



WPP Watch

October to December 2020

Tanzania - Violence against Women Politicians in the recent Tanzanian elections



Hon. Esther Nicholus Matiku is a Tanzanian politician belonging to the opposition Chama cha Demokrasia na Maendeleo (CHADEMA) party. She is a Member of Parliament for Tarime Urban. Ahead of Tanzania's election in October 2020, a full contingent of Police Officers arrived unannounced, heavily armed and apparently without a warrant, into the home of Hon. Ms. Esther Nicholus Matiko, to arrest a number of her guards. She is heard repeatedly asking what the Police were doing there, why they were arresting her guards, and why they

could not simply issue Summons and she would present them in the Police Station. The Police Officers ignore her and do not answer the questions; they merely continue violently arresting the guards. In the process, they roughed her up, and one Police Officer grabbed her buttocks. The whole issue was filmed, uploaded on YouTube and circulated widely on social media.

Hon. Catherine Nyakao Ruge is one of the youngest Member of Parliament representing Serengeti under Chama Cha Demokrasia na Maendeleo (CHADEMA). The week before Tanzania's October 2020 elections, Ms. Catherine Nyakao Ruge went to the local office of the National Elections Commission (NEC) to inquire into the Office's lack of response to formal alterations to her campaign itinerary that she had sought. They instead called the Police who beat her up very seriously, tore her clothes and paraded her with her blouse torn and possibly her breasts visible. They also inappropriately grabbed her private parts, and she has named the Police Officer who did so, with his two names. She had to be hospitalised. Uploaded on YouTube and circulated widely on social media is a clip in which she is complaining to a (presumably senior) Police Officer,



who is clearly muzzling and intimidating her from graphically describing what had happened to her.

No action has been taken in respect of either incident, even though the Inspector General of Police has been very loquacious on matters to do with maintaining law and order during elections. Last week also, in response to another widely circulating clip on social media where a regional police commander is seen mocking Hon. Freeman Aikaeli Mbowe (Chairman of CHADEMA and MP for Hai Constituency), the IGP has already responded and appointed an investigative team to inquire into whether the said Police Commander conducted himself improperly. Neither a statement nor action has been taken so far, in respect of these two Women Politicians.

There is quite some violence in Tanzanian politics, mostly directed by the Police at the Opposition. There, however, seems to be a special type of violence reserved for women Politicians. In March 2020, just outside Segerea Prison, Police so severely beat up three CHADEMA MPs: Halima James Mdee (Kawe), Ester Bulaya (Bunda Urban) and Jesca Kishoa (MP Special Seats) that they were hospitalised. Ms. Mdee broke some bones in the incident.

The October election incidents have shocked the nation and its friends and well-wishers across the region. Activists suggest that, amongst other actors, Women Politicians in the East African region (either in their individual capacities or through any Associations of Women Politicians) issue a Statement condemning last week's attacks and demanding that the Government, Police and National Elections Commission (NEC) condemn all attacks against Women Politicians, investigate and bring to justice the perpetrators.

Zimbabwe – Political party structures need to support women in politics



Rosewitter Madzivire is part of the National Executive Committee for Zimbabwe's movement for Democratic Change (MDC Alliance). Rosewitter contested as a Member of Parliament for the Masvingo West constituency in the 2018 elections. Her journey as a politician started in 2015 where contested and won as a ward councillor under the ZANU PF ticket. She was recalled by the ruling political party in 2016 due to her support of the then Vice President Joice Mujuru. She then joined Cde Mujuru's newly formed party (National People's Party) and later joined the MDC Alliance party ahead of the 2018 elections.

Rosewitter decries the fact that although women constitute more than 50% of the population, they are still side-lined in political party positions in Zimbabwe's politics. She was personally inspired by Cde Joice Mujuru in terms of transformative female leadership in the political field. She highlights that women war liberation heroes are not celebrated enough in Zimbabwe. The natural leader says that many issues have changed on paper to increase women's representation in politics, yet implementation is still poor. She highlights that the introduction of the reserved Proportion Representation seats for women as a step in the right direction to enable women to be in political decision making positions.

