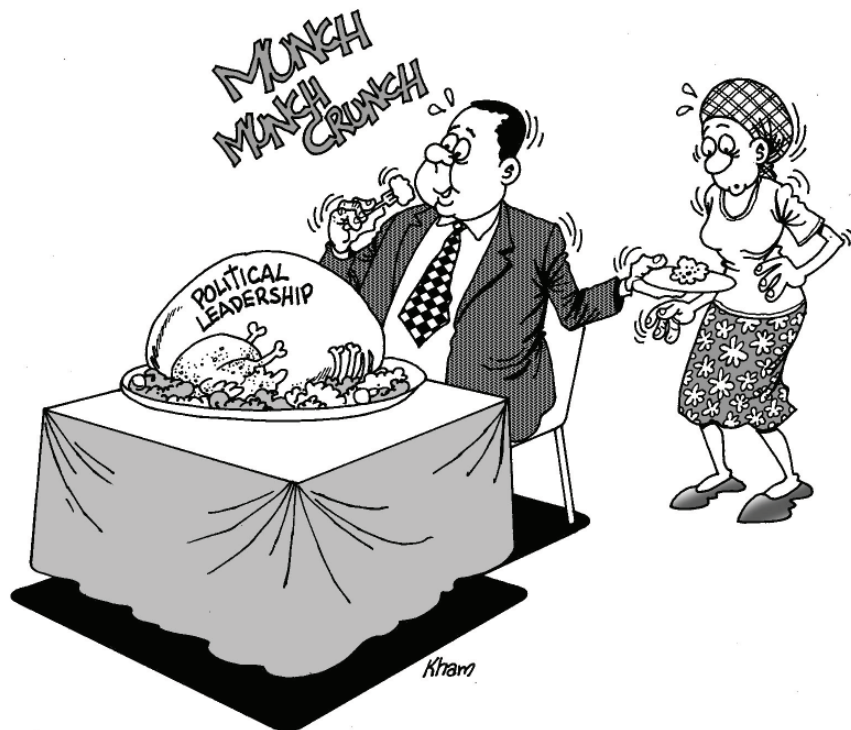


# Women and Political Leadership in Kenya

## Ten Case Studies

Nyokabi Kamau



HEINRICH BÖLL STIFTUNG  
EAST & HORN OF AFRICA

## About the Heinrich Böll Foundation

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The Heinrich Böll Stiftung/Foundation (HBF) is the Green Political Foundation, affiliated to the "Greens/ Alliance '90" political party represented in Germany's federal parliament. Headquartered in Berlin and with offices in more than 25 different countries, HBF conducts and supports civic educational activities and projects world-wide. HBF understands itself as a green think-tank and international policy network, working with governmental and non-governmental actors and focusing on gender equity, sustainable development, and democracy and human rights. HBF's Regional Office for East and Horn of Africa has operated in Nairobi, Kenya, since 2001.

The Women's Rights and Gender Equality Programme supports efforts to enhance women's political participation, curb violence against women, engender public policy making and facilitate dialogue initiatives on key agenda concerns. More information about HBF work on women's political participation is available at: <http://www.hbfha.com/web/52-269.html>

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## Foreword

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After two and a half decades of gender activism, gender sensitization, capacity building, lobbying and mobilizing Kenya women to take up various political leadership positions, civic, gender and human rights awareness has remarkably improved, alongside strategies for policy and advocacy interventions. Policy makers have also mastered the gender language and can rhetorically articulate gender equality principles.

Kenya, however, remains greatly challenged with regard to women's ascendancy into public political leadership positions. Currently, the Kenyan parliament has only about 10 per cent women representation, trailing far behind the global average of 18.8 per cent women representation in parliaments. Some African countries have already attained the critical mass threshold of 33 per cent women's representation in decision making. Over the past decade, all the countries in the East African region have overtaken Kenya on all measures of gender equality indices. In particular, Rwanda has rapidly recovered from genocide to become the leading country in the region and the world on its gender parity index, currently standing at 56 per cent women parliamentary representation.

The dismal performance of Kenya in regard to women's representation in political leadership, despite having pioneered and provided leadership to the post-1990 multi-party women empowerment programmes in the East African region, continues to raise concern both at the level of theory and praxis. Globally, the basic constraints women face as they attempt to participate in politics, though occurring in varying magnitudes in different countries, tend to be broadly similar. It has been argued that Kenya has some unique aspects that continue to keep the numbers of women in politics low, such as lack of an affirmative action law, and the gender insensitive male political culture, which continues to dominate key social and political institutions. This issue requires further interrogation.

This study acknowledges the challenges Kenya women face as they attempt to engage in political leadership. However, the study focuses less on the challenges women politicians face on the road to politics and more on the perceptions, experiences, visions, achievements and the lived experiences that have shaped their leadership perspectives and approaches. The study challenges us to think beyond numbers and to examine what women politicians actually do and aspire to do within and outside parliament. It seeks to confirm, in the Kenyan case, the view held by many gender scholars that women do bring a different perspective from men when in leadership positions.

The study uses the feminist approach and an empowering methodology that gives women leaders' voice and which allows them to tell their own stories in their own words. This study is, therefore, innovative in that it begins to document, interrogate and analyse women's perceptions and conceptualization of leadership and what "making a difference" means

to them. What emerges from the findings of this study is that some individual women politicians contribute more than is often acknowledged. The study also affirms that the lack of a critical mass of women in parliament is a major constraint for women politicians to effect significant and positive difference towards transforming the male-dominated culture of parliament, public policy, and influencing resource allocation in a gender equitable manner. Furthermore, the paucity of women in the Kenyan parliament may have contributed to the strategy of political survival that manifests itself in some women political leaders as a form of perceived "masculinization."

The study examines the experiences of 10 women. The study notes the diverse aspirations of women leaders and brings out the differences between those who, through political nomination, are in politics by accident and had not planned on joining politics and others that have a strong passion for political leadership but are hindered from entry to parliament by various socio-economic and political barriers. Most of the nominated women MPs interviewed for this study had no preparation or political experience. Indeed, one of them admitted to having no interest in politics, while another saw herself as a human rights activist and technocrat rather than a "platform politician." The latter still performed quite well in parliament while the other was effective outside parliament, as a political motivator, mentor and empowering agent. This reminds us that women are not a homogenous group that share a common ideological perspective on all issues. Women leaders, like men, have to manage often contradictory socio-economic and political identities and loyalties to their families, religious beliefs, professions, ethnic communities, political parties and other allegiances. The challenge of managing and harmonizing these diversities in male-dominated political institutions has significant implications on women's performance in political leadership.

The experiences and perspectives of the ten women politicians interviewed for this study provide an excellent foundation for future studies on Kenyan women in political leadership. In this connection, subsequent studies may need to record experiences and strategies of the few women political leaders who have been ministers and who have survived political challenges and managed to remain in parliament for at least a decade and are making a career out of politics. It may also be useful to revisit the issue of *leadership* with a view to analysing the performance of women in *non-political* institutions and as *managers/bureaucrats* in various public institutions. Such a study would be useful in sorting out and celebrating the various contributions women leaders make in public life, as excellent managers who may not necessarily be good political leaders and as community/grassroot leaders/mobilizers who may be uncomfortable with parliamentary political leadership.

Finally, I wish to thank and congratulate the author of this volume, Dr Nyokabi Kamau and all who participated in various ways in this study for a job well done.

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## Preface

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Global advances have been made towards the recognition of the principle of women's political, economic and social equality. In Kenya, however, women continue to be marginalized in many areas of society, especially in the sphere of leadership and decision making. According to a 2009 survey by the Ministry of Gender, only 30.9 per cent of those employed in Kenya's public service are women, 72 per cent of who are in the lower cadres. This same inequity exists in the judiciary, in the leadership of political parties, and in political representation: Women hold only about 10 per cent of the seats in the 10th Parliament.

Ironically, Kenyan women have been at the forefront in championing the discourse and strategies that support women's rights and gender equality—reinforced ostensibly by the hosting of the 3rd World Conference of Women in Nairobi in 1985. Sadly, this pioneer spirit has not only failed in achieving effective political participation or the taking up of leadership positions in Kenya itself, but women have also only served to nurture and observe the growth and success of women's movements in neighbouring Rwanda, Uganda and Tanzania who now lead global statistics on women's representation in elective politics at 56.3, 31 and 30 per cent, respectively.

In light of these contradictions, the Heinrich Böll Foundation's gender programme commissioned this study. The idea was conceived against the backdrop of initiatives by civil society, governments and international institutions to enhance women's political participation, especially towards the presidential and parliamentary elections of 2007. These initiatives included enhanced programmatic efforts by women's and donor organizations, the 30 per cent affirmative action presidential decree and quota legislation proposals made during the life of the 9th Parliament to build the opportunities, capacities and suitable environments for women's political participation. At the same time, this increased pressure galvanized debate, both positive and negative, on the quality of women's leadership in Kenya. Many of these efforts are anchored on a social justice, morality and rights-based concept, which postulates that women have both the right and obligation to actively participate in political leadership. This study, however, extends this premise to bring out the unique perspectives of women's leadership as evidenced in their tenures from 2003 to date. If such a perspective does indeed exist, and if women really do focus on issues (social or otherwise) that are usually neglected by male leaders, then a stronger case will be made urging the electorate to vote for more women leaders based on the values that they bring to leadership.

Based on intensive interviews with female politicians, this study looks at women's perception of their vision, mission, achievements, challenges and future plans, and on their

development priorities. It provides answers to the question: 'Do women bring a different perspective into politics?'

The findings indicate that women develop their vision of leadership from experiences they go through as young girls, growing up in a society characterized by gender inequalities. When they eventually get into politics, their priorities are guided by their vision of a world where all people have equal opportunities. The majority of the women discussed in this study are drawn to the human development paradigm in the projects and initiatives that they support. The study reveals that women political leaders face challenges that include competing family demands, inadequate resources, politics of exclusion in political parties, lack of security and lack of positive media coverage. It identifies options to support and strengthen women who wish to pursue political careers. The study also identifies the need for well-organized mentoring programmes, and for a better understanding by female politicians on how to engage with the media and get acquainted with issues of local, national and international concern. Also, women leaders need to renegotiate gender roles so that there is more equitable sharing of domestic responsibilities between men and women, therefore allowing young women a chance to participate in politics, just like young men. There is also need to educate society to change their views of effective leadership. Furthermore, political parties must embrace policies of inclusion, where gender forms a central part of this inclusion. Civic education needs to condemn all forms of gender-based violence, and especially violence that is targeted at women during political campaigns. Such education needs to go further to re-socialize people on gender equity principles, and should start at an early age during which boys and girls receive messages that encourage them to aspire for political leadership.

The lessons gathered through this study will be shared with other actors so as to further strengthen the spirit of the women's movement not only in Kenya but also in other countries that HBF works in the region.

A study of this kind is impossible without the participation and support of numerous individuals and institutions. Nyokabi Kamau, Senior Lecturer and Director—St Pauls Institute of Life Long Learning, St Paul's University, as the main author inspired the concept of this study and its eventual actualization. The Heinrich Böll Foundation would like to acknowledge the Honourable Members of Parliament and Civic Leaders who dedicated their valuable time and reorganized their busy schedules to be available for the interview sessions and to share information about their personal life experiences that forms the bedrock of the study. Our thanks also go to the reviewers of the study, Mary Kinyanjui—Senior Lecturer at the Institute of Development Studies of the University of Nairobi, Wanjiku Khamasi—Director of the Institute of Gender Equity Research and Development at Moi University, and Godwin Murunga—Lecturer, History Department of Kenyatta University and Coordinator of the Gender Roundtable Series for their critique and reshaping of the arguments, form and structure of the text as well as Amb. Prof. Maria Nzomo for the foreword to this publication. Last but not least, we sincerely appreciate the role played by Felix Murithi in editing and bringing to fruition the final version of this publication.

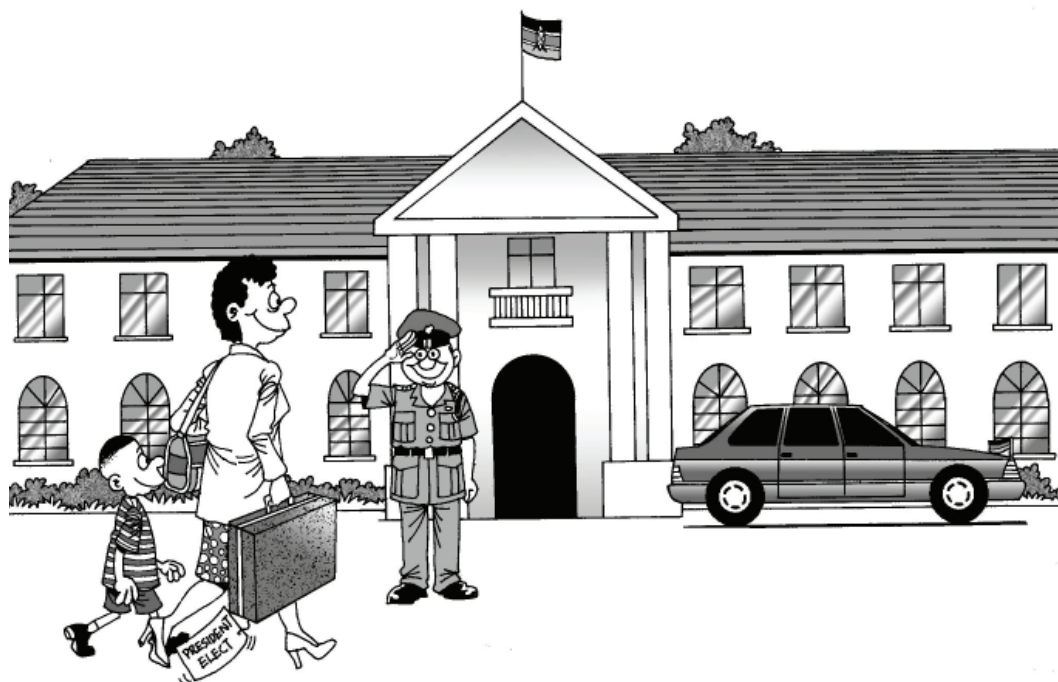
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# Table of Contents

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<b>Chapter 1:</b>	Introduction.....	1
<b>Chapter 2:</b>	Women and Politics in Kenya: Some Historical Background.....	9
<b>Chapter 3:</b>	Political Leadership in Kenya .....	22
<b>Chapter 4:</b>	Passion, Vision and Motivation: The Women’s Stories.....	30
<b>Chapter 5:</b>	Perspectives on Development.....	47
<b>Chapter 6:</b>	Challenges and Support Networks of Women in Politics .....	64
<b>Chapter 7:</b>	Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations .....	76
References	.....	86





## Abbreviations and Acronyms

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CDF	Constituency Development Fund
CBO	Community-Based Organization
CMD	Centre for Multi-party Democracy
FORD-Kenya	Forum for the Restoration of Democracy-Kenya
HBF	Heinrich Böll Foundation
KANU	Kenya African National Union
KENDA	Kenya National Democratic Alliance
KEWOPA	Kenya Women Association of Parliamentarians
MYWO	Maendeleo ya Wanawake
MMD	Movement for Multi-party Democracy
MP	Member of Parliament
NARC	National Alliance Rainbow Coalition
NCWK	National Council of Women of Kenya
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
ODM	Orange Democratic Movement
ODM-K	Orange Democratic Movement-Kenya
PNU	Party of National Unity
SDP	Social Democratic Party
UDM	United Democratic Party of Kenya



## Chapter 1

# Introduction

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Women have both a right and an obligation to active participation in political leadership. In addition to this human right and obligation, political analysts and researchers from different regions of the world (for example Clinton-Rodham, 2003; Neuman, 1998; Maathai, 2006; Thomas and Wilcox, 2005; Wanjohi, 2003) have observed that when women get into leadership and management, they bring a different perspective of political leadership. These analysts and researchers have argued that having more women in politics would help solve problems associated with perpetual poverty, especially as it affects women. Women's leadership not only aids in building nations but also helps to balance up decision making processes (Epstein *et al.*, 2005). Neuman (1998), writing about women legislators in the United States, observed that decisions concerned with issues of education, health, gender violence, women's economic empowerment, peace, rights, dignity, and democracy are usually of great concern to women leaders.

The end of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st century has seen a steady increase in women's political participation in Africa. In a UN report '*Africa and the Millennium Development Goals-2007 Update*', it is noted that the share of parliamentary seats held by women in Africa increased from 7 per cent in 1990 to 17 per cent in 2007, which is close to the global average. As at 2007, women held 48.8 per cent of seats in the Lower House in Rwanda, the highest percentage world-wide. In January 2006, Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf became President of Liberia and Africa's first elected woman president. By the end of the 20th century, a few African countries, for example Rwanda, Uganda, Tanzania, Ethiopia, Eritrea, and South Africa had set quotas for women in national and local legislative bodies, a sign of a renewed commitment to have more women in political leadership. Allowing of such quotas is also recognition of the historical injustices that women have experienced, and which make it more difficult for them to compete equally with men. By 2009, Kenya had not yet legislated for affirmative action in favour of women; a bill sponsored by Martha Karua in 2007 failed to get enough support.

Despite the progress made in some countries, serious and persistent obstacles still hinder the advancement of women and their participation in political decision making processes. Some of the main obstacles are related to persistent poverty; lack of equal access to health, education, training and employment; cultural barriers; political structures and institutions that discriminate on women; and in some cases the impact of armed conflict and natural disasters, which has also contributed to women's lower participation due to other challenges that accompany conflict.

International agreements and conventions have persistently stressed on the importance of women's equal participation in political leadership. The 1995 *Beijing Platform for Action*, for example, emphasized that 'women's equal participation in decision making is not only a demand for justice or democracy, but can also be seen as a necessary condition for women's interests to be taken into account. Without the perspective of women at all levels of decision making, the goals of equality, development and peace cannot be achieved.' The Platform defined two strategic objectives: (i) to ensure women's equal access to and full participation in all power structures and decision making; and (ii) to increase women's capacity to participate in decision making and leadership. Similarly, the *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women* (CEDAW), in Article 7, called upon state parties 'to take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the political and public life of the country.' In addition, the UN Security Council's Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security also reaffirmed the importance of equal participation and full involvement of women in all efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security, and the need to increase women's role in decision making.

That women bring a different perspective in leadership is not in dispute, as clearly indicated by studies done in other parts of the world, which have shown that gender inequality in political leadership contributes to women's issues not receiving enough attention even from men who may be sensitive to women's issues. Despite the fact that studies in other parts of the world have confirmed that women's perspective in leadership is necessary and needed to put women's issues on the political agenda of a country, no research in Kenya has specifically looked into the issues that Kenyan women legislators focus on to find out what kind of leadership perspective they actually bring. Although a lot of work has been done by non-governmental organizations, showing the need to increase the number of women in parliament and civic leadership, none seems to have focused especially on the particular perspective that elected or nominated women legislators have, which may be termed as a women's way of leading politically. The study by Lawless and Fox (1999) did not interview any woman elected or nominated, but rather women candidates for the 1997 general election. The study also interviewed Kenyan citizens on their goals and aspirations and how these compared with those of the women candidates. However, no study so far has looked at women who had made it to parliament either by election or nomination and their leadership goals and aspirations, as well as the actual development issues that they had focused on. Such research may have been hindered by the fact that only very few women have been in Kenya's parliament since independence.

### Women representation and participation in Kenya's parliament: 1<sup>st</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> parliaments

Parliament	Period	Total no. of constituencies	No. of women elected	Available slots for nomination	No. of women nominated
1 <sup>st</sup> parliament	1963-1969	158	0	12	0
2 <sup>nd</sup> parliament	1969-1974	158	1	12	1
3 <sup>rd</sup> parliament	1974-1979	158	4	12	2
4 <sup>th</sup> parliament	1979-1983	158	5	12	1
5 <sup>th</sup> parliament	1983-1988	158	2	12	1
6 <sup>th</sup> parliament	1988-1992	188	2	12	0
7 <sup>th</sup> parliament	1992-1997	188	6	12	1
8 <sup>th</sup> parliament	1997-2002	210	4	12	5
9 <sup>th</sup> parliament	2002-2007	210	10	12	8
10 <sup>th</sup> parliament	2008-2012	210	16	12	6
			50		25

Source: Kihoro (2007) and Kenya parliament records given during the current research

Given the small number of women representation compared to men, it is not easy to tell what women-specific perspectives these women may have brought into leadership, and perspectives that could really be used to advocate for election and nomination of more women.

Despite the argument for more women's participation in political leadership, some sceptics (for example Pinto, 2007) argue that once women occupy political positions, they forget the plight of their fellow women. On the other hand, some women in political positions say that once they are in power, they face a lot of stigma from men, who ridicule and undermine them at the slightest mistake they may make. Therefore, most of their time is spent trying to attain certain standards recognizable by the men folk. It is this stigma that takes them away from problem solving to concentrate on position security. Men who have dominated politics may also not feel very comfortable when women start getting into what they perceived as their domain. This insecurity is manifest in the manner men try to derail women from getting to political positions, especially through use of violence targeting women political aspirants (Okumu, 2008).

It was against this background that this research was conceived. Further, it was conceived against a backdrop of initiatives by civil society, governments and international institutions to front for increased women's political participation especially in the 2007 elections. Many of these initiatives were championed on a social justice, morality and rights-based concept, which intimate that women have both the right and obligation to actively participate in political leadership.

### Objectives of the Study

The major objective of this study was to investigate the perspective that a select group of women parliamentarians and mayors have brought into their leadership. Specifically, the study focused on the following research questions:

- (i) What perspectives do women bring into their leadership?

- (ii) What issues do they address more effectively?
- (iii) Do women leaders pay any special attention to gender issues?
- (iv) Do women face gender-specific challenges?

## Methodology

This being a research about and on women, it utilized a *feminist methodology*. Feminist methodology requires the researcher to think differently about the process of doing research, and gives the researcher the power of naming those aspects of women's lives that are not always named in general social science research. *Naming*, in research, is what determines or defines the quality and value of what is named, while at the same time denying reality and value to that which is never named, never uttered, that which has no name (Du Bois, 1983). This aspect of naming or not naming some aspects of social life was reflected in many of the scorecards used in the 9th Parliament, where the most effective Members of Parliament (MPs) would be published. The scorecards tended to focus on how active MPs were during parliamentary debates. Such a focus clearly challenges first time parliamentarians, where majority of the women fitted. The scorecards may not always have brought to light women's performance outside parliament, an area that this research seeks to look into.

Since the introduction of the Constituency Development Fund (CDF) in 2003, much focus on MPs performance has been on their utilization of CDF. The fact that 8 of the 18 women in Kenya's 9th Parliament had been nominated meant that they had no access to the CDF. Also, Cabinet Ministers tend to have more tangible achievements than MPs and, given that only two women were full Cabinet ministers, the contribution of women parliamentarians was not easy to quantify and/or qualify. By using feminist methodology, this research focuses on other areas of women's work, especially their role in their constituencies (even nominated MPs had what they referred to as their constituencies), which are not always made public.

The case study approach is used to determine the leadership contribution of the women parliamentarians. Robson (2002: 177) refers to a *case* as 'the situation, individual, group, or whatever it is that one is interested in'. *Case studies* refer to research that focuses on a single case or single issue, in contrast to studies that seek generalizations through comparative analysis or the compilation of a large number of instances. The case study approach is used in this research to illuminate women's experiences, looking carefully at their personal experiences rather than looking for generalizations. The use of case studies was essential in assisting the women define leadership in their own terms. Each of the women interviewed is treated as a separate case study, but in cases where similar trends in their work and experiences could be drawn, the cases are analyzed together. Case studies of each of the women who participated in this research provide a good opportunity to understand women's processes of leadership rather than just looking at the end result. The qualitative nature of this study was best suited to a case study approach, which enables description of women's leadership experiences in their own terms.

A semi-structured interview was the main tool of data collection. The study adopted in-depth conversational interviews. Blackmore (1999) writes about using conversational interviews in her research, where the storytelling genre of the interview could be adjusted to a more

informal discussion, taking the form of a conversation. Merrill (1999: 59) observes that 'the interview dialogue becomes a more equal two-way process as the interviewer and the interviewee interact in a conversation. The interviewer should be prepared to share life experiences with the interviewees'.

Conversational interviews were used to elicit dialogue with the interviewees. The study was carried out from an ontological position, which suggests that people's knowledge, views, understanding and interpretations are meaningful for the generation of knowledge. The participants' views and opinions helped bring out issues that would not be apparent in more closed and structured methods of data collection.

In some of the interviews, the key researcher also talked (when requested) about her own experiences. However, there was need to ensure that the interviews did not turn into therapeutic encounters, an issue raised by Mason (2002). Nonetheless, it is important to note that there are researchers who have found the therapeutic nature of research interviews to be an advantage to the participants. In a research interview, participants can reflect on their experiences as they are offered an opportunity to talk about themselves and the situation they are in (Burgess, 1988; Opie, 1992). For some of the women in this research, the interview may have been one of the few opportunities they got to talk with someone interested in their experiences in a positive way. This is one way interviews can be empowering rather than exploitative encounters, depending on the power relationships (Opie, 1992).

While this research interview adopted a conversational tone, the interviews were guided by some broad topics or guiding themes (Blackmore, 1999). The guiding themes helped to keep the interviews focused on the main topics.

In order to build further on the data collected from the interviews, it was deemed necessary to look at the development priorities of other women members of parliament who were not interviewed. This was done by examining their respective CDF websites on the official CDF website ([www.cdf.go.ke](http://www.cdf.go.ke)). The criteria for selecting the women whose constituencies would be looked up was that they had to be in their second term in parliament and elected. The three women parliamentarians selected for the CDF analysis were Charity Ngilu, Martha Karua and Beth Mugo.

The choice of the CDF as the place to see the women's leadership perspective was guided by the fact that most of the women interviewed seemed to describe their leadership in terms of the work they had done in their constituencies, rather than on issues they had focused on as legislators in parliament. In the period that this study focused on, there was no coordinated report on the issues that women parliamentarians had raised in parliament. Since 2008, the Kenya Women Associations of Parliamentarians (KEWOPA) began recording women's participation in parliament. Since none of the women interviewed in this research actually came back to the 10th Parliament, the focus on the work done at constituency level has been maintained.

The research was carried out in 2007 for two main reasons. One, by 2007, the women to be included in the research had spent close to five years in parliament, and therefore had adequate time on the job to clearly articulate what they had achieved, their leadership ideals and visions, challenges and a view of their future in politics. Two, 2007 being an election year, the intention was to share the initial findings, which would provide the electorate with

information on what women in the 9th Parliament had achieved in the five years and what they had to say about their leadership ideals and vision.

Given the width and breadth of issues and the number of women who have played a role in shaping politics in Kenya until 2007, it was important to set the scope of the study right from the onset. The research was to target women mayors and Members of Parliament (MPs) who had served in the period 2003-2007. However, due to challenges of accessing all the mayors and MPs, the scope was extended to include two case studies of an ex-mayor of Thika Municipality, and a parliamentary aspirant in the 2007 general election.

## Research Ethics

The feminist methodology that guided this research implies that there is a 'connection between politics, ethics and epistemology' (Ramazanoglu and Holland, 2002: 102). Ethical considerations make the feminist researcher accountable for the knowledge they may produce, and since feminist research is about fairness, respect and promoting the good of others, ethics become central. The complexities of researching people's lives and bringing these accounts into the public, which forms an integral part of feminist research, raise ethical issues for the researcher that need to be addressed throughout the research and writing process (Mauthner *et al.*, 2002).

