



Community Voices for Peace and Pluralism WhatsApp Workshop Seminar

Series 15

Conversation with Beatrice Kamau (Kenya)

Women, Activism and Politics

The Community Voices for Peace and Pluralism - Africa (CVPP) is a non-profit network of women professionals providing services in preventing, transforming and solving violent conflict, including ethnic and religious conflicts around the world. CVPP also builds capacities through a Peace and Pluralism approach, equipping women to contribute to preventing, transforming and solving violent across the region. We also offer highly effective consulting services to advance global peace and security.

The WhatsApp Workshop Seminar Series began in the wake of the Global COVID-19 Pandemic. The Pandemic had a huge impact globally and the world's vulnerable and marginalised were most the affected. These are the people most CVPP members work with in various societies. Members of CVPP decided to meet this unprecedented challenge by speaking to each other every week by sharing stories, learning new skills from each other through the WhatsApp platform. The platform is ideal and inclusive as some community members either cannot access or afford facilities such as Zoom or Skype.

Seminar Series Convener/Moderator: Dr Sethunya

Presenter: Beatrice Kamau

Seminar Series Rapporteur: Selina Kwamini and Nana Adjoa

Participants: Members of Community Voices for Peace and Pluralism Africa

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Introduction by Dr. Sethunya Mosime, Botswana:

Good afternoon CVPP community. I'm Sethunya Mosime from Botswana and I will be moderating the discussion with our very special guest Beatrice Gathoni Kamau.

As a warm up to the session, I'm going to start sharing some wonderful snippets about her. Who is Beatrice Gathoni Kamau?

Beatrice Gathoni was born and brought up in Nyandarua County, Tumaini village in a family of twelve. The widowed mother of two schooled at Tumaini Primary School and later went Dry's Farm Boarding Primary where she sat for her CPE before proceeding to Loreto Convent Matunda where she pursued both her O and A levels certificates. She is currently pursuing a Bachelor of Law degree at the University of Nairobi. She borrows her motivation to venture into politics from her legal background hence she intends to continue to represent people beyond the corridors of the courts.

Beatrice is a long serving humanitarian worker with 27 years of experience in different NGOs. She has worked with the civil service as human rights, community development and social worker with: Release Political Prisoners, People Against Torture (PAT), Name and Shame Corruption, National Civil Society Congress and Social Reform Centre East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Network. As a member of the civil service community, she was involved from the beginning to the end in the fight for the 2010 promulgated constitution where she was involved in advocating for women issues across the country

where they educated women on making informed decisions while giving their views on constitution writing. Under PAT, she participated in coordinating the Kenya Human Rights Network around issues of torture and terrorism and stopped the passing of an archaic Anti-terrorism law victimising on citizens that would have tormented the country.

Kamau's agenda:

Water

Nyandarua County distributes water to Nairobi city but residents don't have piped water. Beatrice intends to lobby for the residents of Nyandarua to be given a share of this water through being connected to clean tap water.

Empowerment:

The elderly and the youth of Nyandarua County have been neglected. Beatrice purposes to lobby the government to empower the youth through jobs and engagement in economic activities; and also engage the youth in schools and colleges through mentorship. She also purposes to lobby the government to increase the Cash Transfer allocations given to the elderly.

Education

Academic standards in the larger Nyandarua County have dipped. Beatrice intends to conduct a county wide mentorship program targeting people from primary school to university levels with Alumni's and successful people from the region to lift the county's academic standards.

Some key moments in Kamau's political career: Beatrice contested for the Nyandarua woman rep seat in 2013 but lost to Ms Wanjiku Muhia.

"I joined the mothers of political prisoners [and] by the time we started there were 52 political prisoners. 51 of them were released after two years of advocacy. We had to fight hard. We were the first people to hold a meeting without a license," Kamau, 2017

As always, please, as usual, see our guidelines below;

Community Voices for Peace and Pluralism (CVPP)-Africa

Community Voices for Peace and Pluralism Africa is a non-profit network of peace workers that offers expertise in preventing, transforming and solving violent conflict through a Peace and Pluralism approach, contributing to the Women, Peace and Security agenda.

We set up this group to bring together women leaders working across various thematic social justice areas particularly peace building and women's meaningful participation in decision making roles.

