

MULEMBE WEEKLY



Shamberere National Polytechnic: Malava's Rising Skills Hub Transforming Youth Futures

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POLITICS



"Mimi Ndio Sifuna": The Political Wave Sweeping Across Kenya Ahead of 2027

What began as Sifuna's signature phrase has grown into a youth-driven political wave, spreading from rallies to markets, campuses and boda stages. /P4

Dr. Beatrice Inyangala: Driving reforms to make higher education work for every Kenyan

At the State Department for Higher Education, the mandate is huge, 38 public universities, hundreds of Technical Vocational and Education Trainings, over 1 million students, and the pressure to make degrees and diplomas translate into jobs. /P7



Who are the Quakers?

Quakers, officially known as the Religious Society of Friends, are a Christian denomination founded in England and guided by values of peace, integrity, equality and simplicity; they arrived in Kenya in 1902 and have since grown into a major Christian community, particularly in Western Kenya /14

Realignment

Rival strategies emerge as Sifuna, Mudavadi, Wetang'ula and Ntembeya compete

Western Kenya's Big Four Shape 2027 Political Direction

Western Kenya is entering a fierce political season as Sifuna, Mudavadi, Wetang'ula and Ntembeya champion competing visions for the Mulembe Nation; government, opposition and development-first camps are pulling in different directions; the struggle for regional influence is intensifying ahead of the 2027 General Election; the outcome could determine who carries Western's political bargaining power into the national contest. Page 3



Hon. Wetang'ula



Hon. Mudavadi



Hon. Sifuna



Hon. Ntembeya

A Look at Luhya Unity through the prism of tribalism

The search for a unifying leader is not new to the Luhya community. Leaders such as Masinde Muliro and Michael Kijana Wamalwa once carried enormous political expectations and, at different times, represented hopes that the region could build a stronger national voice. Their political journeys showed both the potential and the difficulty of building unity in a region with many communities, leaders and competing interests. Even after their deaths, the question of who could bring Western Kenya together remained unanswered. /P13



Transformation:

Shamberere National Polytechnic is turning skills training into a pathway to jobs, enterprise and opportunity for thousands of young people in Malava and across Western Kenya

Shamberere National Polytechnic: Malava's Rising Skills Hub Transforming Youth Futures

In rural Malava, a quiet transformation is taking place as young people increasingly look to Shamberere for practical skills, new opportunities and a chance to build their future closer to home

■ By Jackton Shayo

Just 20 km from Kakamega town, Shamberere National Polytechnic in Malava Constituency is quietly changing the story of youth unemployment in Western Kenya.

What began as a rural technical training institute is now a National Polytechnic offering higher diplomas, degree top ups, and industry-ready skills that are feeding directly into the sugar, manufacturing, and digital economies.

With enrollment hitting record highs in 2026, Shamberere has become Malava's biggest training institution



We are not just issuing certificates, we are producing welders for sugar factories, technicians for rural electrification and ICT graduates earning from home.

~Dr. Elisha Nyamu, Principal



and a key pillar in county and national government skills and jobs agenda.

Elevated under the TVET Act, Shamberere now operates with national status.

The upgrade brought new funding, workshops, and partnerships.

The polytechnic sits on expansive land in South Kabras ward and offers programs in Automotive, Electrical, Welding, Mechanical, and Solar Technology, Coding, graphic design, Agriculture & Food Processing, Agri-business courses tailored for sugarcane, dairy and poultry farmers in Malava, Accounts, Supply Chain, Hotel Management.

Principal Dr. Elisha Nyamu says the mission is clear, "We are not just issuing certificates. We are producing welders for the sugar factories, technicians for rural electrification, and ICT graduates earning from home. That is development," he adds.

For Malava residents, the polytechnic is a game-changer.

er.

Over 6,000 students are currently enrolled.

Graduates are being absorbed by Sony, Nzoia, and Butali and West Kenya sugar mills, county projects, and SMEs.

The polytechnic's production unit makes furniture, doors, and metal works sold to schools and government offices across Kakamega.

Kakamega Governor Fernandes Barasa's administration has supported Shamberere with bursaries and infrastructure. National government, through the Ministry of Education and the National Government Constituency Development Fund, has funded new engineering workshops and a digital hub.

Leaders say the polytechnic still needs a bigger hostel and more trainers.

A proposal for a 1,000-capacity hostel is pending with the Ministry.

Students also want more industry attachments within Malava so they don't have to



6,000+

students are enrolled at Shamberere, making it one of Malava's leading centres for practical skills training.

How Shamberere Is Changing Youth

■ Practical Skills:

Students gain hands-on technical skills that prepare them for employment and self-employment

■ Industry Links

Training connects graduates with sugar factories, SMEs, county projects and other employers

■ Digital Skills

Coding, graphic design and ICT courses prepare youth for opportunities in the digital economy

■ Agricultural Training

Young people learn modern farming, agribusiness and food-processing skills

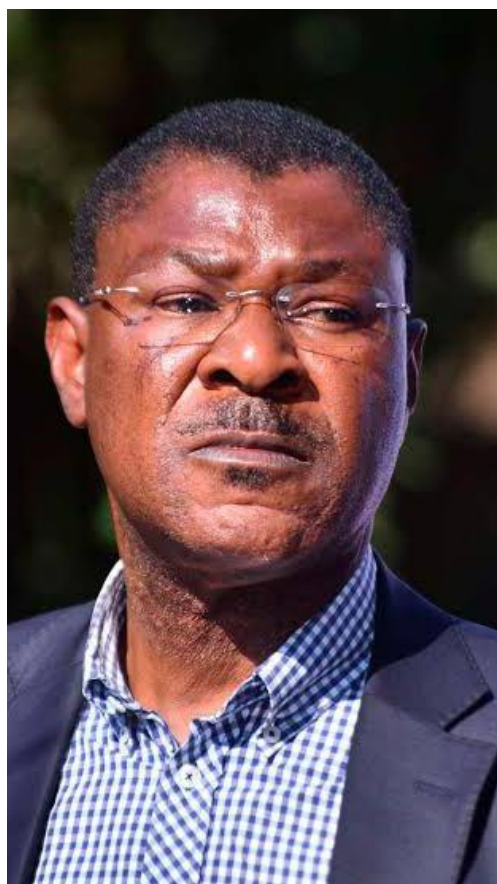
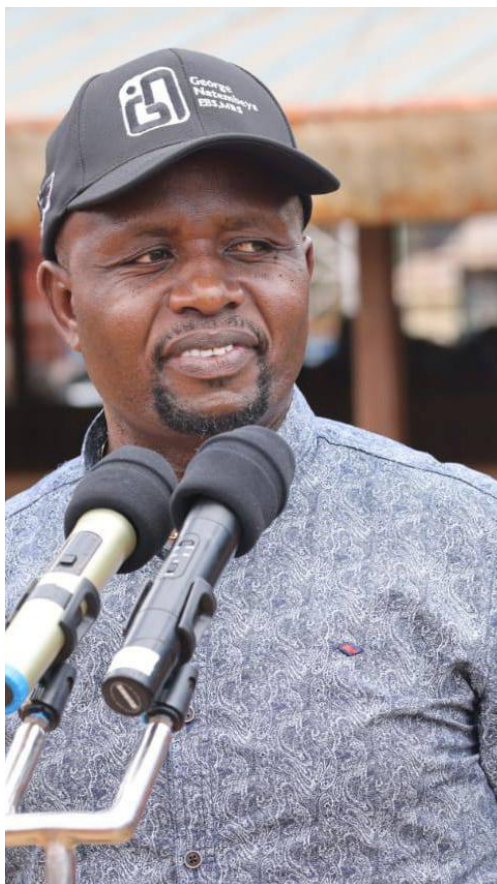
travel to Eldoret or Nairobi.

Local members of county assembly Josephat Wakukah and community leaders say Shamberere national polytechnic is proof that development can come to rural areas when education is prioritized.

"Shamberere has put Malava on the map. Our children no longer have to go far to get quality skills," said a resident, John Masitsa.

Divergence

Four Western leaders pursue different paths as the 2027 political battle takes shape, each seeking to influence the region's direction and its place in national politics



Western Kenya's Big Four Shape 2026 Political Direction

The race for Western's political soul is taking shape, with four influential leaders pushing competing visions ahead of the 2027 elections, as voters weigh unity, government ties, opposition politics and a development-first approach to the region's future

■ By Jackton Shayo

Western Kenya is emerging as a decisive battleground ahead of the 2027 General Election, with four prominent leaders from the region driving competing political narratives.

Nairobi Senator Edwin Sifuna, Prime Cabinet Secretary Musalia Mudavadi, National Assembly Speaker Moses Wetang'ula, and Trans Nzoia Governor George Nitembeya

Though from different political camps, the four have become the most visible faces of the Mulembe Nation.

