



A Rough Ride

2017 Women Gubernatorial Candidates Reveal What It Takes to Vie for Political Office





The National Gender and Equality Commission

A Rough Ride

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CCM	Chama cha Mashinani
DP	Democratic Party of Kenya
EACC	Ethics and Anti-Corruption Commission
ECD	Early Childhood Development
IEBC	Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission
JP	Jubilee Party
MCCP	Maendeleo Chap Chap Party
MP	Member of Parliament
MYWO	Maendeleo ya Wanawake
NARC	National Rainbow Coalition
NASA	National Super Alliance
NGEC	National Gender and Equality Commission
ODM	Orange Democratic Movement
PNU	Party of National Unity
PWDs	Persons with Disability
SIGs	Special Interest Groups
UN	United Nations
WDM-K	Wiper Democratic Movement of Kenya

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I wish to take this opportunity to thank all the nine gubernatorial candidates in the Kenya General Elections 2017. Your courageous and bold move to vie for a coveted position in political leadership is reflective of the determination the Kenyan woman has when it comes to offering leadership.

By the time of publishing this report, three out of the nine candidates had won the Gubernatorial seat in their respective counties. They are Joyce Laboso of Bomet County, Charity Ngilu of Kitui County and Anne Waiguru of Kirinyaga county. Congratulations on becoming the first female Governor in Kenya.

This report would not have been possible without the individual and collective cooperation of the candidates and their campaign managers who despite the tight schedule found time to accommodate the Commission in their field itinerary.

I thank the Government of Kenya for providing the resources necessary to undertake this activity which has provided valuable insights into the gaps and opportunities that require to be fixed to promote the cause of women empowerment.

Lastly, I commend the Commission Secretariat, especially the team that participated in the gruelling one-week assessment of the Special Interest Groups Candidates. Your dedication and devotion to working under a tight schedule and over time are highly appreciated.

WINFRED O. LICHUMA EBS

Chairperson

¹Daniel Waitere-Head of Public Communications & Reuben Kinyangi – Aide to Chairperson

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

What does it take to vie for an elective office in Kenya? What does it take for a Kenyan woman to vie for a gubernatorial seat? These are the questions that the Commission sought to answer as it embarked on a whirlwind assessment of nine women gubernatorial candidates in Machakos, Kitui, Taita Taveta, Kirinyaga, Meru, Bomet, Kisumu and Kakamega Counties.

It is not only bold for a Kenyan woman to run for an elective office in Kenya, it is financially, physically and emotionally draining. Women candidates suffer from entrenched patriarchy that puts men opponents at an undue advantage over their women competitors who have to grapple with negative and demeaning stereotypes.

This report documents the punishing political terrain that women candidates have to endure, the crippling financial constraints and the shocking discriminatory and double standards applied to them against their male opponents in the pursuit of elective offices.

The report shines a spotlight on the hitherto untenable interventions and support models extended by State and non-State agencies towards the promotion of greater participation of special interest groups in political representation in Kenya. The findings are a riveting indictment, particularly to the respective political parties that sponsored women to vie for Gubernatorial positions for blatant discrimination based on gender, the UN Women for the utter disregard of the candidates' practical needs and unsustainable resourcing model and the Maendeleo ya Wanawake organization (MYWO) organization for failing to galvanize the course of women empowerment and champion better and sustainable strategies to build and strengthen the capacity of women to participate effectively in the political discourse of Kenya.

The recommendations range from an overhaul of the resourcing and mobilization strategy to support the women's movement in Kenya, to radical surgery to weed out retrogressive forces within agencies charged with promoting the welfare of the women in Kenya. Most importantly the report points out the need for the women of Kenya to join hands and support one another. In the course of gathering information on this report, the Commission was startled at the extent to which men stand up for each other interests even in the face of stiff competition while women tended to undermine one of their own and each other.

In the long run, succeeding in the hostile political environment in Kenya will not be a one-off event. Kenyan women will need to grow up the ranks by starting from grassroots positions to national leaders. Continuous capacity building, sustainable resource mobilization strategies and the institutionalization of issue-based politics will be key ingredients in affording a truly equal platform for men and women to competitively seek leadership positions in Kenya. That is what it will take.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The National Gender and Equality Commission (NGEC) is a Constitutional Commission established by the National Gender and Equality Commission Act. No. 15 of 2011 under Article 59 (4) & (5) of the Constitution of Kenya, 2010. The Commission's mandate is to promote gender equality and freedom from discrimination for all people in Kenya with focus on special interest groups, which include women, children, youth, persons with disabilities (PWDs), older members of society, minorities and marginalized groups.