We have enabling guidelines, for the users of our WhatsApp group and website, not rules;

1. The CVPP group was formed as an inclusive space for women safeguarding diverse spaces for dialogue by all generations, transforming and resolving violent conflicts, contributing to human dignity and social justice. Ensure your post is relevant and purposeful.
2. Avoid forwards unless they are relevant to the Women, Peace and Security agenda. Avoid cross posting by going through what has been shared to confirm you are not reposting and cross-posting. Links are encouraged. Spamming will pile chats, meaning most will then not follow the discussions.
3. Analyse and give your view or perspective on a subject with respect.
4. We are guided by values and principles as well as our standing as leaders in society and sexist, ethicist, racist, homophobic, political party specific and other demeaning comments or attacks are not allowed. Avoid narrow group views. Stereotypes shall not be entertained on CVPP. Be tolerant and respectful.
5. CVPP is not a place for rumours, innuendo, propaganda, myths or conspiracy theories. Members are asked to share or present what they know to be the truth, facts, evidence or data/information on a subject being discussed.
6. Before posting or replying, always ask yourself this: Is it true? Is it kind? Is it relevant? Is it necessary? Is this a good time to post? Is this going to encourage discussions or degenerate into animosity? Freedom of expression does not relieve you of your obligation to courtesy, decency and decorum.
7. Contribute regularly and share information on what you are doing to promote our stated common objectives. Consider this a conversation. It is not okay for you to just read other peoples input without contributing, asking for information, or suggesting improvements.
8. Do not personalize your chats. Always stick to the issue being discussed or ventilated on without attacking or discussing the person who originated or has commented on the subject.

9. Announcement of events your organization or others are doing is encouraged. However, you cannot initiate causes or activities on CCVP without approval from the forum admin before circulation.

10. We may at times, after discussion here on the forum, support a cause we see as key to encouraging members on CVPP or communities that CVPP Members support or are part of. If such causes are acceptable, the admins shall set up a separate group to advance such an activity or cause.

11. Any information that is produced here in a facilitated manner, such as the Seminar Series is Copyright to CVPP.

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12. CVPP exists because members make what we do possible through their voluntary work. We wish to thank you most sincerely for being members of this CVPP family.

Selina I just thought to impersonate you for the benefit of new members.

Housekeeping: Feel free to share your questions directly onto the group or inbox me if you'd rather be anonymous.

Good afternoon colleagues. It's my pleasure help me to welcome this afternoon the Shero we've already learnt a lot about and whom we are grateful for as a continent for her relentless hard work toward peace, Hon. 'Senator' Beatrice Gathoni Kamau!

Beatrice Gathoni kamau, Kenya: Hello everyone, Good afternoon, Good morning, Good evening to whichever part of the globe that you are in. I want to really thank Doctor Sethunya for the introduction that she has done. I even looked at it and wondered whether if it is I. I

really feel humbled and I am happy to be talking to all of you from all parts of the world. I feel honored. I really thank Community voices.

Thank you very much everyone. My name is Beatrice Kamau as you have already been told. I am Kenyan and I do not need to go through where I come from because Dr S has put it even better than I can do. I want to just make a brief introduction of myself. I am that village girl who has grown up in the villages and then later came to Nairobi and went to other parts of the world – and that is me.

Dr. Sethunya Mosime, Botswana: Good afternoon to all of you. Sorry I am 3 minutes late from the start of the conversation. There was a little glitch with my WhatsApp. Just for housekeeping, you might have seen that I have asked for people to feel free to send in questions either directly into the group or to me to inbox me if you would rather keep them private. Good Afternoon Senator Honorable Beatrice Gathoni Kamau.

Without further ado Beatrice, we have all seen your background, we have read your work, but we are still fascinated about many other things that you have done and especially where you think at the end of the conversation we want to get a little bit insight where you think we can go with creating lasting peace in Africa.

Beatrice Gathoni kamau, Kenya: Thank you Dr. Sethunya for the great introduction that you have done. I want to start by stating that I am human rights defender, a peace builder, a politician, a mother, a married woman, a widow and a single woman. So when I am talking about all this I have the experiences in all this. But before I became the politician, because the topic today is on how I vied; I want to give a brief background of what led me to be political and eventually to vie for political positions and loose two times but I have not given up.

The batter of resisting I can say started when I was in my mother's womb. Because according to what she tells me, I was born after 10 months. Unlike 9 months like other children. She even thought she had a still born baby but eventually she gave birth to me. And then I was born immediately after independence meaning that I was in the womb when the Mau Mau fight was at its height.

Later on, in my school which you have already been told, I think that I have been fighting injustices but not in a violent way so even if I am a fighter, it's a non violence fighter because we have to resist and as many African women know, is that when a girl is born and a boy has been born, a boy is usually given prevalence. In our language, when a girl has a born, we say that it is alcohol that has been born but when it is a boy, it is a king that has been born.

Alcohol means dowry. Because when a girl becomes of age, she has to married off, and when you are married off, there is a lot of celebration, there are goats, there is alcohol. The goats and the cows belong to the parents but the alcohol belongs to the community. That is why it will be said alcohol has been born. And you see now from that discrimination, then even when the annulations are being said by women; they give a boy 5 while a girl gets 3.

