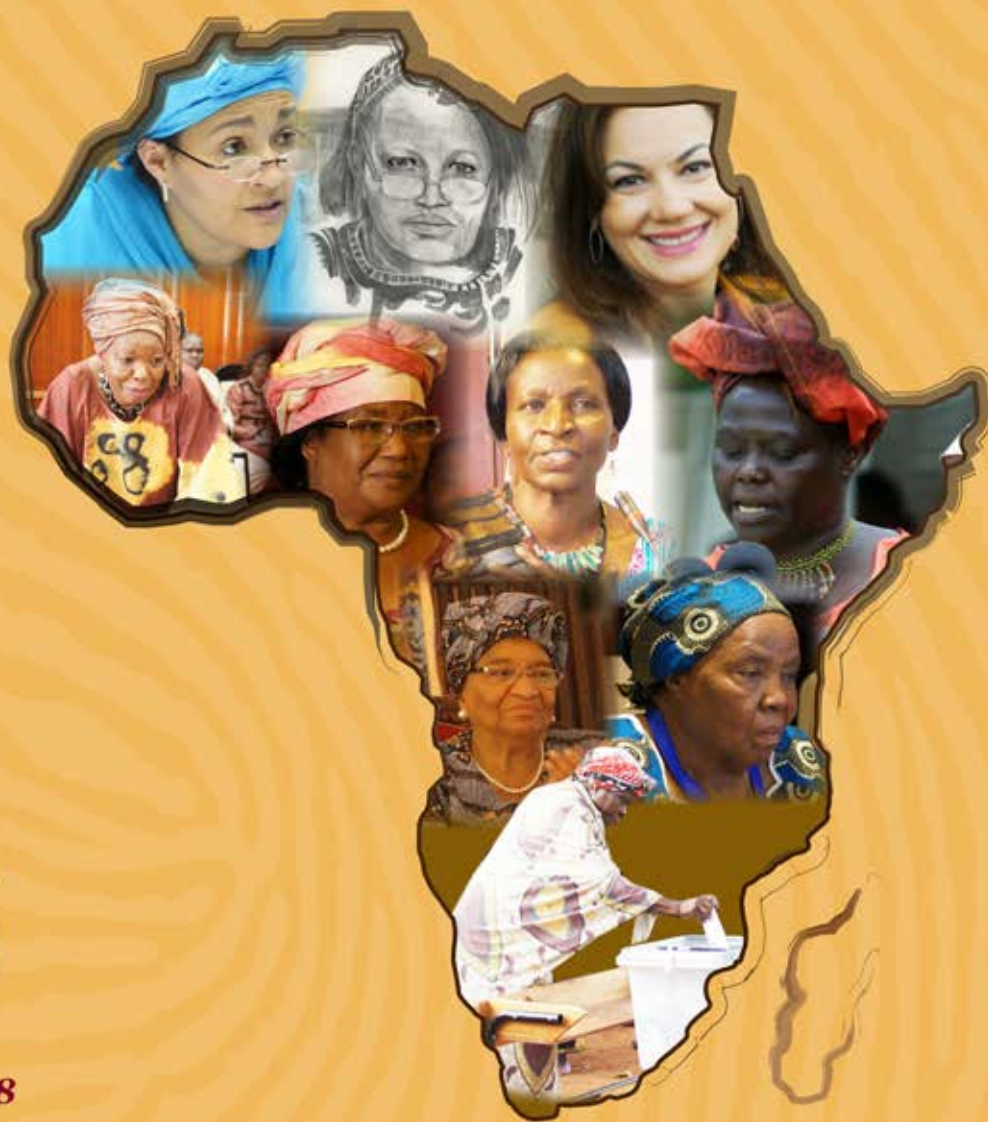


THE African Women's Journal

KEEPING THE AFRICAN WOMEN'S DECADE ALIVE!

Issue VIII

African Women in Power/Politics



FEMNET

Since 1988

THE African Women's Journal

KEEPING THE AFRICAN WOMEN'S DECADE ALIVE!

Issue 08

African Women in Power/Politics



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The African Women's Development and Communication Network (FEMNET) aims to strengthen the role and contribution of African NGO's focusing on women's development equality and other human rights through communication, networking, training and advocacy.

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Editorial

“If a {political} system neglects women’s participation and evades accountability for women [and girl’s] rights, it fails half of its citizens.”

In this issue of the African Women’s Journal, dubbed African Women in Power/Politics, we seek to explore both the individual and collective experiences of past, aspiring or current women in power/politics. The articles speak to some of the persistent and structural as well as emerging obstacles and challenges women face as they wrestle with power, privilege and politics. Authors also present alternative strategies for ensuring visionary, transformative leadership. We stop and take stock and give room for personal journeys and reflections.

Amina Mohammed shares her personally journey, from growing up in North-East Nigeria to her current position as special Advisor to Ban Ki Moon on Post-2015. She challenges us that it is not enough to simply have a seat at the table, but we must speak truth to the establishment and make that seat count for the countless who are not at the table. She reminds us that each of us must play our part, using our positions of power, small as they may be, to create a just and prosperous world



where all people realize their rights and live with dignity and hope.

Annie Devenish takes a closer look at an eco-feminist and ultimately political movement; the Green Belt Movement, as well as the trailblazing woman at its forefront; Wangari Maathai. This case study provides an alternative model of leadership and participation; with women tapping into power through taking control of natural resources and

articulating their struggles and concerns.

Bertha Rinjeu introduces us to a number of resilient women who find innovative ways around the threats, public shame and humiliation they face while on their political journeys. She touches on culture, patriarchy and strategies women employ to overcome obstacles placed in their paths to power.

Gavaza Maluleke looks at women fighting both a racist and sexist apartheid in South Africa – in particular focusing on the role of rural women, and the



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multiple ways in which women can participate and tap into power – both as individuals, and perhaps most importantly, as a collective.

Louisa Khabure delves into patriarchy, political violence and the increasingly monetized nature of campaigns. She presents the nature and extent of challenges women face when seeking political leadership and examines this within the context of a broader political culture in Kenya. She also proposes actions to remedy the ills of the political landscape.

Aminatta L. R. Ngum presents the case of Pauline Nyiramasuhuko, who ironically held the position of Minister of Family Welfare and the Advancement of Women's Affairs in Rwanda and who was the first and only woman tried and convicted for the crime of genocide as well as rape as an act of genocide by the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda.

Nimmo Elmi takes a look at the case of women in Somalia relegated to the private sphere despite their active engagement prior to the civil war. Through *Serah Kahi* and *Sara Longwe's* reflections of their own political journeys in Kenya and Zambia

respectively, we come to understand that the personal is truly political.

Whether we engage at local, national, regional or global levels, we continue to wrestle with power, make our voices heard and bring about lasting change which can be felt by the coming generations. We've heard a few of the stories and journeys here in this issue, but ofcourse there are countless others whose stories have neither been told nor heard. May we continue to shape our own narratives and emerge with possibilities that respond to our realities.

Here's to gender parity in our decision making spaces – including in our homes, and to transformational leadership. ■

A luta continua.

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Foreword

“I will be satisfied with the number of women in political leadership when they are so many that I cannot count them on my finger tips”

- HE Dr. Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma

FEMNET – the African Women’s Development and Communication Network – in its effort to keep the African Women’s Decade alive and mobilize women to engage and influence development policies and practices that affect their lives and their society publishes a bi-annual Journal “African Women’s Journal”. The purpose of the journal is to encourage and provide a platform for African women to tell their own stories. This Issue (VIII) focuses on African women in power/politics. It is compiled at a time when the Beijing +20 review is underway.

Representation of women in politics is one of the critical areas under Beijing Platform for Action with a minimum requirement of 30 percent in all decision making structures/bodies. The review shows that women’s representation in the political arena is one of the few areas where progress has been made over the last 20 years. The African Union Commission elected its first female Chairperson as well as instituted gender parity amongst



its commissioners, Rwanda is the only country in the world with a majority of women in the parliament (64%), and in fact more than 10 African countries meet the 30 percent Beijing threshold. African women currently occupy an average of 21.9 percent of parliamentary seats in Sub-Saharan Africa.

However, we are still far from achieving gender parity at all levels of leadership. Women are few or absent in corporate boardrooms, local governments, cabinets, national and regional parliaments, peace negotiating tables and almost all major institutions in Africa and indeed around the world. The absence and under-representation of women in leadership and in decision-making positions and processes means their rights, needs and interests tend to be neglected, while their skills, experience, and knowledge remains under-utilized. Indeed, the under-representation of women in political leadership equates manifestation of gender inequalities and robs women of their agency and opportunity to shape their futures and those of their societies. A major obstacle



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to women’s full participation in political leadership is persistent discrimination and violence against women and girls in all its forms.

Women’s equal participation and representation is a right in and of itself, furthering efforts of equality and justice, while at the same time serving as a cornerstone to achieving democracy. As long as women are under-represented in politics and governance, our countries cannot claim to have achieved democracy. The Chairperson of African Union Dr. Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma, once said “*I will be satisfied with the number of women in political leadership when they are so many that I cannot count them on my finger tips*”. My dream in my lifetime is for gender parity to be realized across all

sectors in decision-making spaces. It’s going to take big changes: legal and societal changes, but also organizations such as FEMNET to tirelessly push for this agenda until it is achieved. The articles in this journal provide useful insights on the need to build numbers and sustain women in positions of politics and power today and in the years to come. ■

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Universal Challenge: Unleashing the Transformative Power of Women

By Amina Mohammed

Africa has made incredible progress in the last decade, offering immense potential as the world's second fastest growing region. With poverty falling, ninety million of its households have joined the world's consuming classes, providing an attractive market for local and global companies.

Despite progress on the economic front, much of the social and environmental agenda as encapsulated in the Millennium Development Goals remains unfinished for most of the continent. To ensure that economic growth translates into the well-being of all people, deep structural transformations are required, including investment in people. Young peo-



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ple and women in particular are the key to driving productivity, innovation and citizenship.

Take the immense transformative potential of empowering women. Rural women produce sixty to eighty percent of the food in most developing countries (USAID 2011), with over half of the agricultural labor force in Africa comprised of women (Africa Partnership Forum Support Unit 2007). In contrast, women own less than one percent of the African continent's landmass (Africa Partnership Forum Support Unit 2007). Women farmers receive only one percent of total credit to agriculture. They have fewer economic rights and lower access to economic opportunities, including land and credit facilities (Africa Partnership Forum Support Unit 2007). Furthermore, an African woman's average workday lasts fifty percent longer than that of a man, and she shoulders the burden of unpaid activities, often linked to low access to clean water and energy sources (Africa Partnership Forum Support Unit 2007).

This means, if women had the same access to productive resources as men, they could increase yields on their farms by more than twenty percent, raising total agricultural output in developing countries, and subsequently reducing the number of hungry people in the world by up to seventeen percent, as estimated by Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations 2011).

Evidence demonstrates that investing in women's economic empowerment sets a direct path towards gender equality, access to justice, poverty eradication and inclusive economic growth (UN Women). Gender equality and women's empowerment is

a matter of justice and human rights. But it also has a significant multiplier effect on all the social, economic and environmental dimensions of sustainable development. Empowered and educated women live and engender healthier lives, contribute to growing economies, protect and develop communities, shift attitudes, and break cycles of violence and discrimination. The more years of education a woman has, the lower the fertility rate, while the less schooling she has, the more likely she is to be coerced into early marriage (World Bank 2014). With full education, this will ensure that women work and are an integral part of the labor force; families are kept out of poverty, and children are educated and have access to health services which, in turn, leads to economic growth (UN Women).

Ensuring meaningful and equitable political engagement is also critical in putting in place gender-responsive policies that make an impact in the lives of women and girls. The reality, however, looks something more like this: A room full of men in leadership and decision making roles looking authoritative and serious, only to find token women representatives – I have been in this situation many times as I'm sure have many of you.