Their public statements in recent months show clear differences in whether the region should align with government, remain in opposition, or pursue a development-first approach.

Sifuna has positioned himself as the opposition's chief mobilizer in Western. Speaking at a rally, he said: "We

can not allow our region to be divided when national decisions are being made. Let us first unite as Luhyas, then decide where we go as a bloc."

In Parliament, Sifuna has focused on devolution, CDF, and youth unemployment.

Analysts say his task is to hold a Western base and prevent defections to Kenya Kwanza.

He has toured Kakamega, Vihiga, and Busia in the last two months, urging voters to "demand accountability, not handouts."

Prime Cabinet Secretary Musalia Mudavadi, who also holds Foreign Affairs, continues to market Kenya Kwanza's record in Western.

During a development tour in Kakamega last month, he told residents that, "Roads, sugar reforms, and jobs are coming because we are at the table. Opposition shouts, government delivers," he added.

As the senior-most government official from the region, Mudavadi has led delegations announcing tarmacking of rural roads and revival plans for sugar factories.

His challenge, observers note, is to translate policy into visible projects before 2027 campaigns begin in earnest.

National Assembly Speaker Moses Wetang'ula has teamed with Mudavadi to push a unified Kenya Kwanza front in Western.

During a recent public address, he said, "When we speak with one voice, Nairobi listens. That is how we get more slots, more projects, and more respect."

As Speaker, Wetang'ula is expected to remain neutral in House proceedings, but as Ford-Kenya leader, he remains active in Bungoma politics. The two leaders have jointly lobbied for increased appointments of Western pro-

fessionals to government.

Trans Nzoia Governor George Nitembeya has carved a distinct path, emphasizing service delivery over party politics.

At a health facility launch recently, he stated, "Our people need water, hospitals and jobs before 2027 politics. That is what I was elected to do," he added.

The former Rift Valley RC has focused on water projects, ECDE classrooms, and agricultural support. His criticism of both ODM and Kenya Kwanza has fueled speculation that he is positioning himself as a third force or potential national running mate.

The divergence was evident during Madaraka Day celebrations in Bungoma, where all four attended separate functions. Sifuna called for vigilance against government overreach. Mudavadi and Wetang'ula listed government projects. Nitembeya asked leaders to "stop politicking and work."

Political scientist Prof. Adams Oloo notes: "Western no longer has one spokesman. It has four competing centres. Whoever convinces voters that their model delivers will carry the region in 2027."

With over 3 million registered voters, Westerners remain too large to ignore.

The next 12 months will test whether Sifuna can keep the region intact, whether Mudavadi and Wetang'ula can sell government achievements, and whether Nitembeya can convert county performance into regional influence.

As campaigns begin, all roads in Western will pass through these four leaders.

● 3 million+ registered voters make Western Kenya one of the country's most influential political blocs, drawing Sifuna, Mudavadi, Wetang'ula and Nitembeya into a growing contest for the Mulembe vote, with each leader advancing a distinct political message and strategy

Momentum

With millions of online views and growing grassroots adoption, the phrase is giving young Kenyans a new language for expressing frustration, courage and political demands

"Mimi Ndio Sifuna": The Political Wave Sweeping Across Kenya Ahead of 2027



The phrase has moved far beyond Sifuna himself, finding a new meaning among young voters, traders, students and grassroots leaders who are using it to express frustration, demand accountability and speak out against those in power

■ By Our reporter

A new slogan is echoing in boda stages, university hostels, markets, and political rallies from Coast to Western "Mimi Ndio Sifuna" I am Sifuna.

What started as a signature phrase by Nairobi Senator Edwin Sifuna has become a national political wave, with youth and grassroots leaders adopting it as a badge of bold, unapologetic politics ahead of the 2027 elections.

In just 12 months, the "Sifuna Wave" has moved from Twitter spaces to chants in rallies in Kisumu, Eldoret, Mombasa, and Kakamega.

Senator Sifuna, also ODM Secretary General, became known for direct speeches, fact-checking government, and defending "hustlers" in Parliament and on TV.

During a heated Senate de-

bate in late 2025, he ended his submission with "Mimi ndio Sifuna. Nasema ukweli bila woga." I am Sifuna. I speak the truth without fear.

The clip went viral. Within days, youth were printing t-shirts, making TikToks, and using #MimiNdioSifuna to call out corruption and demand accountability.

Political analysts say the wave taps into 3 things Kenyans are feeling in 2026:

Voters, especially under 35, say they are tired of vague promises. Sifuna's style blunt, data-driven, and on the



The wave is not about me. It's about Kenyans deciding they will no longer be silent.

~Edwin Sifuna



ground feels different.

With the cost of living, sugar prices, and jobs dominating debate, the slogan is being used by traders and students to mean "I am standing up for myself."

In his strongholds like Nyanza, Western and Coast, "Mimi Ndio Sifuna" is being used to mobilize for unity and to push the opposition agenda.

In Kakamega, sugarcane farmers in Mumias and Malava have been heard chanting it during protests over delayed payments.

In Nairobi, matatu touts have the phrase painted on vehicles.

The wave is no longer just about Sifuna. County MCAs, youth leaders, and even aspirants are adopting "Mimi Ndio Sifuna" rallies to mean "I am the voice of the people in my area."

The public has embraced it in grassroots mobilization. Posters with Sifuna's face and the slogan have appeared in 20+ counties. On TikTok, #MimiNdioSifuna has over 40 million views.

"It's not about worshipping one person. It's about courage. When we say Mimi Ndio Sifuna, we mean we will speak truth to power," says Amina Juma, a student leader at Masinde Muliro University of Sciences and Technology, Kakamega.

Critics, including some in government, call it "personality politics" and warn it could deepen divisions. Others in other parties worry that the slogan is overshadowing many other individuals from the opposition.

Sifuna himself has tried to downplay it, "The wave is not about me. It's about Kenyans deciding they will no longer be silent. I am just the microphone."

With less than a year to the general election, the "Mimi Ndio Sifuna" wave is shaping how opposition politics is done. It's digital, it's grassroots, and it's youth-led.

Whether it translates to votes remains to be seen. But in markets in Tharaka, bus parks in Busia, and campuses in Nairobi, one thing is clear, the phrase has given many Kenyans words to express frustration and hope.

As a boda rider in Webuye town told us "Siku hizi tunasema Mimi Ndio Sifuna. Maana yake, sitanyamaza tena."

Sifuna: Political journey

- **2013:** Joined CORD as a technical and advisory committee member, beginning his active political career
- **2017:** Lost the ODM Kanduyi nomination, then came second in the Nairobi Senate race
- **2018** Became ODM Secretary-General, a position he held for more than eight years
- **2022** Won the Nairobi Senate seat on an ODM ticket, securing his first elected political office
- **2023** Became Deputy Minority Whip in the Senate, strengthening his role as an opposition voice
- **2026** Was removed as ODM Secretary-General amid an internal party dispute, while remaining Nairobi Senator

Criticism

Linda Mwananchi brigade faces accusations of soliciting funds from struggling Kenyans to support Sifuna's 2027 presidential ambitions

Stop Fleecing Poor Kenyans to raise your campaign money

Government aide Farouk Kibet has accused the group of soliciting money from struggling Kenyans under the guise of supporting Sifuna's presidential bid, while urging Western leaders to remain behind Ruto and prepare for a Mulembe presidency in 2032

By Wakhungu Andanje

The Linda Mwananchi brigade has been cautioned against fleecing unsuspecting Kenyans in the pretext of raising campaign funds to assist Edwin Sifuna in Mount a Presidential campaign in 2027. The, what has now become a norm in each of the Linda Mwananchi rallies across the country has been criticized and condemned by the Presidential aide Farouk Kibet terming it as daylight robbery. Kibet while speaking in Malava during the retirement ceremony of Malava township chief Lena Nechesa Makanga, the leader challenged Sifuna to abandon his Presidential ambitions if he does not have enough funds to run his campaign machinery instead of soliciting monies from poor and struggling Kenyan voters off their little savings they earn through small business trading. He said the Linda Mwananchi team was not out to uplift the livelihoods of

Kenyans but only interested in raising cash for their personal upkeep. Kibet cautioned Kenyans against falling prey to the propagandists marauding the country's political arena campaigning against President William Ruto with no tangible agenda of what they will do to the Kenyan people if they ever assume office. The aide said Kenyans have seen what the government of the day has done in several parts of the country, noting that a second term in office for President Ruto was inevitable. He called on the voters not to be lured by lies to vote for the opposition that had personal vendetta against the government of the day. "The era of abusive politics is now gone and has no space in the Kenya of today, and all the backlash and mudslinging being levelled against President Ruto will not deter his second term ambitions at all." He pointed out the big five agenda in both former Presidents Mwai Kibaki and Uhuru Kenyatta was now being implemented by President Ruto.