In the boarding school, at my tender age, I was able to see the injustice that our matron used to do. He would feed his cows with our porridge and our cabbages and our kale which we call in Swahili *sukumawiki* and we will get very little and some children would not get and you know in boarding school its survival for the fittest so some children will sleep hungry. I am the one who led the children to the headmaster and told them that what the matron was doing was not right and from that time she hated me and of course she ensured I was on every list of noisemakers. I didn't mind because the school knew that if they wanted to oppose the matron; they had someone to do it. And I think that is also very political.

When we were about to finish school, our headmaster gave us a lesson which he told us that we should never forget and this lesson came in a form of a song and I would like to sing it for you people:

You really want to see your people different; the right guide to start with is you yourself.

Come on sisters! There is work to do, don't stand by! Bystanders are betrayers!

He also told us that there are bumps ahead and we should always learn how to jump on them. Since then, when I went to secondary school, I always remembered if I want to see anything change, I have to be on the frontline. Ever since, I have been on the frontline of everything. In my secondary school which was also a missionary school, we were told to volunteer and fight for justice and put God ahead. I became a good Christian but at the same time resisted any

injustice. I also learnt from them peace building and mediation because as Christians, forgiving is important and that relates to mediation.

Dr. Sethunya Mosime, Botswana: We are very excited to learn how your childhood, right from birth to now, has always been about fighting injustice

Beatrice Gathoni kamau, Kenya: In secondary school, it is where I came to know out about politics because our country then was clamoring for the change of Article 2A of the Constitution which was on single-party state. We had teachers who were students of Prof. Maina Kinyati who is one of the great history writers of our country and also Ngugi Wa Thiong'o whom I know you all know. The issue was that we had democracy but the country was still not free. And we had to learn and compare but remember in a boarding school you are not exposed because you do not go home and know the politics. I couldn't understand because the president then the late Daniel Arap Moi was very good to children and he would visit our schools and give us goodies so when they said that there was dictatorship in the country; it was hard to understand that there was dictatorship, yet this nice man used to come, we used to sing for him and he would even cry so it was hard to comprehend. But eventually when I came out, it is when I came face to face with reality as we now listen to the radio and the things we have been taught in school especially literature classes where we were critiquing what was happening and what was being said. Our radios used to sing about this great man the president. There was a lot of psych fancy. Remember at this time you could not even mention the name of the president without checking who was next to you unless you are saying nice things about him.

Dr. Sethunya Mosime, Botswana: As you sing I reminded of our song that we sing here in Botswana among women especially when we do political training:

Mmammati Mpelele ngwana ke o ke a lema ke le nosi x2. O a mpona ke a lema, ke lema ke le nosi

This song is about asking other sisters to help you in your struggle.

First question, which moment would you say was your first of challenging the state?

Beatrice Gathoni kamau, Kenya: Thank you very much. My first moment with challenge the state came when I was already working and one day, the newspapers splashed all over naked women being beaten by police, and forced into lorries and I remember my colleague coming to me, laughing and rolling her head over telling us, ‘oh look at these old women, they are all naked. I cannot wait to see a naked woman, what is wrong with her?’ and I looked at the newspapers, I read, I realized that some of the figures I was seeing there are women that I knew and I looked at her again and then I asked her – ‘What was funny?’ I remember her telling me ‘How can old women of this age go and undress in front of young men, what are they trying to show us?’ I looked at her, I think I cried, I wept. Immediately after work, I went to condole with the mothers and these were the mothers of the political prisoners. Their journey for fighting for their sons who were political prisoners at the time had started. These political prisoners were the prisoners of conscience, these were the people who were questioning the system, these were people who wanted the change of government, to have multi -party, democracy and the mothers were not really concerned about section 2A or whatever what they wanted were their children to be released because they had not committed any crime.

The women resisted for 2 years. This is where we met with Prof. Wangari Mathai who was one of the supporters of these women. She highlighted their plight and the international community came together to push for the release of these political prisoners. By 1992, they released all of them except one. At this time I had already had a buy in. When I looked at these women, especially the very old ones, I felt that it is not them who were supposed to be fighting for the country and their innocent sons but it is people like me who were young and energetic. This is when I joined them and immediately their sons were released some of them as well as those the other young people working with their mothers started a movement called *Release Political Prisoners*.

The movement actually politicized us in the real sense because we saw that those in jail were the prisoners but actually the rest of Kenyans who were not in prison were in the bigger jail. They were actually worse than those in jail. At least those in jail were assured of 2 meals while those outside were not assured of a meal or security or a place to sleep. This is when we started capacity building for all members of *Release Political Prisoners*. One of the things we endeavoured to change was because we lacked revenue we said that we must resist and

say we have freedom for assembling. In our law assembling was illegal. If you were assembling more than 3 people, you had to have a license or else the chiefs would arrest you and throw you in.

Dr. Sethunya Mosime, Botswana: I am happy that you mention being indirectly influenced by the work of Ngugi wa Thiongo, especially that a lot of interest has emerged about his radical portrayal of women in Kenya, especially Kikuyu women.

