AUTOBIOGRAPHY

My Passion Fo r Change

With Masinde Kusimba

My Passion For Change

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This I know for certain.
Regardless of what you are doing,
if you will pump long enough and hard enough,
sooner or later, your effort will be rewarded.

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I also appreciate my elder brother and friend, Rt. Hon. Dr. Moses Masika Wetang'ula, the Speaker of the National Assembly of Kenya, and the Hon. Wycliffe Musalia Mudavadi (the Prime Cabinet Secretary and Minister for Foreign and Diaspora Affairs), among others, for their moral and ideological support.

Before writing this book, a number of my friends and members of my family had encouraged me to document my life story. Initially, I was reluctant to share my experiences and the lessons I have learnt over the years but, eventually, I realised the importance of sharing my thoughts and life experiences.

I wish to thank Masinde Kusimba for walking with me throughout this journey. He listened to my story and conducted further research and interviews with some key informants, and helped me to write this book. I thank Kwendo Opanga and Patrick Kyunguti for editing this volume and preparing it for publication.

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I appreciate the larger Mukhwana family (my brothers and sisters) and members of our Basakali clan for the unconditional love that they have always shown me. Special thanks to my big sister Jordina Naliaka, my cousin Fred Situma (we call him a walking encyclopedia), Rudolf Masika, and my brothers Engineer John Situma and Isaac Opicho, just to name but a few. I am also indebted to many friends and relatives for their invaluable input.

Along the journey of life, I have met many people who have given me opportunities to excel. They have also

contributed to the success of this story. Key among them is my mentor and friend, Prof. David Some, the former Vice-Chancellor of Moi University and later Chief Executive Officer of the Commission for University Education. He believed in me and supported me unconditionally. I cannot thank him enough.

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Ultimately, I cannot forget to thank the people of Bungoma County where I was born and bred. This is their book. They gave me many lessons that provided the bedrock for this publication. They showed me that all that glitters is not gold and that God's timing is the best. This book mirrors them, it is about them, and it also talks to them. This is the story of my passion for change. May you find this publication useful. God bless you all.

Juma Mukhwana, PhD, CBS
Nairobi, November 2024

FOREWORD

The best way of sharing your thoughts and life experiences, so as to inform and inspire others, is to write a book. This also guarantees that the record of events that took place during one's lifetime is accessible and can be of good use to the present and future generations. Thus, I strongly laud Dr. for conceptualising and actualising this noble idea.

I have known the author and his family for a long time. We hail from neighbouring villages in Bungoma County. Mukhweya village (where I come from) and his Lurende village are just across the river from each other. Our families know and have interacted with each other for a very long time. Our parents (*Mzee* Dominique Wetang'ula and the late Tom Mukhwana) were great friends. They shared a lot of common values, especially in their insistence that their children go to school and excel.

Juma is my younger brother. He is a great example of how one can rise from humble beginnings to excel on a global scale. Furthermore, I admire his passion for changing the lives of others for the better. Through his charitable activities he has helped and transformed the lives of many

people; right from his Lurende village, his home county of Bungoma, in Kenya, the African continent, and other corners of the globe.

He has a persistent spirit and always sees the positive side of any adversity. His resilient, sociable and humble nature tells it all. He is a great person and a role model for many.

This book has captured pertinent issues about humanity, education, leadership and, above all, putting the interests of others before self. It is a useful publication for both current and future generations.

Rt. Hon. Dr. Moses Masika Wetang'ula, EGH
The Speaker, National Assembly of Kenya
Nairobi, November 2024

CHAPTER 1

IN THE WILDERNESS

Your mind is a garden; your thoughts are the seeds.
You can grow flowers or you can grow weeds
- William Wordsmith

I WALKED into Nairobi's Wilson Airport with extreme caution and anxiety. I was visiting the place for the first time. I looked and moved round carefully lest I lost my way. I had an appointment with Dr. Chris Field, a man I respected and feared in equal measure.

He was a British expert working in Kenya as the head of a non-governmental organization (NGO) known as FARM- Africa. He also served as a part-time lecturer at the University of Nairobi, my alma mater. He was a typical jack of all trades - a pilot, a zoologist, a rancher and a camel expert with an extreme passion for pastoral life.

He was a tall man who often dressed in khaki trousers and loose-fitting shirts. I asked around and was shown where he was. When we met, he greeted me with a warm, friendly smile and asked me to follow him. We walked to a small four- seater plane that was waiting nearby. He gestured to me to board and I did so carefully and obediently.

"Fasten your seat belt," he instructed me. I obliged.

Shortly thereafter, the engine of the small plane roared to life. Every bit of the contraption seemed to vibrate. Before I could come to terms with what was happening around me, we were airborne. The famously tall buildings of the Nairobi skyline now appeared as indistinguishable structures below.

I had not boarded a plane before. This was my maiden trip in the sky. I was afraid, anxious and excited. The clouds were heavy, which made the ride quite bumpy. Frightened, I held onto my seat tightly as Dr. Field navigated the plane fearlessly through the heavy clouds. We were literally being jerked up and down. I feared the worst.

Being a talkative and inquisitive man, Dr. Field kept asking me questions about myself and my future plans. But my mind was racing and I was absent-minded. He talked about tough life in the dry areas, animals, planes and flying. All I could do was nod and occasionally interject with a few words such as 'yes' 'sure' and 'nice'. At some point he realised that I was quite terrified. I'm sure he expected it. He reduced the talking and focused on navigating the plane.

My fear more than doubled when he mentioned that we had lost our way in the skies. He kept asking me, "Can you see any building or hill down there? Do you see an open field?" At that time, the plane was flying around in circles. I was terrified.

About 10 minutes later, which to me seemed like an eternity, he regained direction and told me that we were overflying Mwea, a rice-growing area in the southern parts of Mount Kenya. A few minutes later, we landed at the Nanyuki Airstrip. The landing was rough because the field was small, uneven and very dry. The plane blew up a huge ball of dust as its wheels touched the ground.

As the engine came to a halt, and as the propeller and dust settled simultaneously, Dr. Field signaled me to disembark. I alighted feeling confused and dizzy. That was in January 1992. I was 27 years old. I had just graduated from the University of Nairobi with a Bachelor of Veterinary Medicine degree.

Dr. Field had parked his car at the airstrip. It was a Toyota Land-Cruiser model. We boarded it and proceeded to Nanyuki town where Dr. Field had a palatial home. We spent the night there.

For the next one week, we visited pastoralists in Kisima and South Horr in Samburu and Maikona in Marsabit. We used both ground and aerial means to traverse the districts. It is during that trip that I came face to face with the harsh realities of northern Kenya. It had no modern housing.

People lived in shanty structures known locally as *manyattas*.

The general infrastructure was poor. There were no tarmacked roads. Schools and hospitals were few and scattered. Electricity, telephone communication, piped water and other amenities associated with modern life were hard to come by. While there, Dr. Field communicated mainly through a satellite-enabled radio call system.

Insecurity, especially attributable to cattle rustling and banditry, was rampant in the area. Wild animals also roamed freely. I regularly heard the howls of hyenas, hissing and snarls of leopards, and roars and growls of lions at night. Most people went about their business armed with guns, spears or the ordinary club (rungu). I later learnt that this was for self-defence against attacks from bandits or wild animals. It was a scary life.

We traversed this region for about a week. At night, I usually slept on a tiny mat in a canvass tent. Temperatures were very high during the day and night and the water was salty. I was always sweating.

I had not experienced this life of hardship before. I was aware that hardship regions existed; but I had only read about them in books and the media – mainly newspapers and radio. I used to hear a lot about hunger, drought, supply of relief food, among other things. This trip brought me face-to-face with reality and made me understand the situation in the north of Kenya better. In reality, it looked worse than I had envisioned.

Despite hailing from the developed western world, Dr. Field seemed to be more comfortable with life in the wilderness than I was. I was amazed and humbled by his simplicity.

Then one morning, out of the blue, he asked me, "Are you ready to work here?" Without giving it a second thought, I answered in the affirmative, "Yes, sir." He looked directly into my eyes and prodded further, "Are you sure you will cope with this harsh environment?" "Yes, sir," I told him again, with a strong conviction. He nodded in appreciation while giving me a rather furtive smile that seemed to be his way of saying 'I-don't-envy-you.'

Immediately, he hired me as a Veterinary Officer at FARM-Africa. My duties were varied but the key one was to treat the animals, especially camels, of the pastoralists and teach them basic animal husbandry.

Earlier in my undergraduate days, Dr. Field had taught me camel production during my third year of study at the University of Nairobi. The unit was about the anatomy, physiology, and productivity of camels. From his lectures, I learnt how camels were adapted to the harsh environment of the north and that pastoralists relied heavily on the animals because they could go for several days without water or food and still remain productive. They also walked for miles in the desert without getting tired.

Camels were the kings of this environment and the people depended on them for milk, meat, means of

transportation and other social functions. This captured my attention and imagination because I had not interacted with these species before despite learning about them at the university. I was, therefore, eager to know more about this unique domestic animal.

During my studies at the UoN, I was taught about exotic dairy cows, pigs and poultry. We hardly focused on indigenous cattle, sheep, goats or camels. This was quite unfortunate given that more than 90 per cent of Kenya's livestock was indigenous.

The syllabus that we used had been developed outside the country by Kenya's former colonial masters. Thus, we ended up learning more about exotic animals which we did not have and which were not well adapted to our environment. When the British colonialists settled in Kenya they brought in their dairy and beef cattle, as well as pigs, poultry and goat breeds. They concentrated on teaching us about these animals and ignored our indigenous livestock.

FARM-Africa supported pastoralists in improving the productivity of their camels and uplifting their livelihoods. This NGO wanted a veterinarian to help in treating the pastoralists' animals, with specific attention to camels, in order to reduce rampant diseases and deaths. The idea was also to make Samburu's and Marsabit's pastoralists self-reliant and reduce their dependency on relief food.

I was qualified for the job. However, having been brought up in western Kenya, having lived mostly in Nairobi

during my university life, and having never experienced life in such a remote region, Dr. Field appeared unsure if I would cope. He thought I was bound to suffer in this dry and remote place. That was the main reason why he had flown me there. He wanted me to understand the situation on the ground before making up my mind.

