatives worked.

But she says women aspirants need to understand how media works and cultivate good relationships with the media.

More training for women is needed on how to present themselves or their agenda when they get media opportunities. They need to also to treat the media as an ally, not a villain out there to tarnish their names and credibility.

Equally, there is need for more training for journalists on gender-sensitive reporting, and for women aspirants and candidates to take up opportunities when they are presented. Looking into the future, Kaberia says the future of women's leadership in politics looks very bright:

"We have demonstrated that even without the 2/3 gender rule, which is yet to be realised, we can be able to push for more women's representation. We hope that the 13th parliament will make sure the two thirds gender rule sees the light of day."

---SS---

**The success of women in the recent polls is evidence that that the country "is now seeing the first gains of affirmative action."**

Njoki Wamai, an Assistant Professor in politics and international relations at United States International University-Africa,

# Political Parties Act work for women



A session in the Twelfth Parliament after passing the Political Parties (Amendment) Bill of 2021 into law By AWCFS

BY FAITH MUIRURI

**T**he amendment to the Political Parties Act before the 2022 General Elections was seen as great a relief and benefit to marginalized groups, especially women. This amendment paved way for order and sanity within the political party nomination process which was previously marred by nepotistic selections, often excluding women. But the question is, did it work for women this time around?

Interviews and views from various women candidates and marginalized groups do indicate that the amendments were godsend as they helped to cushion them from violations they have been experiencing for many years.

To them, the amendment ushered in a more inclusive electoral process largely targeting women candidates

and other marginalized groups.

This was attested by the strengthening of the registration process for the candidates to avoid confusion or shifting of goalposts.

Political party funding criteria was also reviewed in the amendment with 15 per cent of their funding being tied to the ratio of special interest groups included on their nomination lists. This provision served to encourage parties to bring and nominate more women in their party lists submitted to Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (IEBC).

A provision calling for party candidate lists to meet a constitutional threshold of not more than 2/3s of any one gender today paints a picture of success and remarkable gains registered during the just concluded 2022 General Elections.

PAGE>>19

**<<FROM PAGE 18** According to the IEBC records, more women ran for seats in 2022 than in 2017, both in absolute numbers and as a share of the total number of candidates. Out of the 16,100 candidates cleared for the 2022 polls, women represented 12.18 percent or 1,962 candidates.

Three of the four presidential candidates nominated a woman as a running mate and several political parties appointed women as Secretary General or Executive Directors. The number of female deputy gubernatorial candidates also more than doubled from 30 in 2017 to 62 in 2022.

That was not all. The revised nomination rules further helped to yield higher numbers of women in elective seats. Under the 2022 amendments to the Political Parties Act (2011), parties were permitted to directly nominate candidates through universal suffrage of their membership, or to indirectly nominate them through consensus, internal polls, delegates, or other methods.

While direct nominations in some instances worked against strong women candidates, the few that benefitted from direct party tickets managed to secure resounding victories during the elections.

A glance at the numbers of women elected in the just concluded General Elections reveals that most women who were issued with direct party tickets in respective party strongholds registered landslide victory during the polls.

Among those issued with direct tickets by the Orange Democratic Party included Gladys Wanga who won Governor's seat in Homabay County, Lilian Gogo (Rangwe), Millie Odhiambo (Suba North), Eve Obara (Kabondo Kasipul), Roza Abuyu (Kisumu West), Amina Mnyazi (Malindi) and Beatrice Elachi- Dagoreti North. All won their seats.

Direct tickets were also issued to MCAs among them Rose Ogonda (Kware ward), Cecilia Ayoti (Laini Saba) who have retained their seats.

In Kenya Kwanza, women issued with direct tickets also registered resounding victory in their respective electoral areas. Fatusa Achan won the Governor's seat in Kwale County, Susan Kihika is the new Governor, Nakuru County, while Ann Waiguru reclaimed her gubernatorial seat in Kirinyaga County. Cecil Mbarire

was subjected to the party nomination exercise. She clinched the party ticket and won the Embu Gubernatorial seat. Tabitha Karanja also won the Nakuru senatorial seat after being issued with a direct nomination.

At the single member constituency, scores of women issued with direct tickets by Kenya Kwanza coalition secured landslide victory as well. They include Alice Wahome (Kandara), Mary Wamaua (Maragua), Wanjiku Muhia (Kipipiri) Gathoni Wa Muchomba (Githunguri), Maryann Keitany (Aldai), Phyllis Bartoo (Moiben), Jayne Kihara (Naivasha), Mary Emase (Teso South).

Wavinya Ndeti and Agnes Kavindu also benefitted from direct tickets by Wiper party and clinched both the gubernatorial and senatorial seats respectively in Machakos County. Jessica Mbalu (Kibwezi East), Susan Kiamba (Makueni) and Edith Nyenze (Kitui West) also bagged the seats through the Wiper party ticket.

