

SautiSasa

Promoting the rights and position of Kenyan women in decision making

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WE ARE UP TO THE TASK, WOMEN LEADERS SAY





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Patience Nyange calls for concerted efforts to tackle online violence

BY CLARET ADHIAMBO

Patience Nyange was prepared for many things as she declared her interest to vie for the governorship position for Taita Taveta County. But there is one thing she had not given so much thought: online violence. She also did not know that her background in media that she believed would work in her favour; would turn out to be her nightmare.

Immediately she declared she was contesting for the governorship position, her opponents immediately engaged her in massive online violence.

She had entered the race a bit late due to her absence from the country while pursuing her master's degree in Cardiff, United Kingdom.

"I did not experience any physical forms of violence except for some verbal slurs. I did however go through a lot of online violence," says Nyange, who is the current Executive Director of Association of Media Women in Kenya.

So brutal was the violence that some of her abusers made all comments about her marital status and children. Her perpetrators could engage in online

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Patience Nyange

<<FROM PAGE 2 conversations about the length of her skirt, shape of her legs, to the way she would pronounce her name at political rallies.

“When I announced that I was going to vie, they went right to my social media pages and took photos I had posted when I still worked at the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) and the Media Council of Kenya. They started ridiculing me.”

“Some called me a slay queen because of how I dressed and my accent, while others said I was not fit to hold the governor’s office just because I was a woman. They said that I should have instead vied for the Woman Representative seat.”

Most of the online violence was perpetrated on Facebook and WhatsApp platforms. The forms of online violence she was subjected to were trolls and a number of Facebook posts.

Outside, Nyange seemed to be strong willed. But inside, her soul was in turmoil. “Well, I tried so hard to put off all the forms of violence that was happening to me but some of them got to me, especially those that touched on my family.

I had situations when my family members would come and ask me so many questions about posts made online by the online violence perpetrators. That got to me and it made me really sad.”

She had to do something about the posts. She took some time between her busy campaign schedules and made other posts to clarify some of the lies



perpetrated against her on the various Taita Taveta Facebook pages. This did not stop the trolls from going after her. Nyange says she then devised a strategy of not fighting back.

“My votes were at stake. You report one person, action is taken against them, and words start going around that I cannot stand criticism therefore cannot make a good leader.”

What helped her to withstand massive online violence however is the useful lessons she had learnt as a journalist. When she was working for various media houses, she was subjected to similar violence, a development that saw her employers empower her and other women on how to deal with such violence.

“Journalists, especially Television journalists go through a lot of violence. Having been in the media space, I was empowered on how to deal with the online violence.”

In addition to these skills, Nyange says she had a great support team that she leaned on whenever she was experiencing

online violence. “Sometimes we would go through some of the posts on Facebook and just laugh because my support team members were also empowered to deal with online violence.”

Nyange’s says participation in politics taught her a lot about not holding grudges and taking things personal against people who even trolled her online.

“There is this common saying in Kiswahili that ‘usiweke siasa kwa roho, weka kwa lungs’ (do not hold grudges). I am currently friends with some of the people who trolled me because I have learnt not to hold grudges. I attend some of their forums and we empower one another.”

But she strongly feels that something needs to be done to make the online space safe, especially for women.

“There are very many agencies doing very many things. I would urge them to come together and make a collective call against online violence against women. This way, their voices will be heard and action will be taken against the perpetrators.”

To the young women facing online violence, Nyange is asking them to arm themselves with knowledge on how to protect themselves online.

“There are many social media tools they can use to protect themselves from the bullies. They also need to attend as many programs as possible to protect themselves. But above all, those young women need to live their lives and not be apologetic about it.”

--WL--

It is Aluta continua for Apetet

BY AWC FEATURE SERVICES

When Jane Apetet Nashida resigned as Public Service Officer in Turkana County to contest for the Senate race in the 2022 General Elections, she was certain of a win to become the first women Senator for the County.

Her prolife was enviable: Worked as a Director at the Kenya Power Board and a Member of the County Service Board in Turkana County where she gained knowledge and vast management experience in leadership.