Article 38 guarantees citizens the right to make political choices including the right to free and fair elections based on universal suffrage and the freedom of expression. Every Kenyan has the right, without unreasonable restrictions to be registered as a voter; and to vote by secret ballot. Also, every Kenyan has a right to be a candidate for public office, and, if elected, to hold office. On the principles of Kenya's electoral system, Article 81 states that the electoral system shall comply with: the political rights under Article 38; not more than two-thirds of the members of elective public bodies shall be of the same gender; fair representation of PWDs; universal suffrage and free and fair elections which are by secret ballot.

Conduct of campaigns: Advocating hatred or the incitement of violence based on a person's gender, ethnicity, race or any other ground of discrimination is considered an offence under section 68 of the Elections Act, 2011. Also, the Electoral Code of Conduct which all political parties are required to comply with, states that political parties will promote gender equality and the fair representation of SIGs ².

1.2 Women Gubernatorial Candidates

For the first time since the promulgation of the Constitution of Kenya in 2010, a record nine women candidates were cleared to vie for the gubernatorial positions as indicated in the table below.

SN	Name	County
1	Wavinya Ndeti	Machakos
2	Charity Ngilu	Kitui
3	Jacinta Mwatela	Taita Taveta
4	Anne Waiguru	Kirinyaga
5	Martha Karua	Kirinyaga
6	Winfred Mungania	Meru
7	Joyce Laboso	Bomet
8	Mabel Muruli	Kakamega
9	Christine Atieno	Kisumu

²Second Schedule of the Elections Act 2011.

1.3 Objective

Monitoring/observation of the electoral processes and outcomes are important exercises in determining the level of citizens' participation and preparedness by all actors involved in the electoral process i.e. the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (IEBC), political parties and voters. Following the conclusion of political party primaries, for the first time nine women gubernatorial candidates were cleared to vie for the seats.

This was an unprecedented development given the level of State hierarchy of the gubernatorial position and the fact that it was clear the country was headed to get the first women Governors to post 2013 General Elections. It is against this background that the Commission sought to monitor/observe the level of integration and the application of affirmative action policies, rules and regulations of the nine candidates in their campaign trail and document challenges and opportunities that will inform policy formulation to promote greater participation of all special interest groups in the electoral processes.

The findings of this report will assist the Commission to make important policy advisories to the relevant actors.

1.4 Methodology

The team employed on-location unobtrusive observation techniques: The team joined the candidates at their field campaign rallies and meetings and made longitudinal observations by spending a minimum of one-hour listening and observing occurrences.

The team also held face-to-face interviews with the candidates intending to get their experiences and challenges while campaigning.

2.0 ASSESSMENT OF CANDIDATES BY COUNTY



Hon. Wavinya Ndeti Photo/Courtesy

2.1. Wavinya Ndeti- Machakos County

Wavinya Ndeti was the Wiper Democratic Movement of Kenya (WDM-K) candidate for Machakos Governor in 2017.

She ditched Chama Cha Uzalendo (CCU) for Wiper on the morning of April 5th 2017, in line with the law that requires candidates to change political parties within 90 days of the election. Initially, she was handed direct nomination with Peter Mathuki as running mate, but the party decided to hold primaries. The deal had been a product of months of negotiations between the Wiper Party and Wavinya's CCU party with Wiper leader Kalonzo Musyoka said to have prevailed upon Mathuki and Machakos Deputy Governor Bernard Kiala to compromise their ambitions in favour of a ticket that would send the incumbent Governor Alfred Mutua home and win back the seat to the party³.

Ndeti was cleared to run for Governor by the IEBC in early June 2017.