I learnt later that this was how he interviewed his staff, especially those who did not originate from northern Kenya. He took one out to the field and exposed one to the challenges one was likely to encounter so that one could make an informed decision on whether to take or leave the job on offer. I later learnt that he had witnessed many cases where no sooner had non-natives been hired than they resigned, citing the harsh climate.

Unknown to Dr. Field, I was prone to perseverance and risk-taking, and I always wanted to experiment with new ideas. I was young, single and in my element. I wanted to try new things and FARM-Africa presented me with the perfect opportunity to do this. I gladly took the job of working with pastoralists in the wilderness of Samburu and Marsabit. My thinking was that "if pastoralists managed life here, why not me?" And if a 'soft' white man like Dr. Field could cope with life in the jungle, why would it be difficult for a 'hardened' African like myself?"

A week later, armed with a small bag full of medicines, syringes, needles, a microscope and sample bottles, I started working with the pastoralists as the resident vet. I discarded my conventional attire and dressed in a traditional shuka

like them. I worked in various pastoralist camps, also known as Mobile Outreach Camps (MOCs), in Baragoi and Kisima in Samburu and later went deeper into Dukana in Marsabit, not far from the Kenya-Ethiopia border. Though I treated all types of animals owned by the pastoralists (cows, goats, sheep, dogs, among others), my special focus was on camels.

The MOCs were designed to move with the pastoralists. As they moved from one place to another looking for pasture, I followed them, providing professional services and advice. It was a humbling experience accepting someone else's lifestyle and walking the talk, literally. It stretched my endurance to the limit. This was what I needed to survive and thrive in the real world. It came at the right time in my life.

Every cloud, so the saying goes, has a silver lining. Besides giving me a job in the wilderness, FARM-Africa also awarded me a scholarship to pursue a Master's degree at the University of Nairobi. Thus, as I was working with the pastoralists, I was also carrying out my field studies which concerned the internal parasites that infested camels and their treatment. It was a blend of professional work, community outreach and academic research.

As I lived and worked in this region in the early 1990s, I was able to understand and appreciate why pastoralists talked of "going to Kenya" whenever they travelled to places such as Nanyuki, Nyahururu or Nairobi. But presently, as

I write these recollections in 2024, a lot has changed in these areas. We now have a tarmac road to Maralal, and from Isiolo to Moyale. This was unimaginable back in those years. It now takes a few hours to travel to Marsabit. In the past, we used to spend several days on the road and even needed police escort. Indeed, things change.

CHAPTER 2

A MIRACULOUS ESCAPE

Listen to your elders, not because they are right;
But because they have more experience
In making mistakes - MS Dhoni

I HAIL from the Basakali clan. This is one of the major clans of the Bukusu (or Babukusu), a sub-tribe of the Luyia community, which is found in western Kenya. Babukusu are one of the eighteen sub-tribes that form the Luyia community. Babukusu are the most populous of the groups that make up Luyia.

The other seventeen sub-tribes include the Maragoli (*Abalogoli*), Samia (*Abasamia*), Tachoni (*Abatachoni*), Kabras (Abakabras), Banyore (*Abanyole*), Kisa (*Abakisa* or Abashisa), Tiriki (*Abatiriki*), Isukha (*Abesukha*), Marama (*Abamarama*), Idakho (*Abedakho*), Wanga (*Abawanga*), Khayo (*Abakhayo*), Marachi (*Abamarachi*), Batsotso (*Abatsotso*), Batura (*Abatura*), Banyala (*Abanyala*) ba Budalang'i and Banyala (*Abanyala*) ba

Navakholo (also known as *Abanyala ba Ndombi*).

Babukusu comprise six major *bilibwa* (clusters), namely Basilikwa, Bamwalie, Baneala, Bamalaba, Banabayi and Bakikayi. Out of these clusters, we have over 170 clans (*chikholo*). My Basakali clan is part of the Bamalaba cluster.

The Basakali trace their lineage to an ancestor called Maboni who was the father of Chililia. The latter bore Ngulani who in turn bore Maeso. This was way back in the late 1700s during the migration from Egypt to Uganda and later to the present-day western Kenya.

Maeso had three sons: Muemba, Musaba, and Musakali. Musakali fathered two sons whom he named Sianga and Wafulumbe. Sianga was in turn blessed with Wachwenge who, in turn, bore Mungoma, Malaba and Wekanga.

Wekanga was born around 1810 and begot two sons named Mubofu and Weng'ang'a in the 1830s. Mubofu, as his name suggests, was blind (though partially). When Babukusu and Teso (Iteso) fought each other in the 1850s, the two brothers took refuge in Masaba in Uganda. His other relatives escaped to a place named Sang'alo where they lived in a fort (*lukoba*) at Mabusi. When the fighting subsided, Mubofu and Weng'ang'a returned to present day Bungoma.

Weng'ang'a (who was also known as Nalwelisie), had five wives and sired many children among them Lubisia, Situma, Ngichabe, Lutalala, Muyelele, Namisi and Sichangi.

Weng'ang'a lived in the historic Chetambe fort. Most old members of our family lineage, a majority of them now deceased, often referred to themselves as remnants or veterans of the Lumboka and Chetambe wars that took place in 1894 and 1895. A large number of them were killed and the rest scattered in many directions. This massacre, which was carried out by the colonial soldiers, happened largely because Babukusu resisted the white man's rule.

The Europeans started arriving in the present-day western Kenya in the late 1880s. They came after the famous explorer, Joseph Thomson, had visited and assessed the friendliness, or otherwise, of the tribes living in the area and sent back a general impression of the people, topography and climatic conditions in this part of Africa. Thomson passed through present-day Bungoma in 1883. He also made a stop-over in Mumias (the home of the Wanga (Abawanga); something that was common with most of the travelling white parties of those days.

After that, the Europeans started streaming in. They came in three groups: the rulers, the explorers and the missionaries. The rulers were interested in conquering and colonising Africans. The explorers, these days called tourists or visitors, were seemingly interested in seeing Kenya's attractions and physical features such as mountains and rivers.

The missionaries presented themselves as good people. They came calmly, set up churches, schools and

hospitals and systematically embarked on winning souls and converting local people to their faiths. They are the ones who introduced formal education in many parts of Kenya.

Most of these Europeans, in all the said categories, often pitched camp in Mumias. It was then known as Elureko, the home of Mumia wa Shiundu who was the Nabongo (King) of the Wanga.

Nabongo's home became the headquarters of the Europeans (and Arabs too) who were coming into the region. Most of them came through Mombasa. Those heading to Uganda, often stopped at Elureko to rest for several days and meet fellow Europeans before proceeding with their journeys. There was a special compound, with several houses that white men built for themselves in Elureko. It was adjacent to Nabongo Mumia's residence.

Perhaps because of their naming traditions and preferences, the Europeans chose to name Elureko after King Mumia. So, Elureko became Mumias (place of Mumia). That is the name it bears to this day. Taking an African name and attaching an English suffix to it sounded quite odd, but several places in Kenya ended up with such names. They include Machakos, Runyenjes (named after Chief Runyenje of Embu), Njiiris, Oyugis, among others.

As more and more Europeans journeyed into the hinterland, a pioneer missionary of the Church Missionary Society (CMS), James Hannington, was killed in Busoga in

Uganda by King Kabaka Mwanga in 1885. The King did not want Christianity to be introduced in his territory. Most of Hannington's African porters who survived the attack, escaped and sought refuge in Mumias.

As former Vice-President of Kenya, Moody Awori, wrote in his autobiography, *Riding on a Tiger*, the body of Hannington was later exhumed from Uganda and reburied honourably in Mumias. The Europeans always felt at home in Mumias, which they considered their second home. Whenever they travelled from Uganda to the Kenyan coast during the pre-colonial and even colonial era, Mumias was their main stop-over. Mumias also became a haven for porters who carried luggage for the Europeans. Most of the porters were Swahili people from Mombasa. Others were Ugandans and Sudanese.

It is documented by Charles Hobley in his book *From a Chartered Company to a Crown Colony*, that Mr. Spire was the first colonial master to set up base in Mumias around 1888. There was Henry Colville and William Grant in Uganda. The Babukusu in Bungoma did not interact closely with the Europeans and were not interested in forging a relationship with them. Indeed, they were suspicious of Mumia and his strange visitors.

Meanwhile, some porters, locally known as *Misiko*, a corruption of the Kiwahili word *mizigo* (luggage or baggage) and African soldiers who were enlisted in the Europeans army, began stealing from their master in Mumias. With a

high number of soldiers and porters in his abode, sometimes Mumia could not afford to feed all of them. They secretly took guns and sold them to their Babukusu neighbours, mainly in Lumboka, in exchange for cattle and food.

The thieving soldiers popularised the importance of acquiring a gun among Babukusu. They described it as an effective weapon for protecting oneself against an enemy or wild animals. No matter how strong or dangerous one was, one would be brought down by a gun. In fact, it was said that with the gun one would single-handedly take on and conquer a large number of enemies. It was incomparable to the commonly used spears, arrows and shields.

Babukusu heard that unlike a spear, where one was supposed to come face-to-face with an enemy before unleashing the weapon, the gun enabled one to launch an attack from a distance. With a lot of incursions and attacks, *busiku*, happening at that time, this new weapon became the preferred and much sought after implement of combat.

Furthermore, Babukusu were told that a shield, *engabo*, could not prevent a bullet from harming or killing your target. This meant that one could attack and kill one's enemy even when the enemy had a massive *engabo* for his protection. This was pleasant news especially during those turbulent days. Consequently, many Babukusu warriors acquired guns from Nabongo's men. They gave large numbers of cattle in exchange for these modern weapons.

With time, Spire noticed that his stock of guns was

gradually reducing and his armoury was being depleted. Alarmed, he called a meeting in Mumias to establish who the thieves were. The white man was visibly annoyed and he demanded answers from his soldiers.