Normally, it is ethical to give research participants and sites pseudonyms to make them difficult to identify, especially where sensitive issues are raised. This was one area of dilemma during the research. On one hand, the researcher intended to use this research to publicize the achievements of the women interviewed. Using pseudonyms would mean this would not be achieved as successfully as when real names are used. On the other hand, the dilemma of using real names where private lives are discussed may cause harm to the interviewees and their families. However, given the small number of women politicians in Kenya, it would be very difficult to describe their lives and their work without readers identifying who they are. Nevertheless, this study only contains information recorded with full consent of each of the women. The key researcher took time to explain the objectives of the research.

In all the interviews conducted, different techniques were applied, as each case was unique. In all the cases (except with Priscah Ouma, Mayor of Kisumu), letters of introduction followed by a phone call from the HBF Gender Officer started off the process. After this introduction, the researcher made a phone call to each of the women to book appointments. It was much easier to access nominated MPs than elected ones and Cabinet ministers. This explains why only two of the women interviewed were elected, Dr Christine Mango and Nyiva Mwendwa. All the rest were nominated.

Consent was discussed at two levels; first through the letter and phone call from HBF and the key researcher negotiating consent, including permission to tape-record the interviews during the meeting. All the women interviewed accepted to be tape-recorded.

Where the interviews were done (context) was an important ethical issue given that the interviews would sometimes touch on the private lives of the interviewees. On the issue of interview context, Wragg (2002) observes that when people are interviewed in very familiar

places, they may be too comfortable, which may lead to giving some 'false' information. Neutral grounds are generally better for both the interviewer and the interviewee, especially if they are of similar social status or where the interviewee is of higher social status (see also Kamau, 2009). Negotiating for the place to carry out the interviews turned out to be quite complicated, especially because it was difficult to get access to these women. Most interviews took place in the places where the women chose. Some of the ethical questions that arose when interviews were held in the women's chosen spaces were: should the interviewer suggest changing venue in case of noise and other disruptions? Who would suggest to the women to switch of their telephones or should we lock the door to prevent interruptions from people walking in and out of the offices? It was easier to negotiate this with those women whom the researcher had rapport with before the interview than with those she was meeting for the first time. Nevertheless, this brings in the ethics of power relations when carrying out research with people of high social status, such as the women in this research (see also Kamau, 2009 for experiences researching senior university women).

Ethical guidelines are often based on assumptions of unequal power relationships, especially where researchers or respondents could abuse their superior power in situations in which either may not be in a position to protect themselves. Feminist research has highlighted the exploitative nature of traditional social research. The interview situation can be a potential site for unequal power relations. Therefore, feminists advocate for a feminist research that is non-hierarchical and non-exploitative, allowing women to speak about, and make sense of their own experiences.

Feminist methods of equalizing power relations and establishing rapport can sometimes still be difficult when the people being interviewed are more senior than the researcher (Coate, 1999). In most research work, the interviewer is positioned as being in a powerful position. But recent writing among feminist researchers has shown that the power position is not monolithic. Until the researcher has collected the data, the participant is, in many ways, in a more powerful position and sometimes the feminist researcher can feel helpless (Onsongo, 2005). The commonly seen binary of the powerful researcher versus powerless researched was obviously not the case in this research. The power of the interviewee in some cases had an impact on the interviews, as sometimes there were interruptions and the flow of the discussions would be affected. However, power relations notwithstanding, the experience of the researcher in handling senior people came is handy in managing the interviews and gathering the information required.

## Strengths and Limitations of the Study

The main strength of this study is that it gave the group of women politicians 'the microphone or air time' (Barnes, 2005) to talk about their experiences and achievements as politicians. However, using a feminist approach and focusing mainly on women was both a strength and limitation. It was a strength because women were made the focus of the study, a rare tenet in much social science research where women issues tend to be glossed over. However, this focus on women for the larger part was a limitation which, though justified, did not provide a complete gender picture. The study, therefore, risked being seen to be equating gender to women, and thus the recommendation for further studies in order to have a full gender picture, where men's and the electorate views and issues can be analysed.



*Women and political leadership in Kenya: Ten case studies*

Another limitation was the fact that only nine women were interviewed, yet the initial plan was to interview all the women in the 9th Parliament and the women mayors who were in office at the time of the study. Accessing all the women became very difficult due to the timing of the study.

However, looking at the interviews with the women, the responses appeared quite similar and, after carrying out the ninth one, it was decided to stop because the responses were quite similar and it was becoming very difficult to access especially the elected women and Cabinet ministers. Thereafter, CDF websites of a selected number of women were accessed to get a glimpse of their development priorities based on how their CDF funds were used. This would shed some light on issues they deemed as important for their people.





## Chapter 2

# Women and Politics in Kenya: Some Historical Background<sup>1</sup>

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In the context of a nation-state framework, political leadership implies a contractual relationship between those who govern and those who are governed. Ideally, this relationship is sanctioned by the sovereignty of the state. States enjoy autonomy from other states but commit, in return, to recognize those others. Three elements cement the reciprocity and mutual recognition between states. First, is the fact of national boundaries that define the territorial extent of a sovereign state. Second, is the location of power in a central authority that agrees to monopolize the use of violence but commits to the judicious exercise of this power in the interests of all and, finally, the legitimate and fair exercise of that power in the interest of citizens, especially to enforce the rule of law and in the just allocation of national wealth and resources to all (Adebayo and Lisa, 1996).

However, one must recognize two domains for the exercise of power: a public and private domain. Political leadership is not always limited to the nation-state framework. There are numerous other sites of exercise of power where political leadership takes place. These can roughly be described as 'private' non-state sites, including for instance in private businesses, and the civil society domains of professional, faith-based or community-based organizations, to name these few cases. At this level, a different dynamic of politics is at play and a different form of leadership is expected or exercised. The key distinction between these sites and the state-based political leadership is that the state-based demands national level probity. In other words, all citizens of a country have a stake in public leadership at the state or related levels, while the non-state level accounts primarily to those with membership or indirect affiliation to the said organizations and movements.

We distinguish the different levels of exercise of political leadership because they entail issues of inclusion and exclusion. This is especially with respect to how political leadership is constituted and how mandate is exercised. The constitution and mandate of leadership is inextricably linked to its legitimacy. While many have addressed this question, few have seen it through the gender lens. The one exception to this is Schatzberg (2001), whose study deals with the familial and paternal idioms in which the legitimacy of political leadership in most of Africa is cast. The study notes that the dominant discourse of leadership treats women as if they are outside the political realm, their place being consigned largely to 'participation in development activities and projects.' Women have an advisory role; a role that is mostly

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<sup>1</sup> This introduction on women's political leadership in Kenya was written by Godwin Murunga, for whom we are greatly indebted.

outside the public view and advice that can either be heeded or ignored (Schatzberg, 2001). This is, as we shall indicate shortly, a role that is justified by the ideology of domesticity.

In this brief introduction to this chapter, we explain some sources of the marginality of women in political leadership. While focus is on how political leadership has been constructed in post-colonial Kenya, we account for why this existing form of political leadership accords little space for women's participation as leaders. Our thesis is that women's participation in political leadership is limited because of the masculine construction of the state and how its dominant political actors understand and deploy state power to serve specific interests. Historically, these actors have been male and have perceived leadership in a paternal way. In large measure, the only opportunity they provide women is the opportunity for co-optation into a male-centric system.

### Conceptual Issues

Leadership is about harnessing power and using it to advance the welfare of humanity or society. However, power is a many-sided social relation, as Lonsdale (1981) argues. Power can be used or misused. It can be used coercively to extract compliance or it can be deployed legitimately by getting people to acquiesce to the vision of leaders. Leadership is the art of translating the social value of power to achieve broadly accepted and desired ends for a group, a community or country. It can be dictatorial or legitimated. In Africa, power has mostly been used in an authoritarian or dictatorial manner to coerce, suppress and intimidate people. The long history of dictatorship in Africa is well documented both in works of fiction and in academic texts.<sup>2</sup>

Often, analysis of Africa's disturbing history of bad and dictatorial leadership is cast in masculinist terms. Since the underlying structure of domination is patriarchal, it is assumed that bad leadership must be male leadership. The converse is also implied; women hold the potential for good leadership in Africa by virtue of being female. There is no doubt that political leadership has been disproportionately been with the men. However, this way of posing the issue casts women as though they exist outside the state and its politics and leaves them as objects that are only acted upon, not as agents in the creation of their own stories. The idea that women exist outside the state has been overturned, and many studies show the roles of women in nationalist struggles and in the struggle for pluralist politics.<sup>3</sup> Amina Mama (1996) concludes her analysis of women, politics and the state by arguing that 'scholarship on women, gender and the African state over the last five years shows a growing attention to the dynamic interaction between state and society, and between competing groups within civil society.' She adds (Ibid, 1996: 25):

'Even though the concept of the state is still monolithically patriarchal, society begins to be viewed as comprising men and women, with women's actions and responses having unforeseen effects on the male-dominated state, and the relationship between women and the state combining various degrees of autonomy and reciprocity.... Even the most oppressed and marginalized groups are seen as actors rather than passive recipients of whatever the state metes out to the people.'

<sup>2</sup> Notable works in this regard include Achebe (1966; 1987) and the chapter on Malawi in Zeleza (1995).

<sup>3</sup> For a summary of some of these studies, see Mama (1996: 18-26). For Kenya, see Mitullah, in Oyugi *et al.* (2003: 212-235).

Ifi Amadiume (2000), on the other hand, provides the ground for arguing that both masculine and feminine power have the propensity to be either dictatorial or legitimate depending on the kind of society we live in and the way leaders exercise power. Her notion of *Daughter of Goddess and Daughters of Imperialism* is meant to capture the complex story of the role of women in politics.<sup>4</sup>

In a democracy, it is expected that power is legitimated through popular mandate, and leadership is based on the popular will. In the context of recent moves towards democracy in Kenya, such mandate has, unfortunately, been reduced to the ritual of periodic elections and emphasis on rule of law. This emphasis is certainly not gendered, and the fact that elections can be a vehicle for further entrenchment of male-centric politics and leadership has not formed the core of our concerns. In this study, the author refers to 'servant' leadership. But have periodic elections led to servant leadership? In political terms, periodic elections and rule of law are in and of themselves useless in changing the reality of the citizens especially with respect to gender inclusivity. They have not ensured that political leadership serves the people. In the current system, people serve the political leadership. Servant leadership should empower people to control their leaders and attain true emancipatory politics.

Generally, we live in a patriarchal society. This is not simply a society in which there is a system of male-led dominance, but also one in which the market reigns supreme. We call it a democracy but, in fact, it is a society in which liberal democracy (rule by few) has usurped real democracy (rule of the majority). In this society, class, race and gender intersect to promote exploitation of one by the other along multiple axes; of the have-nots by the haves, of the 'people of colour' by white supremacists, of the female by the male. The lines of exploitation are not as precise as suggested here, but they roughly follow the contours of sexism, racism and class. Any discussion of political leadership that wishes to understand the marginality of women in politics must begin by acknowledging these intersections.

### The Monolithically Patriarchal State

The marginality of women in political leadership and their continued exclusion in political decision making is a product of a history of the patriarchal state in Kenya. This is true both for the colonial and independent state. The story of the colonial state is too well known to detain us here. It is a story in which the role and place of women was defined by very specific ideas of gender roles. This idea was not simply western, it was more precisely Victorian. It understood society to be split into the public and private realms. These realms were also gendered; the female occupied the private domain, also understood to be the domestic realm. It was a realm of reproduction in the biological and social sense. It was, above all, an apolitical realm. Other than functioning as the arena where child-bearing and rearing occurred, it was also the place where men, who worked in the public domain, returned to replenish their energies and prepare for work the following day.

Few women would acquiesce to this mode of organizing livelihood were it not for the pervasive impact of the ideology of domesticity. This ideology was embedded in traditional African life in some ways. However, its modern expressions are a direct outgrowth of

<sup>4</sup> Ifi Amadiume (2000); Amina Mama (1998) and Amina Mama (1995: 37-58).

colonial structuring of gender relations and roles. It is an ideology that continues to gender the public/private domains and which has sanctioned the idea that the public domain is official and the private unofficial. As a corollary to this idea, the assumption took root that the public realm is formal and political while the private realm is informal and apolitical. The feminist clarion call that the personal is political was an attempt to subvert this assumption. Yet, in independent Kenya, the assumption prevails that the informal domain apolitical does not contribute to national development. It, therefore, is not a quantifiable and remunerative site of work.<sup>5</sup>

The independent state in Kenya emerged from a nationalist movement that involved women in heroic roles. Most of these women led struggles against colonial domination, protested against colonial oppression, fed and protected veterans during the fight for *Uhuru*, led segments of the resistance armies against colonialism, and effectively participated in the political negotiations leading to independence.<sup>6</sup> However, the colonial structure was never dismantled and its extant forms of class and gender discrimination and oppression persisted. At independence, Mzee Jomo Kenyatta definitely de-racialized the structures of the emerging state, but these were never gendered. On the contrary, the state was further masculinized and ethnicized. The incoming leadership was largely male and there were no females in the first Cabinet that Kenyatta cobbled together. Indeed, key figures in the Kenyatta government stated their belief that women could never make good leaders.

The view that women could never be good leaders was firmly held by most of the male leadership in Kenya, whether within Kenyatta's circle or not. This often found expression in parliament among otherwise respectable leaders such as Martin Shikuku. A firm believer in the 'sanctity' of polygamy, Shikuku often thought of women as children who could only be represented by men. What was ironic about Shikuku's assumption was that the inner circle of Kenyatta's Cabinet thought of women and the non-Kikuyu as people who were ill-equipped for leadership, a belief that still commands serious influence among Kibaki's loyalists. For Kenyatta, as for Kibaki, leadership belonged to the house of *Mumbi*, but in the first instance only to the sons of *Mumbi*.<sup>7</sup> The two regimes nurtured a very cynical attitude towards women and other ethnicities in Kenya.

Valiant Kikuyu women leaders have not found it easy to engage fully as political leaders in Central Kenya. The example of Wambui Otieno and Prof. Wangari Maathai illustrate this. A good number of them get frustrated into quitting the campaigns at the level of party nominations. It is no wonder that the recent declaration by Martha Karua of her presidential ambition has received such sexist reaction from a large segment of Central Province leadership. Many of them have congregated at well-choreographed public rallies to denounce those who want to fragment the Kikuyu community in the 2012 general election. This, of course, is a thinly veiled attack on Martha Karua. According to journalist Emeka-Mayaka Gekara, Karua is seen by the rich businessmen and politicians 'as jeopardizing what Central Kenya elite call *gucokia ruui mukaro* – returning the river to its course, or returning

5 On the ideology of domesticity in general, see Karen Hansen (1992) and for its application to contemporary experiences of women in Africa, see Sylvia Tamale in Elizabeth Annan-Yao et al (2005: 18-31).

6 Such heroic tales of rebellion are recounted of Mary Nyanjiru during the Harry Thuku rebellions of 1922; of Muthoni G. Likimani (1985) and Wambui Waiyaki Otieno (1998) to refer only to those whose experiences are widely publicized.

7 Mumbi refers to the matriarch of the Kikuyu as contained in the stories of origin of the community.

power to the Agikuyu people' in 2012.<sup>8</sup> The experience of Martha Karua mirrors that of many women.

A comparison of women political leadership in the Kenyan parliament since independence easily illustrates the weakness of Central Province. Overall, women representation in parliamentary leadership has been minimal, standing at 9.8 per cent at its peak in the 10th parliament. Numbering 22 female members of parliament, 16 were elected while 6 were nominated. The majority of the women parliamentarians are from the Rift Valley Province, with Central Province having only 2 women while Nairobi has 3 female parliamentarians (two of whom are of Kikuyu ethnicity). Historically, Western Kenya has had the highest number of female representation in parliament as is encapsulated in the stories of Grace Onyango (the first elected female Member of Parliament) followed by luminaries such as Dr Julia Ojiambo, Phoebe Asiyu and Grace Ogot. The only other well known but uncelebrated heroine was Philomena Chelagat Mutai from Rift Valley Province.

A distinguishing element of the women leaders who made it to parliament or any related position of leadership in Kenya is their high levels of professional achievement. Most were accomplished academics, having reached the pinnacle of their professions. Others such as Nyiva Mwendwa were astute politicians in their own right. For a good number of these women, and this is a second distinguishing factor, their family background was a significant boost to their ambitions for leadership, many of whom point out that their educational background owed a lot to the support they received from their families. Indeed, the steadfast support of their fathers counted a lot since this represented the critical pillar against which to break the patriarchal huddles imposed by their communities. This, indeed, was the case for Grace Ogot.

Furthermore, the support of husbands and the opportunities provided through related networks have been useful ladders upon which to build an already sterling performance by these female politicians. Thus, Nyiva Mwendwa got the support of Kitili Mwendwa who, as this study indicates, agreed that she was a better politician than he was. As it becomes clear in this study, the situation where the female spouse ventured into politics before the man differs from the pattern where women often run for parliamentary seat only after their husbands die. In the case of Dr Julia Ojiambo and Grace Ogot, however, their political careers were built on a family of accomplishments, with husbands who were themselves solidly assured of the virtues of their spouses' political careers. This, at least, is the message one gets from Prof. Bethwell A. Ogot's reflections in his autobiography (Ogot, 2006).

There is, on the other hand, those women who have struggled against numerous odds and with not concrete supportive family structure. The story of Prof. Wangari Maathai easily comes to mind. Her achievements and ambitions were threatening to the males around her. This too is the case with some of the women discussed in this study, who point out how threatened their husbands were at the prospects of their becoming political leaders. The important question to consider is: what conceptual implication does the presence and role of family in the careers of the women leaders have for our understanding of politics in general and women in leadership in particular? Perhaps this is the critical issue that studies of these women leaders bring to gender and women's studies.

<sup>8</sup> See *Daily Nation*, 6 April 2009; also posted at <http://www.nation.co.ke/News/-/1056/557878/-/item/1/-/155hgpb/-/index.html>.

It is instructive that family background is a useful microcosm for understanding how context, whether societal or family, also structures politics and influence possibilities for women's leadership. Independent Kenya structured politics in a way that prevented, if not limited, the potential for women leadership. It did not provide space for a gendered understanding of leadership or politics. Politics and the state was dominated by a male ruling political class that was also unapologetically masculinist. While there has been a sprinkling of women, these were either socialized in a male-centric political ethos, were too connected to the ruling class through femocracy to be of significant use to the larger majority of women, or were too few to make a difference. The critical feminist voice needed to inform and transform the existing leadership culture was, therefore, either absent or drowned. One study that interviewed 68 women citizens and 19 women candidates running in the 1997 general elections cautions that 'the suggestion that electing women candidates will generate a women's agenda is precarious in the Kenyan case.' The study points to political and gender socialization as critical impediments to the expectation that women politicians will necessarily articulate a women's agenda once elected (Lawless and Fox, 1999).

### **Pre-Independence Kenya Women Leadership in Kenya**

In order to understand the position of Kenyan women in the modern political and economic dispensation, it is necessary to make clear the structures they operated in before the colonial period and during the colonial era. House-Midamba (1990) argues that the status of Kenyan women deteriorated during colonial rule. This deterioration was particularly noticeable because in the pre-colonial era, 'although women were to some extent subordinate to men under the African Customary Law, in many respects the roles of men and women were complementary in nature' (House-Midamba, 1990: 23).

Even though Kenyan women had certain powers in the pre-colonial times, Kenyan traditional culture was predominantly patrilineal and patriarchal. In this environment, men were the predominant force (Odinga, 1967). When the colonialists took over control of the country, they also emphasized male dominance by transferring men's supervisory rights over land to individual legal ownership (Elkins, 2005). As a result of this individual land ownership, women would be denied access to land, something that was new and foreign (Lovett, 1989). This situation exerted a negative impact on the status of women in property ownership.

Besides losing land ownership and control to men (initially to colonial settlers and later to African men), the status of Kenya women was significantly affected by the coming of colonialists. According to Onsongo (2005), colonial laws disrupted and displaced women's gender roles. This was done through introduction of cash crops, formal education and the monetary economy. While some men secured employment either in large cash crop farms or as clerks in government offices, many women remained in rural areas producing subsistence food (Onsongo, 2005).

Formal education was also mostly available to men, which meant that the majority of women remained illiterate and, therefore, could not participate in modern economic transactions (Odinga, 1967). Women's work (which was mainly domestic) was classified as non-work since it did not fit into the colonial system's economic criteria (Onsongo, 2005). Moreover, due to migrant labour that led to movement of men to urban areas, rural families became increasingly female-headed, driving many of them to serious poverty levels they had

not experienced before (House-Midamba, 1990). It is also documented that colonial state policies limited and controlled women's ability to migrate and work in urban areas (House-Midamba, 1990). Although writing almost twenty years after independence, Obbo (1980) notes that females who migrated to urban areas alone, i.e. not as wives, were always viewed as problematic by both urban authorities and migrant men. Women's migration was seen as a cause of marital instability and a disruption of traditional values (Obbo, 1980). In the early stages of colonial rule, the government worked to restrict the movement of women, especially unmarried ones. The aim was to keep women in the villages so that men could be encouraged to return to the rural home. This arrangement would guarantee a regular supply of labour both in rural and urban areas. This new division of labour seems to have created male breadwinners with women dependent on them, a situation that created a sense of powerlessness among women, which continues to affect their participation in public decision making (Onsongo, 2005; Kamau, 2007).

Colonialists also introduced formal education, which had a different impact on men and women. Most tribal elders viewed girls' education with suspicion. These elders felt that both the colonial and missionary presence 'interrupted a sheltered, isolated, and idyllic life in the villages' (Kanogo, 2005: 6). The movement of girls from villages to boarding or mission schools was initially seen as a way of 'spoiling' the good village girls. There was fear that the daughters would no longer make good wives. The concern was that education would turn girls into prostitutes. However, the 'freedom' that came along with colonial education had its contradictions, especially for women. The syllabus that the girls were exposed to in schools was designed to cultivate their domestic skills for their roles as wives and mothers (Kanogo, 2005). While some girls got jobs as nurses and teachers, 'missions hoped that this would be for about two to three years only before marriage. In the missions, as in the villages...women were not expected to combine marriage and careers' (Kanogo, 2005: 203).

These contradictions have continued to affect women's careers and indeed how workplaces and politics are structured (Maathai, 2006). As educated persons, Kenyan women are still expected to retain their traditional roles of being mothers and submissive wives, while at the same time opening up new normative spaces for themselves (Maathai, 2006). Unfortunately, workplace and political norms in Kenya do not allow for combining of domestic and public roles, therefore creating conflicts for professional women who try to balance the dual careers (Onsongo, 2005). These norms create conflicts for women who venture into politics, both in the ways they are perceived and also in discharging their duties in a male-dominated parliament.

## **Post-Independence Women Leadership in Kenya**

The first decade of Kenya's independence under Jomo Kenyatta was characterized by economic growth and diversification. Young people who had received some education during the colonial period occupied most of the senior positions left by the British. Given that many women had not enjoyed as good an education as men, most of these positions were taken up by young men. It is not surprising, therefore, that the first Kenyan parliament did not have any woman elected or even nominated. However, even though education level may have played a role, the male dominance inherited from both the colonial and many of the traditions of the people of Kenya meant that women would not be the first

choice as leaders. Despite the economic growth that characterized the first ten years of post-independence Kenya, the period was also marked by disputes among ethnic groups, and huge gaps between the rich and the poor. Even though the promise given to Kenyans by the new leaders was to eradicate poverty, ignorance and disease, this has not yet been realized to date, and women and children have suffered the brunt of the problems that are associated with these three evils.

After Kenyatta's death in 1978, Daniel arap Moi succeeded him. Once he entrenched himself, Moi rejected demands for democratization and suppressed opposition. Throughout the 1980s, Moi consolidated power in the presidency under a very powerful single party, Kenya African National Union (KANU). Rioting erupted in 1990 after several outspoken proponents of multi-party democracy were arrested. Bowing to pressure at home and abroad, in 1991, parliament passed a constitutional amendment legalizing multi-party democracy. In 1992, Moi was re-elected president in Kenya's first multi-party election in 26 years. Opponents denounced the election as fraudulent, and the government was subsequently accused of human rights violations. Moi was re-elected in 1997, but KANU lost several seats in parliament. During these years of turbulence and ethnic fighting, women who tried to campaign for women's rights or run for public offices were harassed and silenced (Oduol and Kabira, 2000).

Forced under the constitution to retire, Moi was in 2002 succeeded by Mwai Kibaki, who was elected president, with his National Rainbow Coalition (NARC) winning a majority of seats in parliament. His government promised to deliver a new constitution that would reduce presidential powers and create a more inclusive government (especially one that would include women) within 100 days. This did not happen and it was only in August 2005 that a draft constitution became ready and was put to the vote in a national referendum on 21 November 2005. The government side, which was supporting the draft, lost and therefore the old constitution with an all-powerful president was retained. Given their small number in parliament, women became extremely silenced during the constitution campaigns. Some women, for example Jebii Kilimo, who had strongly supported the draft for its progressive stand on gender issues, changed their minds as they feared for their political survival. Charity Ngilu, a leading woman politician who contested for the presidency in 1997, was reported in the press as a 'fading star' in the constitution confusion (*Sunday Nation*, 6 November, 2005).

Once the government lost in the referendum, a new Cabinet was appointed, which unfortunately saw the number of women Cabinet ministers reduce from just three to two. Sadly, the same president who had been supporting a constitution that would see a third of all public positions reserved for women retracted from his own promise. This is an indication that the leadership had no commitment to gender equality and equity.

As of May 2007, Kenya's parliament had 222 members, 210 of whom were elected and 12 appointed by the political parties represented in parliament. There were a total of 18 (7.7%) women parliamentarians, 10 of whom were directly elected and 8 nominated. Of the 35 Cabinet ministers, only two were women, down from three in 2005, which had been the highest representation of women in parliament since independence, yet it was far below the neighbouring countries of Uganda at 24.7 per cent and Tanzania at 22.3 per cent (World



Bank, 2003). It is, therefore, necessary to understand why Kenyan women continue to perform poorly in the political structure.

### Women's Political Organizing Before 2007

The lack of a gender support structure that could help increase Kenyan women's visibility in terms of voicing their concerns and inclusion in policy and decision making can be attributed to a lack of a sustained women's movement (Kiragu, 2006). This has been the case despite the fact that there have been some women's organizing movements from the pre-colonial period up until the time of carrying out this research.

The oldest women's organization, *Maendeleo ya Wanawake* (MYWO) (Development of Women' in Swahili), was formed in 1952. MYWO was established as a non-political NGO during the colonial era. It had branches countrywide and it has continued to enjoy national representation to date. The aim of MYWO was to improve women's welfare with an initial focus of strengthening women's capacity to generate income and manage their households (Kiragu, 2006). Kiragu (2006: 18) notes 'MYWO at its inception did not challenge patriarchy, rather it sought to find ways and means through which women would weave around the imbalance of power to improve the quality of their lives and that of their households'. Over the years, MYWO changed from just a welfare organization and became almost like a women's wing of the ruling party KANU. This status was consolidated during the 24 years of Moi's rule.

MYWO played a pivotal role as a grassroots organization for Kenyan women. However, it could have done much more in promoting women's political participation due to its national outlook and large membership, as it had over three million members countrywide by the year 2000 (Maendeleo ya Wanawake, 2000). Political interference almost rendered the organization ineffective, making it a reference point on how women could not manage their own affairs. MYWO did not hold elections for over 10 years. When they were eventually held in 2006, political interference meant that those elected were not necessarily the most popular leaders. The government took advantage of the elections to place in leadership women who would help it in the 2007 general election. Given the dismal numbers of Kenyan women who have managed to get to parliament since independence, it is no doubt that in terms of political mentoring of women, the organization did not achieve much yet it helped a lot of men get elected.