As a female politician, Rosewitter has witnessed repressive environments for women to campaign in politics. She highlights that it is important for political party structures to support women politicians before, during and after elections. Zimbabwe has witnessed a mixture of both young and older women political leaders. However, the terrain is not smooth sailing for every female

politicians as many times they have to work twice as hard to convince the electorate to vote for them.

Lack of resources for women to campaign poses difficulties to women politicians as society tends to respect those with resources. Rosewitter points out that there is need for political parties to support women politicians in Zimbabwe. The electorate believes that those without resources have no leadership capacity. Zimbabwe has faced incidents of violence targeted mainly at opposition party leaders. Rosewitter provided an example of Joanna Mamombe who has been violated as a female politician. She also highlights that women politicians in Zimbabwe cannot easily mobilise resources to develop their constituencies and many are blocked if they do so. She gives an example of pooling resources through cooperatives to mobilise resources for women.

The media is sometimes biased in terms of reporting of politics. For example, media will prefer to dig up personal issues of a female politician compared to reporting on their leadership capacities. Rosewitter highlights that media need to be trained on gender responsive reporting in political reporting. A huge issue faced by many aspiring and current female politicians is sexual harassment from male counterparts. Rosewitter highlights that some male counterparts even from the same political party may ask for sexual favours as payment to elevate women politically. She appeals to women in Zimbabwe to campaign for other women politicians instead of de-campaigning them. She is encouraging mentorship and sharing of resources for women politicians to elevate each other politically. Pointing out that there are life-time politicians who do not give time to the younger women to participate in politics – she encourages that older women must give younger women a chance in politics.

The quota for women is currently effective at national level. Rosewitter is advocating that there be a quota for women in local government as this is also a highly contested terrain in politics. She decries that the quota system is not effective enough to increase women's representation in politics. Rosewitter highlights that a mixed system would work well for the country although the main issue is to change attitudes of female leadership for the electorate.

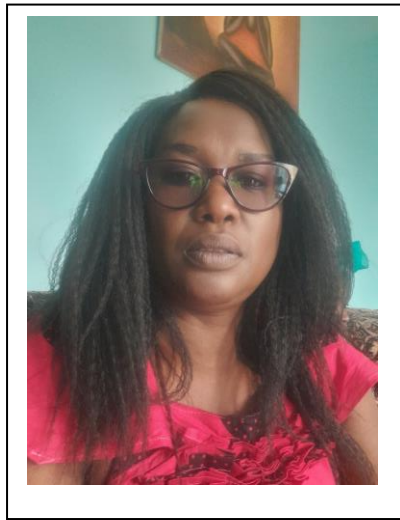
As the Zimbabwe 2023 elections approach, Rosewitter is worried about mobilising enough resources for campaigning. She is also pointing out that civil society organisations such as Women in Political Support (WiPSU) and Gender Links are necessary to reach out to aspiring and in-office women politicians. Rosewitter highlights that this support must cover safety of the female politician as well as their leadership capacity. She points out that election perpetrated violence reduces the confidence of a woman as a leader. Any training must continuously look at female politicians' agency.

Rosewitter says social media has both positive and negative impacts for female politicians. As a start, women have limited resources to buy smart gadgets for use during their leadership or campaign tenure. She highlights that social media is critical to convey a politician's message to the electorate as messages from mainstream media is usually diluted and targets those with resources. Rosewitter points out that many female politicians have been harassed through social media platforms thereby contributing to losses in terms of political mileage.

Women in Zimbabwe's politics are constantly under scrutiny despite their political affiliation. They may face harassment from within their political parties or from other political parties. Rosewitter is adamant that a violence free political environment will propel more women into politics in the 2023 elections. She highlights that the basis of protection should start with the police as protectors

of civilians and that political parties must continuously monitor the environment for female politicians.