Beatrice Gathoni kamau, Kenya: In *Release Political Prisoners* we educated people and told them there is a way of actually assembling and we started resistance that was overboard. There was resistance before that was done by people like Mwakenya which wasn't overboard. But we decided that we wanted to resist non-violently and in a peaceful way. We organized ourselves. We held demonstrations and we refused to go even when beaten by the police. If you see my head, I don't have hair because one time I was arrested and my hair was pulled off by the police but we never fought back. We did peaceful demonstrations and we worked together with opposition. The RPP was a movement whose work was known. We started documenting and working towards understanding the constitutions of other states that had made it. We compared ourselves to Uganda which was writing an interim constitution then and we read the book by Museveni, *Sowing the Mustard Seed* which inspired us. We were able to ensure that everybody whether he/she is a professor or a class 7 dropout and was a member of RPP could actually hold a meeting with people and the work of RPP spread like bush fire.

Being human rights defenders, we worked with all communities. There was a lot of torture. Police would arrest people and torture them. In the process, instead of having peace we would have communities rising against each other. For example, we worked in North Eastern Kenya where there had been cattle rustling. One of the things we did is to bring women and other people together to address the bigger problem. We made them understand that until they look into their problems, fighting wouldn't help. We can say that on one hand we were on the side of the community and we took the issue on torture very seriously. That is how *People Against Torture* was formed. I was the founder member and its chair. Since Kenya had ratified the convention on torture, we were able to hold police accountable and it is during this time that we brought the UN Rapporteur on torture to Kenya. This was part of

peace building. We educated people that whatever was political and they had a right of voting in the right leaders who would take up their issues of representation and their problems to a national level without really having to fight.

Dr. Sethunya Mosime, Botswana: Fast forward to the present, what made you stand against torture in particular?

Beatrice Gathoni kamau, Kenya: Just like always, when you get so entangled, you forget that you are a woman and you find that you are alone in the battle field and you have left the other women behind. This is what happened with me and a few others. When we took count we realised we only had 5 women left in a movement of more than 100 people. That is when we started thinking of the need to engender the movement. This was resisted by men who thought that if we were gender sensitive why would we have women? I remember in one of the times, I broke ranks with my fellow men in RPP when they refused to put women on the board. I insisted that it was important but they argued that there were no strong women who could be leaders in the movement. I insisted for them to put those ‘weak’ ones because that way they will become ‘strong’. It is then that I made up my mind that I have to start working with women movements. When I joined women movement, it was not only to fight for their rights because just like in other parts of Africa they are marginalised. It was also to fight for their issues to be included in the constitution. I was not the first one to do that. There were other great women in Kenya who had done that.

Salim Umar, Nigeria: Thank you Mama Kaduna as we named you here. This is truly an informed perspective. My question is do you have organisations or Government institutions that support women politicians in Kenya?

Dr. Sethunya Mosime, Botswana: And what led you to the decision to stand for political office, and do it not once but twice?

Beatrice Gathoni kamau, Kenya: On my stand against torture, as I have told you, I was a member of RPP. There was a lady, late Josphine Nyawira Ngengi who was a political prisoner and was later adapted by International Amnesty as a prisoner of conscious. She was arrested because her brother was thought to be one of the people resisting. I cannot describe the things done to her. She was beaten and her breasts squeezed with a plier. They inserted foreign objects in her privates and her nails were plucked off. She was also raped. She came

out sickly. These are some of the things that even if she eventually went to the hospital, they led to her death. She was a mother of two. When she came out of prison, I decided that we have to start an organisation resisting torture especially by government agents.

Ladi Madaki: What of the support system (family, friends, community), did you have any? How were you able to cope?

Beatrice Gathoni kamau, Kenya: On the decision to stand for political office as Dr. Sethunya has put it, I vied for Women Rep in 2013. I also vied for the Senate position in 2017. What motivated me to for Women Rep position was because it was new and as I told you when you want to see change then you have to be the first one to do it. I wanted us to set the women agenda in the parliament. It was the first time the constitution was introducing the position to allow 47 women from 47 counties. Of course I didn't get the positions and one of the challenges was that I was a human rights defender and I was among those that 'took president and his vice to Hague'. Of course that was not true! I realised that the political landscape is very different from human rights and peace building.

When you are doing human rights work especially when you are challenging the state, you don't have a lot of support from family and friends because they see it as a big risk you are taking. They feel you cannot cope. My dad could not understand why he could not give me money to start hardware so that I make money. Several times with my brother they asked me not to do human rights work. When it comes to the work of peace building, the communities really appreciate but when it comes to political work, the family supports half heartedly. They are not sure because if you become a leader you are one of them. So sometimes you get support. When I was vying for the Women Rep position, many of my family members supported me. When I was vying for the Senator position, they thought that is a man's world and I shouldn't attempt. I didn't get support even from my own brothers and sisters. My father who had already passed away had equally resisted from the word go. So when you vie for these positions that are for grabs for both men and women it is very hard. This is because people feel it's not women's positions. Discrimination starts from birth and follows you to old age.