2.1.1 Machakos County Gubernatorial Race

Wavinya Ndeti faced the incumbent Governor Alfred Mutua who was defending his seat on a Mandeleo Chap Chap party (MCCP). Throughout the campaign trail, Wavinya Ndeti displayed remarkable resilience perhaps borrowing from her experience as a former legislator for Kathiani Constituency. She came across as an affable and charming politician who combined political wit and bravado when it called for her to wade through the Machakos high octane politics. During our meeting, she was highly optimistic about beating her opponent Governor Alfred Mutua. Her homestretch campaign strategy was door-to-door mobilization which she conceded was turning the tide in her favour

Issues

The candidate intimated that the campaign was costly both in terms of time, labour and finances.

2.2 Charity Ngilu-Kitui County



Hon. Charity Ngilu Photo/Courtesy

In Kenya's second-ever multiparty elections held in 1992, Charity Ngilu pulled off a big surprise by capturing the Kitui central constituency seat on the Democratic Party (DP) ticket.

In the December 1997 general election, she ran for the presidency and along with Wangari Maathai became the first-ever female presidential candidate in Kenya. Ngilu then represented the Social Democratic Party of Kenya. She finished fifth. Later, she joined the National Party of Kenya. In the December 2002 general election, her party was part of the National Rainbow Coalition (NARC).

The coalition went on to win the elections, and President Mwai Kibaki appointed her as Minister of Health when he named his Cabinet on 3 January 2003. Ngilu was re-elected to her seat from Kitui Central in the December 2007 parliamentary election⁴. In the grand coalition, Cabinet Ngilu was appointed as Minister of Water and Irrigation. Ngilu fell to David Musila in the 2013 General election Kitui Senate race.

Ngilu was appointed as Minister of Water and Irrigation. Ngilu fell to David Musila in the 2013 General election Kitui Senate race

Ngilu was appointed as the cabinet secretary for Lands, Housing and Urban Development by President Uhuru Kenyatta but was suspended and later dropped from cabinet, alongside four other ministers, after they were adversely mentioned in corrupt deals by the Ethics and Anti-Corruption Commission (EACC) in March 2015. She vied for the Kitui County Gubernatorial seat on a Narc ticket under the umbrella of the National Super Alliance (NASA)

2.1.1 Kitui County Gubernatorial Race



Charity Ngilu addresses her supporters at Kitoo center, Kitui South. Photo: NGECC

Charity Ngilu encountered a tough political battle pitted against veteran politician Senator David Musila and incumbent Governor Julius Malombe. The Kitui gubernatorial contest was no doubt a battle of titans with candidates pulling all stops to counter their opponents.

Campaign messaging

Ngilu's campaign messaging was predicated on a transformative agenda where she pledged to promote the county's natural resources for industrial take-off. She talked of enhancing the value chain to boost the quality of local

honey, tomatoes, livestock and the much-famed tyre sandals.

Ngilu talked about giving priority to agriculture and health. She particularly decried the lack of clean piped water and pledged to drill boreholes if elected.

³ http://www.the-star.co.ke/news/2017/04/05/wavinya-ndeti-joins-wiper-kalonzo-says-machakos-likely-to-get-woman_c1538806

⁴ http://www.ekc.or.ke/elections2007/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=4&Itemid=2&menuGroup=parliamentary&userParams%5B%5D=63

She pledged to enhance rainwater harvesting to ensure sustainability.

Her campaign materials were simple and compelling. She displayed local honey packaged in a branded container and tyre sandals decorated with beads. She also displayed a leather belt made from cowhide. This simple yet practical messaging resonated immensely with her audience who included old men and women as well as the youth.

Despite being a seasoned politician, Ngilu faced challenges ranging from lack of campaign materials and means to traverse the huge and treacherous semi-arid terrain. When the NGEK team caught up with her at the Kitoo trading centre in Kitui South, the candidate was visibly exhausted but upbeat. Her meetings were usually held on the open ground using mobile public address systems and a portable dais usually a chair of a makeshift raised platform.

Issues

The candidate informed the NGEK team that the UN women had extended support in form of 200 T-shirts and radio airtime which she flatly declined. In her view, the support being extended by UN women was impractical and unsustainable. The candidate informed NGEK that she had requested the UN Women for actual financing of her campaign to which the agency declined and insisted on providing the said collateral. Ultimately the candidate did not benefit from any material or in-kind support from the UN agency despite a spirited plea to reconsider the support model.