He has challenged the embattled and impeached deputy president Rigathi Gachagua to relay the alleged government homicide claims to the sleuths to launch investigations over the same instead of going to the Press. He advised the Western leaders led by Musalia Mudavadi, Moses Wetangula and Wycliffe Oparanya to remain steady fast in supporting President William Ruto ahead of the 2032 power plan that will see the region ascend to the country's top leadership.

"Western region is now ripe and ready to lead this country as its leaders have been tried tested and proven for the top seat, let us work closely with the government of the day as we prepare the Mulembe sons to take over from President Ruto in 2032." He said greed has engulfed the opposition and was pushing them to fight among themselves over tpresidency, cy and yet they have no single candidate to battle it out with Ruto at all.

Amanda Resort redefines hospitality in the heart of Western Kenya



By Jackton Shayo

Amanda Resort is re-defining hospitality in Western Kenya. It's no longer just a stopover. It's becoming the destination. From the moment you

drive through the gates, the noise of town fades. You're met with manicured gardens and staff who greet you by name. This is Amanda Resort — Kakamega's fastest growing leisure and conference hub. Amanda Resort is located

along the Kakamega–Mumias Road near the Joyland Shopping Centre (Joyland stage), roughly 1.8 km (1.1 miles) northwest of the Kakamega town center. It blends modern comfort with a natural, "up-country" feel. It has rooms ranging from standard to executive suites. Each room has hot showers, DSTV, and free WiFi. The resort serves a mix of Western, Swahili, and local Luhya dishes. Their speciality — _Ingokho_ chicken has become a favourite for visitors and locals alike. With conference halls, Amanda has hosted county government forums, school AGMs, weddings, and corporate retreats. The venue comes with backup power, projectors, and ample parking.

"We wanted people to experience Kakamega without sacrificing comfort," says the Resort Manager. Families love the kids' play area and swimming pool. Corporate clients love the quiet for strategy meetings. Couples love it for weekend getaways and weddings. Amanda Resort employs a good number of people, most of them from Kakamega County. They source vegetables, milk, and chicken from local farmers and chamas. "We are not just in Kakamega. We are part of Kakamega," the management says. Room rates are also friendly compared to Nairobi or Kisumu hotels, making it accessible for both middle-class

families and organizations. As tourism in Western Kenya grows, Amanda Resort is positioning itself as the anchor. Whether you're coming for a conference, a wedding, or just to hear birds in the morning, it offers something rare: peace, without leaving town too far behind.



Delivery

Barasa banks on roads, hospitals, agriculture and youth projects as he seeks to secure a second term in Kakamega

Why Governor Fernandes Barasa Is Poised for a Second Term in Kakamega County

Four years of projects in health, agriculture, roads and youth empowerment have strengthened the governor's re-election bid, but unemployment, pending bills and the absence of a united opposition will test whether his development record can carry him through 2027

■ By Our reporter

As the 2027 general election approaches, all signs point to Governor Fernandes Barasa securing a second term in Kakamega County.

With four years in office, the county boss has built his re-election campaign around tangible projects, grassroots mobilization, and what his supporters call "a government that works for wananchi."

Political analysts and local leaders say a combination of development delivery, unity politics, and strong party machinery gives Barasa a clear advantage in the sugar belt. Governor Barasa's administration has focused on the 4 pillars, namely health, agriculture, roads, and youth empowerment.

Completion and equipping of Level 4 hospitals in Matungu, Mumias East, and Malava.

The county also rolled out free primary healthcare and



Incumbency in Kakamega is powerful when paired with delivery.

~Prof. Martin Wafula, political commentator

employed over 400 health workers.

The county government partnered with the national government to support cane farmers, pushed for timely payments, and distributed subsidized farm inputs. With KSB setting minimum cane price at KSh 5,500 per tonne, farmers in Mumias, Butere, and Lugari say they are feeling relief.

Also, over 600km of rural access roads graded and murrumed, and key urban roads in Kakamega town tarmacked.

culture, giving him visibility beyond Kakamega.

With 70 per cent of Kakamega households relying on agriculture, Barasa's focus on sugar, maize, and dairy resonates.

Unemployment remains a challenge, but youth programs and county tenders reserved for local contractors have given him goodwill in constituencies like Khwisero, Shinyalu, and Ikolomani



The Bukhungu Stadium upgrade and county markets are also cited.

The Kazi Kwa Vijana program, bursaries through the county education fund, and support for boda boda and table banking groups have given Barasa a strong base among voters under 35.

"We can now see projects. A governor who delivers roads and hospitals deserves another term," says Mary Shikuku, a trader at Kakamega Main Market.

Barasa enjoys backing from the orange democratic movement party and has worked closely with the national government on sugar reforms.

His ability to bring together leaders from all 12 sub-counties without major fallouts has insulated him from the factional politics that hurt past administrations.

He has also positioned himself as the voice of Western Kenya in national debates on sugar, devolution, and agri-

As of August 2026, no single aspirant has consolidated opposition in the county. Barasa's team has already established ward-level campaign structures and is using county projects as a campaign tool.

Political commentator Prof. Martin Wafula of Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology notes that, "Incumbency in Kakamega is powerful when paired with delivery. Unless there's a major scandal or a united opposition, Barasa starts the 2027 race as a favourite."

Critics point to pending bills, delays in some projects, and demands for more jobs. Barasa's team says they are addressing this through public participation and budget re-allocation.

With development projects visible in every sub-county, strong party backing, and a focus on sugar farmers who form the county's economic backbone, Governor Barasa

Why Barasa has the edge

■ **Development Record:** Hospitals, roads, markets and other projects have given the governor a visible record to campaign on

■ **Sugar Farmers:** Support for cane farmers, subsidised inputs and efforts to improve payment have strengthened his appeal in the sugar belt

■ **Health:** Level 4 hospitals in Matungu, Mumias East and Malava have been completed and equipped, alongside expanded primary healthcare

■ **Youth Support:** Kazi Kwa Vijana, bursaries and support for boda boda and table-banking groups have helped build goodwill among younger voters

■ **Party Backing:** ODM support and cooperation with the national government on sugar reforms have strengthened his political position

■ **Grassroots Network:** Ward-level campaign structures are already being established as the 2027 contest approaches

enters 2027 with momentum.

For many voters in Kakamega, the question is not if he will run, but whether anyone can match his record of delivery.

One boda boda rider in Mumias said that there is a need to give Barasa five more years to finish what he started.



Reform

A new approach to funding, technical training, digital services and research is reshaping Kenya’s higher education sector as the government pushes to make learning more accessible, relevant and connected to jobs



Dr. Beatrice Inyangala: Driving reforms to make higher education work for every Kenyan

With 38 public universities, hundreds of TVET institutions and more than one million students under its watch, the State Department for Higher Education is facing a bigger question than access alone, how to ensure education produces graduates with the skills, opportunities and relevance needed in Kenya’s changing economy

By Our reporter

At the State Department for Higher Education, the mandate is huge, 38 public universities, hundreds of Technical Vocational and Education Trainings, over 1 million students, and the pressure to make degrees and diplomas translate into jobs.

Leading that charge is Dr. Beatrice Inyangala, the Principal Secretary who has made "access,

quality, and relevance," her core agenda.

Since taking office, Dr. Inyangala has positioned the department as the engine room for Kenya’s human capital development under the Bottom-Up Economic Transformation Agenda.

The biggest shift under Dr. Inyangala has been the rollout of the new Higher Education Funding Model.

The model replaces the old flat-rate system with a needs-based approach. Students are now banded according to household needs with government scholarships, loans, and bursaries covering up to 100% of costs for the most vulnerable.

"We said no student should miss university or TVET because of fees," Dr. Inyangala said during a recent forum. "The



WHO IS DR. BEATRICE INYANGALA?

Dr. Beatrice Inyangala is the Principal Secretary in the State Department for Higher Education, where she oversees a sector responsible for universities, TVET institutions and millions of learners, her agenda centres on improving access, quality and relevance while connecting education more closely to Kenya’s economic needs

new model is about equity. If you qualify, you will be funded."

In the 2023/2024 and 2024/2025 cycles, over 200,000 university and TVET students have been placed under the new model. The department has also cleared pending capitation to universities to ease cash-flow challenges.

Dr. Inyangala has pushed to rebrand Technical and Vocational Education as the "first choice, not last resort."

To address concerns about quality, the department under Dr. Inyangala has been working with Commission for University Education and TVETA to audit programs and close ghost campuses.

She has also championed digitization. University and TVET admissions, KUCCPS placement, and Higher Educa-

THE BIG QUESTION?

- Kenya’s higher education challenge is moving beyond getting students into classrooms, the bigger test is whether the system can help them complete their studies, gain relevant skills and move successfully into employment or enterprise

tion Loans Board applications are now largely online to reduce bureaucracy.