Let's talk about challenges I faced as a politician. One of them was the fact that one doesn't have money. Politics in Kenya has really been monetised to the extent that when you go to a group before you introduce, they first ask you if you have money and what you have brought

for them. Even if you give them money, it doesn't mean that you'll be supported. There is a lot of con-manship in politics and when you are talking to the people you cannot tell whether or not they are telling the truth. It's very discouraging that immediately after you have been talking to a group that has promised to vote for you then you meet your opponent who was invited after you left. This is very discouraging. I don't know if it happens elsewhere too.

I still believe that when you have not made it, you can still try twice or even thrice. Our ex-president tried severally before he became the president. I have not given up because then if I give up and I'm one of the women leaders and one of those that build capacity for women and told them to get into politics. If I give up then we would all give up and who would be there to run for office? So, my driving force is the fact that even when I vie and get 10,000 votes, I know that at least 10,000 people believe in me. Even when I speak now, I speak for them.

Dr. Sethunya Mosime, Botswana: I wish to recognise among the audience this afternoon, the presence of our CVPP Board Chair, and I quote from the report from her seminar on this platform: Samia El-Hashmi, is a renowned Sudanese Lawyer that belongs to a sisterhood of women and one man, which you may have heard referred to as the Taskforce created by Inclusive Security where Jacqui and Anna worked. It consists of Sudanese and S. Sudanese who came together after their country was divided into two because they knew boundaries divide countries but not hearts or cultures. A number of people here got involved with the Taskforce including Stella and myself as resource persons and Akello who was then legal advisor to President Mbeki. President Mbeki was in charge of the AUHIP and the taskforce members will tell us what that was about. Samia will tell us all that and much more about Sudan and the revolution and of course women's role in all this. Then we shall identify ways to help Safaa in her new role.

Beatrice Gathoni kamau, Kenya: I think I have succeeded as a politician because I work with women political alliances and we have been able to build capacity of women. We've several women who've gone to parliament and county assemblies through our work. So I may not have been elected but there are those people who I prompted and they took it up and made it. For me, when I am counting my success, I count their success as part of mine.

Dr. Sethunya Mosime, Botswana: Just thought to share a #situationrightnow picture of our speaker, Mama Kaduna. Thank you Alice for sharing



Beatrice Gathoni kamau, Kenya: I also want to say that I have worked with politicians in Somalia. One of the things we did was to really mobilise women, worked with politicians and came up with men gender champions who were to ensure that women got on board. As our Somali sisters here can ascertain, the formula that was adopted for having interim parliament and later on in the current government, it was hard to have women on board. However, during the last election women were able to push the international community and also the civil societies (whom I was working with behind the scene) that we were able to have the current seats. We ensured women were brought on board and there was quite a number of them.

Dr. Sethunya Mosime, Botswana: What lessons do you have for women in politics?

Ladi Madaki: How do we encourage young girls to participate in politics?

Dr. Sethunya Mosime, Botswana: I'd also wish to recognize another member of our Board, Salihu Musa Umar, who is also Chairperson of Farmers and Herders Initiative for Peace and Development Africa.

Beatrice Gathoni kamau, Kenya: To Salim, Mama Kaduna is doing fine here in Kenya. That is the name I was given by Nigerians. In Somalia, I am called Faisal. The question you've asked on whether there are institutions supporting women, yes there are some. However, they don't have funds. In our constitution no politician is supposed to receive money from outside. Women organisations are not funded by government. Civil societies in Kenya just like in other parts of Africa are not funded by the government. Therefore, they are not able to help women much. The most they can do is build their capacity. But even when

you have your capacity build, it is hard to get on board if you have no resources. However, we have women organisations that have been fighting to have policies that are gender friendly. For instance, in the last 2 elections, they managed to push political parties to waive the fees for women candidates vying for the same positions as men by half. That helped a bit. On the issue of women organisations, they have been pushing for the 1/3 gender law. As I said we have a policy that says not more than 2/3 of the opposite gender should get either elective or appointive positions. This is the law that has made the Kenyan Chief Justice advise the President to dissolve the parliament. The women have gone to court on several cases and won but parliament which has mostly men has resisted and ridiculed women in parliament. For now we are still looking for solutions. Otherwise, if there are none, the women in this country will have no option but to support Chief Justice Maraga.