"I vied for a position that no woman in Turkana has tried before because our people believe it is a preserve of men," says Apetet. "I wanted to challenge attitudes and perceptions of my community that certain positions are only for men; and prove that women too are qualified to take up these positions as stipulated in the Constitution of Kenya."

Her motivation to vie for the top position was driven by her passion to contribute to the wellbeing of women and children in Turkana.

Apetet observes that coming from a pastoralist community where only men are considered to be leaders and the voice of the community; women have been left as voiceless bystanders. And most of the times suffer discrimination and human



Jane Apetet Nashida

right violations in silence.

"Having come from Kapedo area, I wanted to become the voice for women and girls empowerment to ensure they are educated and their rights are not violated."

She believes being Senator would have helped her tackle many of these challenges. "Being in that position and in charge of matters devolution, I would have brought dignity to the Turkana community which has been marginalized for over 50 years."

Apetet says campaigning in Turkana County was the trickiest and toughest venture she had to deal with. During the

campaigns, she had to traverse over 77,000 square Kilometers; from Kapedo to Kibish. This required huge resources and planning.

"I had done my calculations and started putting measures in place on how I would reach the people. For over two years, I relied on my savings and support from friends and relatives and of course the women in the TUPEDI to sell my agenda."

Unfortunately, she did not win. But her participation and the visibility in the elections opened another door: Apetet secured a position in the office of The First Lady, Rachael Ruto, as a Principal

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<<FROM PAGE 4 Program Officer. This position has given her an opportunity to serve her people and repackage herself for the next elections.

Her Journey in Politics

How did she get interested in leadership? Her journey as a leader goes back to when she was in high school, where she served as the school head girl.

"I have held leadership positions everywhere, from high school to institutions of higher learning. I knew that leadership was my calling," says Apetet, who holds a Master's Degree in Public Administration.

At the Kenya Power Board she served as one of the directors. She also served as the chairperson of Independent Power Producers (IPPs) and member of Information Communication and Technology (ICT) committees.

Within her community, Apetet is the Chairperson of Turkana Peace and Development Initiative (TUPEDI), an intervention that addresses community challenges including supporting teenage mothers to complete their education and supply sanitary towels to schools.

But her interest in political leadership was inspired by senior women politicians such as Charity Ngilu and Martha Karua, from whom she has learnt a few things when it comes to campaign strategies.

For her, one of the innovative strategies she used in the 2022 elections was using a diversity of groups - the church, women

group, youth, and the media-as channels to pass her messages and development agenda.

She also used songs to pass her development messages. One of the songs said "leo Senator ni Mama" praising her abilities and what she could for the community.

"I also used Information, Education and Communication (IEC) materials from development partners such as UN Women to popularise myself."

Despite putting so much in her campaign, Apetet says many women are short-changed as result of the way politics are conducted in Turkana and in the country.

Holding of political meetings at night, which does not augur well with women politicians, is one such example. Yet, it is during these meetings that decisions are made on who will step down and who will get the party certificate to move to the next level of political contest. Apetet became a victim of these meetings.

"I had spent so much time campaigning and instead of stepping down at the last minute, I opted to join a smaller party three months to the General elections. I was determined to finish the race no matter the outcome, so as to encourage other women to do as well." But this shift to a smaller party proved catastrophic: She had already printed posters using UDA colours and logos, and had already done campaigns for the past two years using the UDA slogans.

The Drastic change ended up confusing her supporters.

Apetet still feels the greatest challenge to women ascending to leadership positions is lack of civic education and patriarchal systems that make communities think that a man is better than a woman when it comes to leadership.

She believes the only way to address such perceptions is continuous sensitisation of the community on the value women bring to leadership and engaging community gatekeepers to endorse women vying for decision making positions.

Lesson Learnt

These experiences have taught her two useful lessons. One is that the importance of starting early in getting the electorate to know you and what you stand for; and the other is remaining relevant in the society by doing something that resonates with your constituents; and never give up.