Kenya – Not yet Uhuru for Women politicians



Dorothy Jebet wears multiple hats. She is a veteran journalist, political and gender commentator with the Daily Nation and The Star newspapers in Kenya. She is a graduate of Moi University. Dorothy is also an entrepreneur, published children’s author, unionist and a proud mum of two children. This strong woman is the National Gender Secretary for the Kenya Union of Journalists (KUJ) an elective position she has held for six consecutive years. Dorothy is the Media Liaison for the Deliver for Good Kenya Campaign Program which is powered by the New York-based Women Deliver whose main theme is women political participation. Dorothy is the CEO of the Non-profit organization Elimu Kwanza Initiative which operates on Goal 3 and Goal 5 of the Sustainable Development

Goals (SDGs).

Dorothy was inspired into politics by her late father Paul Ruto Chepkok, an astute politician who was elected thrice to Parliament between 1987 and 1995 when he died after a long illness bravely borne. Her community is extremely patriarchal and it subscribes fully to its values, leaving aspiring women politicians in limbo. She witnessed female politicians being harassed, abused and demeaned for their marital status and their physical appearance. Dorothy’s main objective is to right the wrongs in my community.

The Keiyo sub-tribe of the larger Kalenjin tribe inhabits the undulating valleys and hills of the Great Rift Valley, women are treated as second class citizens. They are seen but not heard. This culture is so intricately woven into the fabric of the community such that, adult women including female politicians are addressed as children.

Women’s challenges are unique and that is the reason why Dorothy wanted to be a parliamentarian. Although she is not yet a parliamentarian, she is continuously engaging women and girls in political participation in rural Baringo County to demystifying outdated culture and traditions that have locked women out of politics for centuries. To entice the women to politics, she is sometimes forced to distribute foodstuff due to the dire poverty staring women in the eyes. This formula or approach, has worked miracles. Dorothy hopes to campaign for Kenya’s 2022 elections.

It was only until the promulgation of the 2010 Constitution that she saw a new awakening in Kenya’s politics and a spike in women political participation. Kenya’s supreme law stipulates that women shall compete for the Women Representative position in all the 47 counties. This Article is well-thought out Affirmative Action which has seen the increase of women in the bicameral Parliament from a single-digit percentage to 19% in 2013 and to 21.78% in 2017. After years of nursing political ambitions, Dorothy took the plunge in 2013 to vie for the Baringo County Women Rep seat.

There is only one woman in Dorothy's county and only male MPs represent the six constituencies. The County Assembly, however, has a higher percentage of women due to the fact that, party leaders have nominated only women. This is a plus for women politicians whose dreams had been suppressed for too long. A recent report published by the National Democratic Institute (NDI) and the Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA Kenya) highlights a number of important political gains made by women during the 2017 general elections. For the first time in Kenya's history, women were elected to serve as governors and senators, and 29 percent more women ran for office than in the previous election — a fact that led to the largest number of women ever seated at all levels of the Kenyan government. Women now hold 172 of the 1,883 elected seats in Kenya, up from 145 after the 2013 elections.

The Two-Third Gender Rule requires that appointive and elective positions should not exceed two thirds of either gender. Thanks to this, more women have been appointed to the Cabinet and other top positions in government. It is however unfortunate that the threshold of women representation in politics and appointive positions is yet to be realized due to lack of political will.

Lack of political will has witnessed a successful failure by Parliament to pass the Two-Third Gender Rule for more than four times. It is because of this failure that the country's Chief Justice David Maraga dissolved Parliament recently citing ignorance of the supreme Law.

The case on whether to dissolve the legislature is in court. Despite the gains, the report makes clear that significant obstacles remain for women seeking elective office. Although Kenya's constitution mandates that all appointed and elected bodies contain at least one-third women, women's actual representation often falls short of that threshold. Women account for just 23 percent of the National Assembly and Senate — a figure that includes seats reserved exclusively for women representatives.

The main challenge Dorothy has faced as a politician is campaign financing. Many women have been locked out of contesting for seats because of lack of money. Another challenge is nomination fee charged by political parties for an aspirant to receive the green light to contest. Parties charge up to \$10,000. I find this to be an affront to women's quest for political participation. Many women who harbor political ambitions are locked out of the races because they cannot afford the fee. If the fee can be reduced by half, it would make a huge difference between vying and not vying in as far as women political participation is concerned. If women contestants can have access to some kitty to fund their campaigns, it would be good and more women will vie for various positions. Women prefer to fight for the Woman reserved seat because it is much easier to compete with a fellow female. However, there are women who have come out victorious by beating men in the polls. The background of these women plays a major role in their political victories.