MYWO's record of leadership created a negative attitude towards women's leadership, an issue that would also influence the public view of women as ineffective leaders. Most of the media images of MYWO were of women fighting over leadership positions and calling each other names. Worse still, the woman who served this organization as Chair for more than a decade was quoted in the press urging women to leave senior political positions such as the presidency to their fathers and husbands as a sign of respect.

Another women's organization that had a national representation was the National Council for Women in Kenya (NCWK), which was established immediately after Kenya's independence in 1964. Its main purpose was to strengthen and unite women's organizations at the local, national and international levels (Kiragu, 2006). NCWK played a pivotal role in coordinating NGOs in preparation for the Beijing Conference of 1985.

In NCWK's official website (<http://ncwk.or.ke/html/profile.html>), it is stated that its vision is 'to become the prime national council in Africa, resolutely liberating and empowering Kenyan women and girls to attain economic, social and political equality; to be well informed; to have access to basic services and achieve maximum representation at all decision making levels as a channel to the advancement of the status of women, enhancement of dignity and quality of life'. The mission as stated in the website can be summarized as educating women on their rights; raising the economic well-being of women through training, access to credit to finance income generating activities; lobby and advocate for affirmative action, which would lead to at least 50 per cent representation of women in all decision making levels. Among other things, it aims to lobby parliament and policy makers for the passage of laws and policies in achieving gender equality in all spheres of development; provide networking and a common interest discussion forum for Kenyan women and provide a forum for discussing issues of common interest; provide a forum where women can meet and discuss issues affecting them; help to create networks for women; and be involved in conflict resolution, among others.

On the issue of promoting women's representation in public positions and especially in politics, which is the focus of this research, NCWK cannot claim to have achieved much in its 45 years of existence, given that women's political representation is still far below 30 per cent.

There are many other organizations that have been active in promoting women's participation in politics, but the focus was on these two given their national outlook, whereas most of the others may still have worked under them. Many of these organizations have also been regional and focused on some specific issues rather than on a myriad of issues such as the MYWO and the NCWK.<sup>9</sup>

The fact of women's low representation in political positions notwithstanding, it is worth noting that a number of Kenyan women have played a significant role in keeping the women's agenda alive. Though there are many women who have not held political positions but have played very significant roles in keeping women's issues in the national and international agenda, the next section provides a brief description of only some of those who held political positions and who helped lay the foundation that the women in this research benefited from.

### Kenyan Pioneer Women Politicians

Some of the pre-independence political women figures in Kenya include Menyaziwa wa Menza (*aka* ole Mekatilili), a freedom fighter from Coast; Wangu wa Makeri, a freedom fighter from Central; Mang'ana Ogonje Nyar Ugu, the first African female colonial chief in Western Kenya; Moraa Moka Ngiti, a female freedom fighter from Nyanza (Kisii); Field Marshall Muthoni, a freedom fighter from Central; Eiokalaine O-M'barugu, an Assistant Chief in pre-independent Kenya in Eastern; Jemima Gecaga, the first woman to be nominated in the Legislative Council (Legco); Priscilla Ingasiani Abwao, the woman who attended the Legco in Lancaster House, among others.

<sup>9</sup> For more on the Kenyan women's organizing over the years, see Kiragu J. (2006).

There have also been a number of women political players in the post-independence Kenya, two of who participated in this study (Dr Julia Ojiambo and Nyiva Mwendwa). This section of the study provides some brief profiles of some of the women who have played some significant role in shaping the landscape of women's political leadership in Kenya, but will leave out the two who were part of this study as their profiles are presented in a later section. The women included here are those who either became members of parliament and also made a mark in politics, or served as parliamentarians for at least more than one term, or remained active in national politics even after their term in parliament. They are Phoebe Asiyo, Grace Ogot, Prof. Wangari Maathai, Charity Ngilu and Martha Karua.

Phoebe Asiyo is one of the re-known Kenyan political pioneers and outspoken advocates in the fight for women's rights for more than two decades. She was nominated to parliament in 1992 as one of six other women after involvement in Kenya's campaign for multi-party democracy. She has also acted as Chair of Kenya Women's Political Caucus and has been a Commissioner in the Constitution of Kenya Review Commission. Phoebe Asiyo was appointed UNIFEM Goodwill Ambassador in 1998. She has been a strong advocate in highlighting the status of women in Africa in all walks of life and the various forms of oppression they are subjected to, from domestic violence, rape and female genital mutilation, to forced/early marriage, denial of educational opportunities, and denial of property and economic rights.

Grace Emily Akinyi Ogot, one of East Africa's best-known authors, also became an important political figure in modern Kenya and has earned a distinctive position in Kenya's literary and political history. She trained as a nurse in both Uganda and England. Several years working as a nursing sister and midwifery tutor at Maseno Hospital, and later at the Student Health Service at Makerere University College provided her with experience in a number of different careers. She worked as a script writer and broadcaster for the BBC Overseas Service (later having her own popular weekly radio programme in Dholuo), as a Community Development Officer in Kisumu, and as a Public Relations Officer for Air India. In recognition of her blossoming literary career, she was named a delegate to the General Assembly of the United Nations in 1975, and was a member of the Kenya delegation to UNESCO in 1976. President Daniel arap Moi nominated her to the Kenya parliament in 1985 and Assistant Minister for Culture. In 1988, she was elected to parliament in her husband's home in Gem and was reappointed to her position as Assistant Minister.

The 2004 Nobel Peace Laureate, Prof. Wangari Maathai, is the founder of the Green Belt Movement, a women-driven grassroots reforestation and sustainable development movement that has planted more than 40 million trees. Some 60,000 women and 1,500 men manage Green Belt's over 3,000 tree nurseries. Prof. Maathai ran for the presidency in 1997 but lost. She also failed to capture the Tetu parliamentary seat. Later in 2002, she was elected as Member of Parliament for Tetu constituency and served as Assistant Minister for Environment and Natural Resources in the Government of President Mwai Kibaki from 2003 to 2005. A Biologist, Wangari Maathai was the first Kenyan woman to earn a PhD, and to teach and chair a department at the University of Nairobi. An environmental and socio-political activist, her numerous awards include the Goldman Environmental Prize, the Africa Prize for Leadership and the UNEP/Eyes on the Environment Award. Prof. Maathai is a co-founder of The Nobel Women's Initiative, whose goal is to support women's rights

around the world. Her autobiography, *Unbowed: One Woman's Story*, was released in 2006. She has played a pivotal role in Kenya's politics and has without doubt been a role model and mentor for many Kenyan women aspiring for leadership.

Charity Kaluki Ngilu was born in Mbooni, Makueni District. She worked as a secretary in Central Bank of Kenya before venturing into business. During the multi-party general elections of 1992, Charity Ngilu pulled off a big surprise by capturing the Kitui Central constituency seat on the Democratic Party (DP) ticket. Later in the 1997 elections, she pulled even a bigger surprise by running for the presidency where, along with Wangari Maathai, they became the first ever female presidential candidates in Kenya. Charity Ngilu then represented the Social Democratic Party (SDP) and she finished fifth. Later, she joined the National Party of Kenya, which became one of the major partners in the formation of the National Rainbow Coalition (NARC) that formed the government between 2003 and 2007. She was appointed Minister of Health, and was also NARC chairperson. However, she was left stranded after one of the NARC partners, the Liberal Democratic Party (ODM) led by Raila Odinga, left the coalition after the defeat of the government-sponsored draft constitution during the 2005 referendum. While most of the remaining NARC members founded the new NARC-Kenya party, Charity Ngilu held on to her NAK party. It was with the strength of her NAK party that she joined the Orange Democratic Movement in 2007 and was appointed Minister of Water and Irrigation in April 2008 after the Coalition Government was formed between the ODM and PNU.

Martha Wangari Karua was born in Kirinyaga District, Central Province. She was first elected as a Member of Parliament for Gichugu constituency in the 1992 multi-party general election with the Democratic Party (DP) ticket. Between 1981 and 1987, she worked as a Magistrate, and was in charge of Makadara Law Courts from 1984 to 1985, and Kibera Law Courts from 1986 to 1987 when she left to start her own law firm, which she operated till 1992. While in practice, Karua represented many *pro bono* cases, notable among them the treason trial of Koigi Wamwere and the late Mirugi Kariuki. She immensely contributed to the development of family law and especially the distribution of matrimonial property and constitutional and administrative law. Martha Karua was a member of the opposition political movement that successfully agitated for re-introduction of multi-party democracy in Kenya in the early 1990s. She joined Kenneth Matiba's Ford-Asili party but lost the party nomination ticket to the wealthy and influential former Head of Public Service, Geoffrey Kareithi. She was then offered a ticket and support by the Democratic Party (DP) elders who wanted a clean break from the Kareithi-Nahashon Njuno rivalry in Gichugu constituency. Karua won the 1992 general election to become the MP for Gichugu constituency and the first woman lawyer to be popularly elected to parliament. She was also appointed as the party's legal affairs secretary between 1992 and 1997.

Martha Karua has remained a prominent national politician for almost two decades. Between 2003 and 2005, she served as Minister for Water and Resources Management and Development, and was behind the implementation of the Water Act 2002, which then accelerated the pace of water reforms and service provision. From 2005 to 2009 she served as the Minister for Justice, National Cohesion and Constitutional Affairs, from which she resigned on 6 April 2009 citing frustrations in discharging her duties. In early 2008, Martha Karua headed the government's team in negotiations with the ODM regarding the political dispute that resulted from the 2007 election. She was later endorsed as the



*Women and Politics in Kenya: Some Historical Background*

national chairperson of the NARC-Kenya political party on 15 November 2008. After her endorsement, she immediately declared she would be running for the presidency in the 2012 elections. Her work as a human rights advocate has been recognized through several awards. In 1991, she was recognized by Human Rights Watch as a human rights monitor. In December 1995, she was awarded by the Federation of Kenya Women Lawyers (FIDA) for advancing the course of women. In 1999, the Kenya Section of the International Commission of Jurists awarded her the 1999 Kenya Jurist of the Year Award and in the same year, the Law Society of Kenya (LSK) awarded her the Legal Practitioners Due Diligence Award.

Other women not profiled here but who also played an equally significant role in shaping women's political leadership include Margaret Kenyatta, Dr Eddah Gachukia, Chelagat Mutai, Jael Mbogo, Grace Onyango, among others.

## Chapter 3

# Political Leadership in Kenya

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Leadership has been studied within the contexts of social psychology, industrial and organizational psychology, sociology, anthropology, political science, and business. Because of the vast scope of the construct, there is no consistent, universally agreed-upon definition of leadership (Hollander, 1985; Yukl and Van Fleet, 1992). Like art, we seem to know it only when we see it. Social scientists have primarily studied leadership from the context of their own fields and sub-fields, letting the discipline colour the subsequent definition. Political scientists, on the other hand, define leadership politically, group psychologists define it as group facilitation, education researchers see it as educational administration, and business researchers see it as management. The essence of leadership is both more complex and deeper than those fields. Some dictionary definitions of leadership (such as Collins English Dictionary) focus on the position (singular or collective), tenure and ability of leaders, and miss out key points about the purpose and hallmarks of effective leadership.

### What is Good or Effective Leadership?

Whether at the strategic, tactical or operational level, effective leadership demands the achievement of results. In as much as there is need to place focus on organizational capabilities, i.e. adaptability, agility, mission-directed, or values-based, or on leadership competencies, i.e. vision, character, trust, and other exemplary attributes, competencies and capabilities, it is important that a connection is made between these critical capabilities and results. This creates results-based leadership. Results in leadership are the product of demonstrated leadership attributes, including those emanating from personal character, mastering competencies, setting directions, building organizational capacity, mobilizing individual commitment and achieving client, employee, investor and organization results, whether in the public or private.

Good or effective leadership is thus rooted in ethics (Burns, 1975). It is difficult to define good leadership without understanding the ethical elements of leadership and, thus, good leadership is characterized by ethical awareness. Good leadership as an area of applied ethics is evidenced by ability to generate self-efficacy, connectedness, and a sense of being called to something larger than oneself (Ciulla, 2004). Good leaders also have tremendous personal energy, are able to energize teams, have a competitive edge, and a will to win and to have a track record of achieving results. A good leader also has a vision of the future and a roadmap of how to get there. Continual self-improvement for themselves and their followers makes leaders good coaches and mentors, allowing them to increasingly delegate.

Burns (1975) saw leadership as hinging on the results of what leaders actually did. Leadership (*ibid*) should be gauged by actual social change. Leadership must not be measured by press clippings, spin doctoring and words, but by results, by what was done and not by what was promised would be done. Too often, it seems the commentators who call for leadership fall victim to the lure of style over substance. Charm, wit and casual arrogance can hide and obscure policy detail, achievements and failures, and big pictures splashed with bright and bold images can all too often dominate the smaller canvass, with its finer detail and sense of serious purpose. Pomp and colour may pose a unique challenge for women leaders who may not be as qualified as men in the art of self-advertising. Making a reputation in political leadership requires self-advertisement, which poses serious dilemmas for women. Research shows that characteristics for success tend to be stereotyped as masculine, and women have problems coping with a mainly male peer group and its expectations of them to be like men (Morley, 1999; 2003).

In order to examine leadership, it is useful to pose the question: what did the leader actually do and would another leader have done the same thing? Leadership has a transformational element. The leader takes a new direction and in so doing leaves an imprint on both the office and the political, social and economic environment they leave behind.

For the purpose of this research, effective leadership is defined as a process by which a person influences others to accomplish an objective and directs the organization in a way that makes it more cohesive and coherent. An effective leader is one who seeks to achieve social justice and creates equality of opportunities for all people, taking care of their difference be they gender, race, ethnicity, class, age, disability, among others. An effective leader appreciates that the diversity of those he or she is working with is a strength rather than a weakness. He or she seeks inclusion rather than exclusion. Effective leaders do this by applying their leadership attributes, such as beliefs, values, ethics, character, knowledge, and skills. A good leader is one who makes the followers want to achieve high goals, rather than simply bossing them around. This can be described as servant leadership.

### **Servant leadership**

Servant leadership is used in this section as it is explained in the book: *Journey to the East* by Hermann Hesse (quoted in Ciulla, 2006). The story is told of a servant named Leo who carried the bags and performed the chores of the other travellers. The special thing about Leo was that he kept the group together with his presence and songs. In the course of this journey, Leo mysteriously disappeared and it is after this that the group lost its way. It was later that the main character (read leader) in this story discovered that indeed Leo was the leader. Leo was indeed a servant leader. The main shift in servant leadership is the emphasis from followers serving leaders to leaders serving followers.

Although servant leadership has not received as much attention as other types of leadership, say for example transformational leadership, it is acknowledged to be a compelling characterization of leadership. The servant leader leads because he/she wants to serve others. People freely follow servant leaders because they trust them. The servant leader is one who elevates his/her people. One of the tests that one has to pass to be termed as servant leader is whether those they serve have become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous and more likely to become servant leaders themselves. Men and women who may want to

call themselves servant leaders must pass this test. If they have been leaders for more than 20 years, the aspects listed here should be evident in what they view as their achievements and, indeed, should be expressed and visible from among the people they have led.

The focus of this research is on political leadership, which is briefly discussed next.

### **Political leadership**

Political leadership is one of the most difficult concepts to define, quantify and qualify in political science. It is a phenomenon that can be named but sometimes little else. Attempts at explaining leadership have at various times revolved around psychological explanations. Undoubtedly, psychological and personality explanations of leadership have their place, but the former is difficult to measure and the latter is open to a range of interpretations and seems to rest primarily on anecdotes and unreliable memoirs.

African politics and political institutions do not conform to the notion of the predominant institutionalized Western-type state system and a performance-based understanding of leaders and the state. In Kenya, as with many other developing countries in Africa, the definition or potentiality of 'political leadership' has derived generic connotation. It encompasses the values, ethics, vision and inspirational tenets emphasized by leading scholars, and also include indicators and expectations that would not normally be attributed to political leaders. These include:

- *Community development*: in which leaders are expected to ensure that by themselves, or by their actions and influences, they 'bring development' to the areas from which they hail, or for the constituencies they represent. This is an area that has been abused in Kenya, especially before the devolution of funds through the CDF, because those leaders who had the most money to start projects became the most popular. Women became greatly disadvantaged given the skewed wealth distribution in favour of men.
- *Personal assistance/aid to constituents*: in which political leaders are expected to provide assistance (financial or otherwise) to individual or group needs.
- *Policy formulation*: elements of legislative/policy work, which encompass the Western type state system.
- *Representation of constituency issues* in the legislative and policy bodies such as Parliament/Ministries/Departments/Councils, etc, similarly of Western type.

The factors that have caused this generic definition of political leaders are varied. These include the general structure or model of the electoral system that emphasizes on geographical representation (Jo-Ansie, 2001). In such a structure, the political leader, whether civic or parliamentary, must hail from a particular territory and be registered as a voter in that territory.

This geographical hailing has some gender implications for married women. Generally, when women get married, they are said to belong to the husband's constituency. In situations where the couple has resided in cities for years, the woman is seen as a stranger in her husband's home area, yet she is hardly accepted in her home of birth. Women married away from their constituencies of birth may, therefore, find it difficult to sell themselves



as political leaders where geographical representation is given much significance, as is the case in Kenya. This is a factor that has hindered a lot of women from getting elected into political positions. Majority of the women who have been elected in Kenya either vie in their husband's constituencies (for example Charity Ngilu, Nyiva Mwendwa, and Christine Mango) or if they go back to their home of birth, have to be single or divorced (e.g. Wangari Maathai, Martha Karua, Adelina Mwau). The best placed women are those married to men from their constituencies of birth. There are exceptions, such as Cecily Mbarire who vied in Runyenjes in 2007, her home constituency. Her rivals used the fact that she was married outside there as an issue to discourage voters, pointing out that they should not be led by an 'outsider'. However, she won the 2007 election but she never at any time made her marital status public. She never appeared with her husband in public, probably as a way of working around this warped definition of a good political leader. Another factor that may have made the Runyenjes electorate to ignore the fact that Cecily Mbarire was married outside was that her political leadership abilities had already been apparent, since she had been a nominated MP in the 8<sup>th</sup> Parliament and also an Assistant Minister. She is also daughter of a former MP for the area, but it is not clear whether this may also have had some influence.

High poverty levels and governance faults afflicting many governments in developing countries, including Kenya, have rendered systems, structures and institutions weak and deficient in the provision of basic services such as health, education, employment, and infrastructure. On this, Wrong (2009: 51) observes that 'providing services like health, schools, and roads is one way of winning approval (political), but such things are very hard to deliver. Another way is to play the ethnic identity card' and indeed the gender card. Many political leaders have over the years been constrained to fill this lacuna, and often times have been heard making wild promises of service delivery to their constituents during election periods. This tendency has caused a shift of the electorate's expectations of service delivery from the government to the political leader. The number of fund raising events a leader is able to attend and the amount of money contributed, therefore, defines a good political leader (Wrong, 2009).

In addition, the socio-cultural nature of our traditional communities has made family/community/tribal/lineage ties become deeply embedded in the concept of our social responsibilities. Political leaders are not exempt from this phenomenon, which underscores the patronage system. As such, the political leaders are similarly confronted by this pressure to appear conscientious of the plight of their kinship, which ultimately affects their being defined as 'good leaders'. Dorman (2006) calls this a 'patrimonial system' in which power is centralized in one individual, applying it for his or her self-interest, and loyal supporters are rewarded and selectively favoured (see also Wrong, 2009). Furthermore, politics continues to be conducted within a closely knit network of dependent relationships. Although this type of system occurs elsewhere, it is particularly prevalent in the majority of African states where political power is personal and politics is a type of business, as are political positions (Kebonang, 2005; Wrong, 2009).

Gender is also another significant factor that determines the definition of who is a good/effective political leader in Kenya (Nzomo, 2003a). Many scholars approach the question of leadership differences between men and women through the social construct of gender, or traits associated with masculinity and femininity, and what we think about in terms of leadership usually falls within 'masculine' traits. The prejudices of the patriarchal society

have presumed that only men make good leaders because of their character (perceived as strong, focused, assertive and dominant) *vis a vis* women's perceived non-leadership characteristics (emotional, careful, timid, etc).

These factors have played a big role in determining the expectations of political leadership that the electorate/citizenry place on their chosen leaders. Thus, though these expectations may fall outside the scope of good or effective leadership, as academically defined, they may nevertheless influence the choice of leaders.

Although men have dominated Kenyan politics since independence, the 2007 general election recorded the highest number (247) of women vying for parliamentary seats across 112 constituencies. An even higher number vied for civic seats. This was clearly reflected in the outcome, where a total of 16 women were elected into parliament—a 50 per cent increment. There were also six women nominated as MPs, making the total number of women 22 at the beginning of 2008.

Resources play a crucial role in determining the kind of people who get elected in Kenya. Even the women who managed to get elected were economically endowed, just like the men (Mitullah, 2003). There are still many people who judge good leaders by the amount of cash they can give out especially in the fund raising drives commonly referred to as *harambees*. It is those who give the most that get the votes and, unfortunately, not many women can compete materially with the men, given the patriarchal structures in operation, as noted earlier in this study. Generally, very few women are able to raise the roughly US\$ 60,000 (as a minimum) needed to run a successful campaign. Although there has been a lot of civic education so that people can select quality leaders without looking at handouts, it will take some time before the impact is seen in the whole country. Fund raising for campaigns has not yet picked well in Kenya. The person aspiring is usually expected to have money, and very few people are willing to support them financially.

Political parties in Kenya are also not well established to support candidates financially. It is the candidates who are expected to fund parties. For example, earlier in the year 2007, ODM and FORD-Kenya had fixed the nomination fee for their presidential candidates at almost US\$ 30,000. This kind of fee is discouraging to many women candidates who may not have the economic muscle that their male colleagues enjoy. Women candidates generally depend on the support they receive from pro-women NGOs. The issue of resources continues to play a role in the way politicians are viewed even while in parliament.

In Kenya, majority of the population still lives on less than a dollar a day. Cash handouts are, therefore, likely to continue playing a key role in people's perception of a good leader. Civic education, especially spearheaded by FM stations, churches and NGOs, has helped but the impact of this education is yet to be felt. Unfortunately, churches are the main organizers of *harambees*, and therefore become the main forums that politicians use to popularize themselves.

This theoretical framework has been used to provide a background for analyzing women's leadership in the political regime. The analysis looks at women's reflections of their roles as per the indicators outlined above, and gauges their perceptions of their performance in this regard. In the end, the assessment evaluates the focus, style, mindset, issues and

challenges that the women political leaders brought to leadership, and proposes a conceptual framework of the different typologies of leadership. The intention is to pose the question of whether there was a particular typology of women's leadership, which can be compared to men's leadership in future studies where men's leadership is also analyzed.

## Gender and Political Leadership in Kenya

The fact that there has been a glaring gender gap in favour of men in political leadership in Kenya is an indication that gender is indeed a factor in Kenyan politics. In a study conducted by the League of Kenya Women Voters among groups of women in Kitui and Nairobi on women's voting attitudes and perceptions, a majority of the women (81.2%) were of the view that Kenya would be a better place if more women were in elective politics. Another significant finding from the study was that when it came to voting, women look beyond gender and seek high calibre representation. The most important qualities in a leader, as ranked by the women in this study, are education and knowledge, followed by ability to deliver services, honesty and integrity, and experience and exposure in that order (League of Kenya Women Voters, Not dated: 22).

Having noted that women in Kenya favour representation by other women, and that one's gender is not an important consideration in the characterization of what makes a good leader, the question begs then as to why women have continued to perform dismally in past elective contests for positions in parliament and local authorities. This is especially in view of the fact that according to the 2006 population census projections, women make up a majority (52.5%) of Kenya's voting age population (League of Kenya Women Voters, Not dated: 5-6).

The gender disparities that exist in Kenya could be due to deep-rooted patriarchal socio-cultural, economic and political structures and ideologies. Under these conditions, Kenyan women have been excluded from participation in key governance capacities and have been deprived of their basic human rights and access to and ownership of strategic resources, especially land (Nzomo, 2003b). However, Nzomo (2003b) argues that with democratic transitions and legal reforms that have been evident in Kenya since the 1990s, gradual political changes have taken place. These changes are evident in the rise, though very small, in the number of women in senior political positions.

Omtatah (2008) points out retrogressive cultural and traditional practices such as son preference ideology, lack of belief in the importance of educating girls, forced marriages, female genital mutilation, bride price collection, widowhood rites and disinheritance of girls and women as some of the ills that impede the quest for women's leadership in Kenya. Omtatah (2008) further notes that poor socialization where boys are prepared for leadership and girls for domestic roles also works against women's ascendancy to leadership.

The traditional view that women should concentrate on their domestic roles has made politics to be seen as a 'no go zone' for them. Women continue to be socialized to believe that it is only men who can take up political leadership. A woman who takes up such challenges is said to be a bad woman (i.e. not a good mother, wife). In fact, most of the women in Kenya who have tried their hand in politics have been branded as divorcees and men-bashers.

This name-calling discourages other women from getting into politics. They continue to get discouraging comments such as: politics is dirty, it is not good for any woman of good moral standing, it is too violent, one requires a lot of money, who can vote for a woman? Who wants to be led by a woman? We are not yet ready for women leaders (Kamau, 2003). Such perceptions may also influence the way women view themselves as leaders and, indeed, the way the public views their leadership abilities.

As noted earlier, lack of resources works against the aspirations of many women to run for political office. For women to participate effectively in the political process, substantial amounts of resources are required. These include finances, time, infrastructure and people (Women Direct Service Centre, 2006: 11). Of the resources required, finances are the most difficult to access.

Another factor that discourages women from running for political office or works against those who attempt is the threat of electoral violence (Mitullah, 2003). On politically instigated violence, Omtatah (2008: 59) is of the view that in Kenya, at present, 'democratic elections are rather like submitting to the insolence and dictation of a mob.' Later in this study, the issue of gender-based political violence is discussed in more detail.

Mitullah (2003) also observes that women's weak negotiation and bargaining skills work against them when it comes to seeking political office. Similarly, Omtatah (2008) argues that many women come into politics without the advantage of having had quality mentoring and hands-on-training, which may explain this lack of skills. Even for those who have had some mentoring, this will rarely have come from other women politicians, because few women have succeeded in electoral politics in the past and thus have the requisite experience. This clearly works to women's disadvantage as they must learn on the job. As Omtatah (2008: 59) further points out, many of these women are not well prepared for the '...anarchy that is Kenyan politics'.

Lack of media visibility also works against women. It has been noted that the '...power of the media in building credibility and influence in politics is formidable' and yet '... women struggle to receive media coverage and legitimacy in the eyes of the public' (Women Direct Service Centre, 2006: 10). This may have to do with the fact that the media may not regard women issues as newsworthy. The media works against the interests of women when it fails to give importance to matters that concern them and their achievements, and also when it focuses only on their weaknesses as leaders. On this, Omtatah (2008: 60) observes that the media becomes biased against women 'when it fails to embrace gender-neutral language that does not promote barriers against women, such as glorification of conflict, intimidation, negative attitudes, and stereotypes by society and lack of support from the electorate'.