And then came the sinister response from the soldiers: "We saw some of our *Kitosh* (Babukusu) neighbours with guns, they must have stolen them from here." This was a well-crafted ploy to put Babukusu and white men on a collision course.

Swiftly, Spire, with the support of Nabongo Mumia, ordered a team to move to Lumboka, among the Babukusu (whom they commonly referred to as Kitosh) and investigate the allegations.

"Check if the Kitosh are truly armed and find out how they got those guns," Spire ordered his soldiers.

After the investigations, a positive verdict was taken back to Spire. Several people were found with guns that belonged to the white man. Spire then ordered his soldiers to go and disarm all the people of Lumboka found to be in possession of the stolen guns.

This would mark the beginning of a protracted battle that later turned tragic. The armed Bukusu men refused to hand over the guns unless they were given back their cattle. They stood their ground.

"Bring back my cows and I will give you back your gun," they told the white man's emissaries. But the soldiers who took the cattle had done so in secrecy. They were not

known. They had vanished. They could not be traced. In fact, most of them were not part of the disarmament mission. There was a stalemate but Spire's soldiers insisted on taking away the guns by force.

As they ransacked houses and confiscated guns, tension rose. In the process, the soldiers were attacked, overpowered and a majority of them killed. Perhaps, they had under-estimated the response of the Babukusu warriors who ended up grabbing more guns from the surviving soldiers as they fled back towards Mumias.

A second attempt to disarm the warriors met a similar fate. At some point, Spire opted for diplomacy and called Babukusu elders to a meeting to negotiate the surrender of the guns but the invitation was declined. The charged warriors threatened to kill any of their elders who would attempt to negotiate with the Europeans or Nabongo Mumia's emissaries. Babukusu did not want any association with the foreigners.

This angered Spire. However, as he was contemplating his next step, he was told to hand over to Hobley who had been working in Mombasa as a representative of the Imperial British East Africa (IBEA) Company in Kenya.

Hobley arrived in Mumias in 1894 only to be briefed by Spire and Nabongo that the Kitosh had proven difficult to manage and needed to be beaten into submission. They were described as the greatest impediment to the white man's rule in the region. Hobley had his work cut out.

Supported by an Army Commander called Sitwell, Hobley rallied his men to war with the Kitosh. Critical planning was done and reinforcements brought in from as far away as Uganda and Sudan.

The battle of Lumboka was fought in a fort, *lukoba*, located near the present Bungoma-Mumias border. It was fierce, with all manner of weaponry, including guns, spears, arrows, machetes and *rungus*, deployed. The fighting went

on for days because the local warriors put up a determined resistance to the attack.

However, the superior weaponry used by the white man's soldiers and their ability to replenish and sustain the combat, tilted the battle in their favour and disadvantaged the local warriors who ran out of ammunition. Hobley's team overpowered them and demolished the fort of Lumboka and a neighbouring one called Kibachenje.

Routed, the local fighters dispersed in different directions. But Hobley's army was hell bent on killing as many of them as possible so as to subdue the community and send a clear message as to who was the boss. The army pursued the escaping warriors to the present day Mabanga area where a fierce battle took place. From Mabanga, the retreating warriors headed for higher ground in Chetambe, near where Webuye town stands today.

Intelligence gathered by their spies confirmed the presence of a big fort in Chetambe that housed Babukusu and Tachoni communities. The warriors moved into

Chetambe and aware that Hobley's soldiers were still in pursuit of them, prepared for another battle.

This was 1895. The attackers used all manner of weaponry including a machine gun. In the ensuring massacre, it was estimated that about 1,000 Babukusu were killed at Chetambe. Ultimately, the fatalities of the Lumboka- Chetambe war was estimated at upwards of 1,500. Despite the heavy death toll, Babukusu fighters were no walk-over. Hobley admits that they fought back with a bravery and courage that stunned him. He writes:

> *One day we camped near the foot of an escarpment called Tachoni (now Webuye) which was capped with an old lava flow from Elgon. The following morning, we marched in the northern direction and discovered that Kitosh (Bukusu) were in a great- walled village about a mile or so away. We scrambled up the escarpment (Chetambe Hills) and found ourselves on a bare flat plain, with the village some half-mile distance.*
>
> *It was quite a fortress, about 250 yards in diameter, with mud walls nine feet high, a ditch six feet deep, and low gates. We approached it and the Kitosh opened fire, but with little idea of marksmanship. We pitched our tent a few hundred yards away, dispatched a contingent to assist in hauling our machine gun up the cliff and upon its arrival marshaled our attack.*

A storming team of Baganda was organised, supported by the Sudanese. The nearest gate was shelled and a section of the mud wall on each side of the gate was undercut by machine gun fire, until it collapsed. Our forces stormed in.

The Kitosh with great gallantry counter-attacked, and our force experienced considerable loss. I took in the balance of the Sudanese fighters, and fought our way along the inside of the wall. Eventually, the resistance was overpowered. After about an hour of struggle, the remnants of the enemy fled into the far side of the village.

Many Basakali clansmen, among them Weng'ang'a, were killed there. But a miracle happened. As the Chetambe Fort was under attack, Situma, the son of Weng'ang'a, miraculously escaped from the enclosure unscathed.

He is said to have spotted a small opening in the wall and dashed out carrying his son Opicho (born in 1892), who was barely three years old. He left behind many of his relatives who were not as lucky. They were unable to escape, and were killed in the fort.

Hobley admits in his book that about 90 of his soldiers were killed by the Kitosh. His soldiers then took away most of the livestock and other resources that belonged to the defeated Babukusu. Hundreds of survivors, most of them wounded, were captured and detained in Mumias as prisoners of war.

They were dumped in an open enclosure guarded by Nabongo's askaris (guards). Here, they underwent all manner of imaginable torture, suffering and indignity. They endured cold nights and hot days in seclusion. Food rations given to them were scanty. Some children died of sickness and malnutrition. Eventually, peace prevailed and the prisoners were set free after a Bukusu leader named Namachanja secured their release in 1896.

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Meanwhile, Situma and his little boy Opicho found their way to Walala, a fort that had been built in the area where present- day Musikoma stands, on the outskirts of Bungoma town. That is where they lived before the war. They were reunited with some of the people who had escaped and scattered in different directions earlier as fighting raged.

Another notable escapee from Chetambe was a 10-year- old boy called Wabomba who would later be known widely as Mukapuru. He had also found his way to Walala. He was Situma's nephew and Opicho's cousin. Situma picked up the pieces at Walala and started building his life afresh. He always counted himself lucky to have survived the massacre at Chetambe.

Years later, in 1914, Opicho underwent circumcision. This was, and still is, regarded as an important rite of passage among the Bukusu because it marks one's progression into

adulthood. Then, as now, it signaled that one was ready to become a warrior and defend his people, besides being ready to marry and raise a family. This occasion is still celebrated enthusiastically by the community.

After circumcision, Opicho moved from Walala to a new settlement in Khachonge. He had a large herd of cattle and moved to Khachonge in search of pasture. Walala area had a large population of people and livestock and was over-grazed. Khachonge, on the other hand, was a forested area with large tracts of pasture and adequate rainfall, but with fewer people. Opicho was also moving away because of security reasons. Memories of the Lumboka-Chetambe battles were still fresh and some members of the community feared the white man's troops could attack again at any time. The further away one was from Lumboka and Chetambe the safer one felt.

CHAPTER 3

MY FATHER

An ant-hill that is destined to become a giant
Will definitely become one, no matter how many times
It is destroyed by elephants - African Proverb

IN 1917 Opicho married his first wife Marcella Nabucha from the Balisa clan of the Babukusu. Her name was commonly written and pronounced as Marisela. She was the daughter of Subuywa from the neighbouring Sichei village.

The couple got their first child, a girl they named Clementina Nekesa, in 1918. Several children were born after Clementina but they died in infancy. In those days, child mortality was high. It was not news to see a child die; if anything, it was news when a child lived to see adolescence and adulthood. Next came the twins, Thomas Mukhwana and his sister Mulongo, who were born in 1924. Unfortunately, the girl died in infancy. Mukhwana lived on. He is the one that became my father.

Kukhu (grandma) Marisela's other children were Janepher Khisa, Esther Khamala, Mary Majuma, Brigid Nasambu and Sylvester Lumbasi. *Kuka* (grandpa) Opicho had five wives and more than 40 children. Besides Marisela, Opicho's other wives (in this context my grandmothers) included Kafuna, Anyesi, Flora, Cecilia and Akochi. Our family was one of the largest in Khachonge.

My father's stepbrothers included Boniface Opicho, Francis Khisa, Francis Khamala, Jamin Situma, Alfred Situma, Fwamba Weng'ang'a, Patrick Wekesa, Protus Opicho, Maurice Opicho and Gerald Opicho, among others. He also had many cousins, among them Pius Situma, Peter Situma, Rudolf Masika, Masumbuko Macheso, Gilbert Masinde, Joseph Murachi, James and Cosma Nalwelisie.

In grandpa Opicho's days, the more wives and children one had, the higher one was ranked in the society. But things have changed a lot lately. Currently, marrying many wives and having many children is not a benchmark for success. One's level of education and economic status have taken the lead in determining one's social status. Today, opinion is divided on polygamy, with some viewing it as retrogressive, the church frowning on it and activists campaigning against it.

Nonetheless, grandpa was a wealthy man who derived his fame from the huge herd of cattle he kept. People called him Opicho we *chikhafu* (Opicho the owner of large herd of cattle). When he took his animals to the river to drink, the

rest of the villagers, most of whom had only a handful of cows, gave way and kept away from the watering point for a long time.

Opicho was a small-bodied man but with a strong personality. He believed in himself and always did what he deemed right. Whenever he set his mind on doing something, nothing could change him. All the people who dealt with him knew and respected that position. He was not a push-over. You could not face him singly and expect to prevail in an argument, or win a physical battle against him.

The community believed he could only be handled by a group of people but not a single individual. They nicknamed him *chiliundakho*, meaning the one who can only be tackled by a delegation. He was also nicknamed *fungututi*, meaning someone who easily reneged on agreements made. When he entered an agreement with someone but changed his mind later, he did not hesitate to pull out, regardless of the costs he would incur or possible consequences.