Dorothy has also experienced violence on the campaign trail. Male voters usually judge women harshly than they judge their fellow men. Sometimes, even the women voters jump into the fray to frustrate women contestants. A woman politician can be frustrated by her marital status being an issue on whether she can campaign for elections or not. These are unwritten rules. Marriage plays a major role on whether you stand a chance in politics or not. If you are single, you have to redouble your efforts to get elected. In October 2020, Dorothy was asked if she was still menstruating or not upon telling men who work for the Governor that she is running for an MP's position in 2022. They told her that if she is post-menopausal, she should forget running because I will not understand issues. They also questioned her on her marital status. Another obstacle for women politicians is that, if she is married in a different county from hers, it will be difficult for

her to run in the county she is married in because she is counted as visitor or “foreigner”.

Most of Kenya’s political parties are largely headed by men. During nominations, the party leaders make deals with their fellow men to be nominated hence turning parties into a boys club. Women find themselves playing second fiddle in the fight to be nominated to carry the party's ticket.

Physical violence is widespread in Kenya and by the look of things, it is here to stay. In a situation where a female politician is fighting for the same seat with male politicians, the woman is subjected to daily violence to scare her and force her to retreat and bow out of the race. Men still flood the headlines and seats in the bicameral parliament. Coverage of female politicians by Kenya’s media is low unless if it is mostly on the negative.

Personally, Dorothy has not been in a situation where her life is in real danger. She has always been lucky not to encounter unready mobs baying for her blood. However, her political column in the Star newspaper, has earned her real enemies. In 2016, she was forced into hiding after a senior politician threatened her life following a published story about him. She managed to sneak out of Nairobi disguised as a Muslim woman lest they harmed her. As a result, her column suffered a setback after her Editor pulled it down until the coast was clear. Mine is an isolated case compared to what other women go through. For instance, Suba MP Honourable Millie Odhiambo, was subjected to violence which led to the death of her bodyguard. Her home was burned in a political contest that favored her against her male opponent. Despite all this Dorothy is ready for the 2022 elections where she will contest as MP for Baringo Central.

Dorothy has assisted other women go to Parliament through her popular newspaper column to shape opinion in Kenya. This is helping in pushing the women agenda through writing. She is a member of the Association of Media Women in Kenya, (AMWIK) where she often participates in preparing women aspirants for elections by training them. She has mentored other women who have ran for office especially in the local ward representatives position. She has shared her passion with women in her village and beyond. They now discuss politics and would love to contest for political positions. This is especially for the young girls and women who see her as a woman ready to take the world by storm in her own way. Although she has not won any seat, the women refer to me as Mweshimiwa which is Kiswahili word for Honorable.

Violence against women is a widespread stinging phenomenon across the continent. The Kenyan female politicians faces psychological violence, threats of death to their lives and those of their loved ones, beatings, rape, sexual harassment and kidnapping. Dorothy has witnessed several incidences of violence targeted on women but has not heard of any punitive measures on the perpetrators in the corridors of justice.

Technology and social media have a potential to positively impact on women’s empowerment allowing them to network with other like-minded women. Apart from that, online political communication especially through the social media, give politicians enough space to control their own messages. Dorothy uses social media to teach out to voters. She uses Facebook more than any other social media platform. She says use of social media can helps women candidates to improve on the communication strategies during the campaign period.

Her message to aspiring female politicians is that any woman who is running for office must be ready to resist all threats of violence. Any woman who suffers VAW, should report to the nearest police station and can also write an analysis on the same in the print media. She also says in politics, there is always something new to learn in each election. Dorothy has her own share of lessons that she guards secretly as she journeys towards 2022 general elections hoping to break the political glass ceiling like other women currently in Parliament.