In addition, Nzomo (2003a) argues that the apparent political absence by women needs to be understood within the structural impediments that women globally and at the national level continue to face as they seek to participate in all areas of politics. Nzomo (2003a) notes that studies on women's participation in politics and public decision making globally continue to indicate that the electoral playing field has always been tilted heavily in favour of men, more so in countries such as Kenya that are highly patriarchal and lack a democratic constitution, and electoral laws to facilitate a free and fair electoral process. Nzomo (2003a: 2) further notes that in Kenya, since 1963, the gender specific unevenness of electoral politics has manifested itself in the form of:

- The persisting social resistance and/or lukewarm acceptance of women's participation in political leadership;
- A culture of electoral violence that tends to be harsher towards female than male candidates;
- The feminization of poverty that renders women more financially constrained to manage a campaign than men;
- Lack of adequate political socialization for leadership, which manifests itself in women's exclusion from access to strategic political information and general inability in the art of public oratory and populist campaigning; and
- Women's marginality in mainstream political party hierarchy; they are, therefore unable to change rules of engagement, which are defined and organized around male norms and values.

Within the conditions pointed out by Nzomo (2003a), women are constrained from setting the political rules of representation and inclusion in a manner that reflects their specific experience and vision. Indeed, male political ideology continues to define the standards of evaluation of women's political performance and participation. Under the combined circumstances of a weak and fractured women's political lobby and gender imbalanced political playing field, women candidates in electoral politics are, therefore, unable to shape electoral party decisions, especially at the nomination stage. The latter explains why political parties have sacrificed women at the party nomination stage as witnessed since the multi-party elections of 1992 all the way to 2007.

## Chapter 4

# Passion, Vision and Motivation: The Women's Stories

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Research concerning gender differences in leadership performance has found little evidence to suggest that males and females differ in their leadership effectiveness. In particular, several studies have demonstrated that there is little or no difference in satisfaction levels of subordinates of either male or female leaders (Ragins, 1991; Landau, 1995). This has nevertheless not changed the perception that men make better leaders than women. However, some studies, for example Thomas and Wilcox (2005), suggest that the style by which males and females lead is different, while others assert that women make better leaders than men (Wachs, 2001).

According to Kouzes and Posner (1987), the process of leadership that is common to successful leaders includes:

- *Challenging processes*: a leader first finds a process that he/she believes needs to be improved the most;
- *Inspiring a shared vision*: this involves sharing a vision in words that can be understood by one's followers;
- *Enabling others to act*: giving people the tools and methods to solve particular problems;
- *Modelling the way*: when a process gets tough, a leader gets his/her hands dirty, a boss tells others what to do, while a leader shows that it can be done; and
- *Encouraging the heart*: sharing the glory with the followers' hearts, while keeping the pains within their own hearts.

House and Podsakoff (1984) added to these qualities, and attempted to summarize the behaviours and approaches of 'outstanding leaders' that they obtained from some more modern theories and research findings. These leadership behaviours and approaches do not constitute specific styles but, cumulatively, they probably characterize the most effective style of today's leaders/managers. The listed leadership 'styles' cover:

**Vision:** Outstanding leaders articulate an ideological vision congruent with the deeply-held values of followers; a vision that describes a better future to which the followers have an alleged moral right.

**Passion and self-sacrifice:** Leaders display a passion for, and have a strong conviction of what they regard as the moral correctness of their vision. They engage in outstanding or extraordinary behaviour and make extraordinary self-sacrifices in the interest of their vision and mission.

**Confidence, determination and persistence:** Outstanding leaders display a high degree of faith in themselves and in the attainment of the vision they articulate. Theoretically, such leaders need to have a very high degree of self-confidence and moral conviction because their mission usually challenges the *status quo* and, therefore, may offend those who have a stake in preserving an established order.

**Image-building:** Outstanding leaders are self-conscious about their own image. They recognize the desirability of followers perceiving them as competent, credible, and trustworthy.

**Role-modelling:** Leader image-building sets the stage for effective role-modelling because followers identify with the values of role models whom they perceive in positive terms.

**External representation:** Outstanding leaders act as spokespersons for their respective organizations and symbolically represent those organizations to external constituencies.

**Expectations of and confidence in followers:** Outstanding leaders communicate expectations of high performance from their followers and have strong confidence in their followers' ability to meet such expectations.

**Selective motive-arousal:** Outstanding leaders selectively arouse those motives of followers that they see as of special relevance to the successful accomplishment of the vision and mission.

**Frame alignment:** To persuade followers to accept and implement change, outstanding leaders engage in 'frame alignment'. This refers to the linkage of individual and leader interpretive orientations, such that some set of followers' interests, values, and beliefs, and the leader's activities, goals, and ideology become congruent and complementary.

**Inspirational communication:** Outstanding leaders often, but not always, communicate their message in an inspirational manner using vivid stories, slogans, symbols and ceremonies.

The above qualities were taken as pointers to good leadership in the analysis of the leadership of the respondents.

## Profiles of the Women in this Study

By asking the interviewees to provide some information on their backgrounds, the intention was to assess ways in which the women leaders grounded their passion and zeal and ultimate preparation for leadership to issues related to the private and personal aspects of their lives.

The women interviewed were:

- Mrs Esther Wanjiku Mwaura: 2007 parliamentary aspirant

- Ms Njoki Ndung'u: Nominated MP
- Dr Esther Keino: Nominated MP
- Prof. Ruth Oniang'o: Nominated MP
- Mrs Mumbi Ng'aru: Former Mayor of Thika Municipality and Deputy Secretary General, ODM
- Prof. Christine Mango: MP for Butula Constituency
- Mrs Priscah Ouma: Mayor of Kisumu
- Mrs Nyiva Mwendwa: Elected MP for Kitui Central
- Ms Adelina Mwau: Nominated MP
- Prof. Julia Ojiambo: Nominated MP

Esther Wanjiku Mwaura, a Limuru constituency parliamentary aspirant for the 2007 general election, began exhibiting her leadership traits while in primary school. As a student, she was not content with the generalization that her teachers and superiors made of her and her peers, and often challenged this by asserting her individual rights. This catapulted her into leadership positions in her class and school environment, and latter instilled in her the conviction to seek a political leadership position in the 2007 general elections. At the time of the interview, Esther Wanjiku held a national office at Groots Kenya, a network of women self-help groups and community organizations. The organization was formed as a response to inadequate visibility of grassroots women in development and decision making forums that directly impact them and their communities. Its goal is to serve as a platform for grassroots' women's groups and individuals to come together, share their ideas/experiences, network and to find avenues to directly participate in decision making, planning and implementation of issues that affect them. In this capacity, she has helped to improve the living standards of thousands of women in Kenya and globally.

Prof. Christine Mango linked her interest in politics to her husband's experience as Member of Parliament. As is expected with wives of politicians, she had supported her husband through overt campaigns and interactions with constituents, gaining a lot of exposure and interest in the work and commitments of political leaders.

Most of my life I have been in research and from research I went into teaching at the university but before then my late husband was in politics from 1979-1988, so as such I could not help getting involved. I used to support him, campaign for him and I had a lot of interactions with people... (Christine Mango, elected MP, 9th Parliament).

She spent most of her life in teaching and research at Maseno University, and her leadership traits were evident not only from her achievements as a post-doctoral fellow in parasitology/entomology, but more so from the challenges she has overcome in realizing her academic and personal achievements. She attained her PhD while still raising her family, though she received a lot of support from her husband who looked after her children when she was away or travelling. She has been a Director of the Centre for the Study of Lake Victoria and its Environs (CSOLVE), placing the Centre at the forefront of spearheading research and dialogue on the challenges of Lake Victoria. Unfortunately, upon seeking leave to attend



one of her children's graduation ceremony in the United States, Christine returned to find a disbanded Centre, and her family evicted from her university staff house.

Retaining a solid composure, Christine had put in her resignation and after long reflection and soul searching, and motivated by her experiences in work and career, decided to venture into politics in Butula Constituency.

I did not have money. I collected my little benefits and said let me go and gamble it. So at the end of September 2002, through my husband's campaign people, I went and campaigned. Some men may say I used the NARC wave but whatever I used I got elected. I was not supported by any organization. I just had my little resources. I appealed to women and said 'women, you have been voting for men for the last 40 years now here I am, one of your own, give me a chance' (Christine Mango, elected MP, 9th Parliament).

Despite the myriad monetary, cultural and gender stereotype challenges that face women aspirants, she managed to beat her male competitors to emerge Member of Parliament – the first female parliamentarian in the constituency.

Dr Julia Ojiambo began demonstrating her confidence by gaining admission to the prestigious Alliance Girls High School where her 'craving for higher education started.' She was among the first students admitted for technical courses at the Royal Technical College (later to become the University of Nairobi)<sup>10</sup> because of her interest in sciences and technical work. Here, she specialized in human nutrition, and upon completion taught Home Science and Biology and eventually joined research work at the University of Nairobi, specializing in public health.

Science was my best subject and I was really practical. I finally specialized in human nutrition but at that time I just wanted to do physics. I just wanted to do mechanical work so I touched on every aspect of technology at that time. When we went to the main campus...I started as a teacher of home science and biology and eventually got into research (Julia Ojiambo, Nominated MP, 9th Parliament).

Kwashiorkor and Marasmus were prevalent epidemics in those days. In Julia's opinion, they possessed the stigma element and misinformation that HIV and AIDS has developed recently. Thus, while joining her medical doctor husband at Makerere University, she linked up with a renowned team of academicians researching on Kwashiorkor, and eventually developed a high protein biscuit from local sources. This work developed into a further interest in the nutrition and diet habits of pregnant and lactating mothers and their children.

I was also interested in education as a teacher and a social worker (that) I turned into after being in the lab in Makerere. I moved into the community to teach the parents how to use the biscuit and also what to do with children who have started to show signs of that type of malnutrition and for the mothers and themselves what they need to do themselves to avoid the children being malnourished when they were born coz mothers too were malnourished... (Julia Ojiambo, Nominated MP, 9th Parliament).

This interest culminated in her receiving a scholarship from the United Nations Children Fund (UNICEF) to undertake a graduate course in public health and nutrition research at the University of London and a subsequent World Health Organization fellowship at Harvard and McGill universities.

<sup>10</sup> The Royal Technical College Nairobi was transformed into the second university college in East Africa on 25 June 1961 under the name Royal College.

Julia had by then taught at the then Royal College Nairobi, and was the first African woman to be appointed to teach in the Faculty of Education. She moved up the academic ladder from a Tutorial Fellow to a Lecturer, and to a Senior Lecturer/Associate Professor grade at the (now) University of Nairobi by 1973, where she also initiated a science degree programme in human nutrition in the Department of Home Science.

Julia's political leadership achievements are innumerable. As the first female Assistant Minister in independent Kenya, she has held various portfolios, including in Women Affairs, Education, Housing and Social Services. While in charge of women issues, she initiated the International Year of Women and planned the Kenyan government's programme of participation in the UN Women World Conferences in Mexico, Jerusalem, Copenhagen and Nairobi. As a deputy leader of the Government Delegation at Copenhagen, she initiated the resolution to bring the UN Women Decade World Conference to Nairobi in 1985, spearheading a campaign that eventually saw Kenya elected to host the conference. She also assisted in the preparation of a policy on the establishment of the Women's Bureau in the Ministry of Housing and Social Services. As an Assistant Minister in charge of Human Settlements, she prepared and steered the highly competitive negotiations at the Habitat One Conference in Vancouver, Canada, which brought the UN-Habitat Headquarters to Kenya. In addition, Julia Ojiambo became an elected Member of Parliament for Busia Central Constituency for two consecutive terms, 1974-1979 and 1979-1983, and was at the time of this study a nominated Member of Parliament under the National Rainbow Coalition (NARC) party. She was also the National Chairperson of the Labour Party of Kenya, and the running mate of the presidential candidate of the Orange Democratic Movement-Kenya (ODM-K) for the 2007 general elections.

Adelina Mwau's interest in policy and development work began in her formative years. She began her career as a primary school P1 teacher. She taught for several years before joining the Catholic Diocese of Machakos as a community animator in development education. She later undertook studies in adult education from the University of Nairobi and later worked as a national development consultant in development education programmes in the Catholic Church.

I worked among the Samburus, Turkanas, Rendilles, Gabbras and Boranas trying to initiate an adult education programme that is learner friendly. I worked there for three years, living and working there and left and went to do my Masters in development studies, specializing in gender and development (Adelina Mwau, Nominated MP).

Adelina thereafter joined Oxfam GB (Kenya) as a Gender Programme Officer whose tasks included undertaking gender sensitive planning, monitoring and evaluation and trying to assess the gender sensitive status of Oxfam GB programmes. She initiated gender training programmes that were adapted by the whole Oxfam family in the UK, and similarly facilitated training sessions for the regional and international staff. On leaving Oxfam, she joined the Women in Law and Development in Africa as the East African Programme Officer. While there, she further affirmed the lack of articulation of women's issues at policy level and resolved to get involved.

I started wanting to bring my experience with working with grassroots groups in working out policies that are gender sensitive and that are poor people sensitive (Adelina Mwau, Nominated MP).

Adelina is a founder member of the Coalition on Violence Against Women (COVAW), an organization that works to promote and advance women's human rights and fighting all forms of violence against women.

That is where I started to realize that policy and laws are very crucial. Looking at the laws that are used to govern issues around gender-based violence and how gender blind those laws are and also how gender blind the legal fraternity...and policies (are)...I actually got interested in coming to parliament...to become the voice and...come up with the structures, policies and laws that are particular (to) women and put gender issues in the agenda (Adelina, Nominated MP).

Since then, Adelina has been a strong advocate for the implementation of policies and proclamations affirming women's rights.

Nyiva Mwendwa, Mumbi Ng'aru, Prof. Ruth Oniang'o and Dr Esther Keino did not provide a comprehensive description of their backgrounds or political aspirations, but all (except Nyiva) observed that they had ventured into politics by default. Although Mumbi had applied for nomination, she noted that she had not quite thought she would get into politics. However, when the Social Democratic Party advertised for nominations and she knew Charity Ngilu was its leader, she was encouraged to apply. She associated her nomination to Charity Ngilu, who had been keen to have capable women in the party's council. Ruth also said her entering into politics was 'by default.' 'I had not even applied,' she said. 'I just got a call from KANU.' She asserted that she had taken the position knowing well that she would focus on democracy but not become anyone's parrot. Ruth, however, noted that she had always done development work even before the nomination: 'I have a 17 year old NGO which deals with dairy cattle. My development slogan is 'a cow for every family'. The cow is given through women. Every family gets the cow through the woman'.

True to her word, Ruth did not seem to parrot any party wishes throughout her five years in parliament. She focused on development issues and kept away from party politics. Even at the time of the interview, which was only three months to the election, she had not yet identified the party through which she would seek election, although she was pretty sure of running and was also very confident about victory.

Dr Esther Keino, an academic by profession, also said that she had entered into politics by default:

I did not apply to get nominated and I was not quite active in it; therefore, to me it came quite as a surprise. I knew I was already nominated a day before, so I was shocked actually and when somebody called to tell me, I was in Nakuru and I just stood in one step for one hour. I could not move and it was so overwhelming. I could not imagine myself in politics because I had never aspired to be a politician, but after getting a bit sober I decided it was easier to accept it than turn it down because one thing I did not know is what was expected of me as a nominated MP. I had never thought about it or anticipated to become a politician but politics intrigues me. I actually used to support other candidates at home and no other women have stood in the four districts of the Kipsigis ... so for sure I really did not know what to expect and actually it threatened me because I was not sure (Esther Keino, Nominated MP, 9th Parliament).

That 'I got into politics by accident, by default', is a common feature among the women leaders and even in other management positions. Although there are studies that have shown that many women get into leadership or senior management positions through career planning and preparation, there are equally many studies that have indicated that many women ascend into senior positions by surprise, without any direct planning. One such study by Onsongo (2005), which focused on women managers in Kenyan universities, showed that some of the women saw their promotions as a 'big surprise'. Although they were qualified, they had not directly planned to become leaders or managers.

Appointment into senior positions is common in universities where the Vice Chancellor has power to appoint. In Onsongo's study (2005), all except one of the men and women managers had been appointed by the Vice Chancellor. Men tend to lobby more for such appointments than women and, as Onsongo notes, women do occasionally get appointed, although it may be more in situations where the men decide that they should settle for a woman. The decision to settle for a woman may be motivated by different considerations, such as where men want a leader they can manipulate or, as in one case in Onsongo's study, as a compromise candidate. That women wait for 'chance', 'surprise', 'accident' and nominations to get into positions of leadership may explain the small number of women in these positions. In addition, the social cultural factors explored in earlier chapters of this study show that, sometimes, women simply fear or avoid getting into politics, as politics in Kenya is designed to fit the masculine structure. It is worth noting that even the women who got into these positions by surprise were still well prepared for them, only that they had not quite planned to get involved.

It is worthwhile to conclude that women's assertion about 'accidental' entry into politics may be interpreted as them playing into what is referred to as 'the good girl' concept. Fox (1977) makes reference to the theory of 'normative control', which is a strategy used to regulate the freedom of women and to exert control over their behaviour in the world. This form of control over the social behaviour of women is embodied in such value constructs as 'good girl', 'lady', or 'nice girl'. As a value construct, the latter term connotes chaste, gentle, gracious, ingenuous, good, clean, kind, virtuous, non-controversial, and above suspicion and reproach. The pressure to act like a 'lady' continues without respite throughout a woman's lifetime, regardless of her marital status, sexual status, social class, education level or age, with 'niceness' or 'ladyhood' being an achieved rather than an ascribed status. However, Fox (1977) argues that there are hidden costs to normative control as it tends to lay groundwork for a circumscription of women's potential for power and control in the world. Those women who do not internalize the required social control mechanisms bear the cost. In some situations, the deviant women receive some form of punishment devised by social groups. In addition to forfeiture of personal physical security, the not-nice woman becomes the target of ridicule, ostracism, and psychological punishment directed not so much at her behaviour but rather at the person. The group withdraws its approval from her and attacks the worthiness of her self; it negates her moral existence as part of itself, and by so doing absolves itself of the responsibility for the fate of its 'unworthy' members" (Fox, 1977). This may be one explanation for the perceived 'unexpected' nature of the entry into politics of Ruth, Mumbi and Esther.

Priscah Ouma, who was the mayor of Kisumu at the time of the interview, said that she had developed interest in politics as a young woman when she was working as Tom Mboya's

secretary.<sup>11</sup> She said that she used to see Mboya handling people's problems and she admired that.

At Mboya's (office) I could see people coming with problems and telling him. I realized it is good to listen to what disturbs people and see if you can solve it or alternatively they (will) reduce your own tensions if you hear there are other people who have the same problem (as yourself). Then you realize that you are not alone (Priscah Ouma, Mayor of Kisumu).

At that time, Priscah had not imagined herself becoming a politician. Later when she worked with BAT in Kisumu, people would tell her 'maybe one day you will become a politician.' She said that she would relate well with people, especially women, and this is where she developed her interest in politics.

Njoki Ndung'u, a lawyer by profession, with a Master's degree in Human Rights from the University of Leicester, noted that her interest in politics and issues of human rights started when she was still an undergraduate student. In her dissertation, she wrote about the abuse of police powers at a time when Moi's government was notorious on issues of interrogation and detention of suspects. On completing her law degree, Njoki joined the civil service and at that time, she said, she was an idealist who believed that she could change the government from within. She noted that changing the government as she had thought was not easy at all. When she left the AG's chambers to pursue her Masters degree, she did not feel like she would want to go back to the civil service. On returning from the UK, she joined the NGO sector immediately, at a time when the human rights sector was just growing. Her first assignment was with the Institute for Education and Democracy. This was her first real contact with political parties and politicians because she became involved in monitoring elections and by-elections. This work made Njoki become well known to several members of parliament and political parties, as she was also involved in auditing the parties and their manifestos.

On her initial involvement with politics, Njoki noted:

My involvement with politics came from a very academic human rights angle...people join politics in different ways, mine was from a very technical point because I tend to think of myself as a technocrat than a platform politician (Njoki Ndung'u, Nominated MP).

When she later left the Institute for Education and Democracy to join the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) as a national protection officer, she continued with her work of training election observers. This work kept her in touch with political parties. She also became a board member of FIDA, where she was involved in changing the focus of FIDA's work towards advocacy rather than simply providing legal aid to individual women. Njoki's motivation of moving FIDA towards advocacy was from realization that FIDA could reach more women by changing laws, whereas through legal aid they could only help a handful of women yet it would be better to change laws to have government take responsibility over the legal aid of all those who need it.

It was also while at FIDA that she started working directly with women parliamentarians on drafting bills that were specific on women issues. This was Njoki's first experience with

<sup>11</sup> Tom Mboya was one of the most popular post-independent leaders. He was assassinated due to his popularity, and remains a national hero and legend.

parliamentary procedures, which became very handy when she eventually became an MP. FIDA supported Martha Karua in her motion for the bill on equality, as well as Beth Mugo's motion for a bill on affirmative action. Njoki was involved in drafting both motions. Later in 1997, she joined in the presidential campaign for Charity Ngilu. In 2002, on the insistence of Charity Ngilu that there should be a woman in the NARC negotiations, Njoki, as a woman lawyer found herself in the top negotiating team of NARC. Her computer literacy and legal knowledge came in very handy in the negotiations and that was how she cut her niche within NARC. Njoki says that the men in the NARC negotiations initially thought she was a secretary:

Interestingly, those men thought I was a secretary because I was always with my laptop typing. These are very old school politicians who still view a woman typing as a secretary. At one point, when I contributed to the discussions, one of the men told me off 'please can you continue typing' but when I did give my opinion it was very clear that I was not just a secretary, but a lawyer. It was from this that I earned myself the position of the secretary to the NARC Summit. I got nominated because it was decided that all the 7 seats for NARC would go to women, but eventually only 5 went to women and I was one of them (Njoki Ndung'u, Nominated MP).

It is clear that Njoki had been well prepared for the work of a parliamentarian, which would explain her relative success as a legislator.

Godwin Murunga, in his account of the marginality of women's political participation in Africa (see Chapter 2), has identified studies that assert the familial and paternal idioms that form the basis for which African political leadership is cast, with the dominant perception of leadership placing women as if they are outside the political realm and unable to make good leaders.

However, in comparing the qualities of leadership as espoused by House and Podsakoff (1984) and the perspectives that are derived from the stories of these women leaders, it is quite apparent that women exhibit a strong background that forms the basis of their leadership abilities, rendering the perception that leadership is a male preserve untenable. These backgrounds may have been academic or personality-based, but they nevertheless point at each of the interviewed candidate's preparation and capacity for leadership. For centuries, people have debated whether leaders are born or made, and several decades ago, researchers started to try to answer the question. Some contentions assert that leaders are born (Maak and Pless, 2006). On the other hand, leaders are also nurtured. Leadership can be learned by anyone with the basics, but a lot of leadership cannot be taught. Effective leaders take control of their own development. They seek out training opportunities that will make a difference in their performance. Effective leaders look for training programmes that will help them develop specific skills that they can use on the job. When they return to work, they devote specific and deliberate effort to mastering in real life what they learned in the classroom. From the above descriptions, it is apparent that these women have the capacities and abilities of effective leaders.

### **Passion, Vision and Motivation**

Schlesinger (1966) argues that the accountability of democratically-elected politicians to citizens is ensured because individual politicians are ambitious. Schlesinger argues that

ambitious politicians act on the interests of their voters, because doing so aids them in their own desire for advancement.

The women leaders interviewed for this study gave a mixed response of motivators or ambition for political leadership. Besides Esther Keino, all the other respondents alluded to a socialized power factor in describing their motivation for their involvement in politics. Esther Mwaura, an aspirant for the Limuru seat, noted that her motivation was grounded on her experiences of women's marginalization that she had witnessed when she was growing up. She had actually pursued a career in social work where she could help to reduce women's vulnerability. She observed:

In the last 11 years I have invested my own intellectual capacity, money, and whatever I have to build an organization that has supported grassroots women to speak on their own behalf. The organization focuses on women and the girls who are mostly marginalized... I realized that our biggest struggle has been, though we know what needs to be done, not many people at the political front are able to embrace those capacities that women have and personally I feel that I am getting into politics to be able to offer that opportunity. That I am going to be there as a representative of the forces of the many girls and women that I really value and I have seen they have a huge capacity in whatever they do, but they haven't had a stepping stone to influence issues at a higher level (Esther Mwaura, 2007 parliamentary aspirant).

Esther's passion was to be a tool that can be used to help people openly speak and contribute to what they cared about: 'I want to be the person that will provide Limuru people with ability to unleash their own leadership capacity.' She believes that having met many people with huge capacities to lead and who wanted to develop their own agenda for development, she wished to support them and become the bridge that would help in unleashing their capacities and 'create a platform where people are not waiting for an individual to lead them, but people who feel they have a responsibility to lead.'

Adelina Mwau and Njoki Ndung'u also passionately talked about their women's rights agenda. For Adelina Mwau, having worked as a gender programme officer with Oxfam, she had realized that issues relating to women were rarely articulated at policy level. She had thus decided to bring her experience of working with grassroots groups to work out policies that were gender sensitive and that were sensitive to poor people. Adelina, a co-founder and member of the Coalition of Violence Against Women (COVAW), specifically realized that though policies and laws were very crucial in guiding sectoral concerns, her assessment of the laws that were used or governed issues around gender-based violence appeared gender-blind. Furthermore, the legal fraternity and service providers (such as police, prosecutors, judges and doctors) were similarly unaware about the differential gender impact of violence. This revelation further catapulted her interest in seeking political leadership in the national assembly. She realized that she needed to: 'become the voice for women and especially (assist in) coming up with the structures, policies and laws that are particularly sensitive to women issues.'

Adelina was very passionate about seeing women in positions of power at all levels, in order to bring a new way of looking at leadership. This she did by supporting women's participation through training, mentorship, and providing support systems suitable for encouraging women leaders to take up their mantles. She wished to see more women as

models of an alternative kind of leadership, which had a 'feminine aspect'; one that is different in terms of dealing with issues such as corruption and transparency, and is inclusive of all young men and women, able and disabled, rich and poor.

Christine Mango's motivation to engage as a leader emanated from her life-long experiences. As many women academics in Kenya's public universities would attest, women not only enter academia in smaller numbers, but obtain promotion much less frequently. Only a handful of female academics get promoted to the highest academic ranks in comparison to their male colleagues. This has been attested in many studies in Kenyan universities (for example Many, 2000; Onsongo, 2000; Kamau, 2001; Onsongo, 2005; Chege and Namusonge, 2006; Kamau, 2006) and Christine's own experience during her time at Maseno University. She remembers that in her own situation, she had worked even while on her maternity bed, but never received due recognition through promotion.

I continued with my university teaching but in the course of my work I saw a lot of injustices against women. You can be the very best but you'll never be promoted to take on a higher post and women work very hard. I remember my own situation; I could work until 2 days before I go into maternity and even on my maternity bed I am still writing reports. This is never recognized so women do the donkey work and they just never reach the top and then looking around you see your contemporaries, who are not as good, and they are higher up so I started asking myself 'is it that we are never good enough or is it that society doesn't recognize us?' (Christine Mango, elected MP, 9th Parliament).

Christine noted that she experienced a great deal of frustration, harassment and disparagement from her male colleagues and superiors during her tenure as the director of the Centre for the Study of Lake Victoria and its Environs (CSOLVE), but she stood firm for almost a decade.

This made her question whether it was she who was 'never good enough or whether society does not recognize us (women)?' She had also been motivated by her peers, having studied alongside Wangari Maathai, the 2004 Nobel Peace Prize Laureate, at Loreto Convent Limuru and seeing her suffer public and personal ridicule in her fight for the under-privileged. She recalled questioning herself and her contribution to society, wondering whether her teaching and developing of human resource was all she could give in return.