Opicho loved finer things in life. He was the first man to build a permanent house in Khachonge in the early 1950s when virtually all people in the community lived in mud-walled, grass-thatched houses. People often streamed into his compound to see for themselves, and to marvel at the house with walls of cement and stone, iron sheet roofing and white paint. The 'white house' symbolised Opicho's wealth and achievement.

He also set the pace when it came to 'modern dressing' and imitating the ways of the white man. With his khaki shorts and short-sleeved shirts, he stood out in the whole village and beyond. He was truly an extraordinary man, with means, pride and a trend-setter.

Kuka Opicho pioneered the planting of trees and coffee. To date, the big eucalyptus trees that he planted in 1950s still stand tall in the Khachonge area. Many people planted trees in their homes and farms to emulate him.

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The critical decisions that parents make often play a big role in shaping the destiny of future generations. Some decisions may look ordinary at the onset but eventually yield extraordinary results, just like the tiny mustard seed produces one of the world's largest trees.

Despite his wealth, Opicho sent his children to school. In those days, some rich people thought education was meant for children from poor families. It was believed these children had no work to do at home. The wealthy people and their children were busy managing and enjoying their resources and would, therefore, have no time for school. Instead of keeping his children busy at home looking after his great herd and other resources of the family, in 1930 Opicho enrolled my father Thomas in the newly-founded Khalaba Primary School at Sichei. That school later changed

its name to Sichei Friends School. My father would later tell me that sometimes there would be as few as 10 pupils in their class because most people were not enthusiastic about education.

The late Cardinal Maurice Otunga, son of then Bungoma Chief Sudi Namachanja, was my father's classmate at Khalala Primary School. My father used to describe Otunga as one of his best friends. Otunga later became the head of the Catholic Church in Kenya. As of 2024, the Vatican was considering beatifying him as a saint.

My father went through basic education and sat his Common Entrance Examination in 1933. He performed well and proceeded to St Mary's School Yala, which had been founded in 1927. This was one of the best schools in what was then known as Kavirondo and which later comprised the administrative provinces of Nyanza and Western.

With the advent of the Constitution of Kenya 2010, the provinces ceased to exist and what used to be Western Province has been replaced by the counties of Bungoma, Busia, Kakamega and Vihiga. In the previous administrative dispensation, the four were districts.

My father told me that he used to walk from our home in Khachonge to school in Yala, clad in school uniform. The journey took several days. He would walk the whole day and spend the night in any homestead he came to when darkness fell. Those days, people were friendly and accorded strangers the necessary comfort, especially students in

uniform en-route to school. He completed Class 8 in 1937 and later became an Agricultural Officer.

When at Yala, my father occasionally interacted with Daniel Moi (who later became President of Kenya) who was a student at Kabarnet High School in Baringo District, during sports events. When Moi became the President of Kenya in 1978, *Mzee* Tom supported him fully throughout his life. If you wanted to be in my father's good books, you had to talk positively of Moi.

Tom was a diehard supporter and life member of the Kenya African National Union party, better known as KANU, which governed Kenya from independence in 1963 until 2002. Even when Western Province voted overwhelmingly against Moi in 1992 and subsequent years, *Mzee* Tom, as we fondly referred to dad, stood steadfastly by KANU and President Moi. He remained a member of the party until his death.

After Yala, my father moved to Trans-Nzoia District where he worked as a community extension worker and a farm manager for a European farmer. This position was best referred to as nyapara, a corruption of 'senior labourer.' He supervised African workers and also taught them basic farming skills.

However, he quit the job in Trans-Nzoia following a disagreement with his employer. It all began when he saw a white man beat black workers. He complained about the mistreatment. He was the kind that spoke his mind without

fear or favour. In the process, the white man slapped him too.

My father could not take it lying down. He responded in kind, landing a blow on the white man's face. He was arrested, tried and fined, and that marked the end of his employment in Trans-Nzoia. Opicho, my grandfather, paid a hefty fine of 15 head of cattle for my father to be set free and not go to jail.

In 1940 *Mzee* Tom joined Jeanes School in Kabete, Nairobi, where he studied accounting and type-writing. Jeanes School was established in 1925 to provide basic training for teachers and agricultural officers. The school later became the Kenya Institute of Administration and is now the Kenya School of Government. After completing his training, he returned to work for the North Nyanza African District Council (ADC) in Bungoma when it was under the leadership of Pascal Nabwana. He worked in the planning department from 1956 to 1967. He was an ethical worker who was liked by his supervisors.

Mzee Tom later changed jobs and became the Bursar of Kibabii High School. He was well-versed with the typewriter and was used regularly to type school letters, examinations and other documents. I used to see him type very fast. I was told he could type 120 words per minute. Some people would just visit his office to see and marvel at his typing speed. He retired from Kibabii High School in 1984 and returned to Lwanda village where he dwelt on

rearing livestock and crop and fish farming.

My father had the orientation of Europeans and he approached life from that perspective. He encouraged hard work, loathed laziness and demanded high levels of discipline, especially from his children. Anyone who showed signs of laziness was ridiculed and punished by *Mzee*. Woe unto you if he found you idling by the roadside. You would live to regret that moment.

Because of his elegant lifestyle and love for the finer things in life, some neighbours nicknamed him *London*. He loved good food and good clothes. He would wake up in the morning, dress smartly (in a suit and a tie) and just hung around welcoming his visitors or monitoring the progress of work on his farm. He loved quality work and products and hated mediocrity. He drunk bottled beer, which was not common in those days and was only available in Bungoma and other big trading centres.

Once in a while, he would ask my mother to brew local beer called *kebulo* which is made from finger millet. She was good at it. He then invited a few friends to partake of the drink with him. For you to share a drink with my father, you had to win his respect and meet his very high standards. You related with him on his terms. He set very high standards which only a few people could meet.

His best friends whom he regarded highly included Dominique Wetang'ula (father of Moses Wetang'ula, the Speaker of the National Assembly of Kenya), Zakayo Simiyu

(his brother-in-law), Vincent Nyongesa (our grandfather), Dismas Mumelo (a teacher) Felix Makasi (the local chief), Didimo Satia, among other selected few.

Papa loved cleanliness. For him to visit you and stay in your compound or house, for even a few minutes, you ought to have exercised high levels of hygiene, cleanliness and neatness right from your gate and into your compound, in your house and your way of dressing.

Dad would only have a meal in a home, house or compound that was clean, and had no flies hovering around. Stories abound where he would visit a home of his relative or neighbour and quickly walk away in fury because the level of hygiene in the homestead did not meet his standards. Before walking away, he would reprimand the people in that home for their *bunyalu* (loosely translated as being unhygienic).

Ultimately, whenever people knew that Tom was visiting, they went to great lengths to clean their compounds, cut tall grass, and even smear the houses with fresh dung, among other things, in order to escape his wrath.

Mzee was an orderly man and his instructions were made and meant to be followed to the letter. He had a perimeter fence of barbed wire around his compound. He had a specific gate through which everybody entered or exited. Then one day, one of his brothers who lived in the neighbourhood came to see him. Instead of going round to enter through the designated gate, he found a way through

the barbed wire. All this time *Mzee* Tom was seated outside his house watching his brother's every move with keen interest and growing anger.

When the brother eventually reached where papa was, he refused to greet him. "Go back the way you came and enter this compound through the right gate," dad shouted at his brother. The brother stood still in disbelief. There was a brief standoff but papa would never yield. His brother went back. Tom's message had been clearly delivered. He never wavered from his principles. Therefore, to be *Mzee*'s friend, you had to do the right thing, at the right time and the right way.

As a man of strong principles, *Mzee* would not condone talking ill of his brothers, cousins, uncles or the clan members. If he had a problem with you, he would tell you directly without beating about the bush. He never shied away from speaking his mind. Going behind one's back was never part of him. And if you ever went to him to gossip about other people, Tom would brush you aside at the earliest opportunity. If he heard you talking behind his back somewhere, he would confront you and rebuke you, even in public.

He was a strict man who always kept his wives and children on their toes. He let his wives know that if one of the children erred, the mother would be equally to blame. Consequently, our mothers were always on the look out for any wayward child. And whenever they saw a child not

doing the right thing, they quickly reported him or her to *Mzee*. Strangely, a mistake by one wife would be considered a mistake by all of his wives. They would carry equal blame for a mistake made by one of them.

Mzee Tom owned a big motorbike in the 1960s which was a unique possession in our village at that time. Everyone knew whenever he left or arrived at home in style because of his noisy motorbike. This motorbike could only be repaired or serviced in Kisumu by some Indian mechanics. There were no experts in Bungoma to handle it. In fact, it was suspected that this could have been the only motorbike in Bungoma in those days. Once in a while, he proudly took it to Kisumu for mechanical inspection and service.

My father lived ahead of his time. He always made history of sorts. He was never afraid to try new ideas. He became the first man in our area to engage in fish farming. He had many fish ponds. He harvested large amounts of fish but, unfortunately, he lacked a market for them.

CHAPTER 4

AT THE BEGINNING

If you can't fly, then run, if you can't run,
Then walk, if you can't walk, then crawl,
But whatever you do, keep moving forward
- Martin Luther King Jr

I CONSIDER childhood as one of the most exciting periods of human life. This is when you look at life and people without prejudice whatsoever. It is a stage that is characterised by happy memories. It is a period when you truly live your life to the full without being bothered by anything as long as you eat, play, sing and sleep.

I was born on 1st August 1965 in Lwanda village, North Nalondo location, in the present day Bungoma County. This was just two years after Kenya attained independence from British colonial rule. I was named Eusebius. This was the name of a 17th Century Catholic Pope in Rome. I was also given the name Juma because I was born on a Sunday. For many people from my community, Eusebius was a difficult name to pronounce.

Many corrupted versions emerged. I was often called *Lusopio* while others made it sound like Isopis. Because of the confusion I encountered, thanks to the irritating mispronunciations of Eusebius, I preferred the name Juma to Eusebius. Many people know me as, but I still use Eusebius too.