In fact, gender equality and women's empowerment remain unmet universal challenges worldwide.

Taking female representation in politics for example, the global average of women in parliament has reached an unprecedented high of 21.8 per cent according to UN Women. The "Women in Politics" Maps 2014, released by the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) and UN Women, shows a snapshot on where women stand in politics globally in terms of the proportion of women Members of Parliament, women ministers and women Heads of State and Government. Based on the map, we can see that

Over half of the agricultural labor force in Africa is comprised of women. In contrast, women own less than one percent of the African continent's landmass



progress has certainly been made and indeed we have a number of inspiring examples to draw from. This progress however, is insufficient as it masks deep inequalities between and within countries.

It is important to note that having a seat at the table is not good enough. We must speak up, get involved, and take risks in speaking the truth to the establishment for the countless ones who are not at the table. Investing in girls and women requires their active participation in decision-making processes, but also strong support and engagement of their parents, legal guardians, families and care providers, as well as boys and men, and the wider community.

My own story, from growing up as a young girl in deeply traditional North-East Nigeria, working in the country's male-dominated private sector and subsequently having the opportunity to work as an adviser to three consecutive Nigerian Heads of States is notable in this regard. Following the country's debt relief in 2005, I was appointed as an adviser to the President, charged with setting up a Virtual Poverty Fund that would effectively deploy, coordinate and track a billion dollars debt relief gains annually towards the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. It gave me the opportunity to visit

the most isolated corners of the country, building hospitals in villages that had never seen a public official, taking clean drinking water to communities that had lived for generations on a hand dug well, and deploying midwives to the doorsteps of families who had lost mothers, wives and sisters to child birth.

More importantly, I saw the huge disparities in living standards, in demand for, and access to public goods and in attitudes. These were apparent

on a geographic level within and between states and local governments and particularly between men and women. The quality of our institutions for service delivery was also put to test revealing coordination issues and the advantages of an integrated development framework. Today in my position as an adviser of the Secretary-General on the design of the next development agenda, I see these disparities on a more global scale but also see the opportunity to reverse this particularly with a growing number of African women in leadership positions.

When we add in the examples of my own personal heroes President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf of Liberia and Dr. Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma, Chairperson of the African Union, in addition to a rising number of women politicians in Rwanda and across the continent, we see an improving picture.

However, we still have a long way to go. Empowerment begins with each and every one of us. Strong political will must be carried forward by putting in place specific measures such as having governments provide an enabling environment, allocating credit lines and working with other partners to foster micro-enterprises in order for women to have a sense of empowerment and ownership and then following through the actions that enable the transformations that are required to respond to the often complex environments that we find ourselves faced with as women.

What lies ahead in 2015 and beyond

Africa, under the auspices of the African Union has taken a strong position towards the realization of Gender equality and Women's Empowerment through its recently launched Common Africa Position (CAP) on the Post-2015 Development Agenda.

An African woman's average workday lasts fifty percent longer than that of a man, and she shoulders the burden of unpaid activities, often linked to low access to clean water and energy sources



The CAP identifies the importance of actions to “enhance occupational mobility and eliminate gender-based wage inequality; ensure access to and ownership of land and other productive assets, credit and extension services, training; eradicating all forms of violence against women and children, and harmful practices such as female genital mutilation (FGM) and early marriage; and eliminating gender-based discrimination in political, economic and public decision-making processes.”

At the global level, the post-2015 development planning process provides a unique opportunity for Africa to plan for the massive investments required for broad-based inclusive sustainable development. It offers the impetus for Africa to take the driver’s seat in designing the next global development agenda and changes the development discourse to a new frontier by shifting the focus to economic transformation and social justice, ending extreme poverty and putting our planet on a course for sustainable development. This gives the opportunity to cast a strong foundation for the visions of Africa’s Agenda 2063.

Defining the next development agenda is a daunting yet inspiring and historic task for the United Nations and its Member States. They have a serious responsibility to the international community to go beyond existing geo-political and ideological divides, and come together to shape a bold and ambitious agenda. The ongoing debate provides a terrific opportunity to empower women, everywhere, especially in Africa. Setting the new agenda is only the beginning. The real work of finding a practical way forward to deliver results on the ground; where no person goes hungry, lacks shelter or clean water and sani-

tation, faces social and economic exclusion or lives without access to basic health services and education will have to be shared by all. Each of us can do our part to create a just and prosperous world where all people realize their rights and live with dignity and hope. ■

Amina Mohammed is the Special Advisor of the Secretary-General on Post-2015 Development Planning at the United Nations. Connect with her at aminaj.mohammed@un.org.

Having a seat at the table is not good enough. We must speak up, get involved, and take risks in speaking the truth to the establishment for the countless ones who are not at the table.

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An Alternative Model of Woman Power: The Green Belt Movement and Wangari Maathai

By Annie Devenish



This paper provides a critical analysis of the eco-feminism of the Greenbelt Movement in Kenya, and the leadership of its founder, Wangari Maathai, as an alternative model of political leadership, and an alternative avenue into political power, for African women. It compares this social movement, and its impact on the development of a political consciousness amongst its women members, with that of well studied Chipko Movement of India, in which women and local communities successfully employed strategies of passive resistance to prevent the government and corporations from monopolizing and exploiting their local environment.

For rural women who plough the land and maintain the homestead, the tree symbolizes life. In Kenya, under Wangari Maathai's Greenbelt Movement, the tree took on a new significance, as a symbol of power; the power of local groups of women and their communities to manage and control their natural resources, and to articulate their voices as citizens.

Environmental and political activist Wangari Maathai (1940-2011), has left an indelible imprint

on the landscape of civil society in Kenya and the international community. This contribution was recognised in 2004 when she was awarded the Nobel peace prize for her work in the areas of sustainable development, democracy and peace (Nobleprize.org, 2014).

Maathai was born, and spent her formative years in Nyeri District in the highlands of Kenya. In the 1960s she studied abroad in the United States and Germany, and was the first Kenyan woman to earn

a PhD. She worked as a lecturer and professor in Veterinary Anatomy at the University of Nairobi, juggling academia, civic service and family life. After many years as a political activist Maathai formally entered Kenyan politics in 2003 when she was appointed Assistant Minister in the Ministry for Environment and Natural Resources, the same year in which she established the Mazingira Green Party.

Integral to Maathai's politics and developmental practice throughout her career has been the experience she has gained as founder and advocate of the Green Belt Movement, a social movement in Kenya which encourages communities to plant and nurture trees in 'green belts' to rehabilitate degraded land. Since its establishment in the mid 1970s, the movement has expanded to become part of the larger pro-democracy campaign in the country, and has been a vocal public watch dog against government human rights abuses and the misuse of public resources. It is little surprise therefore that Wangari Maathai has been accused of setting a bad example as an African woman. But it is precisely this sense of outspokenness, and her open critique of government authority and priorities, that has made the Green Belt Movement significant for the broader struggle of African women across the continent, enabling Maathai and her colleagues to begin challenging what it means to be an African woman in the first place.

Planting the first seed

The idea of tree planting developed through Maathai's work as a member of the National Council of Women of Kenya (NCWK), and her observa-

tion of the changing landscape as a professor of veterinary medicine in the early 1970s. What can I do about this situation that addresses the root causes of erosion and environmental degradation, but that is still practical and achievable, thought Maathai, and the answer that emerged was to plant trees. She first launched her idea as a nursery and gardening service to create employment opportunities for the local people in her husband's constituency in 1974. Although this initial business model proved unsuccessful, Maathai did not give up.

Three years later in 1977 when she was appointed to the NCWK Executive Committee, she was able to put her tree planting idea into action through a project known as the "Save the Land Harambee" (Maathai, 2008, p. 130) News of the project spread throughout NCWK networks, and soon farmers, churches, and schools were eager to set up their own tree planting initiatives. By the mid 1980s the movement included nearly two thousand women's groups managing nurseries and tending trees (Maathai, 2008, pp. 124-175).

The Chipko Movement in India: The link between control over natural resources and decision making power

The Green Belt Movement offers a number of valuable insights into women's access to political power, both formal power within the structures of government and party

politics and in the sphere of civil society, which provide a useful starting point for contemplating the progress women on the African continent have made towards substantive equality, and some of the challenges they still face. The Chipko movement that emerged in the sub-Himalayan region of

It is precisely this sense of outspokenness, and her open critique of government authority and priorities, that has made the Green Belt Movement significant for the broader struggle of African women across the continent, enabling Maathai and her colleagues to begin challenging what it means to be an African woman in the first place.



India, at the same time the Green Belt was taking off in Kenya, provides an interesting point of comparison.

Chipko began as a stand-off between local populations and the officials of the government forestry department in the hill areas of Uttar Pradesh. It was a protest against government forestry policy, which these communities felt was limiting employment opportunities for locals. Later, it broadened to include protests against private sector logging, mining and road development, and took up flood relief activities as its leadership began to understand the relationship between development, deforestation and environmental degradation (Jain, 1984, p. 1791).

Chipko was dominated by men in the initial stages, when its concerns were limited to employment and customary rights over forest produce, however, as environmental degradation became an increasing focus, the movement began to draw in a larger body of supporters, including women (Jain, 1984, pp. 1788-1791). Activists and academics disagree about the Chipko Movements implications for women. There are those who argue that Chipko represents the emergence of a new form of eco-feminism. Others emphasise that this is a romanticization, and that the participation of women has merely been expedient for a struggle rooted in economic conflicts over mountain forests, with has remained trapped within an unchanged patriarchal framework (Bandyopadhyay, 1999, p. 880). While such debate indicates that Chipko is a complex movement driven by multiple agendas, one of the observations that can be made is the fact that this participation has given such communities of women an important new awareness of their right to participate in the management of their local environment, and the

potential power that they can leverage by doing so.

In Kenya, as in the sub-Himalayan region where Chipko emerged, women are the main cultivators of the land and the managers of the household. This makes them especially sensitive to ecological problems and change (Jain, 1984, p. 1792). Because the impact of environmental degradation is felt most directly by women, and consequently because women therefore have a specific role to play in terms of its prevention, groups of women in places like Garhwal, where Chipko has been active, have come to demand representation in local community councils so that they can have a say in what happens in the their forests and fields (Kumar, 1993, p. 183; Jain, 1984, p. 1792). The Green Belt Movement has enabled a similar awareness and confidence to develop amongst many of the groups of women who were its members in Kenya, and this awareness had a significant impact on the way in which these groups of women have come to see themselves within the development process.

The Green Belt Movement offers a number of valuable insights into women's access to political power, both formal power within the structures of government and party politics and in the sphere of civil society.

Furthermore, the Green Belt Movement has been able to make the jump from enabling women to access greater power in the micro-spaces of their homes and local communities, to formal political power as rights bearing citizens, through its involvement in the broader pro-democracy movement in the 1980s and 1990s. Maathai recalls in her memoirs

how the connections between bad governance, the mismanagement of resources, environmental destruction and poverty developed through her experience of activism, and how this in turn made her realise the importance of incorporating land and governance issues into the civic and environmental education that Green Belt movement members received (Maathai, 2008, pp. 249-254).



Starting at the bottom rather than the top:

Why decentralised democracy and development is important for women's participation

As a highly educated middle-class activist, Maathai has been confronted throughout her career with the challenge faced by many activists across the world in her position; that she was unable to relate to the experiences of the rural poor. The success of this initiative, however, suggests otherwise. The Green Belt model was developed and tailored by Maathai through a process of trial and error, specifically to respond to the needs and capabilities of rural women. The movement incorporated a number of specific characteristics, including; an emphasis on livelihoods, decentralised systems of operation and high levels of community participation, all of which have enabled this success, and are important when thinking about how rural Kenyan women access channels of power and influence in society.