On governance, the PS has insisted on accountability in university councils and management. "Public money must deliver public value," she has repeatedly told vice-chancellors.

Higher Education under Dr. Inyangala is also betting on research to solve local problems. The department has increased support for university research grants in health, agriculture, and climate.

Partnerships with Germany, Korea, and China have brought in equipment and exchange programs for TVET trainers. Universities are also being pushed to commercialize research and create startups.

Students in Eldoret, Kakamega, and Kisumu say the new funding bands have made a difference. Parents say the online application process is faster.

University leaders acknowledge that funding challenges are not over, but credit the department for dialogue and

transparency.

Critics still point to delays in disbursements and capacity in some TVETs. Dr. Inyangala’s response has been to set quarterly review meetings and open a complaints desk for students.

Dr. Inyangala says the next phase is about 3 things, which are completion rates, employability, and relevance.

Plans include expanding student hostels through PPPs, strengthening career services in universities, and aligning all courses to Kenya’s job market and Vision 2030.

"Higher education is not about classrooms. It’s about the future of this country," Dr. Inyangala said. "Our job is to make sure every Kenyan child who works hard gets a chance to learn, graduate, and get a decent job."

As Kenya pushes for a skilled workforce, the State Department for Higher Education under Dr. Beatrice Inyangala is positioning itself as the bridge between the classroom and the economy.



Farmer First

Cane growers across five counties are rallying around demands for faster payments, fair prices and an end to delays that continue to frustrate sugar farmers

Shilunji Taliti crisscrosses 5 counties in bid for Kenya Sugar Board director seat



Delayed payments, low cane prices, harvesting permit bottlenecks and what farmers describe as exploitation by millers have become the driving issues behind Taliti's campaign as he crisscrosses five sugar-growing counties seeking to convince growers that their struggles deserve a stronger voice at the Kenya Sugar Board

■ By Linda Kefa

With just weeks to the Kenya Sugar Board elections, Shilunji Taliti has emerged as the candidate to beat for the Upper Western Region Director seat.

The soft-spoken sugar farmer and community mobilizer has in the last 3 months campaigned in all villages across the 5 sugar belt counties namely Bungoma, Kakamega, Uasin Gishu, Nandi, and Trans-Nzoia. The election is set for 5th September 2026.

Taliti says his mission is simple: "Put the farmer first."

Unlike aspirants who run campaigns from town hotels, Taliti says he has held barazas in cane zones from Misikhu to

Turbo, from Malava to Nzoia and out-grower areas.

The issues he keeps hearing are the same which are low cane tonnage prices, harvesting permit delays, and exploitation by millers.

"A farmer delivers cane in January and gets paid in July. By then the loan from the shylock has doubled. A permit takes weeks to months and the cane over-matures in the shamba. This must end," Taliti told farmers in Lugari last weekend.

He is proposing three immediate reforms if elected in order of priority: fair and timely payment, Push for strict payment within 7 days and a minimum guaranteed cane price per tonne.

Digitising harvesting permits and ending the cartels and brokers who delay permits. "No farmer should beg for their own cane to be harvested," he said.

Lastly, he promises to enforce contracts and stop deductions that leave farmers with nothing.

The Upper Western Region seat is hotly contested. Taliti's main challengers include Dr. Ronald Inyangala, James Weindaba, a veteran farmer

THE RACE

■ **5 counties**
Bungoma, Kakamega, Uasin Gishu, Nandi and Trans-Nzoia form the Upper Western sugar belt covered by Taliti's campaign

■ **250,000+**
Small-scale farmers are represented by the Upper Western regional director on the Kenya Sugar Board

■ **3 reforms**
Taliti is campaigning on timely payments, digitised harvesting permits and stronger enforcement of farmer contracts

■ **7 days**
Taliti proposes that farmers should receive payment within seven days of delivering their cane

■ **5 September 2026**
Date set for the Kenya Sugar Board elections

leader from Bungoma and former Kakamega member of county assembly Moses Makhapila who is banking on political networks in Kakamega

But on the ground, Taliti is seen as the front-runner. His name keeps coming up in _chama_ meetings and boda stages because, farmers say, "he speaks our language."

"He came to our village in Nandi and sat with us. He knows our weighing problems at the factory," said Mama Jane Cheptoo, a cane farmer from Turbo.

The Kenya Sugar Board director will represent over 250,000 small-scale farmers in Upper Western — the heart of Kenya's sugar industry.

With factories like Nzoia, West Kenya and Butali struggling, farmers say they need a director who understands both boardroom policy and

shamba problems.

Political leaders across the 5 counties have also started weighing in, with many calling for a leader who will unite farmers instead of dividing them along county lines.

As campaigns enter the last stretch, Taliti's team is holding mega rallies in each county this month. His message remains unchanged.

"This seat is not about me. It is about the farmer who wakes up at 4am to cut cane. It is about the mother who pays school fees from cane money. I am running to be your voice at the Kenya Sugar Board," he said in Kakamega.

With name recognition, grassroots presence, and a clear farmer agenda, Shilunji Taliti enters the final month as the man to beat. But in sugar politics, the last furrow can change everything

NELSON TALITI SHILUNJI



Kenya Sugar Board
More Sugar for Prosperity



For Leadership that is:

- ✓ HONEST
- ✓ ACCESSIBLE
- ✓ VISIONARY



FOR DIRECTOR

KENYA SUGAR BOARD UPPER WESTERN REGION

Milune emerges as front-runner in Shirugu-Mugai MCA race



Sunguti



Milune



Wanami



Shitsimi

Geoffrey Milune is building a grassroots campaign around accountability and youth inclusion as he seeks to unseat incumbent Peter Wanami in a competitive race also featuring Sakaya Shitsimi and Ezra Sunguti ahead of the 2027 election

■ By Our reporter

With less than a year to the 2027 General Election, political temperatures are already rising in Shirugu-Mugai Ward of Malava constituency in Kakamega county, with Geoffrey Milune emerging as a strong contender for the member of county assembly seat.

Milune, one of the youngest aspirants in the race, is positioning himself as the “voice of the youth and the forgotten” as he seeks to unseat incumbent Peter Wanami, who was elected in 2022.

In his late thirties, Milune has spent the last eight months holding village meetings across Shirugu, Mugai, and the surrounding villages. His message is resonating well with the electorates as he calls for accountability, inclusivity, and service delivery.

“People are tired of promises. For the four years we have asked about bursaries but our children are still at home. We ask about jobs but only relatives are employed. We ask about roads, but nothing is done,” Milune told a crowd in Samitsi last weekend.

Voters say Wanami’s biggest undoing has been poor connection with the grass-

roots, favoritism in bursary distribution, alleged nepotism in job opportunities, failure to involve youth in ward development and deteriorating road network linking to neighbouring wards.

“The MCA is rarely in the ward. When he comes, he only meets a few people,” said Mama Rose Chisika, a parent at Shirugu primary. “Our Early Childhood Development Education centre has no desks. Our children sit on stones,” she added.

Wanami has not yet commented on the criticism. The race already has at least two other known faces who are Sakaya

THE RACE

■ 60%+ More than six in every 10 Shirugu-Mugai voters are under 35, making the youth vote a decisive factor in a competitive race featuring four candidates, including Geoffrey Milune, who has spent eight months building grassroots support ahead of 2027.

Shitsimi.

He lost to Wanami in 2022 and is making a comeback, banking on experience, and name recognition.

Also, Ezra Sunguti is a political newcomer selling himself as a “development expert” with no past political baggage.

Political analysts say the ward is headed for a three horse race, but Milune’s energy and youth appeal is giving him early momentum.

“Geoffrey is in every village. He is on WhatsApp groups. He speaks the language of boda riders and mama mbogas. That matters in Shirugu-Mugai,” that is the word on many lips of the locals.

With over 60 per cent of Shirugu-Mugai voters under 35, the youth vote will be decisive. Milune, a banker, has been mobilizing youth groups, football tournaments, and skills training forums.

“I am not here because I am young. I am here because I am ready to work,” Milune said. “Give me one term, and I will make Shirugu-Mugai the model ward in Malava constituency.”

It is worth noting that Milune has been all along finding his campaigns from his own pocket, and his moves have never been associated with any political formations in the country or a specific politician.

As campaigns pick up, all eyes will be on whether voters choose continuity with Wanami, experience with Shitsimi, freshness with Sunguti, or the new energy that Milune represents.

One thing is clear, Shirugu-Mugai voters are demanding results, not rhetoric.