I saw a lot of poverty in my constituency yet I looked at the natural resources we have in the constituency, rain, land, rivers. I started asking 'why are we poor?' When there were these poverty reduction workshops and so on, I would take part. Whenever I was invited I used to go and then I would question 'why are we poor in Busia?' From then I started getting interested (in the issues) and asking: 'Is there a way I can bring about small change?' Am not a messiah but maybe as a person maybe in one way or another I could do something (Christine Mango, elected MP, 9th Parliament).

As a politician, Christine Mango's biggest passion in her constituency has been the girl child and orphans. She introduced various parliamentary motions about the girl child, and even successfully ensured the passing of one motion that would fast track girl child education in Kenya, and one to have government support for orphaned children. Her facts were clear and guided her conviction as regards this vulnerable group. During the interview, she had on her fingertips statistics of the situation in her constituency. For example, she noted



'poverty is at 70 per cent, HIV and AIDS is at 30-35 per cent and that translates into very many orphans. At primary school, 30 per cent of the children are orphans, thus the passion to ensure that these children get an education because education can really help them out'.

Julia Ojiambo's motivation for political work stemmed from her experience and research in public health. Having seen the impact that Kwashiorkor and Marasmus had on women and children, she used her social work experience and moved into the community to teach parents how to use healthy biscuits, which she developed through a UNICEF initiative. She also educated mothers on how to help children who were stunted and wasted. This grassroots experience motivated her personal and academic zeal to attain the necessary competence and skills. Her research work specifically focused on development of treatment options, and community information development and education to prevent the spread of targeted diseases. From her work, local universities and organizations begun developing nutrition programmes, which she used in implementing her community work. Every time she went home, she noted:

I just merged with the community and lived with them moving from house to house, family to family, counselling mothers, enjoying advising them and also making sure the children were being looked after properly (Julia, Nominated MP).

But this localized experience did not suffice. She felt the need to join political leadership and contribute to changes from the top-down. Her constituents requested her to engage in the region's effort to rid itself of bad leadership and poor development record that it had experienced for far too long, which further reinforced her interest in politics. Interestingly, in their pleas, the constituents referred to her successes as a role model not only for themselves but also for their children. They called upon her to continue with her research work, but also engage in leadership to assist their communities develop, believing that she had the ability to do both tasks simultaneously. This she did in consultation with her community elders and opinion leaders, eventually emerging among the first women members of parliament and one of the leading lights of women's leadership in Kenya.

Julia's passion was thus to contribute to that quality aspect of human beings that would make the community and society to derive the best from individuals, i.e. quality life for all. This meant total development so that individuals could maximally contribute to economic development, to social growth and spiritual enhancement. 'I just like seeing a healthy person, a person who feels they can give their best of everything,' she noted at the interview.

Mine is to contribute to that quality aspect of human beings that would cause the community, and society to derive the best from individuals. So really mine is quality of life for all, meaning total development, so that individuals can maximally contribute to the economic development, to the social growth, spiritual enhancement. I just like seeing a healthy person, a person who feels they can give their best of everything (Julia Ojiambo, nominated MP, 9th Parliament).

Though Esther Keino and Ruth Oniang'o, both nominated Members of the 9th Parliament, had not explicitly professed a fervent ambition or interest in engaging in political leadership, they nevertheless proffered that since their surprisingly unanticipated nominations, their passion for political leadership had been ignited. Both had decided they would vie for the 2007 elections. Although she had not seen herself as a politician, Esther Keino had done a

great deal of work at Egerton University, which included initiating the opening of a gender centre and a mentoring programme for young school girls, a project that was in partnership with the University of Hull, UK. As a nominated MP, she became involved in grassroots work outside of academia and was happy with what she had achieved with women groups. She was proud to have helped many women undergo training on various aspects of development, poverty eradication, education and gender-based violence. Esther established the Rift Valley Women Empowerment Network to build the capacities of women civic and parliamentary candidates for the 2007 general elections. She felt that women should not get into politics by chance, but through training and preparation so that they are able to manage the challenges that go with political office. She also spearheaded such training prior to the 2002 elections, a factor that may have contributed to her nomination. On her passion for political leadership, she stated: 'though I don't have a geographical constituency, I thought I had to particularly focus on development (of) grassroots people, women and children.'

Ruth Oniang'o had been an active community development worker even before her nomination. She had been running a local non-governmental organization dealing with dairy cattle for the previous 17 years, and was very passionate about poverty eradication, education, dairy farming and gender-based violence. Her passion exemplifies her role as a representative of the people. She sees herself as carrying the burdens of her constituents in which she says:

I would have (my constituency) here in the city because there are so many poor people from the rural areas who vote (back home) but they work in Nairobi who never see an MP... my office would be (situated) in Uhuru park... (and I would) have a hot pot of tea all the time where they (people) come and state their issues. That is what I saw in myself as a nominated MP (Ruth, Nominated MP, 9th Parliament).

Mumbi Ng'aru, former Mayor of Thika Municipal Council (1997-2000), though perceiving her entry into politics as accidental (having been nominated by the Social Democratic Party out of three other women candidates in line with its social democracy programme), observed that her initial passion had been to transform the Municipal Council of Thika, which had been denigrated by many years of mismanagement. Though she was anxious about the murky reputation of 'politics', she had the requisite experience as a community conscious enthusiast to want to 'give it a try'.

I got into a council that was just as bad as all others. In fact at that time when I took over the council was at its worst; no salaries, the workers were on strike, they were fighting; Mungiki was in control – it was quite a mess. I went there to serve and I served to the best of my ability and I made a mark (Mumbi, Nominated Mayor, Thika Municipality).

As her interview later reveals, she had done more than just try.

Mumbi's greatest passion as a politician was to serve and to transform. She explained that before she joined Thika Municipal Council, her only experience with councils had been as a student at the university. While undertaking a Bachelor of Arts in Social Work and Administration, she was involved in council business for research purposes while on student attachment. Thereafter, her only relationship with the council was when paying bills such as water, land rates and business licenses and, like everybody else, she had at

the time criticized the performance of the council. When she became mayor, she wanted to make a difference. At the time, Thika Municipal Council's performance had been as bad as many others, but she had the resolve to serve, a resolve she still held, and one that she believes led to her making a mark in Thika leadership.

Nyiva Mwendwa, who first got into parliament in 1974, made her decision to join politics two years prior to this while still teaching at the University of Nairobi as an Assistant Lecturer in the Department of Design. She mentioned only personal ambition as her motivation for political leadership, not attributing her desire to a passion or desire to change any social or personal injustice she had experienced or affiliated to. Nyiva married into a wealthy family, which could explain the difference in motivation between her and the other women who may have experienced poverty first hand. Upon her return from the United States where she had been undertaking a Master's degree, she immediately decided to venture into politics, at 32 years of age. Her husband would later take over as Member of Parliament for Kitui West. It was not clear from the interview why Nyiva's husband decided to get into politics, even though he had admitted she was the 'better politician'. One could speculate that just like majority of Kenyan men, and as was attested by other women in this study, men can get challenged when their wives acquire senior and powerful positions. Also, society does not give such men an easy time, hence peer pressure could have made Kitili Mwendwa to relent on his earlier position.

When asked whether she had an agreement with her husband to run in the same constituency, her response was quite surprising, if not awe inspiring for women politicians everywhere. They had in fact discussed the position with her late husband, Kitili Mwendwa, and agreed that since she was the 'better politician', she should make her attempt political leadership first.<sup>12</sup> This is radically different from many instances of spouses taking over their counterpart's role in politics in Kenya. The typical occurrence is that wives make attempts at political leadership after their husbands' demise, as was the case with the late Mary Ngoyoni (unsuccessful aspirant in the 2006 Laisamis by-election occasioned by the death of her husband, Titus Ngoyoni), Jayne Kihara (Naivasha, taking over from her late husband, Paul Kihara) and Sarah Godana (unsuccessful aspirant in the 2006 North Horr by election after the death of her husband, Bonaya Godana), and in 2008 Beatrice Kones who got elected after the demise of her husband. Even Christine Mango said that this had been her husband's field and she only got in after he passed away.

A question to the women as to the challenges they faced on the family front had interesting responses. Out of the ten women, only three had husbands at the time of the interview, four were widowed and the other three had never married. The issues of husband and family support or lack of it are discussed in a later chapter.

From the analysis so far, it can be argued that there is no uniform way in which women get into politics. Some women may get into politics by accident, while others may do so through careful thought and planning because they believe that as legislators they can bring the desired change. The common denominator among all the women was their desire to help the women folk to become better off. Several of these women had experienced first hand the challenges that girls face and they all said they wanted to do something about it. Their visions and passion seemed to be clearly focused on women's and girls issues.

<sup>12</sup> Nyiva Mwendwa won the Kitui West parliamentary seat in 1974, beating Parmenas Nzilu Munyasia who was the incumbent representative from independence in 1963. Kitili Mwendwa, Nyiva's husband, would later take the seat in 1984.

From the foregoing, it is apparent that these women's motivation for political leadership was influenced by their conviction to change the lives of their communities, but more so women and the socially-excluded groups. They had personally and by proxy experienced the inequalities of the social system, from the glass ceilings to the unrecognized care work of women. The issues that the women pointed out ranged from poverty, especially as it affected women and girls, to gender blind policy considerations, mismanagement of community institutions and their experiences in community plight and disease.

### 'Masculinization' of Women Politicians/Leaders

In the first section of this study, it was implied that women have been accused of behaving just like men once they got into power. Studies have shown that having large numbers of women in leadership positions may not be a guarantee that they will focus on women's issues, which are generally ignored by men. Dodson (2005), for example, notes that increasing numbers of women does not in itself make a difference for women's issues. Dodson (2005) argues that the 103rd US Congress had the largest number of women ever, increasing from 31 in the 102nd to 55 in the 103rd. During this time, Congress passed a record 66 bills dealing with women and children, such as Violence Against Women Act, Freedom of Access to Clinic Entrances Bill, etc. However, Dodson is quick to note that in the 1994 election, although the number of women did not reduce, something drastic happened. Congress was in the hands of Republicans, which also resulted in an expansion of the ideological diversity of the women elected into Congress. She notes that eight Democratic women candidates lost while seven new Republican women got elected, six of who were hostile to the goals of the contemporary women's movement. She further notes:

Although the majority of women members of Congress remained Democratic, relatively liberal and sympathetic to the women's movement, this new small cadre of Republican women (who had the advantage of party majority) gave a different notion that 'women make a difference' (Dodson, 2005: 131).

In their study on women candidates in Kenya, political socialization and representation, Lawless and Fox (2001) concluded that women candidates showed little interest in forwarding women's issues. They note that, on the contrary, women politicians seemed to accept the *status quo* even more than citizens who were not politicians. In a total of 150 surveys conducted, the authors found that attitudes of the women candidates mirrored more accurately the attitudes of men in the sample. They found that there was little indication that the candidates interviewed would advocate and initiate meaningful public policy pertaining to issues that have a greater impact on women than men. The survey also found that although many of the candidates refer to their gender sensitivity and familiarity with the plight of other women, their priorities and attitudes did not seem to reflect their concern.

The suggestion that electing women candidates would generate a woman's agenda is precarious in the Kenyan case. The 19 women candidates interviewed demonstrate neither fervor, nor an affinity for forwarding women's issues. In fact, they seem to accept the current state of affairs more readily than does the citizen sample of women, the latter of whom have relatively modest goals and aspirations (Lawless and Fox, 2001: 70).

Lawless and Fox (2001: 71) do, however, note that the women politicians in their study tended to be products of rigid patriarchal gender and political socialization patterns than the citizen respondents. They further note that although having women in parliament will help in providing other women and especially younger women with role models, having women in itself will not be a guarantee that women issues will be addressed. This is an issue that is addressed in this study. It does not just take women in politics to advocate for women's issues. However, it is also crucial that those women will have an understanding of gender inequalities in the society and have an interest in challenging those inequalities.

When women are torn between party ideologies and women's causes, and in addition are a minority in the party, they are unlikely to want to be seen as fighting for women's issues. Although party ideologies are not as distinct in Kenya as is the case in the US, there are still some women who feel that focusing too much attention on women issues may be a sign of weakness. Others may become too 'masculinized' that they do not even remember the plight of women and girls. Although they may all say that they have a passion to improve the lot of women, this may not be reflected in their work.

Given that we only managed to interview a small group of women, it is difficult to argue whether majority of women politicians go through this masculinization process. Of the women interviewed, only Nyiva seemed to be fairly masculine in her view of politics. She had spent the highest number of years as an MP. This was her fourth term and she was still seeking a fifth one in the 2007 election. On a deeper analysis of her interview, one could tell that her interest in real change to better her people may have dwindled along the way. Of interest is that in the 20 years she had been an MP, five of them a Cabinet minister, she did not have any parliamentary bill associated to her initiative.

Some studies in university leadership have shown that some women do indeed lead differently from men. However, those women who especially focus on women issues would normally be sympathetic to the women's movement or be outright feminists. In the academic sector, it has been argued that scarcity of women within the academic hierarchy has hindered their ability to influence the policy and direction of their institutions (Kearney, 2000). In Wyn *et al.* (2000) study of Australian and Canadian women managers, senior women saw their positions in terms of making a difference for others. These women had made a difference in areas of 'equity, democracy, anti-sexism, anti-racism and participation' (Wyn *et al.* 2000: 442). However, all the women in this study viewed themselves as feminists. Women who are not feminists may not necessarily work towards changes that may benefit other women and disadvantaged groups, as noted by Onsongo (2005) in Kenya and Morley (1999) in Europe.

Even feminists may go through what Morley (1999:75) refers to as 'a process of masculinization'. One woman in the study by Wyn *et al.* (2000) expressed this 'masculinization' when she noted that she had learnt to do things in the traditional ways. At times, she did not always work for radical change. She found institutional practices already in place easier to use than to challenge. Similarly, Mabokela (2003) notes that due to the small representation of women in predominantly male organizations, they may be subjected to treatment that compromises the contributions they could make in their organizations. Such arguments may help us understand Nyiva's position and the argument presented by a newspaper columnist quoted in an earlier chapter of this study (Pinto, 2007).

Njoya (2008) presents an interesting argument on the issue of what happens to the few Kenyan women who have either been elected or nominated into parliament. He uses the example of Nyiva, who was the Minister for Culture and Social Services, where women issues were located during the Beijing conference. He notes that even though a woman Minister was sent to this very important conference, when she presented the report to President Moi, 'he trivialized it by saying that it was the work of lesbians' (Njoya, 2008: 26). The point that Njoya makes in his book, which appears relevant on the issue of masculinization of women leaders is:

The question for MEW<sup>13</sup> is not whether, as a Cabinet minister, Nyiva was equal with men, but that as a Cabinet minister, her equality with men was informed by male dominance.... Unless the minds of both the Kenyan men and women are transformed to see gender equality as a political and economic means rather than as a mere end in itself, the equality of women with the autocratic and murderous men may end up being more dangerous than inequality. If equality is to masculinize women, it must be reciprocal by feminizing men. Within the framework of male dominance, equality, either by means of universal suffrage like that of Nyiva or by affirmative action through nomination...is a masculine exercise, otherwise women by virtue of being more than half of the Kenyan population would be the ones forming the majority of Kenyan leadership. Equality, except by name is not equality, but sexism to the extreme, as long as it is one-way-traffic for women en route to male dominance where women become elicited to compete with men in the dominant male class and its game of machismo (Njoya, 2008: 27).

As much as we agree with Njoya's argument that working within the masculine structures may achieve little towards gender equality, we argue that many women have tried to work within the set masculine structures to forward the women's agenda in ways that have contributed towards genuine equality of opportunities that we are enjoying in Kenya and the world at large. The interviews with women in this study imply that if more awareness was created about the factors that hinder women's progression, then some women would challenge them if in a position to do so (see also Kamau, 2007). However, it is important to note that the efforts of a few women will not change gender relations, and ideas on how this can be done especially by working with men is well articulated by Njoya (2008), whose arguments are based on very sound research in Kenya.

From this chapter, it is apparent that the women interviewed had all been prepared by their past experiences for the leadership roles in which they found themselves. Most of women's style of leadership seems to fit with that outlined at the start of this chapter. The women's experiences, especially those that had to do with the marginalization and hardships that girls and women faced, also shaped their motivation for leadership. These findings also counter the concluding aspects of the study of Lawless and Fox (2001), which claimed that women running for office do not 'offer immediate hope for voicing the concerns of women and improving the status of women.' However, Lawless and Fox (2001) do acknowledge that women who have interest in gender issues and especially the plight of women may focus on the same, a point confirmed in this study.

<sup>13</sup> Men for the Equality of Men and Women.

## Chapter 5

# Perspectives on Development

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In this chapter, the focus is on issues that women mostly focus on when elected or appointed into leadership positions. Discussion will spotlight more directly on the women who formed part of this study, with a view to finding out what their development approaches were, as revealed by the projects they had focused on.

### Issues Women if Elected into Political Office Address More Effectively

Having a small number of women in the policy making institutions is not good for Kenyan women and the country. There are many examples from all over the world which show that women bring a different perspective into political leadership (Kamau, 2003; Epstein *et al.*, 2005; Kamau, 2007). In the United States, for example, some women politicians have pointed out that it was only after they took their place in Congress that women's issues such as healthcare, childcare and support, sexual harassment, domestic violence and gender-based waged differentials, among others, were given priority (Neuman, 1998; Epstein *et al.*, 2005). As Epstein *et al.* (2005) notes, studies in the US have consistently shown women legislators to be more liberal and feminist than their male colleagues. Epstein *et al.* (2005) present data collected in 1999 and 2002 from legislators in 50 states of the US. Overall, the data indicates that women legislators are systematically different from their male counterparts with respect to their levels of political ambition, professionalization, legislative activities, ideology and in specialization. The data from these two surveys generally suggest that, both in behaviour and attitudes, women and men reveal differences in their approach to legislative tasks.

Studies quoted by other scholars on women politicians and political appointees in the US and other parts of the world show that women differ in a number of ways from their male colleagues. Kelly *et al.* (1991: 78) note, for example, that while some studies done in the US show no significant sex difference in power salience, power drive, power anxiety, power enjoyment or power style, sex differences have been seen in the perceived purpose of exercising power. Women view power as a means to promote change, while men view power as a means of having influence over other people. Geisler (1995: 560) also alludes to these differences when reporting the sentiments of two women politicians in Zambia, who were actively involved in the struggle for multi-partyism in their country in the early 1990s. Both women, who went on to become MPs in the Movement for Multi-Party Democracy (MMD) government that ousted Kenneth Kaunda, expressed a sense of disillusionment when they found that the (MMD) ideals, which had propelled them into seeking political office and for which they had campaigned so vigorously, were soon betrayed by the (mostly male)

MMD leadership when it came into power. These ideals included getting rid of corruption and drug trafficking, and changing the lives of (poor) ordinary people by improving their standards of living.

A second way in which women leaders tend to differ from their male colleagues is that the former are usually more supportive of liberal legislation intended at creating a more inclusive society. Kelly *et al.* (1991: 81-82), for example, quote studies done in the United States, which showed that female members of Congress had supported the Civil Rights Act of 1964 more than their male colleagues, and that more female members co-sponsored the Equal Rights Amendment than did male members. Dolan (2001: 214) also notes this tendency among female political appointees, noting that 'surveys of presidential and gubernatorial appointees indicate that female Republican and Democratic appointees were more supportive of childcare, abortion rights and the Equal Rights Amendment than their male colleagues.' Geisler (1995: 555-556) confirms this tendency when she notes in her study on how women politicians have fared over the years in Southern Africa that when a Ministry of Community Development and Women's Affairs was created in Zimbabwe in 1981 headed by a woman, it undertook some ambitious law reforms, which resulted in some pro-women legislation being passed. Examples of these were the passing in 1982 of the Legal Age of Majority Act, which conferred on women legal majority status at the age of 18, and the Matrimonial Causes Act of 1985, which equalized the divorce law and acknowledged a wife's contribution to marital property.

Firstly, women have tendency to support liberal legislation, particularly that which seeks to create a more inclusive society. This may be a result of the fact that in many ways, women have been marginalized and under-privileged in communities all over the world. Having been on the receiving end of discrimination based on their sex, women who get into positions of leadership are more likely to support initiatives that seek to end or at least lessen it, than their male colleagues who traditionally have been the beneficiaries of such marginalization. That women are socialized to be nurturers and caregivers may also help to explain this tendency to empathize with the under-privileged and the desire to bring everybody on board.

Secondly, women leaders also support issues that are traditionally of greater concern to women than to men. Swers (2001: 217), for example, notes that evidence from many studies carried out in the US shows that women serving in state legislatures tended to have unique policy priorities particularly in women's issues. She observes that 'scholars have found that in comparison to men, female legislators are more liberal in their policy attitudes and they exhibit a greater commitment to the pursuit of feminist initiatives and legislation, incorporating issues of traditional concern to women, including education, health and welfare'.

Kelly *et al.* (1991: 82-83, 85) also note this tendency when they point out that studies carried out among US women in local government positions in the late 1970s and 1980s show that women 'were warm to feminism and clear supporters of women's issues; that is those that affect women more than men, such as reproductive health rights, child care or family policy...' They elaborate further on these issues that have been of concern to female leaders



in government as those specifically 'dealing with pregnancy, abortion, rape, prostitution, marriage, divorce, domestic violence, pornography, children, nurturance, childcare, family welfare, public health and the education of children.'

Thirdly, female leaders differ from their male colleagues in that they look at themselves, and are looked upon by other people as being representatives not just of their specific constituents but of all women. Swers (2001: 217) observes that in many studies done in the US, 'female legislators expressed a sense of responsibility to represent the interests of women, and they were more likely than men to view women as a distinct part of their constituencies.' Kelly *et al.* (1991: 82) also note this representational role played by female leaders by observing that 'men as well as women expect elected women to stand for the interests of all women.'

Fourthly, female leaders differ from their male colleagues due to their greater level of concern with community goals at the local level and support of social welfare legislation at the national level. Kelly *et al.* (1991: 82) observe that studies conducted on women in public office in the United States at the state and local level revealed that 'women legislators, in contrast to men, were more concerned with their responsibilities to the community and spent a great deal of time involved in civic goals'. They further quote a study done at the congressional level, which found that 'female members were more supportive of social welfare legislation and less supportive of defence spending and interventionist foreign policy than were the males.'

Fifthly, women leaders tend to be more democratic and promote democratic ideals more than their male colleagues. Richter (1990: 536) in studying South and South Eastern Asian women political leaders notes that former President Corazon Aquino of the Philippines, former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto of Pakistan, and Burmese opposition leader, Aung Sang Suu Kyi, were perceived by some of their countrymen to be weak because of their preference for democratic rule. Richter (1990) notes that this perception of weakness was present, even though these women had stood against and/or taken over from authoritarian regimes that had been despised. Their 'tolerance of dissent, willingness to compromise, insistence on democratic procedures and even political amnesty towards opponents were perceived as 'the result of timidity rather than courage, and weakness rather than strength'.

Apart from differences exhibited by male and female leaders in their attitudes and priorities, female leaders have an impact on the way the affairs of the governing bodies in which they sit are run. Jewell and Whicker (1993: 710-711), for example, conducted a study on the impact of increased electoral participation by women in state legislatures in the United States, and found that increase in the number of women that occurred in State Houses in the 1980s had resulted in the 'feminization' of state legislative leaders. One of the ways in which this had happened was that women had gravitated towards a 'female' leadership style that emphasized consensus and system concerns as opposed to a male style that emphasized control, command and narrow personal ambitions.

The Beijing Platform for Action made the point that women's participation in decision making is not just a right but a necessary condition for a more responsive, accountable and transparent governance. The examples cited thus far from studies and observations made of women's leadership in different parts of the world seem to attest to this fact.

Locally, it has been argued that women's participation in governance will benefit society because women are more likely to press for laws that benefit families, women, children and marginalized groups (League of Kenya Women Voters, not dated: 5). This argument is supported by the fact that in Kenya, some legislative changes in favour of women were noticeable in the 9th Parliament, which enjoyed the highest number of women since independence. Some examples include tax waivers for sanitary wear and diapers, passing into law of the Sexual Offences Bill, review of the Employment Act leading to increase in maternity leave to four months (three months actual maternity leave and one month annual leave), and an increased focus on gender issues and HIV and AIDS, especially by the Minister of Health, who was a woman.

The Sexual Offences Act, which was spearheaded by Njoki Ndung'u, initially received a lot of opposition from male members of parliament. It was only after much lobbying by women legislators and women civil society organizations that the Act saw the light of day. However, due to the opposition it received from men, some important clauses were removed, for example marital rape and criminalization of female circumcision. Even after the success with the Sexual Offences Act, an Affirmative Action Bill towards the end of the 9th Parliament was thrown out through a technicality of lack of quorum, all designed by the male MPs who claimed that the Minister for Justice, Martha Karua, did not consult enough. This, however, was not a unique case of lack of consultation by the Minister, as history clearly shows that male-dominated Kenyan parliaments have in the past consistently blocked legislative initiatives that address women's issues. Examples of legislations that received resistance include the Equality and Domestic Violence and Affirmative Action Bills, which were rejected by parliament because majority of the male legislators perceive such laws to have a negative effect on them (Kamau, 2003; Nzomo, 2003b).

There are many challenges that have continued to face Kenyan women, mainly as a result of their unequal status to men, especially in policy making. These challenges include poverty, illiteracy, HIV and AIDS, all kinds of implicit and explicit discrimination, gender-based violence and gender roles that still favour men, among other challenges. These are some of the issues that women political leaders would be expected to pursue both at legislation level and in their constituencies.

The argument that women leaders support issues that are gender sensitive or women friendly has not been without some opposition. In an opinion in the *Daily Nation*, Pinto (2007) argued that most of the prominent women politicians have failed to show commitment to gender issues in ways that would make any impact on gender equality and equity in this country. Pinto's argument is captured in the box that follows:

Health Minister, Charity Ngilu, shows a lot of motherly passion, emotion and commitment when faced with instances of gender inequality, but that is as far as it goes politically. Her agenda on gender equality has not been clearly reflected in her role as Minister.

Ms Njoki Ndung'u spearheaded the enactment of the Sexual Offences Act. That is her legacy as a heroine in the struggle for gender equality. However, her ideological and political positions on this issue are not clear. Episodic struggles may win battles, but not the war.

Ms Esther Passaris is running for office. Her posters are up. Sources say she wants to run for a seat in Nairobi. But she will have to gun for a council seat first. Sources say she is a great businessperson, hard working, ambitious and a good leader in the private sector. What is not clear is where she stands on gender equality. Coming as she does from the South Asian background, people who are rarely heard talking about the oppression of women, this lack of a clear standpoint on the issue of gender equality is a serious political shortcoming.

Bishop Margaret Wanjiru is a religious leader who has a following in Nairobi. Her story is one of a courageous woman. She now wants to be a political leader. From what some of her followers say, her views on gender equality are Victorian. Her vision of a woman is that of nurturer, child-bearer and comforter of husband as decreed by her conservative interpretation of the Bible.

Justice Minister Martha Karua has had a positive history in feminism and leadership in civil society. She served courageously as a council member of the Law Society of Kenya. She served as chair of the League of Women Voters. Male chauvinists in and out of parliament have faced her wrath. However, her track record on the struggle for gender equality is not manifested in her ministerial duties. Has that powerful ministry masculinized this gender rights warrior?