By developing a simple strategy – that of planting trees – which also created some form of income generation, by accompanying this with educational drives which explained the connection between livelihoods, food security, women's labour, and environmental degradation, and by incorporating indigenous knowledge and folk-law, Maathai was able to develop a strategy which resonated with the immediate concerns of such communities (Maathai, 2008, p. 125) and pre-empted the framework of and Sustainable Livelihoods (SL) developed by the United Nations in the 1990s (Krishna, 2012, pp. 12-13).

In the 1960s Maathai studied in the United States where she was introduced to some of the passive resistance techniques of the Civil Rights Movement. Later she went on to incorporate these into the Green Belt's environmental and voter education campaigns (Maathai, 2008, p. 234). Civil Rights

leaders in the US, were in turn influenced by Mahatma Gandhi, one of the pioneers of passive resistance, who used this strategy as part of his holistic approach of *Satyagraha*, based on the principles of self-reliance, ecological balance, structural changes and local participation (Jain, 1984, p. 1793). Chipko in India and the Green Belt Movement in Kenya therefore share a common ideological foundation. The workers, who initiated Chipko were in fact followers of Vinobha Bhave, one of Gandhi's disciples (Jain, 1984, p.1789).

As Kenya transitions to a devolved system of government, the Green Belt Movement provides a working example of how popular participation and decentralisation can have a positive gendered impact on development, by making decision-making, evaluation and control more accessible to those who are often marginalised from more centralised and formalised structures of power.

The devolution of power from central to local government structures requires local populations to play an active role in determining the direction of policy development. Devolution in Kenya has been promoted as an important means for transforming gender relationships, by ensuring that women are given greater visibility in the political process (Minayo, 2012). But devolution by itself, just like Kenya's recently introduced gender quotas, does not guarantee substantial equality. The challenge lies not in simply fulfilling quotas, but in ensuring that through their implementation, the needs and concerns of those who have been previously marginalised are taken up by government policies and institutions. In bridging grassroots needs, experience and activism amongst women at the local level with formal political power and policy making at a national level in Kenya, the Green belt Movement has given rural women critical mass as a political constituency, and has encouraged the intersection

devolution by itself, just like Kenya's recently introduced gender quotas, does not guarantee substantial equality

of a number of previously separate concerns and struggles in Kenya, including environmental rights and women's empowerment. In so doing it has contributed towards a reconceptualization of African women as agents of change, with the capacity to develop practical solutions to the problems of the twenty-first century, and has offered an alternative model of leadership and mobilisation. ■

Annie Devenish is a South African academic and research consultant with an interest in gender, development and democracy in the global South, the history of feminist organisation and mobilization, and identity politics in the context of political transition. In particular, her work seeks to explore how the practice of history, and critical research of histories of activism, can give depth and breadth to our understanding of contemporary developmental problems and be harnessed to challenge and transform of society. She has recently completed her PhD at Oxford University which focuses on the interaction between gender and citizenship in independent India. Contact her at anniedevenish@yahoo.co.uk.

Reconceptualization of African women as agents of change, with the capacity to develop practical solutions to the problems of the twenty-first century, has offered an alternative model of leadership and mobilisation

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The African Women's Journal



Is There Room for Women in Political Processes of Highly Traditional Africa?

By *Bertha M. Rinjeu*

The African freedom-fighter story is often told from the male perspective. Women, despite their contribution, are often made spectators, even in modern Kenya, where the names of the women who gave their lives to the struggle both for independence through the Mau Mau Uprising and subsequent efforts for freedoms of expression and multiparty democracy fill our libraries and annals. In politics, where history continually presents a problem, it is evident that the traditions most often peddled around as the standard are truly negotiable, for men with tall ambitions and short memories yet fixed and crystallized into an impenetrable glass ceiling for women. This article, through an excursion into library, newspaper and journal research, interviews and written personal accounts, seeks to disprove the notion that women are unfit for high office by bringing to the fore women who have made it in politics. Further, this article interrogates the link between patriarchy, poverty and the economic stumbling blocks to women's ability to get to the ballot box. Drawing from previous experience with presidential and national campaigns in Kenya, five years of steady journalistic experience and a personal future ambition to political office, Bertha presents a brief insight into the viability of a career in politics for women in Africa.

On a cloudy Monday afternoon, Saada Chepkurui Bilali welcomes us into the living room of her small unit in a high rise building in Nairobi's Majengo. As she sits up, smiles and handshakes are exchanged. Promptly, Mama Saada sends for milk for tea. Quashing objection, she hands out files of old and delicate papers, cardboard mounted newspaper cuttings, laminated certificates and written orders – her formal introduction.

Outside, it has appropriately begun to pour as one marvels at the names of the strong and brave who somehow got squashed out of history. Some of these names are scribbled across pages torn out of old school books. Some belong to organizations like the Kikuyu Orphanage Nyeri Union¹, a forerunner of the Kenya African Union (KAU) banned by the colonial government for militant activity. Most transcribe the life of Mwanaisha Tapele Bilali, Saada's mother.

Fleeing a forced marriage in her native Bomet, Mwanaisha made Nairobi's Pumwani² home, alongside former presidents Jomo Kenyatta and Daniel Moi. Unlike Sarah Sarai³ who was arrested together with Kenyatta on the night of 20 October 1952 and spent ten years in detention, Mwanaisha was never suspected by the colonists and continued to arm and shelter resistance fighters, earning the name "Mama Uhuru".

It is with bitterness that Saada recounts her family's struggle to get acknowledgement from successive governments. Leafing through a book of government honours printed in 1998, she points to Mwanaisha's name under the Head of State Commendation. To Saada, it seems Mwanaisha became little more than a pawn to men in power and a ticket for those seeking power. She explains:

"Mama yangu amekuwa used and abused and misused by the government. Wengi wamepitia kwetu. Hata hii kuvunjwa kwa KADU (Kenya African Democratic Union), Mama aliongea. (My mother has been used and abused and misused by the government. Many have passed through our hands. Even this, the breaking of KADU my mother spoke of)," Saada said.

Women are often bullied out of their rights. Few stand for political office and those who do face threats, beatings and public shame. Nonetheless, Kenya has made great gains for women.

Under Article 97 (1) (b)⁴ of the new constitution [2010], 47 seats in parliament are reserved for women through County Women's Representatives. In the 2013 general election, another 15 seats in parliament were won by women. The newly rein-

stated senate also provides more room for women and in President Uhuru Kenyatta's cabinet, six of the country's eighteen ministerial posts are held by women⁵. Of note however, is that though there exist 47 counties, not a single one is headed by a woman.

The Constitution of Kenya 2010 in Chapter 7, Article 81 gives the general principles for the electoral system. Article 81 (b) states that not more than two-thirds of the members of elective public bodies shall be of the same gender. This and the creation of special parliamentary seats to serve women's interest from the county base to the national platform hope to give women a stronger voice in the country's national and county legislatures. However, though there has been an increase in numbers of women present in parliament, it has not translated to a louder voice for women. In fact, women are seen at a greater threat from their male counterparts. Recently, men in parliament, seeking to reduce the country's wage bill, suggested the scrapping of the post of the county women's representatives instead of taking a pay cut.

Why are supposed "Big Seats" ostensibly reserved for men? Is there a secret hand keeping women in controllable spaces and if one exists, whose is it? Or do women, fearful of the actual personal, cultural and political cost, opt out of races everyone assumes belong to men anyway? Why are these seats thought to belong to men?

Culturally, in the traditions of the Meru and the Gikuyu of Eastern Kenya, women were granted a voice in communal decision making. Among the Gikuyu, women were allowed to name their sons after themselves. During the struggle for independence and the Mau Mau Uprising in Kenya, women

¹ The Kikuyu Orphanage Nyeri Union, at its inception, held meetings in which members discussed the general affairs of life under colonialism. It boasted of members such as freedom fighter Mirugi Mathenge who later became General Mathenge during the Mau Mau Uprising. Women were admitted to its membership and all paid equal fees. Lists of attendees and minutes of meetings are in Saada's archive though they cannot be traced elsewhere

² The name Pumwani is derived from *karibu, pumueni* – welcome, breathe – a term used amongst Native Africans evicted from Nairobi's Pangani area to make room for Asians and Europeans

³ She was one of only a handful of Kenyan women arrested and detained by the British colonialists on the night of October 20th, 1952, the same day that Jomo Kenyatta and other nationalist leaders were arrested and detained for their role in the Mau Mau armed rebellion against British rule. She would not be set free until nearly a whole decade later, becoming the longest serving Kenyan woman detainee. But like virtually every other Kenyan woman who suffered while fighting for the country's freedom, she would be accorded no place of honour after independence, even though her life was as remarkable as that of any man whose name graces the annals of the country's freedom struggle. (Kenya History and Biographies Company Limited)

freedom fighters, who were also captured, detained and brutally tortured, transported arms, provided food, information and shelter. Like Mwanaisha, after independence, many died in poverty.

In 1977 the *Maendeleo ya Wanawake* (Development for Women) Organization [MYWO], set up in 1952, inaugurated its political wing. For the next thirty years, push slowly grew to shove as women fought for their place in politics. Charity Ngilu, current Cabinet Secretary for Lands, Housing and Urban Development, conversely met each new push with a shove.

In 1997, Ngilu was the second woman to run a credible Presidential campaign in Kenya, after Wangari Maathai. In 1992 she had won a surprise seat in parliament through the Democratic Party of Kenya (DP). Ngilu came out fifth in a heavily mismanaged presidential poll on a Social Democratic Party of Kenya (SDP) ticket, after a difficult campaign made harder by goons hired to raise her skirts and reveal her underwear, hoping to shame her into submission, whenever she stood to talk. Undaunted, Ngilu took to wearing bikers (close fitting shorts) and carried on with her campaign. With skill, guile and poise Ngilu has made her name, becoming the only woman to stay at the top levels of government twelve years running.

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Martha Karua, another former presidential candidate [2013], was often referred to as the only man in former president Kibaki's government. Karua made the tough calls necessary to stay in cabinet, and became one of Kibaki's chief lieutenants and most trusted advisors. She resigned her post as

Minister for Justice when she felt the president was deviating from their common principles. Karua ran in the hard-fought 2013 presidential polls, coming in sixth with 43, 881 votes, proving that even with track records, women still do not win the popular vote: why?

In Kenya, one requires a national identity card to register as a voter. Women in rural and distant parts of the country face great difficulty in procuring this document. In cities and towns, voting for women candidates is often not the fashion as they lack the airspace, media manipulation skills and funding of their male counterparts. Further, prevailing opinions and biases depict women candidates as messy and anti-culture.

But what of those who made it, what of Chelagat Mutai, the youngest person to ever be elected to parliament at age 24, the first Kalenjin woman to vie for parliament and the only woman to stand in Eldoret North constituency in a field of eleven, who won more votes than all the male candidates put together in 1974?

⁴⁹⁷ (1) The National Assembly consists of - (a) two hundred and ninety members, each elected by the registered voters of single member constituencies; (b) forty-seven women, each elected by the registered voters of the counties, each county constituting a single member constituency; (c) twelve members nominated by parliamentary political parties according to their proportion of members of the National Assembly in accordance with Article 90, to represent special interests including the youth, persons with disabilities and workers; and (d) the Speaker, who is an *ex officio* member. (2) Nothing in this Article shall be construed as excluding any person from contesting an election under clause (1) (a).