We were a big family. My father had five wives and 32 children. Our large numbers provided sufficient labour for *Mzee*'s many farms. We did not require external support when it came to tilling the land, planting, weeding or harvesting of crops. When schools closed for the holidays, we worked on the farms.

My father's eldest wife was called Christina Nabifwo (*Omubuulo*). My mother, Anna Namarome (*Omuaala*), was his second wife. The others were Esther Nakhumicha (*Omukoyi*), Anne (*Omulukulu*) and Bernadette Namboko (*Omumuki*).

My mother was born in 1932. She was known as *omukhana muaala*, the girl from the Baala clan. She was born and brought up in the home of Matayo Murunga and Paulina Khisa from Biliso in Bumula.

Kuka Murunga was among the first Africans who converted to Christianity in the 1920s. He not only learnt the ways of the new faith but was also used by the Catholic missionaries to spread the gospel. He rose to become a catechist. Eventually, he took his children to school. Therefore, my mother was able to acquire formal education

and catechism in Mumias. Her education was sponsored by the Catholic Church.

My mother's siblings included Mark, Furumena (a corruption of Philomena), Getrude, John, Aquinata and the late Francis. I grew up with many of Uncle Mark's children such as Sylvanus Murunga (now Principal of Kisiwa Technical Institute), Catherine, Lukisoi and others.

When the Catholic Church first came to western Kenya, it established roots in Mumias. Initially, the Bible and other teaching materials were in Latin and English. However, to make our people understand the gospel better, the Bible and other publications such as hymn books and educational materials, were translated into Luwanga, the language of the Wanga community of Nabongo Mumia. The Bukusu who attended church and school in those days were taught in Luwanga, and they sang hymns in that language too. Those who joined the Friends Church, (also known as The Quakers) and which was based in Maragoli, were taught in Olulogooli, the language of the Maragoli.

My mother told me that she struggled at the beginning to read, write and sing in Luwanga but she managed to cope with time. She always walked to Mumias in the company of her father to attend mass. They would leave Biliso on Friday, spend the night in any of the homes on the way, resume the journey on Saturday and arrive in the evening in readiness for church on Sunday. Since the return journey took two days, father and daughter were at home for three of the seven days of the week.

My mother studied up to Class 8 in Mumias and came back to teach at Musikoma. She also had a brief stint as a teacher at Kibabii Primary School. She was also a good farmer. My parents got married in 1950 and together bore and brought up 12 children. I am the eighth born. The first was Jordina Naliaka who was born in 1951. She was followed by William Simiyu, Mary-Goretti Nafula, John Situma, Matthew Murunga, Euphrasia Nekesa and Alice Nanjala (whom I follow).

Those who were born after me include Ignatius Wangila, Marisela Nasimiyu (also known as Maryam Yusuf), Fidelis Nangekhe and Isaac Opicho.

My step-brothers and sisters include George Situma (Senior), Mary Colleta, Henry Simiyu, Ephraim Wafula (Bishop) and the late Consolata Nafula, all being children of *Mayi* Christina. The children of *Mayi* Esther are Chris Wanjala, Gladys Ngokho, the late Stella Singoro and the late Wenslause Khaoya.

Mayi Anne, *Omulukul*u, bore Derick and Behadrate, while *Mayi* Bernadette begot Godfrey Wafula, Martin, Adelaide Nekesa, Praxides and Caro. I also have a brother called George Situma (Junior).

Our mothers regarded each other as equal members of the larger or extended family and their children interacted freely without drawing any distinctive lines. Unnecessary competition for attention and battles for supremacy, locally known as *embalikha*, were not encouraged.

As children, we were not separated or identified according to who our mothers were. We simply identified ourselves as children of Mukhwana. We were brothers and sisters. The fact that we had different mothers was hardly ever mentioned. Our mothers, on their part, treated all children equally. When it came to working on the farms, for example, we would take turns to plant, weed and harvest maize and other crops for our mothers.

Polygamy was a normal way of life. We shared meals, celebrations, and all other aspects of our life. Our Christmas was planned ahead of time and was held at the house of one of our mothers. All of us had to attend. My father did not take it kindly when one of us skipped that occasion. This was one of his preferred ways of cementing the unity of the family.

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When I was growing up in the late 1960s and early 1970s, our village was sparsely populated. There were bushes, thickets and forests too, wherever we looked. Things changed in the 1980s with the establishment of Nzoia Sugar Factory in 1978, which necessitated large-scale cultivation of sugarcane and with it the destruction of the vegetation and forests that dotted and surrounded our village.

Before this destruction, local people liked to hunt wild game. Groups of young men would bring out their

dogs which would scent and flush out animals from their hideouts. They would hunt the whole day, traversing villages looking for and chasing game. They crossed rivers and valleys, ran from one village and through another and into a third. They screamed and whistled as they urged the dogs on. And then they would fall silent as they surrounded a bush or thicket and waited for the dogs to pounce on the prey they knew was hiding in there. They would share the spoils at the end of the day.

If one's dog caught the prey or was adjudged to have played a more prominent role in catching it, one took home a bigger share of meat. In those days wild animals such as antelopes, buffaloes, and rabbits, among others, grazed freely on our farms.

There were some individuals who went out hunting on their own. One such man was Ezekiel Muleme. He would ambush an antelope in Lwanda, and chase it for over 30 kilometres through Chwele and Sikusi, wearing it down in the process before eventually capturing it at Kimukung. His heroics were the talk of the village and he became known as *owatimania ekhisi khu lwanda* (he who expertly tracked down an animal without necessarily being guided by its footprints). He was known for chasing an antelope until it collapsed from exhaustion. Indeed, circumcision songs were composed in his honour, making him the envy and inspiration of many a young man.

The children of Mukhwana did not hunt. Our father

regarded the practice as outlandish. He would not allow us to adore or emulate a village hunter. That was not his idea of a role model for his children. He wanted us to think big. He encouraged us to aim a lot higher than chasing and screaming at wild game.

When I was young, my father owned many cows. Unlike *Kuka* Opicho who kept only indigenous cattle, my father raised the standards a notch higher and acquired exotic cattle - mainly friesian and ayrshire breeds - alongside the indigenous ones that he kept. He had about 10 exotic cattle. He took a KSh.10,000 loan from the Agricultural Finance Corporation in 1967 and imported the cattle from England. They were shipped into Kenya and delivered to him in Bungoma.

Exotic cows had not been seen in our village and, I think, much of Bungoma before. Such cattle were kept by the European farmers in Trans-Nzoia and the upper parts of Bungoma such as Tongaren. Many people often visited our home to marvel at the animals and praise my father for his good sense, knack for quality and setting high standards. Therefore, we all loved and treasured these unique possessions. They became the talk of the village and beyond. Our land was neatly paddocked and we had crushes for spraying the cows against ticks and other pests.

Through cross-breeding with the local zebu bulls, these cows calved wonderful breeds. One such cow was nicknamed *Nabangala*. It gave birth to a big bull called

Robert. I spent most of my childhood looking after these cows. They produced more milk than their indigenous counterparts. My elder brother, John Situma, used to go and sell that milk as far as Chwele.

During my childhood there was only one shop available in our area. It was located at Khachonge, the local market. That is where we bought some of the basic commodities. The shop was owned by Didimo Satia. I used to be sent there regularly to buy sugar, salt and soap, among other basic items.

Didimo was a pioneer entrepreneur in our area. He was the first person to own a tractor. He planted his maize in clear straight lines. Because of his wealth, he was among the first locals permitted by the colonial regime to own a gun which did not seem to find much purpose. He was often seen using it to chase scavenging cranes (*ng'oli*) from his farm.

To reach this shop, one had to cross River Chwele, which occasionally flooded. It was risky to wade through, but I made it anyway. Though money was already a medium of exchange at that time, we still engaged in barter trade. My mum would give me eggs to take to Satia in exchange for salt. I still remember occasions when I slipped and fell when running to Satia's shop and broke the eggs, much to the annoyance of mum who punished me for what she thought was downright carelessness.

Children from our neighbourhood used to go to

school, but I was kept busy at home looking after our livestock. I had a friend called Fred Mumelo with whom we grazed animals in the evenings and on weekends. He used to go to school. He would come back and tell me interesting stories about school. He would even teach me some of the things he learnt at school. I started to demand to go to school too. Eventually, my parents gave in and I joined the neighbouring Lurende Primary School in January 1974, aged nine.

Going to school did not put an end to my herding duties. Whenever I returned home in the evening, I had to attend to the animals. Unfortunately, our good exotic cows began dying one by one due to diseases such as East Coast Fever, which had no cure. It was transmitted by ticks. Veterinary doctors were not easily found in Bungoma. There was no support mechanism for modern animal rearing – treating, feeding and breeding of the cattle. Whenever an animal fell sick, a message was sent to Kakamega, for a veterinary officer to come.

A *mzungu* (white) veterinary officer would then come after four days or even a week. Owing to such delayed responses to our requests, chances of an infected animal surviving were very low indeed. Many cows died and the exotic breeds my father reared were the most vulnerable.

Whenever an animal succumbed to East Coast Fever, or whatever disease afflicted it, everyone in the family went into silent mourning. It was painful. It was like losing a

relative. Sadness engulfed our home. By 1975, or thereabouts, the number of our herd had been drastically reduced by diseases. In a couple of years, we had lost virtually all the exotic cows. My mother was inconsolable.

I remember one day when, as mum sat starring into space and emptiness, possibly wondering what had befallen her, I moved close to her and, with the innocence of a child, told her, "*Mayi*, when I grow up, I will be treating animals, they will not die again and you will not cry again." Interestingly, about 15 years later, my promise to my mother was fulfilled when I became a veterinary doctor.

Career choices are often pegged on various considerations, including performance in class, passion, ability, and talent, among others. But the power of the tongue should not be taken lightly too. You confess and you possess. I innocently talked about taking up the profession of treating cows and God approved my preference.

The terrible loss of our animals resulted in the loss of revenue for the family. My father could not service his AFC loan for several years. The penalties he incurred and interest accruing saw the initial KSh.10,000 loan balloon to a debt of more than KSh.300,000.