THE FOUR-WAY CONTEST

- **Geoffrey Milune**
The young banker is campaigning on accountability, youth empowerment and service delivery, while financing his campaign from his own resources without an established political party or prominent politician behind him
- **Peter Wanami**
The incumbent MCA, elected in 2022, is seeking to defend his record amid criticism from some residents over grassroots engagement and service delivery
- **Sakaya Shitsimi**
The 2022 challenger is returning to the race, hoping to use his previous experience and name recognition to mount another challenge
- **Ezra Sunguti**
The political newcomer is presenting himself as a development expert and offering voters an alternative without a previous political record

Service

A career spent teaching, mentoring girls and supporting vulnerable families has taken Pamela Mukabane from the classroom into the race to become Kakamega's next Woman Representative



Retired teacher Pamela Mukabane joins race for Kakamega Woman Rep seat

Mukabane is banking on more than three decades in education, grassroots community work and a campaign centred on women, girls and young people as she seeks to succeed Elsie Muhanda, who has declared her bid for the Kakamega governor's seat in 2027

■ By Lavin Anzigale

The race for Kakamega County Woman Representative has taken a new twist after Pamela Mukabane, a retired high school teacher, officially declared her interest in the seat currently held by Hon. Elsie Muhanda.

Muhanda has announced she will contest for the governor's seat in 2027, currently held by H.E. Fernandes Barasa, leaving the Woman Rep position wide open.

Mukabane's entry has shaken up the contest. She is already being viewed by many political observers as the front-runner in the race.

Mukabane, 58, retired after over 30 years in the teaching profession. During her career she taught in several secondary schools across Kenya and built a reputation as a mentor to girls.

FROM CLASSROOM TO POLITICS

- **58 years**
Mukabane enters the Woman Representative contest after spending more than three decades in education and mentorship
- **4 priorities**
Education support, women and youth empowerment, maternal health and stronger representation form the foundation of her campaign agenda
- **12 sub-counties**
She has spent the past year attending church functions, chamas and school events as she builds support across Kakamega

Since retirement, she has been active in social support programs, most notably sponsoring education for needy but bright children across the county.

"I have walked with mothers who cry because they cannot pay fees. I have walked with girls who drop out because of lack of pads. That is why I am running," Mukabane said during a meeting with women leaders in Lurambi.

For the last one year, she has crisscrossed all 12 sub-counties, attending church functions, chamas, and school events. Her message of education, empowerment, and accountability has been well received.

Mukabane says if elected she will focus on 4 key areas which includes expanding bursary access and mentorship for girls in secondary and tertiary institutions, support women and youth groups with training and market linkages, advocate for better maternal health services and sanitary towels in schools and finally be a

THE KEY CONTENDERS

- **Pamela Mukabane**
The retired teacher is banking on her background in education, mentorship and years of community work, with support growing in Mumias, Matungu and her home area of Malava
- **Leah Khasandi**
The current Gender Advisor in Governor Fernandes Barasa's office brings experience in gender issues and established government networks into the contest
- **Peris Samamba**
The former primary school head teacher enters the race with her own background in education and community leadership

nandes Barasa. She is banking on government networks and Peris Samamba a Former primary school head teacher.

Mukabane has a strong grassroots support in Mumias and Matungu and also her home area of Malava.

Despite the competition, Mukabane's name recognition and years of community work have given her early momentum.

"She is not new to us. She has been helping children long before politics. That is why women trust her," said Mama Jane Lilechi from Shinyalu.

Political analysts say the Woman Rep race will be one of the most competitive in Kakamega, but Mukabane's background as an educator and philanthropist puts her ahead for now.

The seat will be vacant following Muhanda's declaration that she will challenge Governor Barasa in 2027.

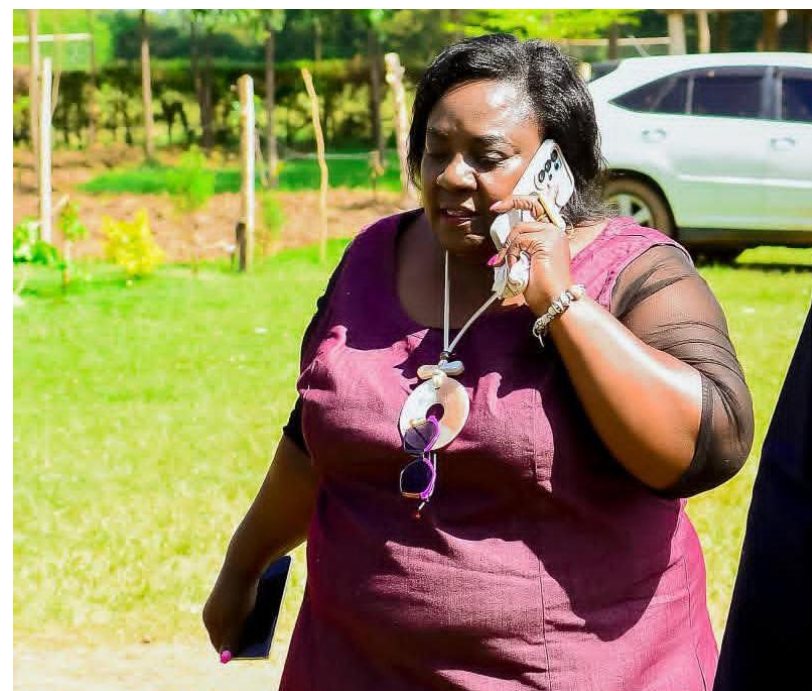
Muhanda, who has served two terms as Woman Rep, says she wants to bring her development record to the county executive.

With campaigns expected to intensify next year, all eyes are now on how Mukabane, Khasandi and Samamba will sell themselves to Kakamega's 800,000+ women voters.

For Pamela Mukabane, the message is clear: "I have taught our children. Now, let me serve our mothers."

strong voice for women in the National Assembly and ensure Kakamega gets its fair share of national resources.

Mukabane will face at least two other notable aspirants who are Leah Khasandi the Current Gender Advisor in the office of Governor Fer-



Political awakening

A new debate over Luhya unity is gaining momentum as Edwin Sifuna's growing appeal among young supporters revives questions about whether Western Kenya can finally rally behind a common political cause.

A Look at Luhya Unity through the prism of tribalism

The excitement surrounding Edwin Sifuna's rallies has reopened an old and unresolved question in Kenyan politics: can the Luhya community overcome decades of division and produce a united political force capable of shaping the country's future? The story traces that question through Kenya's long history of power, ethnicity and failed attempts at Luhya unity.

■ By Caleb Atemi

His eyes twitched as his face broke into a smile. He listened keenly and then squeezed his wet face towel before wiping streams of sweat pouring down his brow.

While adjusting the towel around his waist, he said almost in a whisper: "What you are saying is frightening. There is so much unsaid about Kenya's real history."

I was having a steam and sauna moment with my fitness and wellness buddy at a private members club when the story of Nairobi Senator Edwin Sifuna's wave in western Kenya and the elusive Luhya unity popped up.

Our conversation weaved into Kenya's history, political and economic injustices, and the determination by the ruling elite to ensure certain communities 'remained in abject poverty'.

My friend, a wealthy businessman from Kiambu County, said that a few billionaire businessmen from central Kenya shudder at the thought of

the Luhya waking up from political slumber.

Edwin Sifuna addressed thousands of his supporters in Bungoma.

I started taking a keen interest in the untold political and cultural stories of Kenya in 2001. Former Cabinet Minister Dr. Julius Gikonyo Kiano had commissioned me to write his memoir. I have since interacted enough with elders, politicians, clergy, scholars, and researchers to know that Kenyan politics is deeply spiritual.

Kenya's economic and political power is dipped in secrecy, prayers, and blood rituals. Since the Mau Mau warfare, to the Mwai Kibaki and Uhuru Kenyatta presidencies, elders from various communities have eaten meat and taken vows on controlling the country's leadership.

The 1969 secret and forced political rituals in central Kenya held the country in a spiritual grip for decades. The oathing was designed to keep the

presidency within central Kenya and ensure opposition leader Jaramogi Oginga Odinga stayed far from national leadership.

Sadly, Odinga had turned down an opportunity from the colonialists to short-change Jomo Kenyatta and become Kenya's first Prime Minister. Jaramogi insisted that Kenyatta must be released from prison to take over the presidency.

moment of fame: An elderly Bungoma resident shares an unforgettable moment with Senator Edwin Sifuna. However, after the July 5 1969 assassination of cabinet minister Tom Mboya, members of Kenyatta's inner circle orchestrated an oathing ritual to unite the Gikuyu, Embu and Meru communities ahead of the December 1969 general elections. They vowed that the presidency would never leave Kiambu.

As the health of Mzee Kenyatta deteriorated, a powerful Kiambu cabal initiated vicious campaigns to block Vice President Daniel arap Moi from ascending to power. The constitution provided for a 90-day acting period by the Vice President if the president died before calling for an election.