2.3 Jacinta Mwatela-Taita Taveta County



Jacinta Mwatela Photo/Courtesy

After completing her primary school education at Njawuli Primary School in Mghange, Jacinta joined Bura Girls High School for her O levels before joining Loreto Limuru High School for her forms Five and Six. She graduated with a Bachelor's degree in Commerce and joined the Central Bank of Kenya as a young graduate. She rose the ranks to become the deputy central bank governor.

Mrs Mwatela quit the government in 2008 after turning down a controversial appointment as a Permanent Secretary for Northern Kenya ministry by President Mwai Kibaki. She had wanted to understand the reasons for her transfer from CBK, coming before the end of her contract in 2009. With the reasons not coming, she opted to quit the government.⁵

Her political career started in 2013 when she vied for the Taita Taveta County gubernatorial seat but narrowly lost to Governor Mruttu after she garnered 32,890 votes against the incumbent's 34 290.

2.3.1 Taita Taveta Gubernatorial Race



Chairperson Winfred Lichuma with Jacinta Mwatela at Mwangaza Primary school Taita Taveta. Photo: NGEK

Flying the Amani National Congress party flag, Mrs Mwatela battled it out with Senator Dan Mwazo (Jubilee) Granton Samboja (Wiper) Constantine Mwadime (MCCP), Erastus Katani (Independent) Jared Nzano (Independent) former PS Emmanuel Kisombe (Independent) and Governor Mruttu who run as an independent candidate.

Campaign messaging

Mwatela's positioning statement was based on her integrity and illustrious career as a top Central Bank of Kenya official. The NGEK team caught up with her at Mwangaza primary school on the outskirts of Taveta town where a handful of people had gathered to listen to her pitch. Her dominant theme was the apparent lacklustre performance of the incumbent Governor whom she accused of misappropriating county funds.

She castigated her opponents whom she claimed were inducing voters through bribery in form of money and fancy attires (deras). She told her supporters she did not have money to dish out.

Throughout her speech, Mrs. Mwatela did not elaborate at least in detail on her manifesto or priority programs. It was clear that she hoped the voters would elect her based on her past performance in public service and not on any stated goal.

<http://www.nation.co.ke/news/politics/-Mwatela-fiercely-independent-woman/1064-3964358-sgebxm/index.html>

2.4 Martha Karua-Kirinyaga County



Hon. Martha Karua Photo/Courtesy

Martha Wangari Karua is a former long-standing member of parliament for the Gichugu Constituency and an Advocate of the High Court of Kenya. She was Minister of Justice until resigning from that position in April 2009. Karua has consistently fought for the protection of women's rights and improvements to the democratic process.⁶ Karua was a member of the opposition political movements that successfully agitated for the reintroduction of multi-party democracy in Kenya in the early 1990s. Karua resigned as Minister of Justice and Constitutional Affairs on 6 April 2009, citing frustrations in discharging her duties. She was the first Minister to resign voluntarily since 2003.

Karua contested in the running for the presidency in 2013, under the NARC party ticket. She came in sixth with 43,881 votes⁷. In 2017 she vied in the Kirinyaga County Gubernatorial race and was pitted against former Devolution Cabinet Secretary Anne Waiguru and incumbent Governor Joseph Ndathi.

Campaign messaging

Martha's pitch was based on her well-documented and illustrious career as a consummate politician with 20 years of experience as Gichugu MP to boot. Her pledge to Kirinyaga residents included enhancing value addition to coffee, bananas and tomatoes which are the main agricultural products in Kirinyaga county.

She talked of providing county bursary schemes to university students as well as upgrading and modernizing technical training colleges in the county to boost skilled labour.

Karua also took time to debunk accusations that were hurting her candidature including claims that she was an opposition sympathizer by dint of having vied on a Narc Kenya ticket instead of the choice Jubilee party in the region.

She also dispelled claims that she was too old to vie for Kirinyaga governor compared to Anne and therefore did not have new ideas saying her opponent belonged in the same age bracket as hers.

Another issue she faced were claims that she was disrespectful and self-centred following her famous resignation from cabinet in 2009 under President Mwai Kibaki. Her detractors claimed that by walking out on President Kibaki, she exhibited arrogance and pride. In her defence, Karua explained that she left a prestigious State office with the trappings of power as a matter of principle adding that, were she unprincipled she would have continued to serve and sacrifice her principles at the altar of political expediency.