In Jubilee Party, Agnes Pareiyo, Ruweida Mohamed (Lam East), Irene Njoki (Bahati) and Rachael Nyamai (Kitui South) garnered victory on the party ticket while Kanu's Naisula Lesuuda retained her Samburu East parliamentary seat through the party ticket.

According to the Orange Democratic Movement (ODM) nominated Senator Beth Syengo, the party conducted opinion polls to identify strong candidates before issuing direct tickets. "The party either issued direct tickets or used delegates system to determine their flag bearer."

She is quick to point out that previously the nomination rules were not gender sensitive and the process was often opaque. The revision of rules has led to increased transparency which worked in favour of women, she notes.

Gender parity in political representation is a constitutional requirement under Article 27(8) of the Constitution of Kenya, 2010, which provides that no one gender, should occupy more than two-thirds of appointive and elective.

A big lesson from these elections is that if the political parties are gender sensitive, and support women during competitive election processes, then the numbers of women getting into political leadership will increase tremendously.

---SS---



# It is time to get down to work



Deputy Speaker, Kenya National Assembly, Gladys Shollei.

BY ODHIAMBO ORLALE

**K**enyan politics will never be the same again as the new crop of women leaders take up their respective offices and responsibilities.

They include seven Governors, three Senators, 30 Members of Parliament and Members of the County Assemblies (MCAs). Indeed, the die has been cast after their victory parties and swearing-in; it is now time to deliver on their promises.

The task facing the seven governors is how to strategize and lobby their male counterparts, regardless

of their political coalitions, to back them to pass through their crucial policy proposals.

The same will apply in the Senate, where the three female Senators will have to lobby their 44 elected male colleagues to help them pass key bills that advance the welfare of their constituent, especially women and marginalized groups.

The number of women in both the National Assembly and the Senate is critical in pushing the gender agenda, among other things.

Their role and contribution in both houses

PAGE>>21

<<FROM PAGE 20 will be felt on the floor of the houses but more importantly, in the House Committees that discuss and consider important businesses.

The National Assembly, also referred to as the August House, has seven powerful and influential standing committees. These are Committee on appointments chaired by The Speaker; Public Accounts Committee; Public Investments Committee; Budget and Appropriation Committee; Committee on Implementation; Committee on Delegated Legislation; and Committee on Regional Integration.

All the seven committees have a chairperson and a deputy. Parliament also has 12 departmental committees with elected chairpersons and deputies.

The 12 are: Defence and Foreign Relations; Administration and National Security; Agriculture Livestock and Cooperatives; Environment and Natural Resources; Education Research and Technology. Others are: Energy, Communication and Information committee; Finance, Planning and Trade; Health; Justice and Legal Affairs; Labour and Social Welfare; Lands; and Transport, Public Works and Housing.

The august House also has three other committees; one is on Constituency Development Fund; while the others are Constitutional Implementation Oversight; and on Pensions.

Parliament has two joint committees; these are Committee on National Cohesion and Equal Opportunity, and a Committee on Parliamentary Broadcasting and Library.

According to the new MP for Rangwe, Dr Lilian Gogo, the future is bright for women leaders and politicians going by the political goodwill that many of them enjoyed during the just concluded General Election.

Says Dr Gogo: "Political goodwill was most certainly there. As earlier mentioned, my party ODM and Party leader Raila Odinga, was at the forefront in supporting women leaders. The backing with party campaign

materials was also well coordinated and timely. He walked with women aspirants every step of the way, attending campaign functions in the County and even sending party officials out to help ODM party candidates in their campaigns at the various levels."

Mary Mwendwa, an election observer and political analyst, says she hopes the goodwill women enjoyed will be at play again in parliament with key bills and positions are discussed.

"Women politicians are not yet there yet, but with more effort more will join politics. As we know, African politics has always favoured men; women need to work much harder to excel in politics."

In the past, women leaders and politicians have used different strategies to lobby and campaign for their causes, one of them was sensitizing the media, public and members of the male-dominated august House to support their agenda.



**"Women politicians are not yet there yet, but with more effort more will join politics. As we know, African politics has always favoured men; women need to work much harder to excel in politics."**

Mary Mwendwa, an election observer and political analyst,



The strategy was more effective when the women MPs brought their male counterparts on board, especially the so-called "gender-friendly men" to lead the sensitization and campaign in and outside the august House on important issues as the realization of the gender two-thirds principle.

Despite getting the full support of President Uhuru Kenyatta of Jubilee Party and former Prime Minister Raila Odinga of Orange Democratic Party, the two powerful and influential leaders in the country, the majority of the 349 MPs still failed to pass the 2/3 gender rule.

As they start their five-year parliamentary term, women MPs have their job cut out for them to bring as many male colleagues as possible on board to push their agenda, including the enactment of the two thirds gender rule. Meanwhile, their male counterparts are expected to help and make the environment within the National Assembly and Senate conducive for women to succeed in their legislative and oversight responsibilities.

-----SS-----