⁵ Ministries headed by women: Foreign Affairs and International trade, Defense, Water, Environment and Natural Resources, Devolution, Tourism and East Africa Community and Lands

⁶ Kenya History and Biographies Company Limited

⁷ In early 2014, Nairobi County Women's representative, Rachael Shebesh, was involved in a series of scandals that culminated in the released of sexual images of her in bed with Nairobi Senator Mike "Sonko" Mbuvi. These scandals and the loud manner in which she carried herself earned her a ruined reputation alongside a media blackout. She is yet to recover her social standing. Mike "Sonko" Mbuvi however lost none of his popularity



What of feisty Agnes Ndeti, a forerunner of Charity Ngilu, who became the first deputy chairperson of the Democratic Party of Kenya in 1992?⁶ What of Rachael Shebesh, Ester Murugi, Cecily Mbarire, Millie Odhiambo and other sitting female legislators who continue to fight for equal and fair coverage?⁷

The creation of special seats and the two thirds majority gender rule have made women more visible but are we better represented? Perhaps it is time for women in politics, both in and out of parliament to educate themselves on the inner workings of their chosen political party and be involved in its decision making. Perhaps women should engage more with their voting public, take time to be occupied with proper planning, and treat the move to politics as a serious career move. Perhaps women should enlist valuable help in fundraising for campaigns, be concerned with voter education, run trustworthy campaigns and resolve to be unmoveable come whatever may.

A career in politics is possible, viable and profitable. Poverty has been and will continue to be used as a tool alongside intimidation, coercion and culture. Politics should not be the glass or grass-thatched ceiling that further keeps African women down. ■

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Politics should not be the glass or grass-thatched ceiling that further keeps African women down.

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Categories Unveiled: Women's participation in Politics

By Gavaza Maluleke

This article addresses women's participation in politics by attempting to highlight the importance of focusing on 'who' women are instead of 'what' women are by destabilizing the notion of fixed categories as this not only limits the stories women can produce in the polis but also what we ultimately view and understand as women's participation in politics. A definition of the *polis* or politics in this article is defined as the space where acting and speaking individuals come together and reveal who they are which is taken from Hannah Arendt's concept of the polis. Arendt asserts that "*the polis... is the organization of people as it arises out of acting and speaking together, and its true space lies between people living together for this purpose, no matter where they happen to be*" (Arendt, 1998). This notion of the *polis* facilitates in articulating the argument that there is no specific type of acting and speaking, therefore the *polis* has no set limits on what kinds of action and speech would be necessary to create it.

Stories analysed in this article are taken from interviews conducted with rural South African women

who are actively participating in local politics and who are members of the ruling party, the African National Congress (ANC). This was partly informed by the fact that the ANC has a quota system that is meant to push and encourage women's participation in politics (Pottie, 2000). Simultaneously, it was important to highlight stories of rural women in South Africa as there is a tendency to stereotype rural women by linking them with issues in relation to land and property rights, HIV/AIDS and violence as if these issues only occur in rural areas. Therefore the main premise of this article is that African women in politics are indeed rising, however, in order for this to be evident, we have to start looking at 'who' women are in order to see that their participation in the polis is ongoing and part of a process. Without this change, we only focus on a fixed category of woman which only reveals what women are and thereby reinforcing the idea that there is only one way for women to rise and this is problematic in that it places certain women at a disadvantage where they are always playing 'catch up'.

Voices from the polis

Historically South African women from all walks of life have been active in politics as the system of apartheid was both racist and sexist. According to Hilda Bernstein (1978):

White women, who share the right to vote with white men, and who have access to higher education and live in physically well-endowed conditions, live also in this sexist, male-dominated society... and black women in South Africa suffer from a three-fold oppression: as blacks; as women; and as workers who largely form a reserve army of labour. The three strands are interlaced.

The difference suggested here is an indicator of the multiple positions hidden when categories are used. Within the system of apartheid, the situation of white women differed from their black counterparts; however, history also shows that there were white women who worked closely with black women to fight the apartheid system. In this context, we see both difference and commonality revealed which can be used to surmise that even within the category of black women, the idea of homogeneity could be challenged. Various factors such as location, class, age should always be factored in when dealing with categories as they inform how individuals act and react to their contexts.

The following are summaries of interviews conducted with three women who are involved in local politics in the Giyani Municipality. Each story leads us to understand their participation in their polis.

Ms Manganyi*: “You have to stay strong to survive in Politics”

Ms Manganyi has a Bachelor’s degree in Education and is currently working towards her second degree, a Master’s in Social Sciences focusing on South African traditional medicine. She grew up during the time of apartheid and even though she was not active during the struggle, she grew up with the knowledge that all people should be treated equally. Her interest in politics peaked when the regime ended and a democratic government was introduced in South Africa. There were rallies all over South Africa. At one rally she attended, the message was very clear, *EQUALITY FOR ALL*. Even though she was a teacher at the time, she made the time to attend all the meetings, got involved with the ANC Women’s League and from there, she started learning all she could about politics, human rights, gender equality etc. She is currently working for the Giyani Municipality in the department of Housing (2009).

Ms Manganyi’s voice gives us an insight to the so called “third world woman” who in her pursuit of politics defies the stereotypes given to rural South African women while challenging the status quo in the local politics and at the same time, confronting the patriarchal system of the Shangaan people.

Manana Baloyi*: “I only passed Standard 5 but here I am”

Manana is part of a polygamous family and the first wife; culturally this means that she is the least favoured. She only managed to complete primary school and in the eyes of today’s people, she is not educated and is ridiculed for even trying to argue on the subject of politics. Her

interest in politics started during the struggle in the 1970s, when she joined protests. At that time however, she didn’t fully understand what her role was in the struggle. It was only in the mid 90s when apartheid ended and the constitution was handed out to everyone and an array of slogans such as *Vukuzenzele* and *Khomanani* emerged that she started to think about politics again. She stepped into the world of politics out of a need to help her community when she started volunteering to clean at the village schools. She was not employed at the time and felt that the schools in her community not only belonged to the government but to all who used them so why not play her part in their upkeep? (2009).

Manana Baloyi’s story challenges notions of women in politics. Even though she is not very educated or a member of a polygamous family, she still managed to become a Ward Councillor by taking her own path. Her story shows the importance of having the courage to seek whatever will empower instead of trying to fulfil roles or positions that may not be a good fit.

Sesi Mary*: “Being in Politics is not easy but I really want to be here”

Sesi was born into a poor family. With no money to go to school, she worked at a tomato farm during the holidays to pay for her high school fees. The injustices she experienced while working at the farm seemed to her like a microcosm of the injustices taking place in her country at large. She started listening to the people around her as they spoke about apartheid, the ANC and agitators such as Oliver Tambo. Those were the beginning of critical learning moments for her. Although she wasn’t fully involved in the struggle at the time, she was keen to learn what other women were doing during the struggle (2009).



This last story reveals the importance of the historical context in shaping how Sesé Mary participates in politics. She is similar to Manana Baloyi in that she is also not very educated; however where they differ is what led her to politics in that because of poverty, she was forced to work and witnessed a number of injustices. The way she dealt with injustices while working in the farm is the same way in which she tackles some of the challenges she encounters while in politics.

Conclusion

This article has shown that there are multiple positions that women can hold and thus indicates that there could be a multiplicity of stories that could be produced in the polis. However, by focusing on unified categories of gender or location, we perpetuate certain assumptions that not only limit their potentialities but can also reinforce the notion that there is only one way in which women should participate in politics. When people come together in acting and speaking, the potential of the processes and events taking place are limitless. It is also the significance of different people acting and speaking together, seeing situations from a variety of positions that enable the limitless potential of action in the public realm. ■

**Not their real names*

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Historically South African women from all walks of life have been active in politics as the system of apartheid was both racist and sexist. Black women in South Africa suffer from a three-fold oppression: as blacks; as women; and as workers who largely form a reserve army of labour.

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PATRIARCHY, POLITICAL VIOLENCE AND CAMPAIGN FINANCING: Barriers to Women's Political Leadership in Kenya

By Louisa Khabure

Characterised by low ranking regionally and globally in female representation in political leadership, Kenya needs a critical analysis of the reasons behind the failure of women's access to leadership. The challenges of patriarchy, campaign financing and political violence meted on women aspirants for elective positions have mired women's participation. The envisaged aim of the new constitutional dispensation is ensuring women's access and attainment of their optimal presence in formal governance structures. Paradoxically, women's political representation has remained low; thus denying women the critical mass that can easily influence public policy and decision making. Presently, it is still below thirty per cent across all political seats.

Leadership skills or commitment to a vision aren't the key immediate considerations in Kenya's political leadership. Instead, one's political added value is derived from one's closeness to the political party heads. This is because political parties have 'owners' and one's proximity to these powerful individuals determines one's political destiny. As a result, political contenders – and worse for women, are compelled to use various means to acquire this closeness to the party chiefs' and so tools such as money, violence and sex become the more effective in safeguarding one's influence and nomination into the party. This political culture and behaviour is witnessed during the electoral cycles and is further aggra-

vated by a complex patronage system that has routinely overlooked women. All these factors further alienate women. In addition, female candidates routinely and blatantly face threats and ridicule. They are bullied out of party primaries and few make it to the finish line without pandemonium. Drawing from a series of interviews with women, key stakeholders and 'gatekeepers',

this paper seeks to present the nature and extent of challenges women face when seeking political leadership and examine their relationship with the broader political culture in the country. It finally attempts to raise awareness of this grave matter and generate policy proposals and action for the future.

Introduction

The Kenyan political landscape has not had a strong representation of women in leadership positions be it legislative, judiciary, security and in the executive; right from the pre-independence era to the present times (Kariuki, 2010). The passing of the constitution in 2008 however was indicative of the government's commitment to incorporate improved definitions of all forms of discrimination and then make proposals for action demonstrating its efforts, for instance in ensuring the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) obligations are met.

This gave recognition of women's right to vote; be eligible for election to all publicly elected bodies; hold public office and perform all public functions and participate in the formulation of public policy and its execution. In addition, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) that were adopted in 2000 also seek to promote gender equality and empowerment of women.

On the other hand, there is an abundance of domestic institutional norms that seek to protect and guarantee the participation of women in the public space. First, the constitution (2010) has gender equality provisions such as the Bill of Rights and the requirement that not more than two thirds of members of elective or appointive bodies shall be of the same gender. Second, the Political Parties Act of 2011 and the Elections Act of 2011 also have gender sensitive provisions in line with the con-

stitution's gender equality and affirmative action provisions. Finally, Kenya's economic blueprint (Vision 2030) also attaches importance to women's participation in the political space by envisioning 'a democratic political system in which women and men are equally treated without discrimination on any grounds'.

It is imperative to note that the tradition of women's exclusion from public life was instituted right after independence and the subsequent formation of the first Kenyan government under Kenyatta. This is in spite of women's great contribution in the liberation struggle. The first parliament of 1963 – 1969 had no woman elected or nominated. The second parliament (1969 – 1974) had only one woman elected and one nominated (CMD, 2014:7). The performance of women in both elective and appointive positions was not promising in the successive Moi regimes. The patriarchal nature meant that women were not given a platform and in the event that they were provided one, it was to push the regime's agenda or to push issues dictated by the men most of which hardly included the promotion of women's participation in public life. However, the general elections of 1992 saw a slight increase in the number of women elected in parliament, with a total of six women MPs (Nzomo, 2003). Nonetheless, this number dropped to four elected in 1997 and four were nominated. In the 2002 general elections, there was a total of ten elected and eight nominated women members of parliament (KEWOPA, 2007). Consequently, three women were appointed minis-



ters and four assistant ministers. The 2007 general elections had sixteen women elected and six nominated to parliament. Six women were appointed ministers and seven assistant ministers in the ensuing Government of National Unity (ibid).