"Once you are in politics, you have to have shock absorbers, build resilience, and have the power to bounce back."

For regions like Turkana, Apetet thinks mentorship programs where established political leaders mentor new and aspiring women leaders will result in handsome returns on investment. This, for her, is what will increase the number of women in leadership in marginalised regions such as Turkana.

--SS--

Community rewards woman with a political seat for her good work



Anita Mibey

BY AWC FEATURE SERVICES

The old adage that politics is a dirty game has made many women avoid participating in political processes, leave alone being active competitors in political.

But for other women like Anita Mibey, such statements did not dissuade her from seeking a political seat in the 2022 General Elections. In that year, Mibey

took a leap of faith and waded into the murky and tough political contests. It paid off. She triumphed, becoming the only elected woman Member of County Assembly for Kericho County.

Mibey says that she was not only able to marshal immense support from youth and women, to win the Chemosot Ward seat in Bureti Sub County, but she beat eighteen men during the UDA party nominations.

“The men ganged up against me and agreed to support one of their own as an independent candidate; but I still beat their candidate at the ballot.”

Her close relationship with community members; and professional experience, played a defining role in her win.

“My long and illustrious career as a banker over a period of ten years prepared me for this seat,” says Mibey who was as a branch manager of a finance institution in Voi and a senior manager at Asante Export Processing Zone in Kwale County

A renowned poultry farmer in her community, Mibey says her Masters Degree in Strategic Management also came in handy in designing her strategies. But what set her apart from her competitors was her development record in the Ward. She pioneered the establishment of an NGO that supports girls on how to manage their menstrual hygiene issues.

“Initially, there was a challenge in menstrual hygiene products in my community and I wanted to become part of the solution. In 2017, I started my own NGO and took a group of women to

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<<FROM PAGE 6 Uganda where they were trained on making reusable sanitary towels. When they came back, we were able to get funding and buy sewing machines. We started to distribute reusable sanitary towels and to date we have been able to reach about 50,000 girls with reusable sanitary towels."

This initiative, she says, changed her perspective to life and how to interact and assist people. She changed her line of work and decided to focus more on working for the community, impacting on it in other different ways. One of this ways was starting water conservation initiatives that targeted water springs at the community level.

"I mobilized funds from well-wishers and together we were able to do spring protection. If you come to my Ward, you will hear people saying we are going to fetch Anita water. I wanted women and children to get clean water and this dream has now become a reality."

These two initiatives endeared her to her constituent, who reached out to her to help protect other springs in the community. It brought smiles to the faces of many women who started spending less time fetching water.

Mibey was also able to link farmers doing oil products with buyers abroad, while at the same time reaching out to Yusana, an organisation based in the United States, to help address the issue of food security in her Ward. A project ran by the organization has been replicated to other counties such as Kakamega, Narok, Bomet and

Busia, in the process benefiting more than 100,000 families.

She has also initiated several women empowerment projects including starting poultry project where over 1,000 women have been able to boost their incomes.



The men ganged up against me and agreed to support one of their own as an independent candidate; but I still beat their candidate at the ballot."

ANITA MIBEY, MCA, KERICHO COUNTY



The electorate that had keenly followed her involvement in development activities pushed her into vying for the Chemosot Ward seat. "The community approached me and asked if I could vie for the seat and true to their word, I garnered a landslide victory at the ballot to become the first woman to be elected to this position.

Mibey is also the only woman elected as an MCA in the entire county including in other elective seats.

Challenging times

But it has not been rosy all through for her. "I have been abused and threatened as a woman politician. I also come from a community where tradition dictates that politics is a

male preserve and women should take a back seat."

Still, she takes this in her stride. As a leader, she has learnt to be tolerant. "There are people who will support you and others will oppose you but you must be resilient to overcome this challenge."

Financial challenges have too made her journey sometimes very difficult. Mibey points out that lack of adequate financial resources has derailed some of the projects she initiated in the Ward. Her disappointment is that while an MP has a development kitty, she is sometimes forced to use her own money to finance community projects.

With such financial challenges, Mibey advises women aspiring for political seats to develop a 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."