Enter the debt collectors and our lives changed. They came home regularly to demand payment of the debt. This became a painful and bothersome experience not only to our father, a proud man, but to the entire family. Matters came to a head when dad began dodging the debt collectors.

They used to come in a conspicuous white car. Whenever we spotted a white car approaching, we closed doors, ran away and hid. This became one of the lowest moments for us.

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Besides rearing cattle, my father tilled several pieces of land where we planted maize, beans, finger millet, sweet potatoes and coffee. Much later, he ventured into sugarcane and fish farming.

We had a farm worker called Bernard Wanjala. This man was not your ordinary farm hand. He was more of a supervisor. My father had given him a lot of powers. Wanjala used to wake us up at 4.00am to go to work with him on the farms. He was knowledgeable and taught us a lot about farming. He would even beat us if he thought we had messed up or ran afoul of him. In those days age, and not status, commanded respect. Wanjala was relatively old and despite being our farm employee, we respected and obeyed his commands.

We also had a worker called Manana. He was a Ugandan. He liked drinking beer and was hardly sober. However, we loved hanging around him because he entertained us a great deal. He would compose funny songs on the spot, dance to his music and make us laugh. He told us many stories about Uganda, specifically from his Bakisu tribe who share a common heritage with the Bukusu.

In the 1970s thousands of Ugandans crossed the common border and entered Kenya. Some stayed in the country while others went overseas. It all started in 1971 when the military led by Idi Amin Dada overthrew the government of President Milton Obote who was away attending a Commonwealth Summit in Singapore. In 1972 Amin declared what he called an economic war and expelled Asians whom he accused of sabotaging the economy as he embarked on a systematic slaughter of Ugandans and abuse of human rights.

This is how Manana ended up as our farm hand. He talked regrettably about the devastating war and killings that had taken place in Uganda. He painted a picture of a very miserable country. He made us regard Uganda as a dangerous and unfriendly place.

My father hardly ever said anything about Wanjala and Manana. If anything, he listened to the two more than he spoke to them. He empowered them to run the farms. Woe unto you should he find you disobeying them or be informed that you had gone against the grain. Therefore, when it came to running the farms, Wanjala and Manana had the final say on what was to be done, how it was to be done and by whom. They were hard-working employees and had earned *Papa*'s respect.

Some of our harvests were delivered to school as fees. There was also a portion that was set aside for gifting our relatives when they came visiting or sought assistance,

which is known as khusakha. Visitors would not leave our homestead empty-handed.

My father always kept us busy on the farm so much so that at one time our neighbours started referring to our home as a *prison*. We were always working, in fact, we worked around the clock. Our home was a beehive of activity. My father discouraged idling or laziness. He had strict rules that we had to abide by. Some of our neighbours argued that Mukhwana mistreated his children. But I disagree with that notion because, I believe, we are who we are today because of the work ethic that our father instilled in us. Papa taught us that hard work and patience pay.

Meanwhile, in our village, I remember a man called Lusopio Wepukhulu. He was energetic and outgoing and always ready to chat, even with strangers. He was my grandfather from the Basakali clan. He loved politics and could be quite restless. He would walk from our village to Lwakhakha on the Kenya-Uganda border, a distance of around 40 kilometres, to attend a political rally and listen to his favourite candidate or politician. He always walked bare-footed.

My father occasionally hired him to work on the farms. Lusopio was also known for his skill of filtering (*khuting'a*) the local brew known as *busaa* in clubs. In those days, production, sale and consumption of *busaa* was allowed subject to adherence to the prescribed drinking hours.

Lusopio was always paid in kind. He would be given food and beer in exchange for his services. He often ended

up being ever drunk. He would leave the club in the night but never arrived home. On the way he would confuse one of the many bushes or thickets along River Lurende for his house, make himself comfortable and spend the night there. And when he woke up in the morning he headed back to the clubs to continue his art of *khuting'a busaa*. His love for beer made him the talk of the village. At some point my father did not like to see Lusopio come home to visit us. He considered him a bad influence.

I also remember *Mzee* Mamboleo Makacho (a name that literally means things have gone haywire) who was our village elder for many years. He had many wives and owned an expansive compound. He was the only man who owned a bicycle in our village. This was a valuable possession, which explains why Makacho strictly controlled its use and storage and would not allow anybody to ride it. He never carried anyone on it, not even his wife.

CHAPTER 5

A SOLID FOUNDATION

A good attitude will determine
your altitude - Zig Ziglar

MY EDUCATIONAL journey started at Lurende Primary School in 1974. I was enthusiastic about school but I was also overly playful, exuberant and full of aggression or *kamayuba*, as our people call it. Needless to say, I often ended up damaging school property or injuring a fellow pupil. I was always being punished for falling afoul of the rules. Kamayuba was the reason I was in trouble all the time. I did not deliberately break the rules; it was unintentional.

Our headmaster was Dominique Wetang'ula, the father to Rt. Hon. Dr. Moses Wetang'ula who has served across various leadership positions such as nominated and elected Member of Parliament, a Cabinet Minister, a Senator for Bungoma County, and is the 8th Speaker of the

National Assembly of the Republic of Kenya at the time of writing this book. The elder Wetang'ula was a revered man because he also doubled up as a civic leader (then known as councillor). This is the position that was later changed to Member of County Assembly (MCA) with the advent of the Constitution of Kenya 2010 and the creation of counties and county assemblies.

As headmaster and councillor, Wetang'ula was a class above the rest of the teachers. Whenever he addressed us, he oozed knowledge. He was respected and feared in equal measure. One of his sons, Kizito, was my classmate. Wetang'ula's duties as a civic leader and headmaster frequently took him to Kakamega, the provincial HQ, and Nairobi, the capital and then Kenya's only city. He came by once in a while. The daily administration of the school fell on his deputy, Mr. Okello.

Generally, teachers of those days were strongly empowered. They used all methods available to pass on knowledge and information. Zakayo Wekesa, an old man, who used to teach us Christian Religious Education in Class Three, for example, would take us to his farm to harvest his maize during some of his lessons. Working for teachers was part of our learning process. It was not something out of the ordinary, and no one complained about it.

The girls in our class were regularly sent to the river to fetch water for the teachers, as a way of learning household chores. We fashioned many household items in our arts and crafts classes including sisal tethers, earthen pots, cooking

sticks, among other implements, which the teachers took for their personal use after awarding us marks. No one protested. That was just the way things were done.

Most of the floors of our classrooms were earthen, thus every Friday we carried cow-dung from home to school which the girls used to smear the floors to rid them of dust and crevices. The floors were breeding ground for jiggers which infested the heels, toes and soles of the pupils because we did not wear shoes.

I still remember a very strict teacher called James Sirengo. He taught us history. He had the historical facts about the Bukusu community's migration and settlement at his fingertips. He would narrate them well without referring to any book or notes. His teaching was punctuated with interjections of pebe, which is a Bukusu word denoting exclamation. It elicited a lot of laughter. Eventually, we nicknamed him Pebe.

Whenever *Pebe* was the teacher on duty, the school rules changed. Ordinarily, we used to report to school at 7.30am. But he would change this to 6.30am. Woe unto you if you turned up later than that. You would face the full wrath of Pebe.

And then there was stylish Madam Martha Musungu. She was sister to *Mzee* Wetang'ula, the headmaster. Those days women hardly ever rode bicycles but Martha used to ride one to school. We were always excited to see her arrive in style. We often fought for an opportunity to go near the

office, receive her and park the bicycle for her as a sign of respect. We derived unexplainable pleasure from pushing her bicycle for a few yards and parking it against the wall.

Apart from Martha, my other female teachers were Sarah Wekuke, Lorna Toili and Virginia Wafula. I also remember teachers Gerald Wafubwa, Maurice Wose, Gilbert Masinde and Peter Sarabayi.

Generally, teachers were well-informed and knowledgeable. They introduced us to new things and places around us and beyond, opened our minds to new vistas, encouraged us to love reading and acquire knowledge and wished us well in all our endeavours. Despite caning us regularly, each one of them put in a good shift for our good.

Teachers were leaders in other respects too. For example, Dismus Mumelo who succeeded Wetang'ula as the headmaster and who hailed from our village, owned a personal post office box in Bungoma. It was known to one and all as P.O. Box 58 Bungoma. It was a famous postal address because many people used it for receiving their personal letters. This earned him a great deal of respect in our village and beyond. People who expected letters from members of their families in different parts of Kenya and young people expecting admission to secondary schools, colleges and universities, flocked to *Mwalimu* Mumelo's home to collect their letters or simply inquire if there was correspondence for them.

"Have you seen my letter?" one would ask gently and the teacher would respond, "I will check and let you know shortly." Because of this important role of receiving and relaying letters to members of his community, nobody would afford to be in *Mwalimu* Mumelo's bad books.

In 1978, when I was in Class Five, my father transferred me to Kibabii Primary School. My elder sisters Alice and Stella were already there and dad worked as a bursar at the neighbouring Kibabii High School. Our father believed strongly that the Kibabii schools were the best in our region in terms of the teachers they had and the prospects they held for us to pass examinations and continue with our studies.

The first thing he told me when I joined Kibabii was to tone down on my *kamayuba* and focus on studies. Of course, he had received numerous reports from Lurende about my playfulness and aggression. I took his advice (read warning) and composed myself.

I was sure my mother had told him about my naughtiness when I was at Lurende Primary School. Unlike many mothers who were, and some still are, fond of hiding their children's misdeeds from their fathers, my mother regularly reported us to *Papa* even in our presence. And she would conclude her admonition by asking *Papa* to discipline us because she could no longer handle us.

I remember many incidents that prove our mother would not protect an offending child. One night, it must

have been around midnight, she heard some commotion on the farm. The cattle had broken the fence and strayed into the maize plantation. She rushed to the *simba* (house for the big boys) where my elder brothers William, John and Matthew slept. She wanted to wake them up to return the animals to the kraal. She knocked on the door several times but there was no response despite the fact that the small tin lamp known as toobe or *namatikiyi* was burning dimly.