Issues.

Just like her colleagues, Karua said UN women had disappointed by the way they had opted to support her campaign through T-shirts and posters. She informed the NGEN team that she had turned down the UN women's offer of support for lack of sustainability and responding to the needs of her supporters.

⁶ <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2013/02/2013222164629316425.html>

⁷ <http://www.nation.co.ke/news/politics/Karua-concedes-defeat/1064-1715326-bygz2w5z/index.html>



Martha Karua campaigns at Gatare, Ndia Constituency. Photo: NGEK

2.5 Anne Waiguru-Kirinyaga County



Anne Waiguru Photo/Courtesy

Anne Waiguru served as the first Cabinet Secretary in the Ministry of Devolution and Planning. She was nominated by President Uhuru Kenyatta to the position on 25 April 2013, holding a master's degree in Economic Policy from the University of Nairobi, and having experience in finance, financial management systems, and public service reform and capacity building, and governance. She was behind the establishment of Huduma Centres⁸, places where Kenyan citizens can access government services more efficiently, as well as the 30% procurement rule, which accords at least 30 per cent of all supply contracts to the government to the youth, persons with disability and women⁹.

Following the National Youth Service scandal, in which approximately Kshs. 1.4 billion was stolen from the National Youth Service, a programme under the Ministry of Devolution and Planning, Waiguru resigned from her position as Cabinet Secretary. Anne Waiguru declared her interest in politics and was nominated on a Jubilee ticket to vie for Kirinyaga County gubernatorial seat.

Kirinyaga gubernatorial race

The Kirinyaga gubernatorial was epic and hotly contested. Two powerful women in their own right and an incumbent Governor made the race all the more a high stake one. An interesting aspect of this race is that both Martha Karua and Anne Waiguru had sworn allegiance to President Uhuru Kenyatta. While Martha Karua was vying on a Narc Kenya ticket which had endorsed the reelection of President Kenyatta, Anne Waiguru had the advantage of flying the President's party flag and therefore enjoyed institutional support.

⁸ <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-24855993>

⁹ <http://www.businessdailyafrica.com/Opinion-and-Analysis/New-procurement-laws-to-spur-economic-growth/-/539548/1939380/-/16tryq/-/index.html>

Indeed, when the president toured Kirinyaga county to ask for votes he steered clear of endorsing any of the candidates and instead asked residents to vote for their choice which he promised to respect. However, as the NGEK team learned after touring parts of Kirinyaga and listening to locals, Anne's campaign had begun to run into headwinds as her staunch supporters crossed over to Martha's camp despite being in the Jubilee Party.

Conversely and despite vying with a rival party, Martha Karua's team exhibited remarkable tact and agility and exploited Anne's apparent weaknesses to a fault. When the NGEK team caught up with Karua's team in Gatara, Ndia Constituency, she was addressing an eager crowd of supporters that had gathered early in the morning despite biting cold and light showers flanked by her running mate engineer Joseph Gitari a Jubilee party adherent.

2.6 Winnie Kaburu-Meru County



Winnie Kaburu chats with the Chairperson at Kianjai center. Photo: NGEK

Winnie Kaburu Mungania shot into the limelight when she vied as a running mate to presidential candidate James Ole Kiyapi in 2013. Despite the dismal performance, Winnie retreated to her Maua home where she actively mobilized for the Orange Democratic Movement. To her shock, the party declined to nominate her to vie for the Meru gubernatorial seat prompting her to decamp to WDM-K.

According to Winnie, when she approached the ODM party leader Raila Odinga seeking nomination to run for the Meru county seat, the latter informed her that the party had decided not to field a candidate so as not to hurt the incumbent Peter Munya's bid! This explanation was as preposterous as it was bizarre considering that Munya's Party of National Unity(PNU) was not at least explicitly supporting Raila Odinga's candidature.

Meru County is considered a Jubilee zone and as such there was no way Winnie's candidature on an ODM ticket would have hurt ODM's interest. This was a blatant case of gender discrimination laced with a generous dose of malice and contempt.