Women aspiring for political positions should also, she adds, plan well, including how they intend to engage with the electorate.

"Establish a small group of people you trust to work on your campaign committee, which should reflect the face of your Ward or Constituency." Mibey believes women have what it takes to lead in the political arena and what they need to take a leap of faith and contest for seats in Kericho County.

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It is my turn to take a stab at leadership!

BY FAITH MUIRURI

Winnie Koros believes that it is never too early to start a journey especially in politics where every possible tactic must be employed to win over voters.

After working behind the scenes developing strategies and tactics for other politicians, Koros feels time has come for her to try her luck in the next general elections.

During the 2022 General Elections, Koros was the chief campaign manager of one of the gubernatorial candidate for Kericho County.

Born and raised in Kericho County, Koros says many years of working at the grassroots level has made her a friend of many people who have expressed confidence in her leadership.

They now call her 'A thousand for one' in reference to a slogan she started to engage the community in resolving the problems they face.

"The slogan is actually a movement I started. It works like a merry go round or table banking where people in the community join by



Winnie Koros

contributing anywhere from Ksh100 to Ksh1, 000," says Koros, who holds a diploma in Community Development.

According to her, the movement was born out of the belief that there is need for local solutions to local problems.

"The idea is to come up with local solutions to our problems. If we wait for politicians to do everything, we will never eradicate extreme poverty and hunger especially now that the population has grown so much and resources are not enough."

The table banking is in addition to her work with

PAGE>>9

<<FROM PAGE 8 women groups including those doing other small profit making projects, who she is supporting to make sure that their members can fend for their families. Besides the movements, Koros is credited for spearheading an initiative that targets farmers with knowledge and skills on how to mitigate the effects of climate change on their livelihoods.

In this regard, she has not only brought experts to train farmers on the best farming practices, but also shown them the many benefits of planting trees.

Koros says that farmers are now making money from selling carbon, have knowledge how to prevent soil erosion, cultivate fruits, and keep the soil healthy.

Though she says that the money that the farmers are making is still little compared to what major industries make "it is a good start."

"In the Carbon business, there is not much money in the afforestation and reforestation sectors compared to renewable energy associated with major industries." She attributes this to a lack of competitive market and the fact that farmers lack negotiating skills. This are the challenges she helping farmers address.

Another initiative Koros is pursuing in improving the wellbeing of her community

is girl child education. She has helped form a group that raises money to sponsor the girl child in both secondary schools and colleges.

"We are 32 members and so far we have supported 24 girls through high school and colleges."

She hopes these interventions she is spearheading or implementing with other like-minded people will make her community give her a chance to lead them.

Headache of political parties

But she has to deal first with the issues of political parties. Koros admits that party politics is one of the challenges women aspiring for political seats have to contend with.

This uncertainty, she says, can hurt one's progress because investing in the party and being visible is very important. "But personally I am just playing the wait and see game. I will be very vigilant so that the work I have done on the ground is not compromised just because of a party."

For now, though she is not firmly in a party, she says she knows what she is doing and her campaign team will be advising her on the best way forward.

The culture of handout is another headache for women like her who are aspiring for political seats. "The moment you enter into the field of

politics, people have been trained to expect hand outs, which have over the years deprived this county quality leadership," says Koros.

It is because of this context that she trying to change the attitudes of her community towards handouts. "The little that I have is not enough to eliminate the problems in my community, but my ideas can bring positive change."

Indeed, while many women have great ideas that transform communities, their contribution goes largely unnoticed. Koros wants to change this. She says she plans to partner with the media to increase her visibility and the work she does.

"Women do so much on the ground but who knows about it? We must blow our trumpet and showcase our abilities as leaders. Men are very good at selling their name."

So far, she has been very visible on the social media. "I have been taking pictures of all my projects and meetings and posting them on face book so that my people can see what I am doing on the ground."

She brands herself as a 'grassroots servant' and based on the work she has done with the community so far, she believes that it will be instrumental in delivering a political seat to her.