THESE FIVE LADIES HAVE BECOME famous in part because they do not fit into men's stereotypes about women. It is, however, time that women political leaders realized that on the issue of gender equality, they cannot run with the hare and hunt with the hounds. They must deal with the prejudice women face on the basis of class, clan, race, region and occupation.

While respecting Pinto's opinion and other like-minded persons, we found it of interest to give women a chance to express how they perceive their work, especially as regards issues of gender equality and equity.

## Projects Women in this Study Gave Priority To

The projects women in this study gave priority to were analyzed under the backdrop of the human development approach, which involves creating an environment in which people can develop their full potential and lead productive, creative lives in accordance with their needs and interests. People are the real wealth of nations, thus development is about expanding the choices people have to lead lives that they value.<sup>14</sup> Many of its key principles

<sup>14</sup> As of 1990, the human development concept was applied to a systematic study of global themes, as published in the yearly global Human Development Reports under the auspice of the UNDP. The work of Amartya Sen and others provided the conceptual foundation for an alternative and broader human development approach, defined as a process of enlarging people's choices and enhancing human capabilities (the range of things people can be and do) and freedoms, enabling them to: live a long and healthy life; have access to knowledge and a decent standard of living; and participate in the life of their community and decisions affecting their lives.

can be found in the writings of scholars and philosophers from past eras and across many societies, such as Amartya Sen, the 1998 Nobel Laureate in Economics. Some of the issues and themes currently considered most central to human development include:<sup>15</sup>

- *Social progress*: greater access to knowledge, better nutrition and health services.
- *Economics*: the importance of economic growth as a means to reduce inequality and improve levels of human development.
- *Efficiency*: in terms of resource use and availability. Human development is pro-growth and productivity as long as such growth directly benefits the poor, women and other marginalized groups.
- *Equity*: in terms of economic growth and other human development parameters.
- *Participation and freedom*: particularly empowerment, democratic governance, gender equality, civil and political rights, and cultural liberty, particularly for marginalized groups defined by urban-rural, sex, age, religion, ethnicity, physical/mental parameters, etc.
- *Sustainability*: for future generations in ecological, economic and social terms.
- *Human security*: security in daily life against such chronic threats as hunger and abrupt disruptions, including joblessness, famine, conflict, etc.

The women leaders interviewed were particularly keen on improving the quality of life of the under-privileged in their respective communities. They were concentrating on the value of life, from the basics of good health and nutrition, to the impact of the spread of disease, the under-privileged in society such as orphans, the provision of water, to the human rights of women. These interests can be construed as 'feminine', since they appeal to the maternal nature of the leaders interviewed.

According to the 2002 Human Development Report,<sup>16</sup> 'political power and institutions, formal and informal, national and international, shape human progress. Therefore, politics matters for human development because people everywhere want to be free to determine their destinies, express their views and participate in the decisions that shape their lives'. The report calls for politics and political institutions to promote human development and safeguard the freedom and dignity of all people. This is the path that women's leadership should follow, a path that must be nurtured and encouraged.

The benefits of a human development approach cannot be gainsaid. It is an approach that does not merely generate economic growth, but distributes its benefits equitably. It regenerates the environment rather than destroying it; it empowers people rather than marginalizing them; it enlarges their choices and opportunities and provides for peoples' participation in decisions affecting their lives. Sustainable human development is pro-poor, pro-nature, pro-jobs, and pro-women. It stresses growth with employment, growth with environment, growth with empowerment, and growth with equity. Human development, therefore, looks constantly to enlarge the capabilities of people to lead full, productive,

<sup>15</sup> <http://hdr.undp.org/en/humandev/origins/>

<sup>16</sup> Human Development Report: *Deepening Democracy in a Fragmented World*, Oxford University Press, 2002.

satisfying and valuable lives by raising their incomes and improving other components of their standard of living, such as life expectancy, health, literacy, knowledge and control over their own destiny (Anand and Amartya, 1994).

It can thus be construed that women's leadership adopts a human development paradigm. This will be correlated with the assessment of male leadership in the latter phases of this study, and decipher its focus and conceptual framework in correlation to this approach.

All the women interviewed, except Nyiva Mwendwa, seem to adhere to the human development approach in the projects that they had given highest priority to in the areas they represented and nationally. Nyiva was the only one who responded to the question about her projects with a short answer, showing no passion and not providing much detail about her work. As an example, when asked what projects she had given priority to with her CDF she said: 'In these five years, I have used my CDF for water and also for schools and health facilities.' Compare this with Adelina's response as given below:

Water has been my passion because as a young woman growing up in my village, in a hilly place I know what it means to carry 20 litres 3 times a day. Thank God I went to school and I was able to build a water tank for my mother. So it has been a passion and a vision to see women's work is reduced by bringing water close to them. So far, I've been able to get 2 water projects in two locations that I have actually initiated through the trust fund. I've been able to get 7.8 million of a big water project that will be pumped to several institutions. I've been able to get another water project, a borehole that also has cost the government 7 million. I am the one who lobbied for it. I am still continuing to make sure that water is distributed to several villages. I've been able to lobby for electricity in 3 projects, all of which will cost the government almost 30 million and I am hoping they will all be completed this year (Adelina Mwau, Nominated MP).

Note that Adelina was a nominated MP and, therefore, did not have a CDF, and hails from Ukambani, and therefore was faced with similar challenges as those in Nyiva's constituency.

These government projects came into being due to Adelina's lobbying for the needs of her constituency, yet she was not elected. Similarly, Priscah Ouma (Kisumu mayor) also discussed the projects she had supported in Kisumu, and her ward in particular:

My number one project has been poverty eradication through women's groups. I helped identify an organization called Pamoja Trust to help women know how to save and how they can do merry go round amongst them so that they alleviate poverty. This project has benefited very many women's groups in Kisumu (Priscah, Kisumu mayor).

Similarly, Mumbi Ng'aru's passion for education as a mayor is clearly expressed in the interview:

My first priority as a mayor was education. Can you believe that for three years in a row when I was mayor, Thika Municipality was number one in Central Province? I am passionate about education and when I went to schools to talk to these pupils, I never went there with the authority of the mayor. I went there as a parent and they all thought of me as a role model. Let me tell you, it might have been something very small but every year, I wrote a success card to all schools in the municipality and they were delivered by the civic driver and in the parade when that card was read by the standard 8 pupils, I could hear that the

faces of those children looked just great. The mayor has written this card and I signed all of them – that was truly motivating (Mumbi Ng'aru, Thika mayor).

The other women expressed similar passion for human development projects, all in line with the issues they raised as their passion and motivator for being in politics. For Christine Mango:

The priority is education, health, water and roads. In education already, I've put up a girl's secondary school. It's already complete then I am putting up another girl's secondary school but I have also put up two boys secondary schools and in addition I have bought land and I am in the process of buying another 50 acres of land, which will start an orphan rescue centre but eventually become a university college. I've already put up four dispensaries, which are already complete. In one of the health centres I am putting up a maternity. As you are well aware our area has HIV and AIDS, Malaria and Typhoid so it's a priority area and to that I have managed to talk to Waziri Ngilu and she gave me an ambulance for my district hospital, Nyanza District Hospital. The same sub-district hospital has become a centre for Anti-Retroviral distribution by Moi University in conjunction with Indiana University in the project known as AMPA. This is one of its kind because they give medicine, food and economic support... (Christine Mango, elected MP, 9th Parliament).

Christine Mango described her work for almost half an hour, going into details of how she had played a big role in encouraging people to go for HIV testing. She would attend public meetings to educate people herself. As she noted:

I am very passionate about HIV and AIDS, I go to meetings where women talk to me because am a woman, they say to me 'Mama Mango, please get us medication so that our children who are one year old can get to 8 years old at least then we can hand them over to someone else', and it really touched me so I got very busy asking the ministry for help and as a result I got people from the American Embassy to visit the place and see the health facilities there because then the patients had to go to Busia, which is 40 Kms away – the person is weak, has no money, nutritionally poor and is supposed to go so far. The opening of the sub-district hospital is a big help to the people. ...When this group came I too was tested in the VCT bed so that I could encourage people to come for the test (Christine Mango, elected MP, 9th Parliament).

As regards the water projects, she said that she had promised herself and her people that once they elected her, she would revive some shallow wells that had been drilled in the 1980s when her husband had been the MP. Due to bad politics, the wells had all dried due to lack of maintenance. Once she was elected:

We identified all these wells and I have organized major projects to have all of them operating again. I want to give people clean piped water so that women can get out of this business of having to carry jerry cans on our heads and backs. I always make a joke that my neck is short because of the days of carrying water on my head (Christine Mango, elected MP, 9th Parliament).

Christine Mango also said she had helped to build classrooms, had acquired a grader to clear rural access roads, and had supported income generating projects especially for women. Christine seemed very committed to development work and was actually surprised that, publicly, not much had been reported about her. She was very clear about what needed to be

done and she spent time with her people in meetings discussing their needs and what they wanted done with their CDF. It was very surprising that she lost in the ODM nominations, and therefore she did not vie for the 2007 elections. This takes us back to the issue raised earlier as to what makes constituents view one as a good leader. The politics of political parties provide challenges, especially for women, an issue that we focus on later when we discuss political parties.

Esther Wanjiku Mwaura, as aspirant, was asked what projects she would give priority to if she were elected. Esther's priority would be (these are some extracts from a very long response):

My first priority in Limuru will be to do a strategic plan that is community-led and therefore I wouldn't want to assume that I have preset ideas and I can tell you that during the ground campaign I have changed my mind in what I thought was a priority...I have discovered that people have priorities... The other thing I would do is to invest in projects to empower schools... I've been to schools where children are sitting 5 of them in one desk... For example, there are some schools in Limuru where desks are kept in stores while in others there are no desks—surely something can be done about that... I would invest in reviving a lot of the small scale business opportunities—markets, which I believe would benefit women. In my home village when I was growing up, the whole market used to be full on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Today only 5 women are selling and its just that people are not motivated. I would encourage the business people and work with them in a way to open up Limuru for the markets that exist in Nairobi and be able to be counted as the district headquarters, so that even the community is able to supply their own goods... (Esther Mwaura, MP aspirant).

Esther Mwaura went on to explain the details of what she would do about health services, especially those that are women-friendly. She also talked about some parts of the constituency that had major water problems. However, the point she stressed most is that she would allow her constituents to determine their priorities. She also did not assume that development in general would benefit all people equally. She was aware of the need to have women-specific and gender-sensitive planning and budgeting, otherwise women would continue to be worse off. Local markets, for example, would help women most as they were more handicapped in terms of taking their goods to Nairobi. She especially acknowledged the vulnerability of older women who used to benefit from vibrant local markets.

Esther Keino was also very passionate about issues of women and girls. She noted that even before she was nominated as a Member of Parliament, she had started a project targeting school girls support for education and mentoring project:

From before I came to parliament I have been involved in a project supporting young people. The focus is on primary school children and most specifically girls. Issues of puberty are especially critical and we thought that a project that would support these young people as they go through puberty would be very helpful. For instance, if you think of things like menstruation or even boys breaking their voices, they go through so much stress yet there's very little information to prepare them. At the moment, this project is supporting about 600 children, mostly orphans. We provide basic needs to them like education, health, food and shelter and then we provide them with what we refer to as back to school items. For the girls, in addition to books, we include sanitary pads for the 3 months. We meet with these young people during the school holidays and they come to Egerton University where they interact with university students and academics. It's a very empowering project and I am very proud of it (Esther Keino, Nominated MP).

Work in the area of education for young people and especially the girl child seems to be an issue that many of the women in this study attested to have focused on. Even when later asked what legacy they wished to leave behind as leaders, most of these women mentioned a need to be remembered as people who had promoted education so that their people would be left better than they were. The women acknowledge that they would not have been what they were if someone had not invested in their education. They feel that as leaders, they have a responsibility to encourage especially young women to pursue education to the highest level if they are to escape from challenges of patriarchy and gender inequality.

Empowering women and accompanying them in their day to day endeavours and struggles was another interesting aspect of the type of leadership that seemed unique to the women in this study. This is one aspect that would be of interest to establish if differences exist with men leaders. One interesting example is from Esther Keino, who talked about a journey to Uganda that she took with women from Kericho and Rongai.

I took a bus trip to Uganda with 25 women. The trip was to go and meet with other women in Uganda. I don't like traveling by public buses, but I decided to travel with the women so that they could see I was just like one of them. When we arrived after being on the road for 20 hours not knowing where we were going, I just shed tears. We were all so tired and what moved me is when the women asked, 'why do we vote for men? Would they do this with us? They never take us anywhere?' These were local women in their headscarves. I was moved by this experience and realized that it's gestures like this that can help people regain their power. To feel that a leader is one of them is empowering (Esther Keino, Nominated MP).

Esther Keino went on to explain how leaders in Kenya rarely interact directly with their voters, but left all the work to political brokers who only cheat and buy votes. She felt that leaders empower their people more if they go to their level and live through their experiences. This can be more empowering than any amount of money that politicians keep dishing out. She said that if more Kenyans can be exposed to this kind of leadership, they would slowly start realizing what good leadership is and start shunning those corrupt leaders who buy them during elections and disappear until the next elections.

The other aspect where we could discern women's way of leading, or their perspective to leadership, was to enquire on the legislative issues they had focused on. One of the best examples came from Julia Ojiambo, who had served three terms in parliament, once nominated and twice elected. She said that right from the very first time she was elected into parliament in 1974, she was very clear on what she would focus on. During the interview, Julia was very clear that her interest was with people and their entire development as human beings. She noted:

I knew that as a leader, I had to contribute to the quality aspect of human beings. I wanted to work with the community to derive the best from individuals. I saw the need to look at total development of people so that they can maximally contribute to their economic development, their social growth and spiritual enhancement. I just like seeing a healthy person, a person who feels they can give their best of everything (Julia Ojiambo, Nominated MP).

Throughout her political career, Julia explained how she focused on issues of human development. She noted that her first legislation agenda during the 9<sup>th</sup> Parliament was on



reviving the cotton industry. People from her constituency had over the years depended on cotton. However, due to lack of laws that would protect the farmers, the industry had almost collapsed. She decided to revive the Cotton Bill and started by amending it to remove government control of this industry, so that farmers could have more autonomy. This assignment turned out to be more difficult than she had imagined, and it took her four years to have the bill amended and have it accepted by other parliamentarians. There were also other vested interests among her colleagues regarding the cotton industry, but she persisted until the Minister of Agriculture saw the need to detach the industry from his docket and pass the control more to parliament and the cotton growers themselves. Through her effort, the Cotton Development Authority was established, which helped to vest the regulatory mandate of the industry to the cotton growers themselves. She had managed to work through an issue that is so central to the entire development of her people because their lack of control on such a major cash crop had really impoverished them. She was particularly concerned with the fact that women and children suffer most when rural development is affected. The collapse of the cotton industry had clearly affected the livelihoods of women and children in her area and, as a legislator, she could at least assist with making laws that would help influence change in this important sector.

In addition, Julia also focused on the problem of corruption. Over the years, Kenya has continued to be ranked among the most corrupt nations in the world. This is an area she felt legislators could not afford to ignore if some human development is to be realized. Interestingly, Julia noted that women are generally not as corrupt as men and wondered if one of the ways of ridding our society of corruption would be to have more women who are committed to positive change in influential positions. On this, she noted:

It has been said that women are not corrupt and sometimes I wish we could have women managing all the resources of this country because surely they do not steal as much as men do ... a few have stolen but not so much and not with so much impunity like I have seen with men. You can see a male Minister who is in charge of a whole ministry and he just closes his eyes on the poverty of all these dying people and just diverts money to his purse ... This is what prompted me to get involved. I wanted to know why there is so much corruption and if anything can be done about it. Unfortunately, before I could draft a bill on the issue of corruption, the Ministry of Finance brought the Procurement and Public Disposal Bill. I decided to follow up closely on this one so that we did not seem to have similar bills. This bill was eventually passed and it is now an Act of Parliament. However, on following up closely on how this Act was being implemented, I discovered that within that Act we were not able to control anything because we had not included the service providers. Nobody had been trained on how to use this Act and the citizens too had not been trained to develop corruption-free practises. I therefore prepared a motion for supplies and procurement officers to be trained. The motion was passed and a lot of people are going for these trainings.... I have recently drafted a bill to entrench this public awareness and capacity building into our laws (Julia Ojiambo, Nominated MP).

From the above quote, it is apparent that Julia is clearly committed to ensuring that laws are useful to communities. She does not see the need to have laws if there is no follow up on how these laws would be understood by the users. Njoki Ndung'u raised a similar point when she explained the need for sensitization on the Sexual Offences Act as shown later in this section.

The other area that Julia Ojiambo focused on was nutrition, which is her main area of interest, being a nutritionist. At the time of the interview, she noted that the bill called 'Nutrition and Dieticians Bill' was in its third reading and she was hopeful it would go through.

Still in the 9<sup>th</sup> Parliament, Julia had proposed a motion on resource utilization and development. She noted that this is an area she has looked at and realized there was need for legislation because Kenyans and especially women need to be given some powers to access and grow their own resource base, hence become self sufficient. Her interest on this motion was particularly the women who, she noted, do a lot of work and yet they own and control very few resources. On this, she noted:

Even though women contribute so much to the economy, majority do not even have bank accounts. With the help of like-minded women like Prof. Wanjiku Kabira and her team, we have a motion on this issue, which I brought to the House, successfully debated it and we have again drafted a bill called Community and Social Enterprises Development Capital Fund (Julia Ojiambo, Nominated MP).

She noted that this bill prompted the government to develop the Youth and Women's Enterprise funds. Even though there had been initial resistance to this bill, 'the government seems to have seen the sense in what we were saying and they stole most of the ideas for these two funds from our bill'. She was happy that such developments had come up and was grateful to the civil society that has continued to support women parliamentarians in their effort to bring a human face to legislation, and indeed to resource allocation. She was, however, quick to note that:

Even with the youth and women's fund, I still think it is important that we develop a legal framework to control these funds. The idea is that these programmes do not die if a new government is in place. We need to also develop a culture of saving resources and self-reliance. Our people should also learn that resources yield resources, that when they have their little money they can grow it like they grow their maize, can let it grow and they multiply it and become big strengths to themselves so that everybody can contribute to the economic growth of this nation (Julia Ojiambo, Nominated MP).

Finally, during her time in the 9<sup>th</sup> Parliament, as far as legislation work was concerned, Julia had also drafted a bill on arid and semi arid lands (ASALs) of Kenya. The focus of the bill was to put in a legal framework where government can channel resources to those areas. ASALs, which make up 80 per cent of Kenyan land, had not received adequate attention compared to what was put to the other 20 per cent which, according to her, received over 80 per cent of the resources. The ASALs Bill was to streamline this anomaly. She noted that there was potential for irrigation of this land and exploitation of other resources such as livestock and minerals. The people in these areas do not have to suffer every time there is drought, yet there is so much they can offer. She argued:

It is sad that the people in the ASALs have just been left to herd their camels and goats. They have not be facilitated to use all that land to grow food, let them give us resources, let them become part of the wealth creation of this nation, let them work and they could be more productive. As it is today, we only go to buy meat and we forget that they too can do something to contribute to their own self-reliance and to economic growth (Julia Ojiambo, Nominated MP).

Julia's focus of legislation agenda fits very well with the human development approach. All the bills she outlined fit in very well with issues of social progress, economic growth that achieves equity, efficiency, and participation by all for development. She is also very concerned about issues of sustainability, which she gave as the reason she was very committed to developing legal frameworks so that programmes started by one government could be continued and sustained even after change of regime.

Besides legislation work, Julia still found time to work with her constituents (Funyula) despite being a nominated MP in the 9<sup>th</sup> Parliament. Her main focus, like Christine Mango quoted earlier in this chapter, was on civic education especially on the issue of HIV and AIDS. Funyula constituency faces the common challenges of border locations where there are many people doing business between two countries. Busia town in the constituency is a very busy border town between Kenya and Uganda, hence issues of HIV and AIDS are critical. She helped with creating awareness on issues of prevention and general management of the epidemic. AIDS had claimed a lot of lives and no leader could afford to ignore the issue. She noted:

We have lost a lot of people in our community. We don't have many middle-aged people, and you'll find families of very young people now, the boys and girls marrying at a very early age. So I put a lot of emphasis on education and then I've continued with this civil awareness so we do workshops for men and women together to sensitize them on family life and importance of behaviour change. Also, using my expertise on nutrition, I help by proving counselling on issues of good nutrition for those infected. I have stressed to the community that food security is one of the most important ways of achieving good health (Julia Ojiambo, Nominated MP).

Njoki Ndung'u is another of the participants who did a lot of work on legislation. When asked what she focused on while in the 9<sup>th</sup> Parliament, she described how her entering parliament only helped to put the work she had already started into a national and global level. Her focus as a human rights lawyer was always on issues of equity, and especially women's empowerment. On joining parliament, she found that even though the environment was very women-unfriendly, she was not going to give up. She observed that the Kenyan parliament had never passed any women-friendly laws before 2003:

Before the 9<sup>th</sup> Parliament, there has never been any gender friendly legislation, no matter how you look at it. There was the repeal of the Affiliation Act; there was the Marriage Bill that failed, the Affirmative Action motion didn't go far; so every time something to do with women's rights would come it would fail. When you look at the Succession Act, which was passed in 1981, the rights given to men and women are different; women do not have equal rights as men. Fortunately, I realized what kind of environment I was getting into but when I look back at what I've done in the 9<sup>th</sup> Parliament, its because I looked at the environment and decided I had to learn how to work with it (Njoki Ndung'u, Nominated MP).

Njoki pointed out that as women parliamentarians in the 9<sup>th</sup> Parliament, the first issue that they came together to campaign for was zero rating on sanitary towels. The campaign started early into the 9<sup>th</sup> Parliament in May 2003. But given that the budget is read in June, they did not manage to have that passed until the following year. Since majority of the women MPs were in parliament for the first time, they needed time to understand the budgeting process. Njoki explained that the day to day and practical workings of parliament could

sometimes hinder women from fronting their agenda. This is mainly due to the amount of lobbying that must go on behind the scenes before anything can actually go through. These challenges notwithstanding, the women MPs were able to engage Treasury by August 2003, hence were in good time to have the provision for zero rating of sanitary pads included in the 2004 budget. This was made possible by support from some women-friendly and gender-sensitive men at the Treasury. The fact that all the women parliamentarians were united about the issue also made the lobbying easier.

Further, Njoki observes that issues to do with education of girls tend to face less resistance from men than other more radical changes such as power sharing or where patriarchal and masculine structures seemed under threat. This could explain the reason why gender mainstreaming has been best achieved in the education sector, compared to other sectors in Kenya. The issue of making it easy for boys and girls to access education and reduce their hurdles seems less threatening to the male folk. This was confirmed when Njoki led her colleagues in drafting the Sexual Offences Bill. The bill faced some opposition and at one time it seemed like it would never pass. However, Njoki and her colleagues were able to lobby those men who were positive about the bill and, even though a lot of changes had to be made in the original document, they succeeded. It became the very first women-friendly law to ever be passed in the history of Kenya. Even though she led the process, she received a lot of support from other women MPs and from women's civil society organizations (CSOs). Julia Ojimbo also commended the support to women parliamentarians by CSOs, especially those working on women issues.

Njoki also wanted to draft a bill on labour issues to make workplaces friendlier to women. Fortunately, before she could draft the bill, the Ministry of Labour had its own bill touching on women's issues, such as maternity leave. She found it better to work behind the scenes with the ministry and, through these efforts, a law requiring that Kenyan women would be entitled to three months maternity and not forfeit their annual leave and men to get two weeks paternity leave was passed during the 9<sup>th</sup> Parliament.

Coming up with four months maternity leave required wit and experience on Njoki's part. The Federation of Kenya Employers (FKE) were very unhappy with this law because the minister had proposed two months of paid maternity leave, but with a clause that the government would compensate employers for that. Njoki knew that this would not pass given the cost implication on the part of the government, and the fact that employers too needed to take that responsibility. When the bill came to the house:

I amended the clause and changed paid maternity leave from two to three months and I introduced a new clause of two weeks paternity leave. I am proud that even though FKE are very unhappy with this provision, it is now law contained in the Employment Act. FKE can be unhappy but this is women's right and employers have to take social responsibility too (Njoki Ndung'u, Nominated MP).

Even some women were not happy with this provision because they said that it would make employers avoid hiring women because of this long leave. However, issues of human rights are hard issues and sometimes people may think the person fighting for them is the enemy. When people become accustomed to being denied their rights, they take it that that is how things should be. In some of these issues, legislation needs to go hand in hand with civic

education so that people know that they are not being done a favour but are getting what they deserve. Child bearing contributes to the economy, just like working. There is therefore need to create awareness on gender issues and women's empowerment to all citizens.

Issues of human trafficking were another area of interest to Njoki during her time in parliament. This has been a major problem facing Kenyans and especially young women and men who are promised lucrative jobs abroad but end up working as sex slaves. A Trafficking Bill had already been drafted but since bills can take very long if at all they ever see the light of day, she worked on amending existing employment laws to introduce a penalty for trafficking. In addition, during her five years in parliament, she was instrumental in amending the Political Parties Act. From her experience working with politicians and her knowledge of how difficult it can be for women to manage to work with the existing political parties, this was an area she was convinced would help make the political environment a bit friendlier to women. The Political Parties Act provided that for a political party to get registered, one third of its registered officials must be women. This was to assist women find their rightful place in politics, whose structures are controlled by men and nothing short of affirmative action would change this situation even as other measures were put in place.

It has been noted elsewhere (for example Lawless and Fox, 2001) that oppressive party politics that had characterized Kenya politics for many years had hindered the active participation of women. As a lawyer who understood how political parties work, Njoki focused on legislation that would help improve the situation through legislation and affirmative action.

When asked how she managed to achieve so much within such a short time and being a first time MP, she noted that she benefited a great deal from her earlier work on legal issues, gender equality, human rights and her working with politicians as a member of the civil society. This would not have been possible without that kind of background. This point concurs with the argument made by Lawless and Fox (2001) that Kenyan women politicians may not always focus on women's issues and more so issues of gender equality. They too are products of a patriarchal system and their own socialization, backgrounds and in some cases allegiance to the government of the day may result to them not seeing the need to pay attention to issues that matter most to other women. Most of the women in this study had a background of working on gender equality and women's empowerment issues, which confirms the theory that it is not just the numbers that count, but the quality and substance of the women who get into political leadership (Lawless and Fox, 2001).

Just like Julia Ojiambo, Njoki's work did not end with pushing for women-friendly legislation. She recognizes that making laws is a good beginning but for laws to be effective, a lot of work needs to be done in educating citizens about their rights. She also recognizes the need to mentor young girls on leadership. As a leader who became recognized nationally and internationally, she feels that she needs to be a role model for young women. On the latter, she noted:

About three years ago, I initiated a project we referred to as the 'big sister project'. Through this project, I have been going to constituencies all over Kenya. I've gone to over 60 schools now and hopefully by the end of the year I hope to have reached half a million girls. I talk to girls aged between 12 and 18. I talk to them about careers using my own experience to

inspire them. I also take the opportunity with the girls to create awareness about the Sexual Offences Act. I normally go with a group of people who give these girls skills on how to protect themselves against rape. I also take sanitary towels to these trips and give to the needy girls. The aspect of big sister makes the girls feel comfortable with us and they can ask us questions, which they may not ask their parents or even their teachers. This has been a huge success. Initially, I used my own money to do this work, although I have been lucky to get funds from some donors after they heard about this project (Njoki Ndung'u, Nominated MP).