What lessons do I have for women in politics? The first one is that they have to be bold enough and come out in large numbers to support their fellow women. Women in politics are not only the aspirants but also the electorate. That is why I say that everything in this country is political from the work we do, what we eat and budget for in the country. The moment women are left out, and then ½ of the citizens of the country are left out. So, I would tell women to come out in large numbers. I also tell women not to fear and support each other such that when other women come to vie, there are those available to support them. However, women should make sure that they are peace builders. In all their elections, they should use their motherly women styles of leadership to get into positions. We've had women who've gotten into leadership in this continent for using their motherly or women skills which are peaceful. Some of these women include Her Excellency Ellen Johnson from Liberia. She didn't use force but was able to get into that position. There are other women who have been able to get on board like one of the MPs in Kenya called Linah Kilimo. She used her work to get on board. Many other women too have gotten positions not by emulating men but by using gender skills.

Dr. Sethunya Mosime, Botswana: Your strongest and longest contribution outside politics has been legal reforms, some of which averted potential violence that would have been sparked by some intended laws. Share this experience....

Beatrice Gathoni kamau, Kenya: I encourage young girls to participate in politics. The moment they hit 18, they should get their ID cards and vote. That is the first step of getting

into politics. They should not vote because they have been persuaded but they should read and understand the leadership they want. They should get a representative who will consider issues and not on tribal basis. In our Building Bridges Initiative-BBI in Kenya, we are hoping us as peace builders and in this I hope Alice will join hands with me. We should ensure that they are addressing historical injustices of women who've been marginalised, people with disabilities and the youth should be brought on board. Not on tribal basis but across the board. This way I would urge the young girls to join hands and educate parents on the need to vote wisely, not on tribal basis but on the basis of those that can deliver. All the time they should preach peace in what they are doing.

Dr. Sethunya Mosime, Botswana Beatrice, you are an excellent story teller. What role does story telling contribute in peace processes?

Beatrice Gathoni kamau, Kenya: On the strongest contributions we've made on legal reforms they include engendering the constitution of Kenya and our legislations. We made sure we had gender friendly laws among them the issue of equality and equity, Article 4 talking about human rights e.t.c. It is in this constitution where we have laws on the rights of children and where both parents are responsible for them. We also have laws on inheritance where both girls and boys can inherit from their parents. In this country, it was mostly men who inherited properties like land from their parents because girls were expected to get married. Currently, the constitution is very clear that both genders can inherit and many other good laws. We also have the law on ensuring not more than 2/3 of the gender is opposite in elective or appointive positions. We also have the 2/3 of all the government tenders going to the marginalised i.e. the women, youth and people with disabilities. I encourage the private sector to do so too. We are not yet there but we are still working to engender the laws. In Somalia we worked with the women parliamentarians to engender laws in parliament especially the laws of inheritance, health laws and much other legislation. We worked with civil society to ensure that women were brought on board in committees and many other things.

Salim Umar, Nigeria (responding to Dr. Sethunya Mosime, Botswana): Thank you very much Dr. I'm waving from here!

Jacqueline O'Neill: Beatrice, you are truly one of the smartest people I have ever met. And one of the coolest!

Not sure if you use this saying, but sometimes I read about “wanting to be on the right side of history”.

It is like you have a fire inside you that makes you always have the instinct of creating the right side of history - before people like me even really understand what’s happening.

And I love that you said that not getting elected is not failing at politics. You strengthened the process, likely made the people who won have to think about the issues that you raised. And as you said, you have inspired so many.

My mother was a local politician in Canada and she won two elections and lost one. And I was proudest of her for the one she lost because she had to fight the hardest.

Dr. Sethunya Mosime, Botswana: You spoke about Kenya’s current Constitutional crisis in which the Chief Justice has written to the President and demanded the dissolution of parliament because of failure to ensure that 2/3rds of each gender is represented everywhere. In other words Kenya has failed to include women not only in Parliament but all Constitutional offices including the cabinet! How would you like African women to help you in this agenda?

Beatrice Gathoni kamau, Kenya: Thank you Dr. Sethunya. Regarding storytelling, Kenya just like other African countries, we used to pass on history and information through storytelling. I am not as good storyteller as some people we have on this forum like Salim and Fatuma from Nigeria and also Ladi who is a very good storyteller. Storytelling was one of the ways especially women used to pass their stories, morals, advice and teachings to their children. This used to happen when they were warming around the fire place. This is one of the things we’ve taken because I don’t know about other places but Kenyans don’t like reading but they listen to stories and information can be passed through this. It is through songs and storytelling that we were able to educate Kenyans about their rights in RPP. This is one of the things we are planning to use as women to mobilise women around and ensure they take up leadership in this country and in this continent. Stories at least are not violent. Whenever there was violence we used stories to describe how violence was destructive. It’s through storytelling that we can also achieve peace.

Dr. Sethunya Mosime, Botswana (reminding Beatrice Gathoni kamau, Kenya of a question unanswered): And your thoughts on this?

Dr. Sethunya what a question! We need your help right now. I wish all the members in this group can write to our two principals i.e. the President and former Prime Minister and tell them that we are expecting in the Building Bridges Initiative-BBI to have women brought on board. BBI is one of the handshake's low hanging fruits. We are expecting that one of the low hanging fruits the principals are giving Kenyans is the 2/3 gender principle. We would want all women in this forum to write to the 2 principles and tell them that Kenyans and the world is watching how they are going to deal with the 2/3 issue.