The anti-Moi Change the Constitution Campaigns failed, and Moi took oath of office after Kenyatta's death in August 1978. Moi ruled for 24 years, then before leaving office, he insisted that only Uhuru Muigai Kenyatta, Jomo Kenyatta's son, was qualified to step into his shoes.

Father and son: Veteran politician and former cabinet minister Musikari Kombo blessing Edwin Sifuna and offering him to Kenyans as Luhya's choice for presidency.

His 2002 choice of Uhuru shocked the Kenya African National Union (Kanu)

leadership. When Kanu leaders started decamping to the opposition, Moi appointed Musalia Mudavadi, his deputy making him for a few days, enjoy being the first son of Abaluhya to be Kenya's Vice President.

Moi's protégé Uhuru Kenyatta never made it in 2002, but Moi retired smiling because Uhuru's godfather Mwai Kibaki would for 10 years hold brief for the owners of power. Although the presidency had slipped out of Kiambu, it remained within the Gikuyu.

I used to wonder why Moi dumped experienced Kanu leaders such as Kalonzo Musyoka and Professor George Saitoti. The answer lay in a secret meat covenant between Moi and Jomo Kenyatta.

My wealthy sauna friend told me: that a fortnight before his demise: "Mzee Jomo Kenyatta had just officiated an important meeting in Nakuru when he asked Moi 'do you have a goat?' Moi responded in the affirmative. Jomo then told him, 'slaughter it, we eat together.'"

"Moi quickly organised for the slaughter of two goats. The President and his Deputy were then driven to an isolated area, and with Moi carrying the meat inside a basket, they alighted and entered deep inside the bush. Not even their bodyguards were allowed to accompany them. After hours, they emerged holding hands," says my friend.

Former presidents Daniel arap Moi (I) and Mzee Jomo Kenyatta. Former head of civil service Geoffrey Kariithi confirms this in his memoir Cool Under Fire. Kariithi says that after a function near Lake Nakuru, Kenyatta: "turned to Moi and asked him: 'Do you have a goat?'" "Yes Sir, I have a goat" Moi answered. "Go and





bring one to State House and chinja it so we can eat together.”

Kariithi says that Moi came back with two goats. “One of the goats was slaughtered and roasted. Moi and Kenyatta went into the bush and ate the meat together. They spend quite some time in that bush. I have no idea what they discussed and why Mzee insisted that they share meat despite the fact that they had already had lunch. Whatever deliberations the two had inside that bush remained their own secret.”

A few days after the meat in the bush, Kenyatta died. Kariithi quickly mobilised the cabinet, and Moi was sworn in as Kenya’s second Head of State. Moi firmly protected the Kenyatta’s and ensured he handed power back to them.

“The meat explains Moi’s determination to ensure Uhuru Kenyatta stepped into his shoes. That was a meat covenant he had entered into with his departing boss. Covenants and oaths are deeply spiritual and can be either for good or evil” says Sociologist and preacher Bernard Jakait.

The few Kikuyu elders I interacted

with say that oaths are carriers of life and death. Once you have taken it, you will go with it to your grave.

Some Kikuyu elite, including former deputy president Rigathi Gachagua, believe that the community holds sway on who becomes president of the Republic of Kenya. Gachagua spouts that it is the Gikuyu who has a right to the country’s presidency.

Among the elders I interviewed is Mzee Samuel Kamitha, a cultural anthropologist who teaches about Gikuyu traditions, history, and spirituality.

My journey with Mzee Kamitha started with Kiano’s book assignment. I was handling Kiano’s dream to establish a university based on indigenous and esoteric knowledge around Mount Kenya.

“Mount Kenya does not belong to the Agikuyu. We are mere custodians of a mountain that holds secrets for the African continent. The Caucasian race spends millions of dollars daily circling Mount Kenya with satellite technology in search of the Ark of the Covenant, which they believe is buried there” Mzee Kamitha once told me

During a lunch session we held at Nairobi’s Hotel Boulevard, Mzee Kamitha said that: “Mount Kenya is symbolically so powerful that even Egyptians send pilgrimages there every year because they believe that, Isis, their goddess of magic, healing, motherhood and fertility sits there”

Many Kikuyu’s still give thanks to Mwene-Nyaga, or Ngai (God). Jomo Kenyatta, in his book *My people of Kikuyu*, vividly captures part of the prayer to Mwene-Nyaga: “We pledge to you O Mwene-Nyaga, that we shall not sit idle and let anyone snatch away what you promised to our forefathers, to be our children’s

Can Western unite?

● A shared political purpose

The renewed support around Sifuna has revived calls for Western Kenya to find a common political direction.

● A history of division

Despite producing influential leaders, the region has repeatedly struggled to maintain one united political front.

● The leadership challenge

Past leaders such as Masinde Muliro and Michael Kijana Wamalwa inspired hopes of unity, but no lasting successor has brought the region together.

● The real test

The current wave must grow beyond rallies and slogans if it is to turn renewed enthusiasm into lasting political unity.

birth right forever.”

Former President Uhuru Kenyatta (I) and former Prime Minister the late Raila Odinga.

Today, many Agikuyu, among them Christian leaders, are walking back to Mwene-Nyaga. During my talks with Kamitha and other Kikuyu elders, concerns were raised over the frequency of falling Mugumo trees.

“These falls signify the end of an era. Power has left the mountain” one elder told me. At the time of our interview in 2017, Busia Senator Okiya Omtatah had taken the Central Bank to court to initiate the removal of the image of Mzee Jomo Kenyatta from the Kenyan currency.

In 2018, exactly 40 years after the demise of Mzee Kenyatta, Omtatah’s plea was addressed. Another generational change was taking place.

The ‘owners of Kenya’ had carefully prepared their eternal stay in power with powerful families sharing the national cake as other Kenyans watched from a distance.

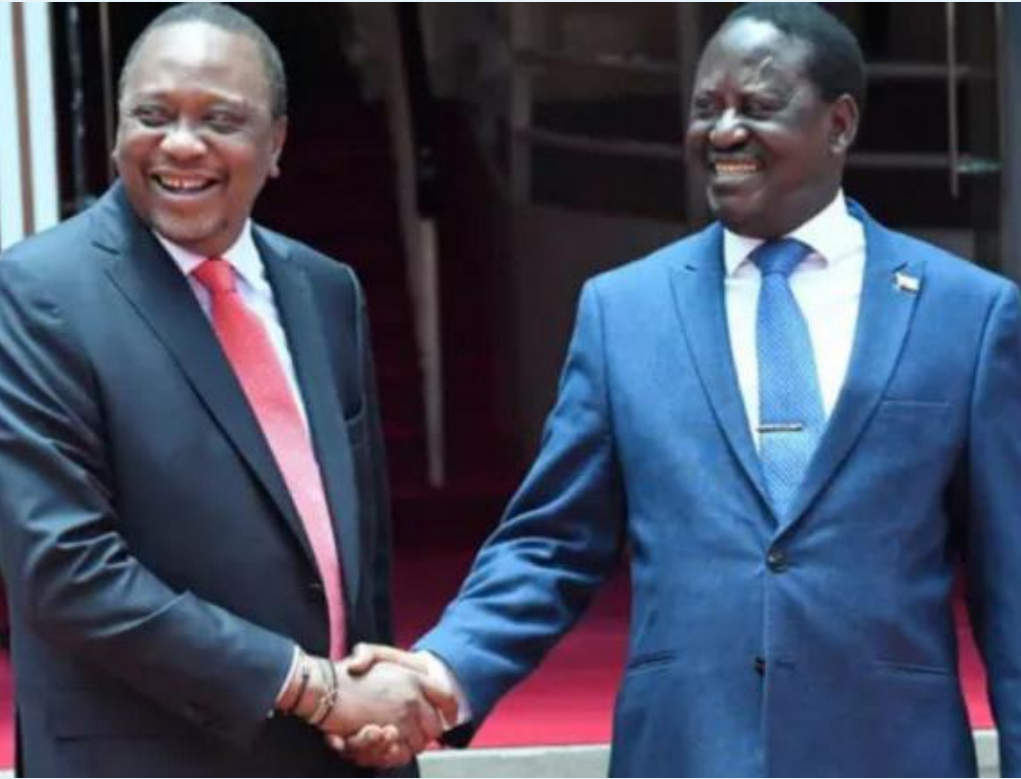
Derogative dismissal of Luhyas by former Kanu boss Joseph Kamotho as “mere watchmen and maids” began making sense.

These watchmen and maids have grown into a formidable voting base. Millions teem every corner of Kenya, from major cities, to irrigation schemes such as the Tana River delta, offering labour in homes, coffee, and tea plantations.

My friend told me: “You know, 90 per cent of the workforce on my farms, homes and businesses is Luhya. The strength, energy, and efficiency they offer are equal to none. Some of us feel safer when the Luhya’s keep our title deeds and financial secrets for us. We trust them more than our own entitled children”

The excitement among the youthful





supporters who turned out at Senator Sinufa’s rallies in Bungoma ignited the debate of the elusive Luhya unity.