The dismal performance of women in elective positions has persisted even in present times. Currently, there are 86 women in parliament out of a total number of 349 (national assembly and senate). Subsequently, women are a minority in both house committees which are mostly chaired by men. Also, the leadership (speaker) of both houses is controlled by men except for the national assembly which has a woman Deputy Speaker. The Jubilee government has also appointed just six women in the cabinet (out of a total of eighteen). Sadly, no woman was elected Governor in the 47 counties, and only one as Deputy Governor. The county governments also have few women holding cabinet positions as well as chief officers (USAID, NDI and FIDA, 2013)

Challenges facing women in accessing political leadership in Kenya

The Kenyan political culture is characterised by weak democratic institutions as well as little appreciation of democratic norms by several actors in the domestic political marketplace. Thus, women players in the political field find it even harder to navigate the already murky field of Kenyan politics; given their already disadvantaged positions in both economic as well as social spheres. Although Kenya has made leaps and bound in the exercise of democratic elections and elections management for instance in effective voter/civic education and proper electoral systems

and management it also has a bad reputation. Political violence, voter bribery and vote rigging, patriarchy, cronyism, are all adjectives that best describe the nature in which the political process is organized and practised.

Patriarchy

Kenyan society is entrenched in a patriarchal system in which men are placed at the forefront in all spheres of life (Kabira and Kimani, 2012). This practice is reinforced by longstanding cultural and social traditions that have come to be appreciated from generation to generation. In such relations, women are supposed to play subordinate roles to men (ibid). Consequently, during the campaigns for political office, female aspirants are disadvantaged since men are presumed 'natural leaders'. A woman must often invest twice as much energy as a man in campaigns. Moreover, the patriarchal nature of the Kenyan society; and by extension the political system in Kenya, has further led to little appreciation of the leadership ability of women leaders. In Kenya, the woman is assumed to be the weaker sex; thus given little consideration by the electorate when seeking representatives. According to one female parliamentary candidate 'society sees our place as being the kitchen and the bedroom and nothing beyond there'. In another incident, the female representatives in parliament are often referred to as

'flower girls' making it difficult for them to engage in effective parliamentary debate.

Moreover, a survey by CMD (2014) reveals that the patriarchal structure of society is also evident in the political parties that participate in the political

Kenya's economic blueprint (Vision 2030) also attaches importance to women's participation in the political space by envisioning 'a democratic political system in which women and men are equally treated without discrimination on any grounds'.



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game in Kenya. The survey results indicate that all the political parties in the country are male dominated and the male members also account for the largest proportion of members in the executive councils. Political parties in Kenya lack systems and are not yet strongly developed enough to constitute vibrant youth or women's parties. Consequently, during the nomination primaries for the various political parties; the male dominated parties first give considerations to their male cronies in well organized patron – client relations and then violence, money and even sexual favours take centre stage.

Political violence

The electoral cycle in Kenya has never escaped instances of violent conflict in the recent past. Imperatively, the political actors in the polity have constantly and effectively instrumentalized violence as the 'effective tool kit' for winning political office (Lugano, 2013). In a game that is bereft of political ideology among the players, violence has become the ultimate and alternative choice of accessing political office. Moreover, this violence is always organized well in advance and confined in a well elaborate network. Nevertheless, having had little experience in the Kenyan political system, women political actors lack these 'organized networks' of militias and thugs that are hired to cause havoc. In the end, women aspirants have been among the recipients of such violent acts. In addition, the violence has to be well financed and women generally lack the enormous funding in comparison to their male counterparts.

Sometimes, women aspirants are sexually assaulted in public and subjected to ridicule; and at times

it gets worse, resulting in rape incidents. Migiro (2013) gives an account of one incidence in the run up to the 2013 general elections in which a female aspirant had her male rival litter a polling station with condoms that had her name printed on them in order to paint her as promiscuous.

Campaign financing

Financing a political campaign in Kenya is a very expensive affair. An indication from a female MP of the money she spent on her campaign in running for a Member of Parliament (MP) post in a rural constituency was approximately 24 million Kenya shillings (271,500USD). One has to pay nomination fees to political parties, mobilize and pay campaign agents, print and mount posters as well as fund mobility. These activities might turn out to be an expensive exercise for women aspirants; against the backdrop of their marginalization in economic spheres (Kisika, 2013). Unlike men, women generally have limited access to economic resources and thus face financial challenges when campaigning for political office. As a result, quite a number of potential women candidates for elective political positions shy away from the political contests. In addition, the few women who eventually end up in the political duels with men do so at disadvantaged positions. The

Women aspirants are sexually assaulted in public and subjected to ridicule; and at times it gets worse, resulting in rape incidents. A female aspirant had her male rival litter a polling station with condoms that had her name printed on them in order to paint her as promiscuous.

ones who have managed to succeed have done so at great sacrifice. They are often women who have run campaigns and lost several times before, women who have strong male supporters, prominent and wealthy husbands or fathers or women who have undertaken effective development projects at the constituency level and have managed to win the confidence from their community.



Way Forward

The various challenges women aspiring to politics face include; inadequate campaign financing, patriarchy, sexism, political violence, all of which are embedded in the country's political culture. It is therefore important to increase the opportunities and create a conducive environment for women in contesting political leadership beyond constitutional provisions. This can be done by ensuring their safety on the campaign trail, financing their campaigns and orientating them in the nature and context of the country's political culture so that they can be on a level playing field with their male counterparts. Finally, more efforts should also be made to sensitize the public on principles of gender equality as well as the leadership potential and abilities of women leaders.

All stakeholders involved in the participation of women in leadership need a good understanding of the constraints women face when contesting for these positions. A long term strategy spearheaded by the Gender Commission to respond to the crises, problems and constraints faced by women is needed. The women themselves need to employ a more cohesive approach towards working together especially through platforms like the women's caucuses and women political party wings. The question of violence is very worrying and thus, the police, judiciary and the electoral commission must monitor and apprehend those who mete out violence in general and against women during elections in particular. Those undertaking programming on women's participation should identify key allies and gatekeepers to work with and support. ■

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The African Women's Journal



The Case of *Pauline Nyiramasuhuko*, ex Minister of Family Welfare and the Advancement of Women’s Affairs in Rwanda

By Aminatta L. R. Ngum

This paper demonstrates that women have not just stood by and watched their male counterparts perpetrating heinous crimes of genocide and related crimes but that they have actually taken part as found in the courts. Jurisprudence on Women Victims and Perpetrators that is available from International Criminal Tribunals and national courts e.g. groundbreaking decisions and the judgment on Pauline Nyiramasuhuko, who was the Minister for Family and Women’s Affairs during the genocide in Rwanda. She is the first and only woman tried and convicted for the crime of genocide as well as rape as an act of genocide, by the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda [UNICTR]. Her conviction and sentence went against the usual perception that women are harmless during conflicts. What happens in the aftermath is that the alleged genocidaires are tried according to national and international law, sending a clear message to perpetrators of heinous crimes that impunity will not be tolerated.



Introduction

Pauline Nyiramasuhuko was born in 1946 in a small farming community of Ndora, in the Province of Butare, Rwanda, to a poor Hutu family¹, and rose to become the Minister of Family and Women’s Affairs in 1992. She was a local success story, known to some as Butare’s favorite daughter². At that time few African women were educated let alone involved in power or politics. She became part of the Hutu elite and was a member of the Inner Circle *Akazu*, a fact that Prime Minister *Kambanda* testified to in his Guilty Plea. In paragraphs 517 and 518 on page 31 of their Report on the Rwanda Genocide, the International Panel of Eminent Personalities to Investigate the 1994 Genocide in Rwanda and the Surrounding Events found that “...The small faction of insiders were called the *Akazu* (“Little House”) or sometimes “*le Clan de Madame*,” since its core was the President’s wife, family and close associates....But the *Akazu* also was the centre of a web of political, mercantile

¹ Wikipedia Pauline Nyiramasuhuko.

² Peter Landesman “A woman’s work” in The New York Times 2 September 2002 <http://www.nytimes.com/2002/09/15/magazine/a-woman-s-work.html>

and military machinations...” And at paragraph 8.15 on page 52 “*The Akazu occupied key positions in the Presidential Guard, FAR and both MRND and CDR political parties and they controlled the interhamwe and impuzamugambi militias as well as the radio station RTLM...*”

Whilst a Minister in the Interim Government 08 April to 17 July 1994, *Nyiramasuhuko* participated in attending meetings, overseeing rapes and murders culminating in her being the only woman charged, tried, convicted and sentenced to life imprisonment by the UN International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (the UNICTR). Her conviction and sentence go against the usual perception that women are harmless and usually the victims not perpetrators of crimes. In a Congolese refugee camp in 1995, *Nyiramasuhuko* told the BBC that she was not involved in killings: “*I couldn’t even kill a chicken. If there is any person who says that a woman, a mother, could have killed, I’ll tell you truly then I am ready to confront that person.*” Despite this declaration, *Nyiramasuhuko* became the first woman to be convicted of rape as an act of genocide³. Her case is pending on appeal before the UNICTR Appeals Chamber. *Nyiramasuhuko* rose in power/politics, to become the pride of her region yet she fell from grace, and is widely condemned amongst women politicians in Rwanda. Angeline Muganza, for example, a former Rwandan Minister of Gender⁴ stated “*She makes me ashamed to be a woman.*”

Biography

Whilst attending High School at the *Ecole Sociale de Karubanda*, it is understood that *Nyirama-*

suhuko became friends with *Agathe Habyarimana*, the future wife of the late Juvenal Habyarimana, who became President of Rwanda in 1973. *Nyiramasuhuko* trained and worked as a social worker. In 1968 she married Maurice Ntahobali, with whom she had four children, including *Arsene Shalom Ntahobali* her only son, who is also jointly charged with her. The family owned and lived in the Hotel Uhiliro.⁵ *Nyiramasuhuko* worked for the government’s Ministry for Social Affairs, educating women about health and childcare and AIDS prevention. She was ambitious and attended the National University of Rwanda to study law in 1986 graduating at the age of 44 years. She was appointed Minister for Family Affairs and the Advancement of Women in late President Habyarimana’s government from 1992. Her days as Minister were devoted to improving the lives of women and children, their preservation, education and empowerment. Following the death of President Habyarimana on 06 April, 1994, and subsequent to the assassination of Prime Minister Agathe Uwingiyimana, *Nyiramasuhuko* held the position of Minister of Family and Women’s Development in the Interim Government of Rwanda.

Trial, Conviction and Sentence:

At the Beijing Conference in 1995, when she was then First Lady, Hilary Rodham Clinton, Former USA Secretary of State emphasized these important words “*...It is a violation of human rights when individual women are raped in their own communities and when thousands of women are subjected to rape as a tactic or prize of war.... If there is one message that echoes forth from this conference, it is that hu-*

³ 24 June 2011 Last updated at 20:38 Profile: Female Rwandan killer Pauline Nyiramasuhuko by Josephine Hazeley BBC African Service.

⁴ Pambazuka News “Rwanda’s mother and son genocidaires” by Elizabeth Barad

⁵ Pambazuka News “Rwanda’s mother and son genocidaires” by Elizabeth Barad. The Trial Chamber found that *Ntahobali* set up a road block outside their house and committed atrocities for which he was convicted and sentenced. Their house which had overlooked the National University was razed to the ground shortly after the Rwandan Patriotic Front comprised of Tutsis from the Ugandan Diaspora had stopped the genocide.