After close scrutiny she found that that the house was actually locked from outside. The boys had left the tin lamp on in order to hoodwink anyone coming around that they were in and busy with their homework or reading. The trio had gone to dance. Some young men would organise dances in their simba and invite friends to come over and dance the night away with some girls. Needless to say, it was something our parents were totally against. Alarmed, my mother swiftly informed *Mzee* about the concerning situation in the simba. She knew they were out for mischief and she told *Papa* exactly that.

Together *Papa* and *Mayi* went to the *simba*. On looking around they spotted a key hidden in a crevice above the door. They quietly opened the *simba*. William and John were missing. *Papa* gathered their beddings and took them to his house. The big boys had a tough time the following morning explaining where they had been at night. Papa was against such nocturnal activities and he meted out a thorough punishment on them as mum urged him on.

Another incident happened sometime in 1977 when one of my brothers had just completed Form Four. He had taken up a part-time job as an untrained teacher of mathematics at Khachonge Girls Secondary School in the interim as he awaited admission to college. Khachonge was a newly- established school and did not have enough teachers. A girl from our neighbourhood was a student at the school.

One day, my brother gave the students an assignment and instructed this girl to bring him the books at home so that he could mark them in the evening. The girl complied with the instructions of her teacher. She brought the books home late in the evening and took them to the *simba*. She walked in just as supper was being served.

That evening, I was the one who was tasked with delivering *ugali* and the accompanying vegetables to the big boys. Per the unwritten law, the big boys were the bosses. They waited in their respective houses to be served. They were not supposed to go near the kitchen, which was reserved for women and children. When I delivered the food, my brother told me to go and get more vegetables for the visitor.

No sooner had I relayed the message to mum than she jumped to her feet and demanded to know who the visitor was. She quickly suspected that her son was up to some mischief with the schoolgirl.

She grabbed a cooking stick and shot off towards the *simba*. She found my brother with the student and others

waiting for vegetables. Without uttering a word, she hit him with the cooking stick and gave a similar treatment to the girl. The girl took off in shock and fear. In the ensuing commotion, the table was upended and the food was thrown all over the place. That night my brothers went to bed hungry. Mum was not done. When dad came home she recounted the whole incident to him. That was how tough our mother was; a strict disciplinarian.

Being a staunch Catholic, she expected some things to be done a certain way, which was inculcated in her by her parents and reinforced by her pastors. She demanded the same of us. Although she did not go very far with her education, she was an intelligent woman who read people's minds with ease. If she met someone for the first time, say, a friend who came home to visit us, she could tell you the type of person he or she was after a brief moment of observation and exchange of pleasantries with him or her.

Mum was also a woman of courage. After she celebrated her 78th birthday early in 2010, she nicknamed herself *kazi kwisha*, which in English loosely translates to 'a finished person.' She believed that her days on earth were numbered or that she had done her bit as a Christian, parent and member of her community and was prepared for the hereafter.

When she fell sick, she refused to go to hospital telling us not to waste our money on her treatment because she was *kazi kwisha*. "Use that money to educate your children.

Don't invest in me. I am going," she would tell us. But we insisted on treating her, and too her to various hospitals for medical care. She passed on in October of the same year.

Back to my story. When I moved to Kibabii in 1978, I lived with my father in the Kibabii High School compound. I had to wash his clothes and cook for him. He was a man of high standards and, like mum, wanted everything of his done well. He paid attention to minor details. Sometimes I got it right, sometimes things went utterly wrong and I was swiftly reprimanded for it.

One day I prepared *ugali* and served him. Per his standards, it was uncooked. When he scooped a piece with his hand, he noticed some small balls of raw flour. As I turned to walk away, he hurled the hot *ugali* at me. It hit my back. He must have concluded that I was too inattentive or playful to have done a good job of making the *ugali*. Seething in anger, he made me kneel down as he reprimanded me for what he called sloppy behaviour.

He led me to the kitchen and took me carefully, slowly and step by step through the process of preparing ugali and ensuring it is well cooked. He made me boil the right amount of water, then showed me how to measure the right amount of flour so that the *ugali* was not too thin or too thick, and he showed me how to stir expertly.

From that day my *ugali* has always been good. I learnt it the hard way, thanks to my father's no-nonsense approach to issues. When I was in Class Seven, my stepmother, *Mayi*

Bernadette Namboko, came to live with us in Kibabii. *Mzee* had just married her. She was a teacher. She now took charge of his affairs. I felt relieved.

Unlike Lurende which had scanty semi-permanent and temporary buildings, Kibabii was a well-built complex with modern structures. In Lurende we were taught in our mother tongue because virtually everyone was a Bukusu. But Kibabii was an English-speaking community. It had many people from other parts of Kenya, Africa and beyond. Some of the teachers, especially in the high school, were Europeans. We also had a couple of teachers from Uganda. The medium of instruction in the Kibabii schools was English.

Kibabii was a highly populated complex with a conglomeration of institutions that comprised the boys high school, a girls boarding primary school, the Catholic church, the priest's house, Cardinal Otunga Girls School, and a home for widows (*ebaloosi*), among others.

There was a farm where we used to plant maize and assorted vegetables. A section of it was an open field where we used to play. Today, the magnificent Kibabii University stands on this piece of land that was my childhood playground.

The nearby Tuuti market had only one shop to which my father used to send me regularly. Most of the surroundings were either bushy or bare and uninhabited land where people grazed their animals. This is today a

vibrant commercial centre that is home to many businesses and is inhabited by hundreds of residents, including university students and professors.

In this increasingly religious community, we attended mass regularly. I remember Clement Waswa was one of the African catechists at Kibabii Catholic Church. He had a gift of the gab and his delivery of biblical messages was striking, attractive and hilarious. He used to tell us that there was no hunger in heaven, which he described as a place where people ate delicacies such as liver (*kamani*), among other mouth- watering dishes. And he described hell as a place whose hungry residents were consumed by fire every day.

Waswa made me long for heaven. I became one of the staunch believers and held strongly on the teachings of the Bible. I became an altar boy. I used to escort the priest to the pulpit. I gladly undertook that solemn duty throughout my primary and secondary school days, clear in my mind that I was destined for heaven where I would partake of liver.

The Kibabii Primary School headmaster was Joseph Masinde. He was a mild stammerer and a laid-back person. But George Sitati, the deputy headmaster, was a flamboyant man. He was also a dedicated man. He taught us English in Class Six and Class Seven. He often conducted classes at 5.00am using his personal pressure lamp, which he carried to school daily. There was no electricity in school and so Sitati's pressure lamp came in handy.

Francis Nalimae, who taught us mathematics, had a unique way of greeting us when he came to class. It appeared designed to remind the class what he had taught the previous day or week. When he said 'good morning, class', he demanded that we respond *mathematically* by reciting several mathematical formulae. Needless to say, the class' responses kept changing as he introduced new topics and with them new formulae.

It was comical. "Good morning, class," he would say as he walked in and stood in front of the classroom and, arising from what he had taught as the last time, we would, for example, answer back, "the area of a circle is half pie times its radius ..." The next time he came to class we would respond to his greeting with BODMAS (Bracket, Order, Division, Multiplication, Addition, and Subtraction) or some other mathematical term.

Most teachers of mathematics were known to be strict, but this one was friendly. His unique style so simplified the subject that even pupils who were known to be weak were not left behind.

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There was always something new to learn or experience away from school too. When I was in upper primary school my father opened a shop and a bar at Lwanda, our market. The bar was christened Lwanda Super Blue Bar and the shop was called Lwanda Grocery Shop.

However, the shop did not operate for long because my father was often unfriendly to customers. He appeared not to appreciate that he needed to win over and retain customers. He was not patient with customers. Buy it or leave it, was his attitude.

For example, if a customer came to the shop and found him working on the farm, *Mzee* would not stop what he was doing, go to the shop and attend to the customer. He was more likely to brush off the visitor with the quip, "I am busy, come later" than to plead, "please, give me a minute, I will be with you." This greatly reduced the number of people who chose to shop at Lwanda Grocery Shop.

Outside that shop, *Mzee* had a designated place for parking bicycles. However, some people, perhaps because they had little regard for order or did not know what was going on around them, would arrive and park their bicycles against the wall or just anywhere else. This would infuriate *Mzee* Tom. He would then face down the shopper, berate him and chase him away without selling to him.

If a youngster came to his shop wearing a cap, *Mzee* Tom would send him back, without selling to him. He maintained that it was disrespectful of a young person to address elders while wearing a cap. Unsurprisingly, Lwanda Grocery Shop became unpopular and soon went under.

However, Lwanda Super Blue Bar thrived. It had regular and well-known customers who included Mumelo the local headmaster, Timothy Musungu, who was an Education Officer, and a certain well to do old man from Sichei called

Charles Nangubo. These were the most common faces, among other patrons. Despite being a minor, I often served in this bar when schools closed for the April, August and December holidays.

Nangubo was a very interesting man. Despite his immense resources, he would go to great lengths to avoid buying anyone a beer. He devised a clever trick which only he and I knew about. He would come to the bar in the early afternoon, say around 1.00pm, when no patron was around. "What is the cost of four beers?" he would ask me.

"Twenty shillings," I answered. He then handed me the money and instructed me thus: "Keep them, I will drink later." In the evening, around 6.00pm, he would walk in quietly and sit next to his friends. He would then call me and loudly: "*Musoreri* (young man), I don't have money today, please give me some two beers I will pay later." I understood his coded message and served him two beers ostensibly on credit.

After consuming his two bottles and still talking to his friends and neighbours, he would call me loudly again. "Please, my son, kindly give me two more beers on credit. Please." He would be very kind and humble in his demeanour and language and lead everyone to believe that he was actually asking for a favour from me. I would play along and serve him his remaining beers. After the four beers, he would call me aside and whisper to me *sina deni yako* (I don't owe you) as he walked into the quiet night.

Talking about debts and credits, my father gave me a strict warning against selling beer on credit. He did not entertain that arrangement. But I always found myself between a rock and hard place when, for example, a teacher or a respected elder came to the bar, ordered beer, drunk and, on rising to depart, promised to pay me the following day. I could not stand in their way and demand payment. I quickly said "okay" or "fine" as the customer in question left. They never paid on the appointed day and so when my father came to audit the sales he would punish me for not insisting on cash payment.