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Kamwara's determination to succeed in politics

Juliana Kamwara is a woman on a mission. After serving Mathare residents as a Chief and helping to transform their lives; she has now trained her eyes on securing a political seat.

Kwamara says while the journey to winning a political seat looks tough, she is confident that her track record will help her win the support of her constituency. She boasts of a list of successes she has recorded while serving as a Chief.

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

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

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



Juliana Kamwara

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

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

"During a recent campaign and meet-the-people tour in Kosovo, some irate youth recognized me and forced me to apologize for driving them out of town saying they will campaign against me. But I told them the move was not meant to destroy them, but

to make their lives better," says Kamwara.

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

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

A former teacher and graduate of Kenya Technical Teachers College (KTTC), she says it is for this reason that she started the Giant Step Secondary School

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<<FROM PAGE 10 in Zimmerman with about 200 students.

But the COVID-19 lockdown forced the school to close just a few months after opening. When schools were reopened, only half of the students reported back. She never gave up on her hope to a better live.

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

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

Mathare has a population of over 200,000 people and is second biggest informal settlement in the capital city. It has 116,000 registered voters in six Wards; namely Kiamaiko, Huruma, Ngei, Mabatini, Mlango Kubwa and Hospital Ward.

Challenges on her political journey

Like other women political aspirants, Kamwara has to

confront many challenges when traversing the community. One of them is political violence.

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

Her competitors are using both online and offline tactics to intimidate her. She says the intimidation and harassment does not stop at the physical level; it has been extended to the cyberspace where some women aspirants have been lynched by hired bloggers.

At one point, a blogger who had maligned her had to apologize when she confronted him. In recent times, online violence against women politicians is emerging as a major problem in their quest for political leadership. Their competitors have turned to online spaces to intimidate them not pursue their political dreams.

This is besides the women having to deal with financial and cultural challenges.

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

It is estimated that to win an MP position, a candidate requires in excess of Ksh 25 million to run a successful campaign and other

electoral needs. This is money is far too high for many women.

Understanding the inner workings of politics is another challenge. “I must admit that I am still learning the ropes as a green horn in politics.”

On many occasions, she has had to protest and demand for inclusion in the processes and decisions of her political party.

In 2022, her competitors tried to stop her from addressing powerful political forums that would enhance her visibility. Sometimes she was forced to demand for a chance to do so.

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

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

She also enjoys great support from her family- husband, children, extended family members- and staunch supporters, who are with her every turn she makes.

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

--WL--

A former headteacher recounts her political journey



Rose Njoroge

BY AWC FEATURE SERVICES

Tradition, culture, and societal norms have been a major obstacle to women's ascendancy to decision making positions, especially political leadership. But not so for Rose Njoroge, who managed to win a grueling political contest despite the very factors affecting the performance of other women leaders in the country.

Njoroge, who won the Member of County Assembly seat for Gilgil Ward, says her win came without many problems due to the overwhelming support she received from the community.

The electorate fronted her name for nomination by the United Democratic Alliance (UDA) yet she was in another political party. "I had to decamp from Jubilee Party at the last minute to beat the UDA wave,"

Says Njoroge who served as a headteacher for Gilgil Highway Primary School

According to Njoroge, the goodwill she enjoyed in politics was as result of her more than 10 years investment in her social capital and bringing positive change in her community.

It all begun in 2012 when was promoted to serve as a headteacher for Kambi Somali primary school in Gilgil. "I found a dilapidated

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<<FROM PAGE 12 structure which was formerly used by the Europeans but decided to change the face of the school."

I managed to mobilize resources from local leaders and the Ministry of Education to give the school a facelift. I also changed the name of the school to Gilgil Highway Primary School which gave the school a new status. The school's performance improved drastically which helped endear me to the community.

Meanwhile, she was quietly helping vulnerable groups—women and children—to come up with strategies to survive. She empowered single mothers and widows who were experiencing difficulties in life with skills on how best to cope with their situation.

But the burden of doing so became heavier as time went by. That is why in 2017, she decided to vie for the Member of County Assembly seat to be able to advocate and influence the government to finance initiatives that empowered the community and the women.