⁶ <http://www.famousquotes.me.uk/speeches/Hillary-Clinton/>

⁷ Statute of the UNICTR see: <http://www.unict.org/Portals/0/>

⁸ <http://www.famousquotes.me.uk/speeches/Hillary-Clinton/>

⁹ Statute of the UNICTR see: <http://www.unict.org/Portals/0/English/Legal/Statute/2010.pdf>

¹⁰ “Life in jail for woman behind Rwanda genocide” The Sydney Morning Herald June 25, 2011.



man rights are women's rights - and women's rights are human rights....⁶

African women continue to face challenges regarding violations to their human rights, due to the various conflicts that have and continue to ravage communities; from internal conflicts in Uganda to Sudan's Darfur Region, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Ivory Coast, South Sudan and Central African Republic to name a few. In these conflicts women are the majority of victims. However, there have been instances of women as perpetrators of the injustice to other women, which the Trial Chamber took into consideration in *Nyiramasuhuko's* case. We await the Appeals Chamber judgment. In the aftermath of the genocide in Rwanda, the UN Security Council, acting under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations, by Resolution 955 of 1994, established the UNICTR "for the sole purpose of prosecuting persons responsible for genocide and other serious violations of International Humanitarian Law committed in the territory of Rwanda and Rwandan citizens responsible for genocide and other such violations committed in the territory of neighboring States, between 1 January 1994 and 31 December 1994."⁷ The mandate is to try the masterminds of Rwanda's genocide in which 800,000 people; mainly Tutsis as well as moderate Hutus were killed over 100 days.¹⁰

Nyiramasuhuko was arrested in Kenya in 1997 and later transferred to UNICTR together with her son. The case referred to as the *Butare* commenced in 2001 presided over by Judge William H. Sekule, including two female Judges Arlette Ramarosan and Solomy Balungi Bossa. After 10 years on 24 June 2011, the Trial Chamber found unanimously that *Nyiramasuhuko* was guilty of the following 7 charges: Conspiracy to Commit Genocide; Genocide;

It is that human rights are women's rights - and women's rights are human rights....

Crimes Against Humanity (Extermination); Crimes Against Humanity (Rape); Crimes Against Humanity (Persecution); Serious Violations of Article 3 Common to the Geneva Conventions and of Additional Protocol II Thereto (Violence to Life, Health and Physical or Mental Well-Being of Persons); Serious Violations of Article 3 Common to the Geneva Conventions and of Additional Protocol II Thereto (Outrages upon Personal Dignity).

The Chamber dismissed the following 2 charges: (Complicity in Genocide); and (Murder as a Crime against Humanity).

The Chamber found her not guilty of: Direct and Public Incitement to Commit Genocide; Crimes Against Humanity (Other Inhumane Acts).

Having taken particular note of the seriousness and atrocity of crimes repetitively perpetrated at the *Butare préfecture* office throughout a period of time where hundreds of Tutsis were abducted, raped and killed, the Chamber took into consideration "the vast number of victims, far in excess of the threshold for extermination as a crime against humanity, to be an aggravating circumstance."¹¹

Additionally, the Trial Chamber referred to the UNICTR Appeals Chamber's judgment in *Simba*, where it held that an accused's abuse of his or her superior position or influence may be considered as an aggravating factor.¹² In this case, the Trial Chamber found, "*Nyiramasuhuko's position as Minister for Family and Women's Affairs during the events made her a person of high authority, influential and respected within the country and especially in Butare préfecture from where she hails. Instead of preserving the peaceful co-existence between communities and the welfare of the family, Nyiramasuhuko, on a number of occasions, used her*

¹¹ *Nyiramasuhuko* judgment and sentence <http://www.unicttr.org/Cases/tabid/127/PID/83/default.aspx?id=4&mnid=3>

¹² *Simba*, Judgement (AC), paras. 284-285.

influence over Interahamwe to commit crimes such as rape and murder. This abuse of general authority vis-à-vis the assailants is an aggravating factor.” The Trial Chamber also noted several aggravating factors especially:

“the catastrophic number of victims across Butare préfecture who perished and suffered as a result of Nyiramasuhuko’s participation in the conspiracy to commit genocide. The Chamber further considers as an aggravating factor the numerous victims of rapes and killings at the Butare préfecture office in particular,¹³ many of whom were particularly vulnerable.”

Moreover, the Trial Chamber found that the mitigating factors were, of a very limited weight, given the gravity of the crimes committed by Nyiramasuhuko. The mitigating factors that the Trial Chamber took into consideration were Nyiramasuhuko’s “background and individual circumstances.... The Chamber notes Nyiramasuhuko’s service as a Government Minister since 1992. The Chamber notes as well her service in the Ministry of Health.” The Chamber used its discretion to impose a single sentence, and sentenced her to life imprisonment. Consequently, the mitigating factors were important but in this case, did not help to reduce Nyiramasuhuko’s sentence, due to the aggravating factors outlined above, by the Trial Chamber.

Additionally, the Nyiramasuhuko case was one of the rare cases where a UNICTR Trial Chamber issued a conviction on the conspiracy mode of liability. In previous cases, Trial Chambers have held that the evidence offered by the prosecution that an agreement to commit genocide was inadequate to prove beyond reasonable doubt that a conspiracy to commit genocide existed. In the Nyiramasuhuko case, however, the Trial Chamber found that:

“Considering all of these elements, the only reasonable conclusion is that Nyiramasuhuko entered into an agreement with members of the Interim Government on or after 9 April 1994 to kill Tutsis within Butare préfecture with the intent to destroy, in whole or in part, the Tutsi ethnic group. As a member of the Interim Government, Nyiramasuhuko participated in many of the Cabinet meetings at which the massacre of Tutsis was discussed, and took part in the decisions which triggered the onslaught of massacres in Butare préfecture. There can be no other inference from these facts than that Nyiramasuhuko conspired with the Interim Government to commit genocide against the Tutsis of Butare préfecture.¹⁴”

Moreover, Nyiramasuhuko was the first person to be convicted for committing genocide with her son, Arsene Shalom Ntahobali. The fact that senior fe-

¹³ Semanza, Judgement (AC), paras. 337-338.

¹⁴ The Chamber notes that there appears to be a split of authority regarding whether convictions may be entered simultaneously for conspiracy to commit genocide and for genocide; see Gatete, Judgement (TC), paras. 654-662 (addressing this split and, after considering that the scenario was similar to that faced by the Trial Chamber in Popović et al., following the approach taken in that case); Popović et al., Judgement (TC), paras. 2117-2127 (discussing this split and concluding that it would be redundant to enter a conviction for conspiracy to commit genocide and for genocide, which had been committed through a joint criminal enterprise). The Chamber considers, however, that it does not need to address this issue because the conduct that serves as the basis for conspiracy to commit genocide (entering into an agreement with members of the Interim Government on or after 9 April 1994) is different from that which is addressed below as the basis for genocide (engaging in acts or omissions on or after 19 April 1994, generally with persons who were not members of the Interim Government). In any event, the Chamber notes its view that, because joint criminal enterprise does not feature as a form of commission in this case, conspiracy to commit genocide and genocide each contain a materially distinct element, and thus a conviction could be entertained on both charges under the present circumstances.

¹⁵ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Biljana_Plav%C5%A1i%C4%87 and <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2009/oct/27/bosnian-serb-war-criminal-freed>

¹⁶ Biljana Plavsic was indicted in 2000, for charges including genocide for her role in Serb atrocities in the 1992 -95 Bosnian war. The genocide charge was dropped as part of a plea bargain that saw her convicted the UNICTY in 2002 of Persecution, on political, racial and religious grounds, a crime against humanity.

¹⁷ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Biljana_Plav%C5%A1i%C4%87 and <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2009/oct/27/bosnian-serb-war-criminal-freed>

¹⁸ Rwanda: Pauline Nyiramasuhuko et Simone Gbagbo, deux mères de famille poursuivies pour viols 7 MARS 2014

¹⁹ The Rwanda Assembly passed a law on August 30, 1996 to regulate prosecution for Genocide, Crimes Against Humanity, and other crimes committed in connection with them – see Government of Rwanda document Organic Law No. 08/96 of 30/08/1996. Pursuant to this law and despite worldwide condemnation, on Friday 24 April 1998, the Rwandan government carried out the executions of twenty-two people condemned to death for having led or participated in the genocide, including the first woman Virginie MUKANKUSI. Nyiramasuhuko is not the only woman to have been found guilty of genocide, as several women have been but not before an International Court. Two Rwandan Catholic Nuns were found guilty by a Brussels Court in June 2001 for their role in the genocide and sentenced. Sister Gertrude alias Consolata Mukangango was sentenced to 15 years whilst Sister Kizito alias Julienne Mukabutera received 12 years. Many women have been sentenced for their role in the genocide in Rwanda’s traditional court system or before the Gacaca community courts.



male perpetrators of wartime sexual violence, such as *Nyiramasuhuko* tried at UNICTR supra, and *Biljana Plavšić*¹⁶, former President of Serbia¹⁷ tried by the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia [UNICTY] in The Hague, Netherlands respectively, and by the International Criminal Court *Mrs. Kagbo*¹⁸, for their complicity in crimes against humanity, has revealed an unsettling pattern in modern warfare; women as perpetrators of rape as a weapon of war and conflict-driven violence.

Conclusion

African women have risen, in most cases from humble roots, by being elected or appointed to positions of power/politics as Presidents, Vice Presidents, Speakers, Ministers and other high profile posts. However, where women have participated or acted as agents of violence, in committing crimes in their capacities, they have been prosecuted in national¹⁹ and international jurisdictions for the most heinous crimes committed in the world. This story needs to be told because in the past women perpetrators of heinous crimes were not prosecuted. Ms. Wendy Lower's research in *"Hitler's Furies: German Women in the Nazi Killing Fields"* showed that during the Nazi regime, women had committed heinous crimes but were, in most cases, not prosecuted.

The *Nyiramasuhuko* case shows us that the UNICTR has taken into consideration the role played by women as perpetrators of violence against their fellow women. Additionally, in Rwanda thousands of women perpetrators were tried in the National as well as the Gacaca courts, with one executed and others serving their sentences. *Nyiramasuhuko*'s case seems to have received more international press and publicity because she was tried by an International Criminal Tribunal. *Agnes Ntamabyariro* who is now 77 years old and a former Justice Min-

ister was found guilty of genocide crimes in January 2009 and sentenced to life imprisonment by the Nyarugenge Intermediate Court in Rwanda. She was the only member of the then Interim Government, which took over after the death of late President Juvenal Habyarimana, who was tried by a Rwandan Court. She is appealing against the life sentence.²⁰

It will be interesting to follow up on the appeals chamber judgments in these two former women Ministers' cases. These cases remind us that women have not always been the victims, but have participated as perpetrators and in some cases at national and international levels have been and continue to be tried and convicted of serious crimes e.g. for murder, infanticide, drug and human trafficking, slavery to name a few. Using the expected gender paradigms, one would expect women ministers to sensitize others and fight for the promotion and protection of women's human rights. But for reasons explained in their defense cases, these women made a choice, or deny any involvement. The modern society has to accept that this is not a new kind of criminal, but that we have come to terms with gender equality at all levels, including criminal liability and responsibility. With so many national and international conflicts in Africa, women in power/politics should draw valuable lessons from these two cases that impunity, from either gender will not be tolerated and conviction may lead to the maximum penalty available. Although African Women in Power and/or Politics are rising, it is incumbent to curb impunity for the betterment of our society as a whole. ■

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²⁰ The East African 20 February, 2014 "Sentenced to life in 2009, former Rwandan Justice Minister appeals" see www.theeastafrican.co.ke/Rwanda/News/Former-Rwandan-Justice-minister-appeals-life-sentence/-/1433218/2215420/-/c2hqrkz/-index.html



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"Women, Armed Conflict and International Law" by Judith G. Gardam and Michelle J. Jarvis

"Les Blessures du Silence: Témoignages du génocide au Rwanda" by Yolande Mukagasana

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Paradoxes of Democracy Promotion

By Nimmo O. Elmi

This article is concerned with the paradoxical deteriorating role of Somali women in the society due to misinformed rebuilding efforts. During my six months of fieldwork in Nairobi, Kenya it was quite evident that rebuilding efforts in Somalia focused mainly on engaging the elites who comprised largely of males excluding women's agency. Women's active roles during and after the civil war were not viewed as a priority compared with engaging with male clan warlords and elders. In some conflicts, women's roles are transformed from the private to the public sphere like in the case of Liberia where Ellen Johnson Sirleaf was first appointed as a minister and later as the country's first female president. However in the case of Somalia, I argue that women's roles were relegated and confined to the private sphere; contrary to the advanced role they used to play before the civil war.