I want to emphasize on the need of you people on this forum to help Kenyan women push for the 2/3 principle. If Rwanda and South Africa have done it, why can't Kenya do it? If Somalia is almost there why can't Kenya do it? We are saying that if you help us to push and they see that the push is coming from all over Africa and the members of AU here can also push presidents from other countries to ensure we get this. The win will not just be for Kenyans but for all women in Africa.

Lydia Zigomo, Zimbabwe: Thank you mama Kaduna for this really insightful presentation on your political journey. Inspiring indeed!

Dr. Sethunya Mosime, Botswana: Thank you and we will think about your proposal about how we can partner on this.

Botswana is the worst in the continent on women's representation so we need you even more.

"I joined the mothers of political prisoners [and] by the time we started there were 52 political prisoners. 51 of them were released after two years of advocacy. We had to fight hard. We were the first people to hold a meeting without a license," Kamau, 2017.

Share more about this day. How you held a meeting without a license.

Beatrice Gathoni kamau, Kenya (responding to Dr. Sethunya Mosime, Botswana): We shall really appreciate.

Beatrice Gathoni kamau, Kenya: Dr. Sethunya you are saying Botswana is worse. It can't be worse than Kenya. Here we have policies and legislations in place. We have pushed Members of parliament who swore to defend the constitution but have literally refused to legislate. What do you call that? Why should they not go home?

Mandiedza Parichi(PhD): Thanks you Beatrice much appreciated. How do we manage filtration processes that prohibit women from taking part in politics such as political violence during campaign periods and restrictive policies?

Beatrice Gathoni kamau, Kenya: Regarding how we held meetings without license, let me take you all through a lesson. First, we had to prepare ourselves psychologically because some of us are not as strong and we would run away the moment we saw the police with rungas (wooden clubs). So we had to sit down and strategise not in a day, 2 or 3 but for a week. We would create scenarios just how we do it when doing peace work. We created the worst case scenarios and determined how we would respond. That is where I talked about us having to prepare and ask everybody to carry a belt for scaring the police horses. We would swing at them and they would think they are snakes and so they would run away. We would carry a bottle of water and a towel. The water was for rinsing your eyes when tear gassed and towels were for holding the teargas thrown at us and throw back to the police. The men did this for us. That way we would have time to either run away or have police taste a dose of their own medicine. But we were never violent. We only threw back the teargas thrown at us.

Dr. Sethunya Mosime, Botswana: Oftentimes women try to conform to legal means of protest. What are the strategies that you think women can use to protest so that on the one hand they do not compromise their already compromised security, but that they are able to meaningfully challenge the state?

Alice Nderitu, Kenya: When I worked at the Kenya National Commission on Human Rights we would establish how serious an issue people were demonstrating against by finding out whether Beatrice was in the demonstration. She was our barometer.

The young peace builders and human rights defenders call her “Mama wa Nguvu” which is Kiswahili for “Mother or Woman of Power”

Beatrice Gathoni kamau, Kenya: As I said there was a law that said if you wanted to hold meeting for more than 3 people be it a dowry, unless it was a church meeting you had to ask for license. We thought this is one of the most draconian laws because it was refusing people to organise or have self expression. We resisted and did demos. We held meetings. We went all over the country and ensured that our meetings took less than 5 minutes. By the time the police realised we were there and we had organised a meeting, we would have passed the

message and then asked the rest of the people from that area to run away and leave us as members. After arresting several members of RPP, they stopped arresting us and turned to those people we were educating. So we learnt to tell them to disperse after 5 minutes. When the police showed up we would disperse or they would disperse us but we would have passed the message.

Dr. Sethunya Mosime, Botswana: Madame Seriousness Barometer of Kenya!

Fatima, Nigeria(responding to Beatrice Gathoni Kamau, Kenya): Thank you mama Kaduna for your great presentation! I agree for a pan African action of support to this cause

Beatrice Gathoni Kamau, Kenya: How do we manage the filtration processes that prohibit women from taking part in politics such as political violence during campaigns? How you manage this is that you bring very close people to you who cannot betray you or be bought. This is because buying of agents is very rampant during campaigns. People will even pay almost 500 to 1000\$ to make sure they buy your strong agents. So you bring people who cannot sell out and they also believe in you. Also, you should have checks and balances. Apart from having the agents, have others policing the agents and then you have another group again policing the police. That way you will be getting information and it is also good to have a think tank and people who are reviewing on almost daily basis especially when the elections are near, have people reviewing what is happening on the ground so that you are able to change tactics. Strategy is very important during campaigns because these strategies are the ones that will help you know what is happening on the ground. Keep in mind that there are also many other people who are trying to steal your strategy and your people. That is why you have to be very careful bringing all those people. After getting your relatives, the other group you get is your close friends and probably your former schoolmates and then anybody who believes in you. These are the people who will protect you, even from the violence. In Kenya for example, the electoral commission usually gives women candidates security but at your own cost. As long as you are able to pay the police, you can have them. However, this is still hard for women because the security members can also be bought.