Meru Gubernatorial Contest

The Meru gubernatorial was a high-stakes duel that was hotly contested. Two Meru politico supremos Senator Kiraitu Murungi flying the Jubilee party ticket and incumbent Governor Peter Munya on a Part of National Unity (PNU) ticket were locked in a supremacy deadlock in which only the final poll would determine the ultimate winner.

Winnie Kaburu's candidature was considered inconsequential. In her own words, Winnie told the NGEK team that she felt largely ignored and could not decipher whether it was because she posed a serious threat that could not be validated by being mentioned or that she did not matter at all. The latter seemed to be a more plausible explanation as she narrated to the NGEK team how entrenched patriarchy is in the Meru community such that her supporters found it extremely hard to market her gubernatorial candidature on account of her gender.

Issues

From the onset, it was clear that Winnie's campaign machinery was seriously deficient and lacking in essential materials. She, just like her colleagues complained of the meagre support extended by the UN women which included 1000 posters and 200 T-shirts.

Her party WDM-K was also not helpful in resourcing her campaign and her bid looked objectively designed to fail even before it had started. Fortunately, Winnie came across as a pragmatic candidate who was articulately aware of her situation and the odds against her yet soldiering on if only to leave an indelible footprint of the courage, power and determination of a Meru woman seeking a high elective office.

Winnie informed the Commission that the County government under the leadership of Governor Peter Munya had frustrated her efforts to mount campaign billboards in Meru and Maua towns. During a tour of Meru town and its environs, the Commission observed that in the main streets in Meru, the lamp posts adverts featured only the incumbent Governor and his arch-rival Senator Kiraitu Murungi who was vying for the same position.



Campaign truck belonging to Winnie Kaburu. Photo: NGEK

2.7 Joyce Laboso- Bomet County



Hon. Joyce Laboso Photo/Courtesy

Dr. Joyce Cheron Laboso was MP for Sotik and the Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly of Kenya in the 11th parliament. She was elected to the Parliament of Kenya to represent the Sotik Constituency in a by-election held on September 25, 2008. She succeeded her sister, Lorna Laboso, who died in a plane crash. She worked as a Lecturer in the Department of Language and Linguistics at Egerton University and served as a Commissioner of the National Commission on Gender and Development¹⁰. Joyce sought the Bomet Gubernatorial seat on a Jubilee Party ticket.

¹⁰ http://www.standardmedia.co.ke/?articleID=2000082161&story_title=the-rise-and-rise-of-joyce-laboso

Bomet Gubernatorial Contest



Hon. Joyce Laboso addresses supporters at her Sotik home. Photo:

The race for the gubernatorial post in Bomet County was as epic as it presented a watershed moment in the larger rift valley politics. The incumbent Governor Isaac Ruto was a sworn political rival of Deputy President William Ruto with the Deputy President considered the King of rift valley politics. The two had fallen out after the former accused the latter of undermining local leaders in the rift valley. This rivalry had become so severe that it had split political alliances within the larger Kalenjin community into 3 groups all coalescing around their perceived supremos.

In North rift, where the Nandi sub-tribe of the Kalenjin community is dominant and to which William Ruto belongs, the deputy president was holding sway.

In the south rift home to the Kipsigis, Isaac Ruto had bolted out of the mainstream Jubilee to form his party Chama cha Mashinani (CCM) and aligned himself with the opposition NASA coalition. In the Central Rift, the Tugen was becoming belligerent with similar accusations against the Deputy President and Senator Gideon Moi was leading the onslaught against the Deputy President's influence in the rift.

However, the Deputy President had remained indefatigable and stealthily stemmed the rising dissent in his backyard. As such, the race in Bomet was a contest of two strong men with Joyce Laboso perceived to be holding brief for the Deputy President to clip the stubborn incumbent Isaac Ruto and send him to political oblivion.

The advantage of the State machinery deployed by the Deputy President and resources deployed by the Jubilee Party to mount Laboso's campaign had the candidate at an advantage over the incumbent. By Laboso's campaign team's admission, had the incumbent Governor Isaac Ruto formed his party and remained in Jubilee as an allied partner, she would have stood no chance of dislodging him.

This startling admission mirrored the perception in Meru County where the candidature of Mrs. Winnie Kaburu drew so much indifference as all attention was fixed on the two male political titans Kiraitu Murungi and Peter Munya.