As part of this study, in addition to the women leaders interviewed, the CDF websites of three prominent women MPs, all of whom were members of the 9th Parliament, were reviewed. This was with a view to finding out what their development priorities were, as revealed by the level of funding these priorities had been allocated in their CDF kitties since the fund was instituted in the 2003/2004 financial year. The three women MPs were Martha Karua (MP for Gichugu), Beth Mugo (MP for Dagoretti) and Charity Ngilu (MP for Kitui Central).

From the observations made from the websites, it may have been too early to tell definitively whether the women MPs priorities differed in major ways from those of their male colleagues. This is especially because at the time the fund was instituted, the country was just coming out of a period of serious economic depression, and basic infrastructure such as roads, education and health facilities all over the country were in poor state. Therefore, Members of Parliament across the board tended to concentrate on the basics of schools, water, health and transportation (roads, bridges, river drifts, etc) as the major priorities in their constituencies, though actual levels of funds allocated varied according to need. A look at the CDF websites for the constituencies represented by these three women revealed some interesting trends.

The website for the Gichugu CDF Fund, for example, revealed that in the first year of the implementation of CDF (2003-2004), some of the funds given were allocated to a market (it is assumed it was either to be constructed or rehabilitated). This would seem odd considering that many of the other (male) MPs whose CDF websites were visited allocated the first disbursement to schools, water and health projects. Indeed, the Gichugu CDF stands out in that none of the funds in the first lot were allocated to schools, which would seem at odds with conventional wisdom and research quoted earlier in this study, which established that women leaders give priority to education issues. It would be interesting to find out the reason for this apparent contradiction from Martha Karua. It may be that schools were not a pressing need in her constituency, though subsequent allocations did prioritize schools. There may also have been a gender dimension to this choice. Women tend to benefit more from local markets, as observed earlier by Esther, the parliamentary aspirant from Limuru. This is because in many cases, women are the ones who carry out the retail trading at the local level. The project may, thus, have been conceived with a mind to assist women economically.

The trend to concentrate on projects that empower people economically seemed to have continued with the second allocation of funds by the Gichugu CDF fund (2004-2005). Although this time around schools got the lion's share of the funds (41.8%), a significant portion (17%) went to horticulture and dairy farming projects in the constituency. While it is

not certain exactly who these funds were spent on, this again is a departure from the trend in other constituencies where the priorities continued to be schools, water, electricity and health projects. This focus on getting the funds to benefit actual people immediately (rather than hope that when one takes care of the big issues, the benefits will trickle down) seems to be unique to this constituency, at least up to this point, and among the constituencies observed.

Review of the Dagoretti constituency CDF also revealed some unique trend. Among all the other constituencies visited, Beth Mugo's constituency is the only one that had put up a project that, it is assumed, was meant to generate money for other further projects, in the way of a multi-purpose social hall. This is an important step towards not just further income generation, but sustainability in the long run, as CDF funds may not always be available. This approach seems to be in line with the emphasis on sustainable growth that is an important tenet of the human development approach.

Kitui Central constituency CDF largely concentrated on the common projects mentioned earlier, and particularly water and schools. It is noteworthy, however, that emphasis was given to educational bursaries for needy children (bursary funding appeared among the top three priorities in three out of the five years reviewed). The emphasis on bursaries in Ngilu's constituency seems to be more than was given in other constituencies. This again may have to do with the fact that women, as mentioned earlier, tend to gravitate towards projects that assist children and the less fortunate in general. This tendency has already been seen earlier in the case of Christine Mango and Esther Keino, both of whom had started projects for orphaned children, with the latter also running a bursary fund for needy girls.

An interesting observation in the case of the three constituencies, and which it is assumed contributed to the unique aspects of the funds allocation detailed above, is the fact that their CDF committees, assuming that their constitution has remained as it was between 2003 and 2007, has relatively higher numbers of women than those of their male counterparts. Gichugu's CDF committee, for example, had 6 women and 7 men, while Dagoretti's had 5 women and 8 men. This is in great contrast to a constituency such as Kaiti, where the CDF committee had only 2 women (the mandatory minimum required by law) and 11 men. It seems obvious that women MPs influenced the appointment of members to the CDF committees to ensure a high representation of women (a localized form of affirmative action), and this 'critical mass' presence may have brought about the deviations from the norm witnessed in the prioritization of funding areas detailed above.

It would appear, then, that the women interviewed and those whose CDF websites were visited seemed to follow a human development approach to development. This approach calls for politics and political institutions to promote human development and safeguard the freedom and dignity of all people. This is the path that the women leaders, with one exception, seemed to follow, a path that is worth nurturing and encouraging. It is a path that needs more publicity through such studies, which will make the public aware of women's style of leadership.

## Chapter 6

# Challenges and Support Networks of Women in Politics

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The previous chapter explores women and men's perspectives to development and how these perspectives differ. In this chapter, focus will be on the challenges that women face when they vie for political office, and once elected or nominated. It will also focus on the support networks that help women survive in a turf that is predominantly male. The discussion takes a thematic manner, with the specific themes being family issues, political parties, finances, gender-based violence and mentors.

### Family Issues

The women were asked about the challenges they face and the opportunities available in order to identify ways in which those supporting women politicians could help them overcome some of the hurdles. The private challenges of family, and especially husbands, are explored.

Studies from different parts of the world suggest that women's social obligations may have a negative impact on their career progression (Romanin and Over, 1993 in Australia; Blackmore, 1999; Moore, 1999 in Israel; Morley, 1999 in Europe; and Coleman, 2002 in the UK). In Romanin and Over's study (1993), men and women who held a full time appointment at lecturer level and above in Australian universities in 1988 were compared in terms of the career paths they followed, geographic mobility, domestic responsibilities, work roles and levels of performance as academics. The women in this study had more often spent a period outside the workforce or in part-time employment due to childcare responsibilities. The findings of this survey showed that there were more women than men combining full-time work and household labour. However, even when numbers of children and their ages were considered, there were no differences between men and women in self-rated performance in such academic roles as teaching, research and administration. The responsibilities that women have outside work contribute to attitudes of male managers, which brand women as lazy or uncommitted to professional growth (Kamau, 2002; 2007). In politics, such attitudes can influence decisions about who will be elected, nominated or given a prominent position in a political party.

Many Kenyan career women give first priority to their families, not because they lack commitment to professional growth but because they have been socialized that a good



woman thinks of her family first (Kanake, 1995; Onsongo, 2005; Maathai, 2006). In a study of senior university women in Kenya, Kamau (2007) found that many women would rather wait until their children have matured before they consider making major career moves such as taking doctoral studies. In politics, the situation seems similar as many women would rather join politics when children have grown up or after their husbands have passed on. This has been the case with a number of women politicians, who joined politics after the demise of their husbands.

Husband support is generally ranked very highly in women's success. This could partly explain why majority of the women in politics are either widowed, divorced or never married. The married ones have had to get the full support of their husbands before joining politics. The same does not apply to men, many of who have joined politics with fairly young families and whose wives are expected to not only support them, but also continue looking after the children.

Nyiva Mwendwa and Julia Ojiambo joined politics when they were in their early thirties and when already married and with young families. This is an indication that there are exceptions. In Nyiva's case, her husband, who also had political ambitions, allowed her to go at it first. When asked how this happened, she said: 'It was in agreement. We agreed with my late husband that I was a better politician. We thought he should go before but then we said I would do better at that particular time. And that is how I managed to get in at the age of 32 years.' As to how she managed with young children (aged 8 and 6 when she joined politics), she noted:

It was quite trying. Whenever I would leave they would say: 'Mummy are you going again?' but with a supportive husband, who could spend time with them, it was easier (Nyiva Mwendwa, MP 9th Parliament).

Nyiva said that her husband would spend time with the children when she was out in her campaigns. The husband fully supported her financially, which was very useful because she would not have managed without his full support. She also noted that many women have financial challenges because men generally decide how family finances are spent, and if they are not supportive of a woman's political ambition, chances of managing in politics, which is an expensive exercise, become dramatically reduced.

Julia Ojiambo was not explicit about her husband's support or lack of it. She and the husband hailed from the same constituency and, therefore, she had no challenge as to whether it was her home or not.

Mumbi Ng'aru, Esther Mwaura and Ruth Oniang'o were still married and living with their husbands and, therefore, a question was asked concerning support from their husbands, or how the husbands reacted to their political lives. Here are some extracts:

I like to call a spade a spade. I am very lucky because probably I've passed the age where he would really have intimidated me to submission. He agreed for me to be nominated into the Council. That time he didn't have a problem but later when I became mayor, I started noticing some changes. He seemed more insecure about my new position. We had lived in the same town for over 30 years, and for all these years I was known as Mama Githinji (mother of their son). Now this changed and I became 'Her Worship the Mayor'. We would go to the Club where for many years he was the one who took us there but as mayor, I had

the membership paid by the Council. Suddenly roles had been reversed. I had become the focus of attention—this was not easy for him (Mumbi Ng'aru, former Thika mayor).

On how Mumbi handled this sense of insecurity and the sudden change of roles:

I faced my husband and told him: Look Daktari (that's what we call him) when you rose to the top in the corporate world, I stood by you; and I reminded him how I backed him making sure I was taking care of the family. He would travel the world and I would be there for him. I told him 'It's my time now. Stand with me, and you know what, if you don't I'll still stand. I've made a decision. I think this made him to reflect back on where we had come from and he decided to let me be. These days, he respects me and supports me fully. But I can tell you it's not easy as a woman politician (Mumbi Ng'aru, former Thika mayor).

These are sentiments that many women around the world would identify with. Leonard (2001) notes in her research of women's careers that husbands may not support the idea of their partners pursuing higher degrees. They can actually prove a bigger obstacle than children. He reckons that wives are more likely to support their husbands through the task of completing a doctorate degree than husbands, who may threaten or even ask for a divorce. In Probert's (2005) study of women academics in Australia, it emerged that eight of ten women had broken up with their partners while they were studying for their PhDs.

Politics may actually be more threatening than academic progress, as was attested by Ruth Oniang'o, who was already a professor by the time she was nominated. When asked how her husband responded to her nomination, she responded:

You know I have always been busy even as a professional. I started being busy when my last born was 8 years old. I breastfed all five children. I waited until my last born was a little bigger. I held back my career, then I started travelling and I've just been very busy but am in a field which doesn't have too many professionals. I am a food and nutrition scientist. I've been in international committees and so on. As I travelled as a professional, you know, it was no problem. Let me become an MP, I think my husband first and foremost had a problem dealing with that and so would any husband. The visibility was different, the environment you are working in is different, politics and the way it is viewed by the public is different from academia (Ruth Oniang'o, Nominated MP, 9th Parliament).

On how she dealt with that sudden insecurity from a man who had always been supportive, also a professor, she said:

I just resorted to prayer. I've been a prayerful person and I've been telling my colleagues, somebody asked me yesterday, 'if you were to advise women how they should prepare themselves to campaign...' I said, 'Be spiritual, just pray'. We are the praying gender, because when you pray other things open up, whether you should have resources, how to deal with the media, gutter press, crowds, constituents and so on. So I resorted to that and I must say now four and a half years later Mzee (husband) is coming around. He's not coming out telling me 'I am supporting you in politics' but I think he's seeing that his wife has remained the same Ruth that he knew (Ruth Oniang'o, Nominated MP, 9th Parliament)'.

Ruth had no challenges with the children, because like in the case of Mumbi, they were grown up and were all away studying in the US. Ruth further noted that she did not bring politics into the house and neither did she rub it into the children's minds. She said that her

children knew what they wanted to know, they read or other people told them, 'This is how your Mom is', but they were not as political themselves. She, however, noted that one of her sons who was still in the US had promised to come and help her in the campaign. Ruth said that the world of politics was not easy for women.

It's a tricky world for women coz we worry what the children will think about us as we go into politics, we worry about security, when we are mentioned adversely in the gutter press, what will they think? I think they worry more about their mother than they would about their dad (Ruth Oniang'o, Nominated MP, 9th Parliament).

Of the three women, Esther Wanjiku Mwaura was the youngest, with three young children aged between 15 and 6 years. She had this to say about her young family and her husband:

I have quite a stable family and I would say my husband is very very supportive. He's not a politician and he is very quiet. He doesn't want to get involved but he's been of very high support...you know I have to go to churches in the constituency and I can't carry my children to all these churches so you find that my husband is left to perform that role, taking care of their spiritual life. These days I am away all week-it's a lot of sacrifice (Esther Mwaura, parliamentary aspirant 2007).

It may be difficult to tell if Esther's husband would retain the same attitude even if she were to become an MP. On this, Njoya (2008) argues for the need to not only focus on changing women only, but also the way men are socialized so that they do not feel inferior or threatened when their wives achieve more than them.

## Political Parties

Political parties are 'associations formally organized with the explicit and declared purpose of acquiring and/or maintaining legal control, either singly or in coalition with other similar associations, over the personnel and the policy of government of an actual or prospective state' (Women Direct Service Centre, 2006: 6-7). In the legislative systems of many countries, political parties are the vehicle through which candidates are elected into legislative bodies and local authorities. Therefore, political parties are an important part of a country's democratic system and are responsible for 'selecting, grooming and supporting candidates for political leadership and governance positions' (Women Direct Service Centre, 2006).

In Kenya, women's representation in political parties and within the leadership positions in political parties is low. This is in spite that the manifestos of most political parties purport to support women's leadership within political structures. This low representation translates into comparatively few women getting the opportunity to be nominated on party tickets to vie for political office. The nomination process of many of these political parties, particularly the major ones, is flawed to the extent that in many cases, deserving candidates are actually rigged out of the exercise. Women candidates are especially vulnerable as they are perceived as the weaker and more expendable candidates (Nzomo, 2003; AWC Features, 2004; The Women's Shadow Parliament-Kenya and HiVos, 2008). Christine Mango, for example, notes that she was almost rigged out in the NARC nominations in 2002, and attributes this to the fact that the men who drive the political parties influence the outcome of nominations. In her own words:

I was nearly rigged out but I had to fight it out. Parties are dominated by men so you never know what they are up to, so you always have to have plan A and B. Political parties as it is, women join but unfortunately men don't seem to take women seriously, unfortunately (Christine Mango, elected MP, 9th Parliament).

This manipulation of the nomination process creates a scenario where relatively few women end up getting nominated on major party tickets, and especially in these parties' strongholds, which greatly reduces their chances of getting elected. However, the situation is gradually improving, as evidenced by the fact that in the 2007 general election, a total of 15 women parliamentary candidates were elected on the tickets of major parties, ODM and PNU, and other minor parties. Later in the year, after the death of Kipkalia Kones, his wife Beatrice was elected and a sister to the late Lorna Laboso, Dr Joyce Laboso, was also elected. The election of these two women brought the total number of women elected to 16, with 6 of them appointed Cabinet ministers from a total of 40 ministries (still below 30%). Another six women were nominated. The year 2008, therefore, had the largest number of women in parliament at 22. However, out of 222 MPs, this is still much below the required critical mass of at least 40 per cent, which would mean at least 88 women in parliament.

Lack of support for women candidates is not unique to Kenya. Jewell and Whicker (1993: 707), commenting on the state of affairs in the United States, note that 'in the past... neither Democratic nor Republican parties actively pursued women to be candidates for state office, with a few exceptions, nor have they consistently provided adequate support to those women who were candidates.'

At the time of this research, Kenya had a multiplicity of political parties, many of them briefcase outfits without structures. The women in this study lamented that Kenyan political parties were no more than personality cults, tribal groupings or outfits set up to sell nomination certificates and not organizations based on ideology. Even though the smaller parties serve as alternative routes to nomination for candidates, and particularly for women and men rigged out of nomination by the larger political parties, many end up not sending a single representative to parliament or to local authorities, as they simply do not enjoy the kind of grassroots support required to win elections. There have been exceptions to this rule. In the 2007 general elections, for example, three women, Prof. Hellen Sambili, Jebii Kilimo and Wavinya Ndeti were elected on fringe parties (UDM, KENDA, and CCU, respectively) in regions considered to be ODM and ODM-K strongholds. These are unique cases where the electorate seems to have focused more on the person than the party, which is relatively uncommon in Kenyan politics. All the other women were elected on major parties of ODM, PNU, KANU and NARC-Kenya.

The fluidity of the political party situation in Kenya does not augur well for women candidates. Since the advent of multi-party politics in Kenya, every presidential and parliamentary election has been preceded by a realignment of political forces in the country, with new political parties being formed and old ones discarded, again unfortunately based more on the need to win elections rather than on any real ideology. The situation works well for old political hands (most of whom are men) that are well known by the electorate, as their supporters will move with them from one party to the next, but may work against upcoming politicians, especially women, who do not have the opportunity to build their profiles within a stable political party's structure before running for elective office. On the

other hand, it may work to create a situation where one is elected because of being in the 'right' party at election time, but subsequent changes in the political arena work against their re-election. This may have been the case with Christine Mango, who was elected in 2002 on the popular 'NARC Wave', but who was unable to clinch nomination on the ODM ticket in 2007, and therefore did not vie in spite of her impressive development record as noted earlier.

The negative effect of the fluidity of the political party situation is also demonstrated by Ruth Oniang'o's dilemma. She was nominated to parliament by KANU, the oldest political party in Kenya, even though she did not seek that nomination and seems not to have been particularly supportive of the party itself. However, at the time of the study, she had decided that she would vie for parliamentary election in her constituency but she had no intention of seeking nomination by KANU because, presumably, of the party's weakened position and lack of popular support among her constituents. She would have to shop for another party, hopefully one that was at the time popular among her constituents (as this is usually a more important consideration than ideology) and hope not to be rigged out if she won the nomination. At the time of the interview, she had no idea what party she would be seeking nomination from. She eventually ran on PNU, but the party turned out to be very unpopular in her area and, therefore, she lost despite her confidence that her development record would speak for itself.

Esther Keino also faced a similar dilemma. She was nominated by KANU but, unlike Ruth, had supported the party, but was not sure whether the party would still be in existence as a viable party at the time of the election, considering that it had already split into factions. In her own words:

...at this time, it's hard to say because the situation is very fluid but it's my wish to stand in KANU. I've never changed my mind about it but will it be there? If it will be there and it will be a viable party, then it will be the party I'll definitely run in... (Esther Keino, Nominated MP, 9th Parliament).

Esther Keino was nominated by ODM-Kenya, which was not the most popular party in her area as ODM was the main party in Rift Valley. She too did not make it to the 10th Parliament.

A related concern is that parties in Kenya have what are referred to as 'owners', i.e. the party leaders who pull the strings from behind the scenes, and who in most cases are men. Keino herself alluded to this when she noted:

I think the challenges in political parties have to do with '*KANU iko na wenyewe*' (it has owners) so I think that you have to be seen to be someone useful to be given a place in the party... (Esther Keino, Nominated MP, 9th Parliament).

This comment was rather strange coming from one who had been nominated. This, however, may indicate that women's nomination may only be a token to please women folk by simply following the gender parity rules without any real change of will to be inclusive in totality. Indeed, it has been observed that '...political parties in Kenya do not truly represent the aggregate interests of society, rather mostly the interests of the male elite and particularly

the so-called 'party owners' (Women Direct Service Centre, 2006: 7). Many of the major political parties have 'owners', and these are the people in many cases who decide who will be nominated on their party tickets either implicitly (by giving the nod to a particular candidate) or explicitly (by ensuring that their candidate of choice is rigged in). Owners of political parties influence who gets into leadership positions, as Keino observed when she noted that 'one had to be seen to be someone useful to be given a place in the party'. This usefulness may also be fluid as those found to be useful in one election may not be so in the next one. Remaining useful may also have some gender implications.

## Finances

As mentioned earlier, financing the campaign process is an uphill task for most aspiring women politicians. Mitullah (2003) reports that two of the women elected in Kenya's 9th Parliament indicated that they had spent Ksh 800,000 and Ksh 1.3 million, respectively, for the campaigns. These figures may have been low for the hotly contested 2007 elections. Campaign expenditures which, as noted by Mitullah (2003), include nomination expenses, printing of fliers and hand bills, hiring of public address systems, mobile phones, agents' fees, campaigners' expenses, hospitality, transportation, accommodation and subsistence for candidate's team must be met.

Finances came out as a major challenge that women face, even though men also face this challenge. However, given the gender dimensions of wealth distribution in Kenya, this problem definitely affects women more than men. This again is not just a Kenyan problem, as Matland and Ballington (quoted in Women Direct Service Centre, 2006: 11) note that 'it is widely accepted that despite their large representation and their significant contribution to countries' economies, women fail to have access to essential development resources and consequently tend to have less power and fewer resources than men in general.'

Priscah Ouma (Kisumu mayor at the time of this study) voiced the challenge of lack of financial resources that women aspirants/politicians face when she notes that '...first of all, a woman will have nothing not even a title deed to charge to get that loan...', referring to the fact that in most cases, family property that is usually used as collateral in bank loans is more likely to be registered in the name of male family members.

The women interviewed had gone about the challenge of finances in different ways. Some of them, such as Christine Mango and Esther Mwaura, had used their own funds. Others, Esther Keino for example, had received support from pro-women NGOs and foreign embassies, which supported them in training and employing mobilizers/campaigners, etc.

One of the recurring concerns in Kenyan political campaigns is that candidates often have to bribe voters and buy votes. Mitullah (2003: 231) notes that in addition to maintenance of vehicles and transport costs, buying of votes and bribing of voters takes a large proportion of a candidates' budget. Some of the women interviewed expressed concern that voters expect to be bribed, but mentioned that they were trying to break this culture and do things differently. Esther Mwaura, for example, noted:

I've also been to campaign fields where I've had youth saying they will remove the doors of my vehicle because they think am the only one who doesn't give money and the other

politicians will come and they will give them 5,000. Who do I think I am, and I have refused to give out this money like to dish out 20,000 for them to share because you see it's not about me getting this position, it is about me contributing to changing people's attitude so am doing a very different thing from what my opponents are doing (Esther Keino, parliamentary aspirant).

Esther Keino also attested to having had to deal with the fact that people in her constituency expected her to give them money because they were used to politicians doing this. She had tried to discourage this and observed as follows:

I've asked them not to ask for any money from me. If you come to my house in the morning you'll not find anyone because I've told them I am disabling you if I am giving you money, and they have known it. Initially they were very shocked... (Esther Keino, Nominated MP, 9th Parliament).

It appears then that having more women in politics is likely to have the effect of changing the way political campaigns are run in the country, in making them more issue and not money-oriented. This would help bring about a situation where political offices no longer went to the highest bidder, but to those who truly merited it.

## Gender-Based Violence

The threat of political violence, especially during political campaign periods, continues to be a major challenge to women who aspire to political positions. Omtatah (2008) notes that the threat of violence is often insidiously used by men who pretend to be advocating against it as a way of discouraging women from participating in the electoral process. Likewise, Okumu (2008) also asserts that violence or the threat of it has traditionally been used during electioneering periods to silence aspiring women leaders and women's activism in general. Okumu (2008) attributes gender-based violence to the patriarchy that is so much a part of society. She notes '...it appears that the patriarchal hegemony provides dense institutional supports that socialize men for violence while also obscuring it from public scrutiny.'

Although electoral violence in Kenya in the past has targeted both male and female politicians, the threat is particularly ominous to women due to their weaker physical make-up and peace-loving nature, a fact that seems to further embolden political goons to attack them. The violence meted against women takes various forms. Okumu (2008) outlines these as 'physical, sexual and psychological violence occurring in the family, community and perpetrated or condoned by institutions and lack of law.'

The women interviewed voiced the threat of violence as a concern. Christine Mango, in particular, saw it as a major issue and she had set up a security team to protect her from possible physical attacks and even more audacious violations such as kidnapping on the eve of party nominations. In her words:

Being from the border, you hear a lot of stories of those who want to gun you down and to kidnap you and make you disappear from the face of the earth until nomination is over so you have to be on alert. It's just that bad and it has happened to women aspirants. They banish you, and in my constituency last election, I was supposed to be kidnapped and vanish until elections are over and my opponent would have walked through. So what I

did, I used to campaign during the day and where you sleep nobody knows. The day before the elections, nobody knows where you are sleeping, you just appear and vote and then start moving around. So this time I have to have my *Kamjesh, Jeshi la Mama* because we are dealing with people who are totally unkind (Christine Mango, elected MP, 9th Parliament).

By setting up her own security team, Christine felt that she had to play the male game to survive in their field, an issue raised earlier in this study and well discussed by Njoya (2008). Adelina Mwau also mentioned the threat of violence, and particularly sexual violence as something that is of real concern; she also had to set up a security team to take care of her safety:

That's what I fear most because these elections are going to be very hard for women, because they can use violence, which has a gender aspect to it because women have really come up so they can use the tool of rape as a weapon to silence women. Me I actually fear that most but am trying to...I have youth, young people and am trying to say lets use politics without violence so for me it's truly a challenge (Adelina Mwau, Nominated MP, 9th Parliament).

Anecdotal reports after the elections showed that most of the women who vied had to use the same violent tactics as their male counterparts. Unfortunately, for women, when they get targeted they suffer more than men as most of the attacks may include rape, which is rarely the case with men. Therefore, as Njoya (2008) argues, when we are dealing with systems and structures guided by what he refers to as 'flawed masculinities', then the few women may get 'malestreamed' and no much change will be achieved.

## Mass Media

There is a hypothesis that the media "mirrors" already-existing social norms and behaviours. In contrast, some say the media is important in creating or shaping those norms and behaviours. Whichever side of the argument one takes, the media plays a central role in shaping and influencing people's attitudes and behaviours. It has a profound impact on people's attitudes and perceptions. In the case of women and leadership, the media plays a major role in making women leaders who may never have been known nationally to become national figures. Even though she has at times had problems with the media, Martha Karua, for example, still owes a lot to the media as it is through it she got to be known as a leader worth paying attention to. Mass media in Kenya has over the years devoted significant time reporting issues specific to women's rights' abuses and intervention strategies (Association of Media Women of Kenya, 2006: 1). Such media attention has at times positively influenced responses to the circumstances under which Kenyan women find themselves. However, the report points out that the same media has encouraged negative perceptions and stereotyping of women. Most of the times, the media covers women either as victims or when they fit into the stereotypical roles associated with the female gender. It is on rare occasions that the media goes out of its way to present women as able leaders who contribute positively to national development. Omtatah (2008: 60) questions "What good can come out of a media that constantly portrays women as consumable sex objects?" Such portrayal can be picked from most media reporting in Kenya. Onyango-Obbo (2010), although writing about Obama as the first Black President of the United States and the challenges he faces for being a pioneer of what he refers to as 'curse of novelty', compares this with the first women



parliamentarians in Kenya and Uganda. Of interest is the choice of words to describe these women. The women 'struggled to be seen as something more than a set of breasts, headscarves, and golden earrings to lend colour to institutions long dominated by graying, balding, pot-bellied men'. He further notes that the only thing these women were expected to do was to 'push for women's issues', which he gives an example of sexual offences and that success of women parliamentarians beyond these issues has been rare. What surprises one is that sexual offences should be seen as just women's issues, yet they should be a concern of all people, both men and women. In addition, going by the work that the women in this study focused on, it is clear that they focus on human development issues which, even though they may be of more concern to women and girls due to the historical injustices they face, are truly issues for all human beings. This is the kind of media women politicians have to work with.

Further to reporting women as sex objects and subjecting them to a moral criterion not upheld by the rest of society (Omtatah, 2008), the popular media also has a tendency of simply ignoring women. Women are generally invisible from the media as studies have found that, globally, women issues are under-represented in the news. On average 21 per cent of people in the news are women (Institute of Education and Oxfam, 2006). Even when in the news, women are less likely to be the central figures, and they tend to feature outside the serious part of news agenda.