"Knowledge cannot reside in a bosom that has contained milk" -Somali Proverb¹

Introduction

Conflict is a necessary tool for social transformation and change, restructuring the relationships within societies. However when it escalates into violence like in the case of Somalia, it leads to massive loss of lives and displacement.² In search for peace, Somalia's rebuilding efforts focused on the clan-based nature of the conflict, which was mainly dominated by males belonging to major warring clans. The inclusion of women was not only disregarded by the peace initiators but by researchers as well. This is due to the nature of the Somali kinship system, which is patrilineal. A woman's kinship affiliation will change at least once or sometimes several times during her lifetime depending on her marriage. She is part of her father's lineage until she is married and subsequently joins that of her husband after marriage. Uncertainties abound, however with regard to where to place a woman's loyalty or affiliation to a clan. For instance, a woman is in a unique position to connect her clan of origin and that of her husband and address causes of conflict that may emerge between the two. In this case, she can act as a connector. However, if she loses the trust of one

or both clans, which happens often, she be turned into a divider. After all as the Somali adage goes to say: "*Wixii Xun ba Xaawa leh*" (*All that befalls a family comes from women*).

This is the primary reason boys are valued more than girls in kinship traditions. The boy can protect the clan and even expand it when he marries. Besides, a boy's education is valued more than the girls, explaining the proverb quoted above on knowledge not being able to reside in a bosom. A woman's role is restricted to producing offspring for the clan.

Honour Codes and Agency

"Do you know Fathumo Jibril?" inquired my informant who worked with me at the National Democratic Institute (NDI) where I conducted my research fieldwork. Filsan*, a self-declared feminist, considered her as her number one hero. She explained when I told her that I had not heard of her, that Ms. Jibril was the director of a local NGO called ADESSO (African Development Solutions) and a women's activist who managed to secure the 30% quota for Somali women during the drafting of the Somali provisional constitution. The constitutional

¹Bryden (1998)
²Bryden (1998)



drafting process was to allocate 8% representation of women in government but Mrs Jibril protested by taking a traditional Somali drum (durbaan) and played a famous tune and thus managed to disrupt the men who were deliberating on the women's clause. Hence, she managed to restore the rights of the women as the men gave in to her demands of 30% quota. Despite this provision, women only managed to secure 15% representation.

Ms. Jibril belonged to the generation of women who were not only politically active before the civil war but active members of the society. This then made it natural for her and her activist peers to claim their position despite being excluded in the peace negotiations. The exclusion of women from politics is described by Lila Abu Lughod (1986) as a core feature of nomadic communities. In her ethnography among the Bedouins, Lughod argues that societies that are clan based or nomadic, exclude women from expressing their sentiments in what is described as honour codes. However, Lughod explains that the women find agency through art, poetry or songs. Similarly, the Somali women though undermined by the culture, yet they find ways to contribute to peace, reconciliation and political inclusion through the use 'buraanbuur' (poetry) and 'Xeeso' (songs) as demonstrated by Ms. Jibril (Bryden, 1998, p. 34).

A similar case that stood out in my research was that of civil society activist, Aisha Haji Elmi, whose husband later became a prime minister in 2012. Mrs Elmi decided to take matters in her own hands

and create a women's clan, the 6th clan, due to the evident exclusion of women in peace negotiations during the Arta conference in Djibouti in 2000. The conference agreed upon a clan power sharing formula that gave 5 Somali clans political leverage in the transitional government. Aisha felt that women were excluded from the power sharing and formed the sixth clan where all women could use to push for

their agenda. The women raised their own funds and attended the conference despite not being invited. They were very few in number compared to the men but that did not hinder them from using their agency. The 6th clan is currently not being employed by Somali women but it created a political space for the women that gave the women agency and a platform to fight for inclusion in politics.

In the patriarchal and lineage based tradition of Somalis, women's roles are usually confined to the walls of their home, thus limiting their meaningful participation in education, economic and politics, and keeping them out of decision-making processes. However, it is worth noting the success registered during the heyday of the Somalia state. The former Somalia President Siad Barre had made efforts to promote women's inclusion through the establishment of the SWDO (Somali Women's Development Organisation). The organisation has made significant

gains in raising awareness and thus managed to raise the status of women in society and in policy making levels. However, the civil war reversed the gains made and placed women in a more precarious position.

Women find agency through art, poetry or songs. Somali women though undermined by the culture, find ways to contribute to peace, reconciliation and political inclusion through the use 'buraanbuur' (poetry) and 'Xeeso' (songs).



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In Nairobi, I was introduced to a highly educated group of Somali women from both the Diaspora and Somalia who hold PhDs and Masters from prestigious universities around the globe, are currently engaged in different fields and are actively trying to break the barriers of women's exclusion in Somali politics. They referred affectionately to each other as 'Abayo' or sister in Somali. My supervisor had introduced me to one of the sisters, a Somali Canadian middle-aged lady, Sagal* who worked as gender expert and later became the point of contact to this group. As a gender expert, Sagal was engaged by most organisations to mainstream gender into their programs. Sagal expressed her frustration with the paradoxes of democracy rebuilding in Somalia. Somali women, explained Sagal, were not being taken seriously in peace building negotiations because of the traditional views of women as not full clan members.

To change the demeaning perception the society holds against the women, she wanted to be selected as an MP however her clan chose her cousin, who was not only uneducated but also linked to killings during the civil war. Sagal was furious and she told me that women will never be taken seriously. *"We need to shift to the one-person one-vote system - women will then have a fighting chance of competing with the men"* says Sagal. Sagal also narrates incidents she encountered while travelling to Somalia for the first time to work for the government. She explains that not only was her life threatened but also as an unmarried woman she was told that she should focus more on marriage rather than rebuilding the country - seemingly a role reserved for men!

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New Identities, New Roles

It's 4am in the morning when the taxi sent by the National Democratic Institute (NDI) stops at the Wilson airport in Nairobi. A consultant, my supervisor and I are flying to the world's largest refugee camp, Dadaab, in North Kenya to observe and take part in focus group discussions that will engage 20 young girls aged between 17-24. NDI was keen on collecting the views of Somalis all over Somalia and in the refugee camps about the recent political developments in the country with the election of a president and a government. The girls would be given questionnaires that were administered all over Somalia. The focus group discussions would be conducted by one of NDI's partner civil society organisation (CSO) based in Dadaab.

We arrived at a local school and immediately started to engage the girls in the focus group discussion. Being the only Somali woman in the group translating for my colleagues the girls could not keep but staring at me—most likely wondering why I am out in the field abandoning my 'role' to stay to the confines of my wall. *"What do you think of President Mohamoud?"* asked the moderator. *"He is a great man", "He is good for Somalia,"* responded the

girls one after the other.

The young girls who lived in the refugee camp were somewhat aware of the political changes in Somalia but due to the hardship of living in a refugee camp, it was not possible to fully grasp the extent to which they were sensitive to the changes that had taken place in Somalia. One question focused on the prime minister who at the time of my fieldwork had started losing popularity among the Somalis. One answered, *"Those who elected him must know*

why they did so. I accept him as my prime minister. I am glad that Somalia finally has a prime minister. I hope to return to Somalia one day and live in peace". I sensed that the girls were not only afraid to give their honest opinion but that they felt that their opinion did not really matter. The moderator reached the most important question about the role of women in Somali politics and this highlighted how these interventions to rebuild Somalia's state led to the marginalization of girls and women.

One answered: "Women should not be allowed to participate in politics as it goes against the religion". Another answered, "Why should women even want to have representation? Our men can work and provide for us and we can raise the children". From their body language and their verbal responses, I sensed that the girls had grown up in an environment where they believed that their only roles in their society were to become wives and mothers. I was unprepared for this conversation, as most of the Somali ladies I had met in Nairobi were activists who aimed to reclaim the position of Somali women before the war. The history of Somalia especially after independence included brave women who were pilots, politicians, doctors and other professionals. However, the young girls who were born and raised as refugees became sheltered from public life due to the fear of rapings and kidnappings, viewing men as protectors.

Conclusion

The examples from Faduma Jibril and Asha Haji Elmi show women's resilience and creativity in order to be included in male dominated spheres. The young women whom I encountered in the refugee camps were more accepting of the new roles that

had emerged after the collapse of the state. From what I witnessed, both local and international rebuilding efforts do not focus on this aspect. Most ignore that the role and position of Somali women is constantly being confined to the private sphere silencing their voices and without agency to contribute to any efforts, politically, economically and even socially. With a population of over 50% women, all rebuilding efforts have to be gender mainstreamed in order to get women involved in rebuilding the state. One of the things that have become new phenomena is young girls being recruited to Islamic militia groups like the *Al Shabaab*. The exclusion in the public sphere, and in decision-making spaces leads young girls and women to join such groups as they give them a sense of inclusion and belonging. If Somalia is going to rebuild itself from its ruins then it will have not only meaningfully include women and girls in its portfolio but also address women's disempowerment. ■

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Organic Growth of a “Test Tube” Politician: Case of a Young Woman from Kenya

By Serah Kahiu



I have always been a politician. However, explaining that to the extended family, and going through with it at the age of 30, is not easy for a young unmarried woman. I did it. This is my story of how I slowly nurtured the political dream, and ran for a Senator position in my home Kiambu County, a notoriously patriarchal society. It culminated in 21,395 votes, a wealth of experience and determination to continue in Kenya's political dance. My horizons were stretched; it shifted my mental paradigm and set me free to be audaciously ambitious. The lessons learnt will hopefully inspire the next generation of young women politicians in Kenya. I intend to run again, building on those lessons learnt.

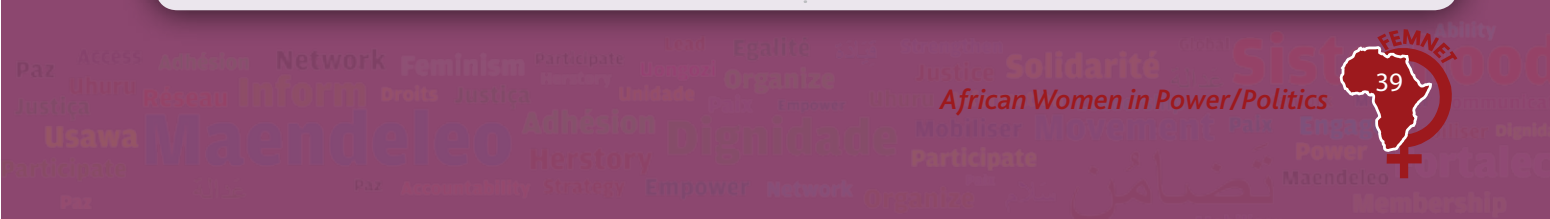
When I decided to vie for the position of Senator in Kenya's notoriously patriarchal Kiambu County, my whole family thought that I was crazy. I made this announcement in March of 2012. I was 30 years old. When I told them that I had a great announcement, they thought I was finally bringing home a husband. After all I was of age, sufficiently educated and 'quite ripe'. Needless to say they were shocked hearing me seek their blessings to run for politics.

All the elders from the extended Kahiu Family's clan of *aambui-a-mbaari-ya-mbuu* were summoned and demanded I explain myself. Apparently, there had never been a female political leader in the known history of all the estimated 100,000 descendants of

great-great grandfather Kahiu who had 25 wives.

I explained that as a daughter of Kiambu, born, bred, fed and educated in the county, I owed it to bring back my knowledge to serve, instead of being another statistical brain-drain. I reassured them that I chose to be in politics 10 years before in 2003 at only 21 years old, therefore I had thought it through. They blessed me and thus commenced my political adventure.

I tell people that I was born a politician. This was further augmented by growing up in the chaotic Karuri/Banana village of Kiambu county Kenya, as the only sister to three brothers. My parents who were teachers, believed in equal chances for all children regardless of gender. My father was partic-



sity of Nairobi. We took a break to watch some kids skating at the basketball pitch near the swimming pool of the main campus. I asked my friends “do you know there are people who skate for living? Yeah I saw it on CNN. What do you guys want to do for living?”