In the 1960s, some Luhya leaders mobilised the community to acquire property and invest in land. They knew political power required resources. They held meetings in Nairobi’s Eastland’s to explain investment opportunities in the land being vacated by white settlers.

“Masinde Muliro, Senator William Wamalwa (Wamalwa Kijana’s father), Pius Gumo, and others mobilised Abaluhya to buy Mzungu farms in Trans Nzoia” recalls media veteran John Khakhudu Agunda

Former Vice President Michael Kijana Wamalwa.

Tribalism, stewed in greed and served on a plate of corruption, pushed Kenya to the cliff with a demonic cabal enslaving millions. Today, they control all key sectors of the economy, including agriculture, finance, energy, health, real estate, transportation, hospitality, gambling, and even crime.

In his book; Kenya; A History since independence; Charles Hornsby traces the damage of tribalism and corruption. He says: “Kenya has failed to make a transition to a new model of economic development or a higher level of material benefit for its people.”

Departing colonialists made Kenya a strategic partner with the Kenyatta government receiving millions of dollars to compensate those who lost land to Wazungu. The Kiambu group gobbled land in Western Kenya, the Rift Valley, Nairobi, and the Coast while driving thousands of the landless to occupy land belonging to other communities.

By the time Moi took over power, says Hornsby, the Kikuyu had already eaten most of the “fruits of Uhuru”. Moi had to reinvent the eating process

and techniques. Moi’s 24-year ‘pastoralist’ era was replaced by Kibaki’s Mount Kenya (Kikuyu, Embu, Meru) era. Kibaki’s regime became a Mount Kenya Centred government perpetuating what Michela Wrong calls; Our Turn to EAT.

Hornsby says that, the killing of Tom Mboya in 1969:“speeded Kenya’s move towards rule by a Kikuyu Oligarchy, political and economic decay” while, Moi’s take over: “Shifted Kenya onto ‘a trajectory of ethnic tension and resource redistribution”

The failed 1982 coup led Kenya on a: “path of Kalenjin led authoritarianism.” Moi locked out key members of the Kikuyu oligarchy from the political kitchen, but after he left the scene, the Kikuyu leadership sabotaged the Constitution review process at the Bomas of Kenya with John Michuki, a powerful minister saying that with Moi out of power, the agitation for the new Constitution was no longer necessary.



Hornsby says that the Kenyan elite control both wealth and power. He emphasizes that “The same families appear to run the country and the same arguments over land, ethnicity, presidential authority, corruption and foreign intervention seem to continue decade after decade”

Hornsby argues that: the struggle for power and resources coalesced into a three-way cleavage, epitomized by three ethnic groups; the Kikuyu, Luo, and Kalenjin.

“The first two decades of independence saw the incorporation (on junior terms), of the Kalenjin into Kenyatta’s Kikuyu centred alliance and the gradual marginalisation of the Luo, alongside the embedding of a series of advantages for the Kikuyu community.”

My wealthy friend smiles and says: “believe me, my brother, many of our leaders live in dreadful fear of a Luhya unity, and more so if that unity is dressed in anti-Kikuyu sentiments.”

Obed Simiyu, a Journalist and political analyst argues that, the fear of Sifuna is fuelled by the fact that he: “has aroused the Luhya spirit of ‘mulembe’ (peace/unity), which has been elusive since the days of the late Kijana Wamalwa. Sifuna has managed to tickle the conscience of the mulembe nation”

Obed argues that that the wave has awoken political veterans such as; Fred Gumo, Musikari Kombo, Joash Wamang’oli, Moody Awori, Amos Wako, Dr Noah Wekesa, Dr Mukhisa Kituyi, and Bifwoli Wakoli. Youthful political aspirants and established politicians like Kakamega Senator Boni Khalwale and Trans Nzoia Governor George Nitembeya have thrown their weight behind Sifuna

While in prison, I met hundreds of youth who had chosen the lustful path of greed. Many had turned into pathological liars, armed robbers, and

incorrigible Obtainers. Rigathi Gachagua boastfully stated that youth from his community were the majority in prisons.

“I’m proud of our watchmen and maids status. God, in his wisdom, is preserving an army to remain morally upright.” I told my friend.

He lowered his gaze and whispered: “My brother, some of us need a complete reset on our purpose on earth and the true meaning of life”

Attempts to unite the Luhya have failed in the past. Masinde Muliro had the charisma and ability to do so. However, he blundered when he publicised his trip to London to meet former police officer Wajackoyah, who had crucial information on the 1990 assassination of Dr. Robert Ouko.

Muliro collapsed at the Jomo Kenyatta International airport upon his return. Special Branch officers who were waiting for him at the immigration took off with his briefcase.

I interviewed Prof. Athur Obel soon after Muliro’s death, and he said: “Eliminating Muliro was scientifically possible. He had a heart pacer. All the killers needed was, during inoculation, inject him with terminator drug, which could be activated mid-air but would go into effect once he touched the ground and his heart would stop”

At his burial, Moi was greeted with hostility. Elders were furious at the speed with which he was buried without an autopsy.

Then came Wamalwa Kijana, who wrestled Ford Kenya from Raila Odinga in his grand march to State House. “Moi doesn’t sleep. He sees Wamalwa and the Opposition in every bush” Wamalwa told thousands of his frenzied followers at rallies

Former Vice President Uncle Moody Awori and Prime Cabinet Secretary Musalia Mudavadi.

Wamalwa died as the second Luhya Vice President putting on hold the Luhya unity. Moody Awori, who became the third Luhya Vice President, focused his gaze on his ministerial docket.

Moses Mudamba Mudavadi, Musalia’s father, is perhaps the only Luhya leader who wielded real political power. He would publicly tell his distractors to “let Moi and Mudavadi rule Kenya”. He unapologetically employed Luhyas in all ministries he ran.

History scholar Peter Kagwanja has dismissed the Sifuna wave: “Kenya is not a banana republic. Sifuna cannot run a country. What else had he handled apart from the Senate and his law office? ” Kagwanja says that the Sifuna wave will pass.

When my friend and I finally parted, we agreed that Kenya belongs to all its communities, who must work and live together with justice as our shield and defender.

Who are the Quakers?



Known to many Kenyans for affirming rather than swearing on the Bible, the Quakers carry a remarkable history stretching from a small mission in Kaimosi to schools, hospitals, public service and communities across the country

■ **By Henry Imbachila**

Commonly going by the sobriquet Quakers, and officially known globally as the Religious Society of Friends, the integrity-driven and sometimes controversial denomination hit the headlines three weeks ago when Prime Cabinet Secretary Musalia Mudavadi and Bungoma Governor Ken Lusaka accompanied a delegation of its leadership and 6,000 members when they were hosted by President William Ruto at State House.

To one and all, Quakers are known as the Christian faith whose followers do not swear on the Bible but instead simply raise their right hand to affirm their testimony.

Quakers believe that telling the truth must be consistent at all times and do not, therefore, need an oath as

that amounts to double standards and unreliability before God, the Creator.

Quakers at State House.

In the years gone by, Quakers in Kenya have come to the limelight whenever one of its members is elected to Parliament or appointed to the Cabinet and opts to affirm instead of swearing on the Bible.

That was the case during the parliamentary and ministerial swearing-in ceremonies involving the late powerful Local Government Minister and Sabatia Member of Parliament Moses Substone Mudavadi, the late Agriculture and Kimilili MP Elijah Wasike Mwangale, the late Malava lawmaker and Housing Minister Peter Soita Shitanda and former United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) secretary-general, former Malava MP and Minister for Health Joshua Mulanda Angatia and one time Trade Minister and Kimilili MP Dr Mukhisa Kituyi as well Musalia Mudavadi who also currently serves as the Foreign and Diaspora Affairs Cabinet Secretary and the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP) Renson Ingonga.

Musalia Mudavadi is taking oath of office. Beyond the memorable once in a while swearing-in event, few Kenyans know about the Friends Church.

Both around the world and in Kenya, Quakers have been involved in the establishment of impactful health, entrepreneurial, and educational facilities.

A highly ethical religious group, the Friends Church has had its presence in Kenya since 1902 following the arrival of three American missionaries—Willis R. Hotchkis, Arthur B. Chilson, and Edgar T. Hole who had been sent by the Friends Africa Industrial Mission from Ohio, the United States.

The three missionaries established the first permanent Quaker station in the Kaimosi Forest, Vihiga County of Western Kenya.

The iconic EAY, Kaimosi.

With an estimated membership of over 150,000 followers, today, Kenya hosts the largest concentration of Quakers worldwide.