But her constituents were not willing to support her on this path. Many parents in her community felt she was better placed to serve them

not as a politician, but as the headteacher of the school she helped built.

"Most parents felt I was better placed in serving the community as a headteacher and not as an MCA."

Still, her sterling work had impressed many people and institutions, one of them being the Jubilee Political Party that nominated her to serve as an MCA in Nakuru County Assembly.

She did not abandon her community even after being nominated: "I continued to support needy pupils and bought them school uniform. I also organized football tournaments. I would disburse food to the needy elderly people and help women groups within the ward to access Affirmative Action Fund."

These initiatives and others, she implemented while serving as a nominated MCA would later pay off handsomely come the 2022 General Elections. When she decided to vie for the same seat in that year's election, she was many miles ahead of her competitors. This time around, even her constituents egged her on.

"My inspiration largely came from the people who overwhelmingly endorsed my candidature. I told myself

not to get distracted by any sideshows. I remained focused and God walked with me throughout this journey and touched these people to elect me. For this, I must deliver."

Innovative strategies

What made her win the seat with a convincing majority? Njoroge credits her track record of transforming people's lives as one of the key secrets to her win. After diligently serving the community both as a nominated MCA and a headteacher, she was a favourite of many people in her Ward. She emphasized her track record as she engaged in door-to-door campaigns. This strategy and use of local radio stations, the churches, women and youth groups to sell her agenda, helped to popularize her candidature.

Njoroge's slogan Kazi Bora, meaning engaging in good and quality work, resonated well with the voters. She did a mapping of the needs of her people, and crafted a plan on how she was going to address them. It paid off! Many people started expressing preference for her leadership.

The other strategy she used to consolidate her success was to change her addressing style to be culturally PAGE>>14

acceptable especially when dealing with voters who are heavily conservative. She combined this with constantly interacting with people and building her social capital.

"I completely rebranded and changed my dressing including putting on a head scarf. I also took advantage of any gatherings in the community including visiting churches as well as attending funerals and weddings which gave me a lot of connection with the people."

These actions improved her ratings and made her popular as the election date neared. But one thing worried her supporters: she was on a political party that was receiving a major beating from another party. They advised to shift allegiance.

"They (voters) told me to decamp from the Jubilee party and fronted my name for the UDA ticket because they were willing to journey with me to the ballot." She obliged and it paid off with her being elected.

Challenges encountered

Even as she made this major success, finances remained her biggest challenge. "I did not have money during

the campaigns and only relied on the goodwill I enjoyed from the people. The incumbent who was a woman had delivered; the only thing that worked against her was the party. She would have given me stiff competitions were it not for the party and the fact that she had served for two terms and people wanted change."

With hindsight, she says that majority of women candidates do not have resources to mount successful campaigns like men. "I am lucky I had saved when I served as a nominated MCA."

Njoroge points out that visibility remained a big challenge during the campaigns and she really had to physically appear for public gatherings to increase her presence in the race. "You cannot be visible on the ground without resources. We need to fundraise for these women early enough before elections so that at least they have a kitty draw from."

Her success has taught her many lessons. One of them is that: "If an opportunity comes your way, go for it, if you fail, you failed not because you didn't take it, but because you tried and your best may not have been good enough."

To bridge the gender gap in the political arena, Njoroge underscores the need to nurture women aspiring for elective positions many months before the elections. "We should identify those who want to run and start nurturing them so that when elections come, they automatically go through."

She further feels that there is the need to in place mechanisms for rewarding electoral wards and constituencies that elect women as their representatives. "For instance, all the wards that elected women as MCAs should be rewarded with projects such as hospitals, boreholes or community libraries. This will serve to motivate the electorate to vote more women to power."

But she also feels that to increase women in political leadership, women have to present themselves for competitive positions. "We should be able as women to come out because, if we sit in those houses and say we are going to be leaders tomorrow; nobody will pick you. You have to present yourself to the people and challenge men who say these seats are for men and not for women."

--WL--