My friend John said “I want to become renowned business man, to own fleet of transport trucks.” My other friend Tracy said, “I want to be a volunteer medical doctor and to be a mother of 10 kids...” The only thing that came to mind was that “I want my life to matter politically. I want to influence Kenya’s politics!”

I couldn’t say that aloud –it seemed like an impossible dream. There was stigma associated with women in politics then. For example in my village, they were derogatorily called “*Malaya ma siasa*” (political prostitutes) or *mang’aa* (radical). And I had seen how vocal women like Wangari Maathai were harassed previously. That particular fact, and my mother being an official in our church’s Mother Union, made me shy away from actively taking part in student politics. I had grown up knowing that individual interest should never supersede nor violate the interest of other members of the Kahiu family. So instead of joining student leadership, I nurtured my leadership skills through membership in moderate student clubs such as Rotaract, I-Choose-Life, Red-Cross and being a Class Representative in all university classes I attended.

However, I did covertly influence Student leadership in University of Nairobi between 2003 and 2006 by volunteering in campaign fundraising for the candidates of integrity, several of whom succeeded. This, as I thought then, was my preparation

for the future, the beginnings of building my social capital when I decided to join politics.

In 2003, Kenya got a new President – Kibaki. It was my first time to vote and relished it! I was a classic ‘Nyayo era’ kid; all my life till 2002 I had known only one president, The wave that brought in President Kibaki gave me a lot of hope that change was possible, including the possibility for woman to run for any position in Kenya without being humiliated and the possibility for me to join politics without wreaking havoc on my Mama’s reputation in the church’s Mother’s Union.

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Slowly in my quiet way, my political dream grew and as it did, so did my love of science and appreciation of its potential to reduce poverty. I pursued my studies in life sciences; because in it I saw the possibility of job creation for the burgeoning youthful educated population of Kenya. Science and technology was for me the last frontier of job creation in Africa.

As I worked with the community, I would demystify the science of agriculture and medicine. For example, explaining that tissue culture bananas were not genetically modified (GMO), and explaining that GMO was not going to make their intestines form knots. I mostly did this in Kikuyu, my mother tongue, which rural farmers would

understand. I also did the same to encourage their daughters to pursue STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) courses. I figure that with the Kenya’s oncoming Industrialization and acceleration towards middle-income economy in 2030 (Kenya Vision 2030), we cannot have too many professionals in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics.

A new constitution (Constitution of Kenya, 2010) was enacted in 2010, which I read with a fine tooth comb! Lo and behold it favored women's participation in politics! Slowly I started gathering my wits to join politics in the oncoming elections. Initially I wanted to wait and run in 2017. But then I realized in 2017, I would still be politically naïve and clueless. So I decided that the 2013 election was going to be my 'Political Bootcamp'. I was honest enough to admit to myself that as a scientist with a Bachelors in botany and biochemistry, and a Masters in Biotechnology, I was deficient in political theory. The experiential learning that a campaign would provide was the shortest route to getting in the political game, without sitting in a political science class.

So after the Kahiu clan's endorsement to lead, I gathered my team of 12. We did a SWOT (strengths, weakness, opportunity, threat) analysis and determined our winning points. First point was getting a party that was favorable to youth and women candidates' nomination to get to the ballot. We found the Party of Independent Candidates of Kenya (PICK) very accommodating. Our second winning point was to get at least 10,000 votes. We made a manifesto, prioritizing on 5 key points, namely: (1) Establish cottage manufacturing industries; (2) Modern high value agriculture; (3) Relevant skill-based vocational training; (4) Pharmaceutical production and (5) Culture of dignity. We designed great campaigning materials for facebook, posters and t-shirts.

We campaigned intensely in all the 60 Wards of Kiambu County. It was excruciating and I loved every moment. It was me in my element, living my life's purpose. In the months of January and February 2013, I only slept for four hours. Every time I awoke, I jumped out of bed, chair, floor or wherever

else I fell asleep with excitement of going "out there to change the world!" I only ate once a day and supplemented my meal with Moringa leaf powder, roasted soya drink, pure coconut oil and vita500.

Most helpful were numerous trainings by women and political organizations like COVAW, UN Women and FIDA (Federation of Women Lawyers). These advised on dressing, public speaking, debating, building a winning manifesto, making posters, campaigning, female candidate safety and so many other life skills that were handy to the survival of female candidates. National Democratic Institute (NDI)'s Candidate manual (NDI, 2011) was my teams' second bible! These trainings also reminded me to get mentally ready 'just in case I won'. This was in realization that, with the confusion of the new system and youth 'digital' wave, anything was possible. Special thanks to all who stepped in to sponsor with the printing of campaign T-shirts when they ran out. I still see my people wearing them while going about their daily hustles. There is something jolting and humbling about seeing your face plastered on someone else's

chest so often. It always reminds me that I'm not done with the whole political business.

In the end we got 21,395 votes (IEBC, 2013) and a lifetime experiential Knowledge in Kenyan politics 101. I am using that knowledge to mentor five other young women who like me, are interested in shaping the Kenyan and indeed the African political landscape of the 21st century. For some reason I feel obliged to improve the lives of at least 22,000 people in Kiambu County. This is with the assumption that those woke up very early and cast their votes for me. I cannot take that for granted.

As of now my team and I are running projects through two non profits that I am affiliated to. One

You can never fully understand politics until you wallow in that mud. And until you wallow, you are not ready to swim with the sharks.



is YADSTI (Youth Agency for Development of Science, Technology and Innovation); which we started 10 years ago as students at University of Nairobi. My pet project there is to establish the first Science Museum/center in Africa. To that effect, I am among six Kenyan young women selected for the TechWomen-2014 program by the US government. In October 2014, I will be mentored in the best science and technology museums in Silicon Valley and come back to implement. The Museum will allow people from all walks of life to enjoy the beauty of science, understand the role of science in accelerating Vision 2030, and economic opportunities thereof. This will in turn grow a science-conscious generation, which will help influence relevant policies.

The second initiative is the Kilele Community Development, where I am the Executive Director. Here we endeavor to reduce poverty through Science, Technology and Agribusiness. Our immediate goal is to set up a network of Agribusiness incubators and demonstration farms. These will host training to youth and women on various aspects of agribusiness, from farm technologies to value addition to marketing.

The political experience has widened my horizons. I now have a bird's eye view of life. I do not expect solutions from outwards; instead I view myself as the solution to whatever problem facing myself and my community. That mental paradigm shift has helped me venture into projects that I wouldn't touch before. For example, I can now write ambitious project proposals with a budget of KShs 5 billion (USD 50 million) without blinking. Before politics, all those zeros confused me. It felt audacious to be ambitious. Now I feel free to embrace that audacity.

The question I often get is whether I will run again. Of course I will! God willing in 2017 and beyond! Being in politics is not an accident. It has been a deliberate decision that I made, wrestled with, and finally made peace with the fact that therein lays my

purpose for living. Truth be told you can never fully understand politics until you wallow in that mud. And until you wallow, you are not ready to swim with the sharks.

Besides I ask, "Why would a society educate and empower women and then deny them a chance to lead?" (Fida, 2014) Empowerment is a natural precursor to leadership. ■

Serah Kahiu was a Senate Candidate in Kiambu county-Kenya under the P.I.C.K party; during the 2013 elections. Connect with her senatorserah@gmail.com or www.facebook.com/serahkahiublog.

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Failure of 50/50 Female Representation in Zambian Parliament

By Sara Hlupekile Longwe



Women are lowly represented in all decision making positions because of the entrenched belief of male supremacy (patriarchy) in our Zambian constitutions, customs, traditions, religions, politics and practices. Thus, any woman who tries to enter into politics faces multiple forms of patriarchal discrimination.

In the 2011 tripartite elections, I was approached by the Chairperson of the ruling political party (Patriotic Front Party) to stand on their ticket as a Member of Parliament Candidate in Lusaka Central Constituency. I reluctantly persuaded myself

to agree in the affirmative to the request. On one hand my hesitation was a result of patriarchy, on the other hand however I agreed because I wanted to experience and prove whether or not patriarchy would be used against me, especially considering that the request was from a fellow woman (Ms Inonge Wina), who was highly placed in the Party.

I successfully passed through the initial selection processes at constituency, district and provincial levels. The hurdle was at the national level, the final selection stage. Here the patriarchal whim of the party leader was supreme: the President at the

time, (the late Mr Michael Sata) categorically said that he was not ready to work with a feminist – of which I proudly am - that was the end of my political bid; I did not even get my name on the national electoral ballot paper.

I tried to ignore my loss and joined the party campaigns on radio for the male incumbent in my constituency and at the party rallies. My introduction at my maiden rally speech was coated with patriarchal and racist tones by my party president: every speaker was introduced by their names and portfolios, except me. I was introduced as ‘a wife of a Whiteman’ in Bemba language and in a derogatory tone. Yes, I am married to a British man, he is white, so what? The discrimination was not only gender-based but it also was racially-based. The irony was that the Party Vice-President (Dr. Guy Scott) was a ‘Whiteman’ of British parentage - but the President saw nothing wrong with that. Also, the President had earlier taken offense when one of the paramount chiefs (late Chitimkulu of the Bemba people), who had openly portrayed discomfort at the prospect of having a ‘Whiteman’ for a Vice-President, if the PF won the elections, which he equated to going back to the British colonialism period. So, the main obstacle to my adoption was patriarchy because I was female and a feminist that fights for the elimination of patriarchy.

What I experienced is what many women politicians go through in all elections. A woman has to be a non-feminist to enter politics and in addition if married, it has to be to a ‘Blackman’. So, women politicians are not expected to believe or behave as social equals to male politicians. This is why very few women are ‘allowed’ to Parliament and if they are ‘allowed’ they are treated as second class decision makers that will not readily upset the male supremacy. Hence, I consider the Zambian Parliament as equivalent to ‘a men’s-club’, which has continued

to have few women MPs (12% currently) that are expected to behave as unwelcome guests.

The low representation of women in decision making positions will end in Zambia if the national Constitution removes the discriminatory claw-back clauses (Article 23 Clauses 2, 3 and 4) in the 1991 Constitution’s Bill of Rights. Article 23 Clause 1 disallows discrimination of any person on basis of their sex or marital status or any other personal social attributes. However, the same Article 23 at Clauses 2, 3 and 4c-d, also allows exceptional discrimination based on customs, traditions, marriage and personal law.

So, the discrimination that I went through in my political quest is not regarded as an offence by law, even though my country has ratified many regional and international conventions against all forms of discrimination against women. Sadly, our current Constitution of 1991 continues to ignore the principles of gender equality being fostered in the ratified conventions.

However, the women’s movement has not been idle: in the last three of the five Constitutional Reforms attempts; the women collectively and individually proposed non-discriminatory Articles in the current Draft Constitution (2013). But the biggest obstacle is that the Constitutional reform process has always been interrupted by the previous and present patriarchal and dictatorial ruling parties. The latest Draft Constitution has been hijacked because the process has been unilaterally stopped by the current government, whose ruling party is ironically named as *Patriotic Front Party*. ■

Aluta Continua!

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ABOUT FEMNET

The African Women's Development and Communication Network (FEMNET) was set up in 1988 as a pan-African, membership-based Network for women's organizations. Since inception, FEMNET continues to play a central role in sharing information, experiences, ideas and strategies among African women's NGOs in order to strengthen women's capacity to participate effectively in the development processes at different levels in Africa. This has been successfully done through communication and networking, advocacy and capacity building initiatives. Over the years, FEMNET has played a leading role in building the women's movement in Africa and ensuring that African women voices are amplified and influence decisions made at national, regional and global levels, which have direct and indirect impact on their lives.

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