Dr. Sethunya Mosime, Botswana: We have been in this chat for an hour. This session is a conversation opener and we can continue since we are all in this group. I would like to thank you very much; your footprint is everywhere in African and beyond. United we stand, divided we fall.

To the rest of the members, it was suggested that we discuss how we can support Sister Lina Zedriga Waru following the arrest of Bobby Wine. This conversation can also continue of the group in the coming days

Thank you very much especially on the end with strategies of campaigning which is a topic we might have more substantively on another platform. This has been a very engaging conversation. It has been thought provoking and it had practical ideas, stories and moments. We would like for colleagues and members to continue this conversation outside this formal presentation or meeting. Enjoy the rest of your weekend and of course we don't sleep. There is always something that we need to work on. It has been suggested that we need to think about supporting our sister Lina Zedriga Waru. So conversation will be continuing and I know that when I wake up in the morning there will be 50 messages from this group. Good night! Thank you once again Senator, Mama Kaduna, Beatrice Muthoni Kamau.

Beatrice Gathoni Kamau, Kenya (responding to Dr. Sethunya Mosime, Botswana):

Thanks Dr Sethunya. Thanks members of community voices.

Biographies



Beatrice Kamau

Beatrice is the Executive Director of the Women Political Alliance and a strong believer in a world that upholds justice and equality. A world where people can co-exist peacefully knowing that their fundamental human rights and freedoms are respected and guaranteed. This boils down to good governance, respecting the contract between the governed and those governing them. As a strong human rights defender, she is known for going an extra mile to ensure that duty bearers uphold human rights when delivering services. For that reason, she

believes a good government is judged by how well its policies and practice takes care of the vulnerable in the society.

Beatrice has worked extensively with local communities in Kenya, specifically on governance, social justice and gender. She also worked in Somalia for six years on policy, governance, gender and peace building. Her vast experience is drawn from involvement in work as a human rights defender, peace builder, employee, consultant, volunteer, office bearer and also as a politician.

Beatrice has worked in the Human Rights field in Kenya for over twenty-eight years, gaining a lot of ‘hands on’ experience. As a human rights defender, she founded many institutions such as Release Political Prisoners (RPP), People Against Torture (PAT) and Social Reform Centre (SOREC) among others. For more than four years, she coordinated K-HURINET campaigns, advocating for the rights of Kenyans in the areas of torture, gender. She also advocated for the establishment of the Kenya National Commission on Human Rights, the Truth Justice and Reconciliation Commission and the Gender Commission.

She was one of the leading lights in advocating and reviewing policies and legislation such as the 2010 Kenya Constitution, the Political Parties Act and the Electoral Act. Beatrice was notably present, for eighteen years, in the campaigns for the review and eventual passing of the 2010 Kenya Constitution. She is currently championing for the Constitution’s implementation, focusing on Affirmative Action, Social Justice, and Governance Bills, as well as Article 43 of the constitution. Beatrice has also worked on the review and drafting of legislation in Somalia.

As a strong advocate for women’s rights, Beatrice is a member of the National Women’s Steering Committee advocating for inclusion in all spheres. She is also a member and a coordinator of the Women Leadership Task Force under the Ministry of Public Service and Gender.

Beatrice is widely travelled, and has sharpened her skills in areas of development attending the *Local Development Course at the Hague*, *‘International Civilian Peace Keeping and Peace Building’* and a specialized course on *‘Women in Armed Conflict’* in Austria.

Beatrice has been a candidate, vying in two General Elections, and learning many lessons. Among these lessons is the price of being called **mheshimiwa** “honorable” and “**The Senator.**” This where the story Beatrice will share begins!



Dr. Sethunya Tshepho Mosime

Dr. Sethunya Tshepho Mosime holds PhD since 2007 from the University of Kwazulu Natal, in Communication, Media, and Society. Currently, she is a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Sociology, Faculty of Social Sciences, at the University of Botswana. She has a multidisciplinary background in Sociology, Political Science, Social Anthropology, Media, Communication and Cultural Studies. Her research and teaching interests are around the rights of political and social minorities across ethnicity, gender and sexuality, African Social Thought, Sociological theories and methods, Gender and the Criminal Justice System, Communication for Development and Media-Military Relations. She is also a gender activist, and have she has partnered with many rights based organization including OSISA, FES, Africa Gender Institute, Emang Basadi and National Democratic Institute. In 2014, Dr. Sethunya Tshepho Mosime co-founded *Letsema* Resource Support for Women in Politics and work with political parties to help women candidates.