Engaging with the media was cited as a major challenge for women politicians. Even though the women in this study were in their fifth year in parliament, not much of the great work they talked about in this research had been reported in the popular media. Occasionally, women would be featured but nothing else would be heard about them in a long time unless they were caught in embarrassing situations. However, politicians such as Kalembe Ndile seemed to attract a lot of media attention even though they would be saying nothing of importance to national development. Adelina Mwau commented about this when she noted:

The Kenyan media is not women friendly at all at all, most of what I do as a woman is not seen as newsworthy. My weekends are not newsworthy being with 300 women just for them dancing for themselves because we've always danced for men. Us being able to solidify our power, civic education, that's not news. It's about heckling, it's about what Kalembe Ndile says about Kalonzo Musyoka. Like on Sunday I was in a very important function ... I treasure it, we went to do a *harambee* for a priest who was building a library for the community and I discovered so much about this priest. This even was not reported yet we had media people in the function (Adelina Mwau, Nominated MP).

The women also noted that media has its owners whose interest is profit. Women politicians carrying out development work do not seem to attract the attention of media. Majority of the senior editors in the media are also men, who often seem blind to the development work of women leaders. The women also noted that for one to be reported, money has to change hands, especially if they think they will give you some political mileage. This compounds the financial challenges that women seeking political leadership face. Esther Wanjiku observed:

Before I declared my candidature, I used to be given free air time by some of the local radio stations to talk about my work. But once they know you are a politician, you have to pay

for 15 minutes maybe 40,000 shillings, no matter what agenda you are going to talk about. There is a lot of corruption and I am just realizing this now that I am in politics (Esther Wanjiku, Parliamentary aspirant).

Esther Keino concurred with Wanjiku by noting that besides being in business and corrupt deals, the media has its own agenda and serves certain interests. Even the reporters in the field seem to have little control about what finally gets published or aired. Decisions are made at the head office. Since most media businesses are owned by men, and even the women who work there may be gender blind, it becomes more difficult for women's positive issues to be seen as important issues worth reporting.

Ruth Oniang'o was the only of the interviewees who did not see media as a challenge. She felt that as long as one talks about issues in an informed way, the media will actually seek you out. She noted that sometimes people complain about the media because they do not know how to engage with them. In her term in parliament she had no problem with the media at all. In fact, they would look for her to comment on issues. Sometimes it is politicians who mess themselves and then they blame the media.

## Mentors

The Oxford Dictionary defines a mentor as an 'experienced and trusted advisor.' Omtatah (2008) argues that many women come into politics without the advantage of quality mentoring and hands-on-training, which may explain their lack of skills. While this may be true with regard to training specifically in the political field for many of the women interviewed, most of them cited specific people, either locally or abroad, who had served as role models for them and in some cases inspired them into taking up political office.

Some of the persons cited by many of the women as having served as role models as they grew up were close relatives. Adelina, for example, indicated that her mother, who was also a nominated councillor, was her role model, while Keino mentioned that her grandmother had inspired her. Christine Mango and Mumbi Ng'aru mentioned that their fathers had encouraged them, especially in their pursuit of education.

Other persons cited included former teachers and university lecturers. Adelina, for example, mentioned Dr Eddah Gachukia (who was also a former nominated MP) and Prof. Wanjiku Kabira as having inspired her. Christine Mango mentioned an Israeli lady professor, whom she met in the course of her studies, as having opened her eyes to the fact that women could excel in their chosen careers. Esther Keino mentioned a woman teacher, Mary Were, who was an inspiration to her. The running theme when it came to women teachers as mentors was that these teachers had shown, either by example, by instruction, or both that women could excel in whatever they chose to do, and therefore inspired these women to aim high.

Finally, the women mentioned other politicians, both men and women, and both local and foreign, as having inspired them into politics. Ruth Oniang'o, for example, mentioned Nelson Mandela as her role model. Esther Mwaura had been inspired by Martha Karua, Beth Mugo and Prof. Wangari Maathai, all prominent female members of the 9th Parliament, the latter also being a Nobel Peace Laureate, while both Priscah Ouma and Christine Mango had been inspired by Phoebe Asiyo, a former Member of Parliament who had the distinction of having

persistently pushed for affirmative action while in parliament. Priscah Ouma also cited Tom Mboya as having been her mentor and role model, as well as Grace Ogot, another former member of parliament and Mumbi Ng'aru, former mayor of Thika and one of the women interviewed in this study. Mumbi herself cited Raila Odinga, a prominent Kenyan politician and present Prime Minister, as having been her mentor, and Charity Ngilu her role model. She also expressed admiration for Joseph Kamotho's (former MP) professionalism.

One of the arguments for having more women in senior positions is that they can act as role models to young women, who can then believe in their own ability to become able leaders. This is especially important in a country where women hold less than 30 per cent of senior positions. The examples of the persons who acted as role models to the women interviewed for this study shows that this theory holds some water. Many of them had admired other women who had risen to senior leadership positions. It was in this breath that they too were asked if they had made any conscious effort to mentor other young women. All the women, except probably Nyiva Mwendwa, felt they had an obligation to not only act as role models from a distance, but to actually act as direct mentors to young women. The big sister project by Njoki Ndung'u and Esther Keino's work with orphan children as described earlier are examples of such mentoring. Esther Wanjiku too had a similar initiative:

I have always encouraged women from my home area to support the rural schools they attended. I later founded a trust in my own community that brought together people who have succeeded in professions and businesses and each of us gives 20,000 shillings per year to support in paying school fees for needy children. I am encouraging young people completing universities to join the trust. This trust has become a very good avenue for giving back. I am also using the campaign as a platform to speak about my own life. Through these talks, I have inspired very many girls and boys too. For them to see one who came from a similar background like theirs and has made it to my level is a huge inspiration. They come and tell me that they hope to one day become like me. Even if I do not make it to parliament, I have changed perceptions of many people about what a woman can do especially because I am the first woman to vie for a parliamentary seat in the constituency (Esther Wanjiku, Parliamentary aspirant).

Role modelling and inspirational communication are some of the qualities for successful leadership. Majority of the women in this study had these qualities. One can look forward to the day when Kenyan leadership will have more women with such qualities, which would give them the critical mass they require to make some significant impact in shaping the future of the country.

## Chapter 7

# Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations

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### Summary

This study sought to explore the experiences of women politicians in the period 2002 to 2007. Due to the challenge of accessing politicians who were in office for the specified period, one of the pilot interviews was carried out with 2007 election parliamentary aspirants. An ex-mayor of Thika, Mumbi Ng'aru, was interviewed as it became difficult to access two of the women mayors holding office at the time of the study. Mumbi Ng'aru was selected for two reasons: one, she was friendly and supportive to this research and two, she had continued to be an active politician especially in political party circles, an area where many women do not seem to perform well as compared to men. Mumbi confirmed during the interview that her party, ODM, had promised her parliamentary nomination. Unfortunately, she did not get nominated despite being the Deputy Secretary General of the party, and the senior-most woman in the party leadership structure.

This study was carried out towards the end of an election year, and this made it a huge challenge. This particular year was chosen for two main reasons. One, it was believed that having spent close to five years in parliament, the women in the study would have had enough time to clearly articulate their achievements, their leadership ideals and visions, challenges and their view of the future in politics. Two, it was hoped that releasing the initial findings just before the election would provide the electorate with the ideals and visions of the women leaders. More often, commentators on women leadership tend to only focus on the weaknesses and hardly on the strengths and achievements of women leaders.

This research was set on the premise that women's perspective in leadership does indeed exist, and that women leaders focus on issues in ways that have been neglected by male leaders. There is thus need to urge the electorate to vote for more women leaders, and political parties to nominate more women in future.

Drawing on women's perception of their vision, mission, achievements, challenges and future plans as a reflexive device, this study makes explicit the embedded male structures in politics, which hinder women's participation right from the grassroots. Even when they get to the top, women still face challenges that make it very difficult for them to operate or even articulate their achievements. The study utilized feminist concepts, theories and

methodology to answer the research question: 'Do women bring a different perspective into politics?'

The findings of the study show that women develop their vision of leadership from experiences they go through as young girls growing up in a society with major gender inequalities. When they get into politics, women's priorities are guided by their vision to see a world where all people get equal opportunities in life. The majority of the women were drawn to the human development approach in the projects that they support. However, the study notes that some women get 'masculinized' and operate in a similar model as men.

Some of the challenges faced by women politicians and those aspiring to political office relate to family issues, resources, political parties, gender-based violence during elections, general insecurity and lack of positive media coverage. The latter creates a situation where voters do not get to know what the women have achieved. The findings also indicate that the societal understandings of able and effective political leadership are very gendered and skewed against women.

## Conclusions

Much of the good work done by women political leaders does not get to the public domain. In the 9th Parliament, for example, the only women perceived by the public to be active were those with ministerial positions, namely Charity Ngilu, Martha Karua and Jebii Kilimo (for the short time she served as Minister). Beth Mugo, as an Assistant Minister in the education docket, also attracted some coverage. Besides Njoki Ndung'u, who gained a lot of publicity due to the Sexual Offences Bill that she championed, the other women were basically unknown to the public. Esther Keino had drawn media attention because she never gave a maiden speech in parliament. When asked in this research why she had not spoken, she noted that being in parliament for the first time required that she understood how business was conducted. Njoki Ndung'u, a first time MP, also confirmed that parliamentary procedures can be very intimidating to first timers. Njoki noted that together with Cecily Mbarire, they were encouraged by a male MP to make their maiden speeches as soon as they could, as this would help them to get used to speaking from early on. Therefore, having a mentor in the house is crucial for new comers, especially women who clearly find themselves as a minority, a situation that can be intimidating even to the most courageous of women.

Women's political leadership tends to focus on the needs of the vulnerable and the disadvantaged. This is an area that seems to be neglected by the male-dominated political leadership in Kenya where the needs of the weak and vulnerable are rarely given priority. Contrary to the popular perception that women politicians focus on 'soft issues', the issues that the women in this study spearheaded cut across all aspects of development. The advantage, however, was that the women were keen to see people developed in an all round manner; a manner that would make them better people than they were before the initiative.

An interview with one of the women who was in her third term in parliament showed that when women stay in politics for long, and especially if they continue to be a minority in a very masculine political climate, they may undergo a process of 'masculinization', where they tend to do things in the traditional, masculine and patriarchal ways. They may find

it very difficult to challenge the 'menstream' issues, and may find it easier to 'join them if you can't beat them'. Due to the small representation of women in predominantly male organizations, they may be subjected to treatment that compromises the contributions they could make as politicians.

However, looking at the issues almost all the women interviewed said they had passion for and had focused on, there is an indication that if there was a critical mass of women in political leadership and women who support the cause of gender equity, equality and justice, then much more can be achieved towards development that takes on board gender issues.

In order to assist more women to succeed in elective politics, it is apparent that a combination of issues needs to be addressed, and there is no one size that fits all. The recommendations drawn from this study try to look at the various areas that require emphasis to facilitate election of more women, and to assist those already elected to have a more positive and visible impact as leaders.

## Recommendations

In view of the findings of this study, a number of recommendations can be made to women as individuals, to women aspiring to be politicians, to women already in parliament, to society or the community of voters, to NGOs and CSOs that want to help more women get elected, and to educators and other people involved in shaping future men and women leaders.

These recommendations are made under the backdrop of many other conflicting realities with regard to women's successful participation in politics. In almost all the recommendations, there will be some exceptions to the rule. Examples would be when we recommend that resources are a key factor in helping women and men succeed in politics, yet there are examples of women who have had a lot of resources at their disposal and who seem to have fulfilled all that was required to succeed, yet lost to men. This is not unique to women as there are also men who loose elections even when they have resources at their disposal. Also, women married away from their constituencies of birth may not be elected, yet there are women who have defeated fairly strong men candidates, yet they were married away from their constituencies.

Cultural practices, which seem to work against women's empowerment, may be blamed for lack of support for women politicians. Rift Valley Province, which has a large number of communities that retain some cultural practices that disadvantage women, has the highest number of elected women in the 10th Parliament. On the other hand, other provinces such as Nairobi and Central that may claim higher levels of education still lag behind in the number of women parliamentarians. There is need for specific case studies of the individual women politicians to establish the factors that work for them, which women from other provinces could learn from. It could be that politics can be very contextual and time-specific, and that what works in one place and time may not be applicable in another place and time, gender notwithstanding.

Women also need to position themselves in political parties. However, this too has been challenged by the fact that in the 2007 elections, some women who were extremely well

positioned in the well established political parties such as ODM, PNU and KANU did not get elected or even nominated. Examples include Mumbi Ng'aru, who had secured her nomination certificate even before the election, yet in the end she was not nominated. Julia Ojiambo too was a leader of a political party and was a running mate to Kalonzo Musyoka, yet she was not nominated even though it is understood she had been promised nomination in case she lost the election. Anecdotal information confirms that she gave up her presidential candidature when it was agreed that even if she would not be elected, the party would nominate her. Other factors other than gender seem to have taken over in some of these cases. The reverse happened to some women who were little known nationally, and who vied under small parties that were not dominant in their areas and who still managed to get elected.

None of the women interviewed for this study were either elected or nominated into the 10th Parliament. All except Njoki Ndung'u vied. Follow up case studies would be useful to establish why they were not re-elected or nominated.

### ***Recommendations to individual women***

In some cases, the paucity of women in prominent leadership positions can be attributed to personal factors such as lack of self-esteem and confidence, limited aspirations in management, and lack of motivation and ambition to accept the challenges of leadership. Esther Keino and Ruth Oniang'o stated that their nominations were a surprise, rather than anything they had planned and worked towards in spite of the fact that their backgrounds and activities prior to the nominations prepared them quite well for new roles as MPs. Other studies on issues of gender and management have indicated that men tend to be much more purposeful about planning their careers and lobbying, while women tend to shy from the same (Kamau, 2002; Onsongo, 2005).

Women need to be more purposeful about working on the personal factors that hinder them from taking their rightful place in society. They need to work on issues of self-esteem and confidence in relation to politics. Although it is apparent that all the women interviewed for this research, and even those who have made it into political leadership, are generally much higher achievers compared to their male counterparts, they do not become as visible as the men do, even when the latter have little to show especially with regard to academic achievements. There is therefore need to recognize that even though academic achievement is extremely important for leaders to be effective, of equal importance is a better understanding of politics and issues of legislation. Women planning to join politics need to familiarize with the political dynamics in Kenya and especially how they can develop clout in a male-dominated parliament. Women, especially given their small numbers, need to work extra hard to become role models for other aspiring women politicians and to act as ambassadors of other women so that the electorate can begin to appreciate their leadership. Women politicians need to appreciate that since they are a minority, they have a much bigger responsibility because everyone is watching how they perform.

At individual level, women need to learn to challenge the traditional gender roles, which leave most domestic responsibilities in their hands. Women with young families seem to face unique challenges, therefore discouraging them from getting into politics. Women also need to negotiate for sharing of domestic responsibilities with other family members and

especially spouses. Esther Mwaura, interviewed in this study, attested to have done this with her husband and this helped her find time for politics. Young women who make it in politics and manage to keep their families together should share their experiences with others, so that they can encourage them. Experiences of women such as Julia Ojiambo, Nyiva Mwendwa, Martha Karua, Cecily Mbarire, among others, who have joined politics while under the age of 35 should be shared with other young women so that they too can feel encouraged that it is possible to combine family with politics.

### ***Women aspiring to be politicians***

Women aspiring to be politicians need to be prepared for the various challenges that go with politics. One way they can do this is by consciously seeking mentorship from those who have made it in politics. Mentorship training would be especially useful if it covers areas such as positioning oneself in political parties, raising campaign resources, working with the media, handling issues to do with security, among others. Fortunately, the number of women who have made it to parliament and local councils is growing and, therefore, women aspiring to get there should be able to find at least one that they can seek out. Women aspirants can also benefit by networking with fellow aspirants. In this regard, it appears that Esther Keino's work with the Rift Valley women parliamentary and civic candidates helped build capacity in preparation for the 2007 general election. This initiative through the Rift Valley Women Empowerment Network may have played a part in the relatively large number of women from the region who managed to get into the 10th Parliament, even though she did not get elected herself.

In a study by the League of Kenya Women Voters (Muriithi, not dated), it was noted that the ability to deliver services is an important consideration for women voters when deciding on whom to vote for. Individual women aspiring to join politics, therefore, need to position themselves well by demonstrating the ability to lead and deliver services to their communities. They can do this through active participation in community projects, or by initiating such projects and mobilizing communities to participate. This would raise their visibility and make plain their leadership abilities and give them experience, which is important to the electorate. Although basing effective leadership on individual service provision may not be the best way of gauging effectiveness, especially where such provision is only pegged on wooing voters, Kenyan voters still view good leadership in terms of the services they can provide. This is likely to remain the same for as long as most voters lack basic services of health, water, education, and housing. Women who position themselves in addressing the basic needs of the voters can then get to parliament and, as legislators, advocate for service provision to the people by the government rather than by individual leaders. The introduction of the CDF is one way that the Kenyan parliament has been able to show that the Government has enough funds to provide such services to the people, and individual MPs can concentrate on other equally important issues of legislation and supervision of such funds.

Another way that individual women with political ambition can get national visibility is to learn how to work with the media. They need to link with media personnel who are friendly to women candidates, and work with them to get themselves profiled long before election time. Many women aspirants have not quite mastered this, but seem to assume that if they went about their tasks in their constituencies, then that was enough in itself. Esther Keino



and Christine Mango appear to have done very good development work, yet not much of that was covered in the media. Women should learn to seek out the media, rather than hope that the media will highlight whatever good they are doing. They should be vocal on issues of national concern, so that they get to be known not only by their constituents but also by the nation at large. People who project innovative development issues would attract the media. Making well informed comments of current affairs in the media would serve to give women visibility. Njoki Ndung'u, a first time MP in the 9th Parliament, became very visible both nationally and internationally partly due to her work in the Sexual Offences Bill, and her ability to engage on current issues, both locally and internationally.

Individual women with political ambitions also need to work towards positioning themselves in political parties in such a way as to improve their profiles and develop clout for their political aspirations. As noted earlier, while political parties are the vehicles through which political aspirants must use to get into political office, these tend to be male-dominated and biased against women in a variety of ways. Women aspirants should, therefore, not shy from actively seeking and campaigning for key positions in political parties. They should hold these parties accountable to execute the gender ratios spelt out in their manifestos and constitutions as concerns leadership positions. They should also speak against marginalization of women in these parties. This will discourage the view, especially among the party leaders, that women are expendable and can be satisfied with peripheral positions at best.

Women politicians also need to form their own parties as long as they meet the requirements of the Political Parties Act. As the women in this study confirmed, parties have owners, and these owners can also be women. Women such as Charity Ngilu, Martha Karua, and Julia Ojiambo have shown that this is not an impossible task. With parties where they have a say, they then can determine the rules that can help more women and other minority groups find a voice in the political class.

### ***Women already in parliament and local government***

The women already in parliament or local government need to ensure that their voices are heard, and that issues of concern to women are kept at the forefront. One way they can do this is to network among themselves by holding regular consultations to discuss issues that affect women differentially, and to strategize on how they can make this part of the legislative agenda. This is in keeping with the fact that, as noted in the study, society at large expects women politicians to represent not just their constituents but women as a whole. Not only will such networking help increase the visibility of women issues, it will also help keep the women leaders accountable to each other and, therefore, offset or at least diminish the likelihood of their becoming masculinized, where they get so engrossed in keeping their positions in a male-dominated parliament that they lose sight of issues that are of concern to their fellow women.

In addition to working with other elected women leaders, women MPs and Councillors need to mentor other women aspiring for political office. This can be done both formally and informally. Formal programmes along the lines of Esther Keino's Rift Valley Women Empowerment Network should be replicated around the country. It can also be done through formal and coordinated outreach programmes to schools and universities, where political

awareness can be provided to young women. Recruitment into political parties should also start at an early age. Women leadership awareness forums should be encouraged right from secondary school, especially targeting young girls so that they can be mentored for political leadership from an early age. Women leaders need to do this not only as an act of service to their fellow women, but also in recognition that the more women there are in parliament, the better for the women rights agenda. The Kenya Association of Women Parliamentarians (KEWOPA) in partnership with NGOs working towards increasing women's representation in politics should consider supporting such initiatives. Individual women politicians should also consciously look for opportunities to mentor young women into politics, to demonstrate to them that it is a career that ordinary women can pursue. At the moment, many girls think that becoming a member of parliament is beyond their reach.

Women in parliament must make use of the media in a more purposeful and aggressive manner. Women should not assume that the good they do will speak for itself. They must let the world know what they are doing, or what their views are on issues of national importance. They must resist the temptation to be self-effacing and modest about their achievements. While some may argue that this is operating in a masculine mould, it is just real politik. However, it is important that even as they do this, women should remain true to themselves by being honest about what they have achieved and let the world know about it. This way, Kenyan voters will not be struggling to think of women as effective political leaders, as they will have examples of their effectiveness at the fingertips.

### ***The society/voters***

There are many ways in which society works against the aspirations of women, particularly those aspiring to political office. Society does this through the widely held expectation that a leader must bribe voters either by giving them money directly during campaigns or by giving generously to their personal needs or local projects. This view works against women because most women are not as well endowed financially as men and this expectation, therefore, places them at a disadvantage. The community of voters needs to begin to judge candidates for political office more by what they stand for and their accomplishments than on how much money they can dish out. This would make the ground more level for women candidates, and is much more likely to produce quality leadership than the money-oriented approach. However, it requires joint effort by government, NGOs, faith-based organizations, media, civil society and human rights organizations to educate Kenyans that by accepting to be bribed, they are selling away their right to vote for good leaders, be they men or women.

Society needs to make it safer for women to participate in political campaigns by standing firm against violence and intimidation, which negatively affects all candidates, but particularly women. Politicians who condone and/or use violence to silence political opponents should be disqualified, otherwise election violence tends to scare away many potential good leaders, who find it safer to keep away.

In accordance with the Political Parties Act, Kenyans must keep political parties accountable for their promises as concerns gender equity, as outlined in their manifestos. For the most part, promises made by political parties during campaigns are just gimmicks to make parties appear to be gender sensitive. The promises are ignored and women pushed to the

periphery as soon as elections are over. Women must especially refuse to be part of political parties that are not serious about giving women key leadership positions in their parties. In addition, voters must resist the attempt by politicians to impose on them unpopular candidates through rigging of political party nominations. They can do this by sticking to their candidates of choice, even when these have to move to fringe parties as a result of having been rigged out of the nominations of the big parties. This will send a message to party bosses that they should ensure fairness and transparency in party nominations, and this will in turn work well for women candidates, who are especially vulnerable to being rigged out.

This study reveals that some of the stories given by the women respondents play into what is referred to as 'the good girl' concept, one that develops out of the expectations of society (societal norms) on women. This is the perception one gets on evaluating the responses by some of the women interviewed, who noted that they entered into politics by accident or that their nomination to parliament was a total surprise. Also of interest is that none of the women admitted that they actively participated in some known political tactics such as voter bribing or even being involved in any kind of violence. Such information needs to be treated with caution given the nature of politics in Kenya, and the common knowledge that women who make it in politics have to get involved in as much lobbying as their male counterparts, and also get to play the same dirty games that men play. Such information can be difficult to get from women who have perfected the art of presenting themselves as the 'good girl' as a survival tactic. Given that this study focused on what the women had to say, the full picture can only emerge once the men's and electorate's view are sought in further research.

### ***Non-governmental organizations***

This study highlights some of the strategies NGOs can adopt to ensure that more women are elected to parliament. The most obvious is by organizing training and networking forums for women aspirants, in the mould of the Rift Valley Women Empowerment Network. This forum seems to have had a particularly significant impact in getting women aspirants from Rift Valley into the 10th Parliament, and could be replicated in other provinces. NGOs are best placed to handle the logistics of setting up such forums, and such forums could also be particularly enriched if the organizing NGOs got elected women politicians to be a part of the training team.

Apart from training, NGOs should continue giving logistical support to women aspirants in their campaigns, in recognition that campaigns are expensive to run, and most women are financially disadvantaged when compared to their male counterparts. The idea of employing community mobilizers for the women candidates, as happened in the case of the Rift Valley network, is a good approach, but other support mechanisms such as assisting aspirants with transport and security arrangements can also be explored. The latter is particularly important because women are particularly vulnerable to politically-instigated violence during campaign periods.

Thirdly, NGOs should continue working with communities to sensitize voters against vices that work against fair and transparent elections. These vices include voter bribery, election violence and nomination malpractices, which work against the aspirations of not just women but all politicians of moral standing. They also need to continue sensitizing communities on

the need to look beyond gender when choosing candidates for political office, and focus on the character of the aspirants.

Finally, NGOs need to aggressively disseminate information from studies that show women bringing a different perspective to leadership that works for the good of society. They also need to carry out more such studies to strengthen the case for women's leadership.

### **Educators and other socializing agents**

This study has revealed that some of the factors that prompted the women leaders to pursue political careers had to do with injustices against girls and women, which they had observed and experienced when growing up. In many ways, girls are disadvantaged right from birth. They are assigned the more tedious and time consuming domestic chores at home, which works against their educational pursuits and aspirations. They bear the burden of teenage pregnancies while the boys responsible go on with their lives. They undergo harmful cultural practices such as female genital mutilation and forced marriages, among other discriminatory social practices.

Parents and teachers can help ease some of these burdens and make it easier for girls to excel in life by being sensitive on the need to be fair in the allocation of domestic chores, and on the need to encourage girls to excel in whatever field they choose, as this can have a big impact on what they become later in life. Parents and other close relatives were particularly important mentors for many of the women leaders interviewed. Such sensitization can be done by teachers who interact with the parents in forums such as parents meetings in schools, and by administrators such as chiefs in their *barazas* or CBOs working with communities.

Teachers themselves need to be sensitized before they can serve as advocates for the girl-child in their communities. The Ministry of Education is in the best position to do this. Commendably, it has already taken the first step by coming up with a Gender in Education Policy. The Ministry should ensure that the provisions set out in the policy are implemented in schools to improve the learning environment for all children, and particularly girls, to ensure that they achieve their full potential.

### **The government**

The Kenyan government has an obligation to legislate for quotas for women in national and local legislative bodies. This would be a sign of a renewed commitment to have more women in political positions. Allowing such quotas would be recognition of the historical injustices that women face, and which have made it more difficult for them to compete equally with men. This kind of affirmative action would help more women to get into political leadership, therefore allowing for the critical mass needed to have more women friendly laws and provide young women and girls with a large pool of role models and mentors.

### **Suggestions for Further Research**

There is still need for more research of this nature to help make known what women are capable of doing and their approach to development. Some of this research, for example,

could take the form of long term studies on the use of Constituency Development Funds by elected women MPs to establish what forms their priorities in human development, after basics such as water, health and schools have been taken care of for the better part. This might help delineate more clearly their priorities from those of their male counterparts. Once the basic necessities are no longer a big issue, an MP might feel freer to allocate more funds to projects involving their 'pet' issues.

Research in constituencies that have continuously elected women may help to establish the factors that work in favour of women, and if these can be replicated elsewhere. It would also be useful to study those constituencies that have never elected women to establish what works against women and, therefore, get an understanding on what could be done to help women be accepted as able leaders in such constituencies.

A study looking into how the 'good girl' concept can be transformed into a strategy for effecting or sustaining women's public or political aspirations may be useful in helping understand ways in which women can increase their participation in politics. This may be worthwhile given the trend established, which indicates that women who go against the expected norms and behaviour associated with the 'good girl' may be viewed as threatening to the patriarchal state.

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