The church is an offshoot of the Church of England. It was started in the Midlands and North West of England in the 17th Century by a young inquisitive and provocative man called

From England to Kaimosi

- **1647:** George Fox's spiritual awakening challenged established religious practices and laid the foundation for the beliefs that inspired the Quaker movement.
- **1652:** Fox's powerful preaching attracted growing numbers of followers, marking the rise of the Quaker movement across England.
- **17th century:** Early Quakers faced imprisonment and persecution for challenging religious traditions, refusing to take oaths and promoting direct worship.
- **1902:** Three American missionaries arrived in Kenya and established the first permanent Quaker mission at Kaimosi in present-day Vihiga County.
- **1920s** The church spread beyond Kaimosi, attracting more followers and establishing a growing presence across communities in Western Kenya.
- **1946** East Africa Yearly Meeting was established, giving the growing Quaker community in the region a stronger African-led church structure.
- **Today** Kenya remains a major centre of Quakerism, with a large community and a lasting legacy in faith, education, health-care and public service.

● The Quakers, officially known as the Religious Society of Friends, are a Christian movement guided by simplicity, peace, integrity, community, equality and stewardship. Known for affirming rather than swearing oaths, they believe truth should be upheld at all times. Since arriving in Kenya in 1902, they have built a lasting legacy in faith, education, healthcare, public service and community development, particularly in Western Kenya.

George Fox who challenged some of the practices by the Anglicans such as drinking of alcohol and which he believed contradicted the Bible.

Fox had always had reservations with the conduct of the members of the Church of England from the age of 12 years but it was in 1647 when he opted to break away at the age of 23 years old to establish the Religious Society of Friends.

Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP) Renson Ingonga taking oath of office.

The Quakers church is founded on six strong pillars summarised as ‘SPICES’. Thus: Simplicity, Peace, Integrity, Community, Equality, and Stewardship.

In their strict adherence to these virtues, Fox and other members of the Society were repeatedly persecuted for their beliefs, being thrown in jail and tortured every now and then.

It was while in the dock on one of the occasions that Fox teased the presiding magistrate he was appearing before to be quaking whenever the name of God was mentioned in his presence.

Dr Mukhisa Kituyi is taking oath of office.

It was from that incident that the church was given the sobriquet Quakers, which has stuck to this day.

Sticklers to the six virtues are uncompromising crusaders for and defenders of rights, freedoms, and liberties for everyone and everybody.

They are fearlessly faithful to the teachings of Jesus Christ, do not take or give bribes, abhor business exploitation, and do not lie or bear false witness.

They are firm followers of Christ who do not kill, steal, or lie.

A pastor during a sermon at Malava Yearly Meeting of Friends’ church. Quakers hold the respected General Consultative Status at the United Nations through the Friends World Committee for Consultation (FWCC), which is their global umbrella body.

That status is the highest level of accreditation granted to non-governmental

organisations by the UN, allowing them to operate official representation offices.

They operate through the Quaker United Nations Office (QUNO) with physical locations in Geneva and New York City. Quaker Houses, from where they maintain informal, off-the-record meeting spaces near the UN headquarters to host diplomats, UN staff, and experts for quiet dialogue and consensus-building.

Congregation during a church service at a Friends Church in Nairobi. Their core focus is on areas of peace and disarmament: advocating against violent conflict and supporting peace-building systems. Human Rights: Working on refugee protections, conscientious objection, and criminal justice reform (such as the rights of children of prisoners).

They also address the human and social impacts of global climate change.

Kenya hosts the largest concentration of Quakers worldwide, with an estimated membership of 150, 000 followers, mostly in Western Kenya.

The Friends Church was established in Kenya in 1902 at Kaimosi in Vihiga County.

Beyond Kenya and the United Kingdom, the State of Pennsylvania in the United States was founded by exiled English Quakers and even named it after its founder, William Penn.

The word Slavania is a native American term that means woodlands, woods, or forests.

Thus, Pennsylvania means the woodlands or forest of Penn.

Quakers were also instrumental in the establishment of New Jersey, Delaware, and Rhode Island states.

The Quakers Church has to date established more than five universities in the United States and more than 10 flourishing schools in the United Kingdom.

Quakers believe in peaceful resolutions of conflicts and abhor violence of any form. Initially, Quakers were opposed to conscription into warfare. A practice that brought them into conflict with the Monarchy in England where they were killed, imprisoned, or sent into exile owing to their beliefs.

They believe in direct worship to God and that God the Creator ranks above any creature, including man.

That belief is one of the reasons that triggered a clash between Quakers and the English monarchy when worshippers resisted the move to prioritise the Crown ahead of God, famously declaring that the Cross comes before the Crown.

Also, the Quakers were key architects of the Industrial Revolution in England.

They were at the forefront of the abolition of slavery crusade in the US, the fight for the independence of the United States, and the civil rights movement of the 1950s and 60s in that country.

The late Richard M. Nixon, the 37th president of the United States. PHO-

TO | AP

Former United States Presidents Richard Nixon and Herbert Hoover were Quakers, while former First Lady Dolley Payne Madison, the wife of fourth President of the United States, James Madison, was a Quaker.

Global entrepreneurial empires founded by Quakers include Barclays Bank, Cadbury’s, Clarke, and Lloyds Bank of London.

Barclays Bank, now Absa.

Some of the notable Quaker public figures in Kenya include the Mudavadi, Prof. Miriam Were, Kenya’s first deputy chairman of the Public Service Commission, Benjamin Shidzugane Ngaira, the late Prof. Norah Olembo, the late prominent cardiologist Dr Benaya Majisu.

Some of the prominent learning institutions established by the Quakers in Kenya include Friends’ Kaimosi University (formerly Kaimosi Teachers’ College), Chavakali High School, Alliance Boys and Girls’ High Schools, Musingu Boys’ High School, Kaimosi Girls’ High School, Lugulu Girls’ High School, Friends’ School Kamusinga (Boys), Malava Boys’ High School, Friends’ Kaimosi Teachers College, Vokoli Girls’ High School and Kivaywa Boys ‘ High School, among others.

The prestigious Alliance schools were mooted in 1926 by the Alliance of Protestant Churches in Kenya, of which the Quakers Church was a prominent member.

Some of the medical institutions founded by Quakers in Kenya include the Kaimosi Mission Jumuia Hospital, Lugulu Mission Hospital, Lirhanda Friends Mission Clinic, and the Sabatia Eye Hospital.



Bungoma emerges western Kenya agriculture powerhouse, bags prestigious award

The latest honour, received during a national forum in Mombasa, marks the fourth consecutive year Bungoma has been recognised for its implementation of the agricultural programme, placing it among the best-performing counties alongside Nyandarua and Bomet.

■ By Our reporter

Bungoma County has been feted with a Bronze Award for exemplary implementation of the National Agricultural Value Chain Development Project (NAVCDP), further strengthening its position as a leading agricultural powerhouse in Western Kenya and the country.

The award recognizes the County's performance in implementing NAVCDP projects during the 2025–2026 period.

Bungoma received the honour during the closure of a three-day Joint National-County Consultative Forum on the implementation of the World Bank-supported NAVCDP and Food Systems Resilience Project (FSRP) at Sarova Whitesands in Mombasa.

Receiving the award on behalf of Bungoma, Governor Kenneth Lusaka commended the County NAVCDP team, led by County Coordinator Rabecca Lusweti, and the Department of Agriculture, under CECM Eng. Herbert Kibunguchi, for their dedication and commitment to the successful implementation of the project at the grassroots.

Governor Lusaka said the recognition underscores Bungoma's sustained commitment to transforming agriculture, noting that the County has now been recognized for exemplary NAVCDP imple-



■ The Bronze Award strengthens Bungoma's reputation as a reliable agricultural performer and recognises the county's efforts to turn development projects into practical support for farmers. The recognition also highlights progress in strengthening agricultural value chains, improving food production and building partnerships that reach farmers at the grassroots. By maintaining strong implementation, the county is reinforcing its position as an important player in Kenya's push for a more productive and resilient agricultural sector.



mentation for four consecutive years.

He lauded the partnership with the World Bank, saying the programme has played a critical role in empowering farmers across the County through targeted support across various agricultural value chains.

"The partnership has been instrumental in ensuring that farmers at the grassroots are empowered in their respective value chains," Lusaka said, while urging counties to sustain effective implementation of the programme for greater impact on farmers and food production.



The CoG Agriculture Committee Chairperson said the continued recognition demonstrates Bungoma's growing capacity to translate agricultural investments and development partnerships into tangible opportunities for farmers, reinforcing its strategic role in strengthening food security and value-chain development.

The Bronze Award places Bungoma among the best-per-

forming counties under the project, with Nyandarua taking Gold and Bomet securing Silver.

The latest recognition further positions Bungoma as a consistent performer in agricultural project implementation and a key contributor to Kenya's broader agenda of transforming agriculture into a productive, resilient and commercially viable sector.