Campaign messaging

Joyce admitted that her Party Jubilee had supported her campaign immensely without which she would not have countered the incumbent's influence. This was evident in a meeting she held at Kapkelei Technical Training Institute attended by Principal Secretaries for East African Affairs Betty Maina and Vocational and Technical Training Dr. Dinah Mwinzi who endorsed her candidature. The local provincial administration also spoke highly of her candidature. When she rose to speak, Laboso enumerated the gains the community had received from the government ranging from the appointment of its members into government positions.

She talked about power connections and announced that the energy cabinet secretary Charles Keter who hails from the neighbouring Kericho county was in Bomet to commission new power connections and to oversee the replacement of faulty power transformers.

2.8 Christine Atieno-Kisumu County



Christine Atieno Photo/Courtesy

Christine Atieno Otieno, a lawyer by profession is the Maendeleo ya Wanawake Organization (MYWO) Kisumu County Chairperson. In 2013 Ms. Otieno vied for the Kisumu County governor position but failed to clinch the seat. In 2017 the Jubilee Party despite huge opposition from its Secretary-General Raphael Tuju nominated her to vie for the Kisumu gubernatorial race.

This was bold if not daring for a woman candidate to go for such a coveted position on a party considered anathema in the region. Kisumu County is the bastion and political stronghold of Opposition leader Raila Odinga.

Issues

It is extremely audacious that a candidate and no less a woman would consider to vie on an "unfriendly" party and hope to go through. Perhaps this explains why Christine felt that the Jubilee Party Secretary-General Raphael Tuju was not interested in her bid and attempted many times to have her disqualified from vying, her gender notwithstanding.

Issues.

“It was a big battle to get the Jubilee party ticket.” She observed.

“I’m fought at very high levels,” she said. Christine revealed that her security was threatened and that she had been warned by her close friends to be wary of her male opponents including her own Jubilee party colleagues.

But there she was standing tall and enjoying unequivocal support from her husband mobilizing door to door for votes from her supporters spread across Kisumu County.

According to Christine, the MYWO had frustrated if not undermined the women’s movement by failing to support grassroots women to take up leadership positions.

According to Christine her party Jubilee also undermined her campaign by declining to accredit her preferred agents.

Instead, the party handpicked unreliable and untrustworthy agents for her. She also claimed that after she submitted the list of nominees for Kisumu county, party honchos at the Headquarters doctored the list and nominated strangers.



Christine Atieno and her husband in a brief meeting with the Chairperson in Nyakach. Photo: NGECC

2.9 Mable Muruli-Kakamega County



Mabel Muruli Photo/Courtesy

Born, brought up in Kakamega and married in Britain for 28 years, Mable Muruli was flying the Jubilee flag for the gubernatorial seat in Kakamega county.

When the Commission caught up with her at her secretariat office, the venue was teeming with over 600 supporters and agents waiting for briefing and distribution of roles ahead of the elections.

Mable was facing two male opponents, the incumbent Governor Wycliffe Oparanya and Senator Boni Khalwale. She described the contest as tough and brutal.

Messaging

Mable positioned her candidacy on poverty eradication and championing access to education by improving and equipping ECD centres in the County.



Mable Muruli with Chairperson at her secretariat office in Kakamega. Photo: NGECC

Issues

Campaign funding

Mable informed the Commission that her party was not forthcoming with logistical facilitation and she had to protest to the deputy party leader. There was also discrimination in logistical facilitation between sitting MPs and other candidates.

The UN women provided 12 banners for each sub-county, which Mable said she was grateful for.

Security

Mable informed the Commission that the initial campaign forays used to be interrupted by her rivals. The worst was when her male opponents resulted in vulgar insults which were extremely demeaning. She confronted her male opponents and warned them against insults which they agreed to stop.

Mable also adopted a flexible itinerary to ensure that her supporters never came face to face with her opponent's supporters to avoid ugly confrontations.

3.0 CHALLENGES FACING WOMEN CANDIDATES IN KENYA

3.1 Patriarchy

The patriarchal nature of the country has had women at an inherent disadvantage when it comes to vying for political leadership. This was evident in Meru as reinforced by Winnie Kaburu who lamented that men could not fathom her candidature as a woman leave alone contemplate voting for her. The extent of patriarchy and how it affects voting patterns however appeared to differ with counties. In Kirinyaga for instance the two frontrunners were women with the incumbent Joseph Ndathi featuring as an underdog. In Machakos, the Wiper party settled for Hon. Wavinya Ndeti over Bernard Kiala is the best bet to face incumbent Alfred Mutua.

However, as it was evident during the campaign circuit, one of the hotly discussed issues around the two women candidates in Kirinyaga county was their female appeal with monikers such as “*minji minji*” and “*ndengu ndengu*” being assigned to Anne Waiguru and Martha Karua respectively. These monikers used to illustrate youthful vivacity for “*minji minji*” and “*Ndengu Ndengu*” for old school thinking as opposed to substantive policy issues had all the connotations of gender chauvinism assigned by men against the women candidates with the potential of hurting or promoting the candidature of each depending on which side one supported.

3.2 Campaign Resources

Perhaps the single most important drawback that faced the candidates was the lack of financial resources to mount intensive and relentless campaigns. The nature of political contests is brutal and gruelling due to the importance and influence attached to a political office. As such candidates deploy colossal amounts of resources running into billions of shillings with the singular aim of whitewashing their opponents and clinching the coveted seats. Campaigns in Kenya have spawned a seasonal whirlwind economy where demand for campaign materials leads to heavy spending by candidates. Unfortunately, the Kenyan public has also been accustomed to expecting handouts from politicians.

Even though offering inducements and voter bribery is banned under the Elections Act, both politicians and voters alike have devised mutually symbiotic yet illegal methods of soliciting and receiving inducements in return for political support. This form of organized extortion is the greatest disincentive to potential and capable leaders with sound policies that drives them to shun politics. Women candidates are particularly disadvantaged since, in a patriarchal system like Kenya, men own and control the factors of production and attendant resources. This means that they enter the political field with an undue advantage over their women opponents and with the ground hostile to less-resourced candidates, women usually find it hard to counter their male opponents.

3.3 Gender Discrimination

Article 27 of the Constitution of Kenya 2010 provides for gender equality and freedom from discrimination. Despite the strong affirmation by the Constitution on the principles of quality and inclusion, women candidates continue to face discrimination on account of gender. It is even worrying that discrimination appears to be institutionalized going by the conduct of political parties and their treatment of women aspirants and candidates. The Candidates we spoke to indicated that leaders of political parties were outrightly opposed to their candidature. The vice appeared to cut across the ruling coalition and opposition ranks. The bias extended to the amount of facilitation women candidates received against their male counterparts within the same party or coalition with women getting a raw deal and only after protesting.

3.4 Communication/Campaign Strategies

The kind of high-stakes political competition that is practised in Kenya calls for a smart and elaborate communication strategy. As the Commission observed the women candidates traversed the campaign trail, it became clear that a well-thought communication strategy, and organisational and public speaking skills were critical. While Kenyan politics are not entirely issue-based, women candidates needed to interact with mundane issues that may appear misplaced but are very critical to the voting population. It would appear that candidates who had a political background found the ground receptive as they navigated the populist tide as opposed to their colleagues who had no prior experience in competitive politics.

4.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 Civic Education

There is a need to undertake grassroots civic education as well as behavioural change campaigns to counter patriarchy and negative gender stereotypes as a matter of going concerned. Hopefully, this should institutionalize issue-based politics and level the playing field for both men and women to sell their manifestos without fear of stereotyping or gender discrimination.

4.2 Special Women Elections Fund

The support model offered by UN Women and other agencies is unresponsive to the practical needs of the candidates and requires an overhaul. There is a need to explore the possibility of establishing a special women elections fund where agencies can pool their resources and the same is allocated to gazetted women candidates at an agreed formula.

4.3 Capacity Building for Women Candidates

Women seeking to join competitive require capacity building in voter mobilization, public speaking and organizational skills. Women movement agencies such as MYWO need to retrace their role in the struggle for women empowerment and offer sound strategies to capacitate women so that they can participate in political leadership.

4.4 Enforcement of Political Parties and Election Acts

The IEBC and Registrar of Political parties should ensure political parties comply with the provisions of the Political parties and Elections Act as far as integrating the principles of equality and inclusion during nominations, campaign funding and logistical support for SIGs candidates.



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