I also encountered a customer who, after consuming the beer he ordered, would claim that he had suddenly realised he made a mistake. He had changed coats just before coming to the bar. His wallet, unfortunately, was in the coat he left behind. "Please come and pick the money tomorrow," he would tell me. But it usually took a long time before such debts were paid and after I had made endless trips to the homes in question. Little wonder dad insisted that I should never sell on credit.

I fell into big trouble one day. Some teachers came in, made themselves comfortable and ordered beers. I served them with respect. But it was only when they had finished and wanted to leave that they told me they would pay later. Because of the respect I had for teachers, I could not face them and demand payment. I let them have their way.

On this day, my father had left me with 20 bottles of

beer. All of them were consumed that evening but I had money for only 15 bottles of beer. Frightened, I devised what I thought was a clever way of dealing with the situation. I could not tell my father that I had sold on credit because he had strongly warned me against the practice.

However, desperate times call for desperate measures, and can lead one to do the unthinkable. I took five empty bottles, filled them with water, returned the corks meticulously and placed them back on the counter. When dad came to conduct the audit, I gave him money for the 15 bottles and showed him the five 'unsold beers.' I was expecting him to go away, then when the debtors paid up, I would hand over the money to him and discard the bottled water on the counter. I had just created a white lie to save the situation but that day I was caught red-handed.

Papa came to the bar and took the money for 15 bottles but did not leave immediately. He stayed around for a while. Shortly, some patrons walked in and asked for beer. "We don't have any stock left," I told them, almost in a whisper.

But dad quickly came over and faced me. "What are you saying? Why are you chasing customers away? Is that not beer on the counter?" He demanded that I serve the patrons. I was momentarily tongue-tied. I owned up and told dad that the five bottles were filled with water.

He took the bottles and studied them in amazement. Then he threw them on to the floor in anger. They broke and spilled their contents. He punished me for what he

saw as a mischievous plan aimed at stealing his money. He could not believe my explanation that I had sold the beer on credit and was waiting for payment which I would hand over to him. As far as he was concerned, I had stolen from him.

Dad only softened his stance towards me when he personally received the money from the debtors, but he did not forgive me wholly. He kept rebuking me for playing with his mind by filling beer bottles with water and keeping them on the counter. I realised after this incident that the more you lie, the deeper you dig yourself into a hole. I learnt my lesson the hard way and resolved to speak the truth always.

I sat my Certificate of Primary Education (CPE) examinations in 1980 and performed well, scoring 33 out of a possible 36 points. My father was extremely happy with my performance.

My friend Augustine Tabani scored all 36 points. He was a bright student from a humble background. He talked little. Their home was in Kangabasi. He lost his father early in his childhood. His mother used all means possible, including brewing and selling local beer, to take him to school. Tabani and I are veterinarians and our wives, Julia and Lucia, respectively, are sisters.

CHAPTER 6

THE MASTERSTROKE

Whenever you see a successful business, someone
Once made a courageous decision - Peter Drucker

THE ABILITY to move from a lower level of education to a higher one always brought joy not only to the candidate but also the entire family and community.

After performing well in CPE, I joined Form One at Kibabii High School on 26th January, 1981. Out of about 20 members of the teaching staff, three were Europeans. We also had several Ugandan teachers.

Kibabii's Principal was Zakayo Simiyu. He hailed from Bukokholo village in Bungoma. He was my father's close friend and brother-in-law because his wife, *Senge* Clementina Nang'unda, was my father's first cousin. Simiyu was the first African to head Kibabii High School. He took over from Brother Mauritius Smit, a Dutch Catholic priest.

After relinquishing the principal's position, Brother Smit did not leave the school. He stayed on as an ordinary teacher. He taught me Physics. Smit was a tall and slender man who walked majestically with calculated steps. He was always in a suit and a tie. He spoke quite diplomatically – never arguing and never shouting. I hardly saw him beat or rebuke a student, something that other teachers frequently did.

Simiyu was the opposite of Smit. He was a heavily built man with a loud and rough voice that often sent shivers among students and workers. His presence or absence in the school compound was easily noticeable. He was a hands-on man who was seen in every corner of the school, making sure everything was going on well. Management by walking around appeared to be his favoured style.

He was very strong physically and whenever he grabbed an offending student in his arms, the offender had no way of wriggling himself free. Because of his physique and strength, we nicknamed him *Mr. Stone*. Whenever we saw him come around, we would alert colleagues by the code phrase 'the stone is rolling' and we would take cover.

Simiyu taught us geography. He came to class on few occasions. And whenever he was in class, he spent considerable time addressing administrative matters rather than teaching his subject. For example, he would enter the class during geography time, but he would be carrying a list of fee defaulters and start calling out their names and

asking them to leave.

When done with fee defaulters, he would then walk around the class checking on the cleanliness of students and colours of their uniform, among other things.

"Why have you not combed your hair? Go and wait for me at my office," he would tell a student. "That pair of trousers you are wearing is not our school uniform, get out!" He would tell another, "Why are you in slippers in class, go and wait for me at my office," and so on.

He then spent considerable time emphasising the importance of observing school rules and regulations and spelling out the possible punishments for infringement. "We shall expel you!" he blurted angrily after pointing out the mistakes the students had made. By the time he was done with all these issues, the time for the lesson that brought him to class would have elapsed and the class would be half empty. He would then assign us topics to go read and make notes on our own.

Kibabii also had young and vibrant teachers who had just graduated from the University of Nairobi, the Kenya Science Teachers College and the Kenya Technical Teachers College. Some of these teachers included Peter Mbaya (maths), Henry Lukhanyu, aka *Mr. Snake* (biology), Peter Nyaranga (physics), Caleb Anene (English), Jason Weloba (Kiswahili), and Peter Waswa (chemistry), among others. Nyaranga rose to become the deputy headmaster. A man of few words, he was famous for asking students to 'narrowly' explain issues, meaning to

summarise their stories. He had noticed that some students used too many words to answer his questions.

I was a member and official of the Young Christian Society (YCS) and Wildlife Club. I also played basketball, which was my favourite sport.

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I sat my O (Ordinary) Level (Form Four) examinations, then known as Kenya Certificate of Education (KCE), in 1984. I scored Division One. I performed well in the science subjects, especially biology, chemistry and mathematics. These were my favourite subjects.

With these results, I expected to join either Mang'u High School or Alliance High School for my A (Advanced) Level. Those were my schools of choice. But Simiyu, the principal, conspired with my father and colluded with other authorities to ensure that all of us who had performed well in the Form Four (O Level) examinations that year proceeded to Kibabii High School for our A Level (Form Five and Six). None of us was allowed to go elsewhere.

For about 5 years, Kibabii was not performing well in A Level examinations. Many students who scored high grades joined well-established schools such as Alliance, Maseno and Mang'u. The A Level phase in Kibabii had been introduced about five years earlier and was still struggling. I did not like the idea of staying on at Kibabii for my A

Level education. I had been in that school for many years. I wanted to change my school environment. Furthermore, as an insider, I knew that Kibabii was not well-grounded and did not have experienced staff to teach the A Level classes. Most of the teachers had not taught A Level classes before.

My father supported the idea of having me join Kibabii for A Level studies. But I refused to join Kibabii and, defying him directly and boldly for the first time, told him that that I could go anywhere else but not Kibabii. He kept quiet.

A month after the A Level students had reported to their respective schools, I was still at home, firm in my rejection of Kibabii and defiance of dad. My father yielded to my demand and took me to Musingu High School in Kakamega. In Musingu, I quickly realised that the devil you know is better than the angel you don't know. I found life in Musingu unbearable. The facilities were horrible. The school's culture was quite different from that of Kibabii. I could not fit in quickly. Even in terms of the quality of teaching, I realised that the Kibabii I was running away from was much better.

I was in Musingu for only one term. When we closed for the April holidays I refused to go back. "Let me take the Kibabii slot," I told my father. The look he gave me had 'I-told- you' written all over it. Dad had the last laugh.

I returned to Kibabii High School where I was familiar with every teacher and student. I took up my Form Five slot and immersed myself in reading, catching up with my

classmates and doing the best I could to make up for time I lost when I was away in Musingu. My subject combination was mathematics, biology and chemistry.

Our teachers and several professionals were at hand to guide us to success. Mary Apiding taught me biology and Peter Waswa taught me chemistry. I was taught mathematics for a while by my brother Matthew Murunga who was then a student at Kenyatta University on teaching practice. Despite the limitations, I was motivated to keep my eyes on the ball.

It was while in Form Five that my friend Tom Sindani and I won the Science Congress Award in Biology for Western Province. This award ordinarily went to top students in top schools. This was a sign that we were not far off from the best. We represented Western Province at the national level in the Science Congress that year in Nairobi.

We travelled by train from Kisumu. That was my first time to visit Nairobi. I was very excited. I tried to visit my brother Situma, who worked at the Ministry of Water at Maji House, but I lost my way several times and was forced to give up trying to find his office. I went back home convinced that Nairobi was a complicated city.

I sat my final A Level examinations or the Kenya Advanced Certificate of Education (KACE), in December, 1986. I got 11 out of possible 15 points. I qualified for university admission. A total of 39 students from our class qualified for university admission that year. At the time we had only three universities in Kenya, namely the University

of Nairobi, Kenyatta University and Moi University which had just been established. It was a moment of great celebration in Kibabii. Some of the students who topped our class included Tom Sifuna (who became a pharmacist) and Remmy Wanyonyi (an electrical engineer).

Simiyu's idea of retaining all his bright students for A Level paid off. Kibabii performed very well and became one of Kenya's highly-rated schools. Henceforth, Kibabii became a force to reckon with in academics. It became a school where bright students ran to and not away from.

Years later, I could not help but congratulate Simiyu for that move which looked unpleasant in the beginning but yielded great results in the end. It became a win-win situation for students and the school. It was a masterstroke. Out of this, I learnt that most of the good things we enjoy in life have resulted from some bold, drastic and often initially unpleasant decisions that were made by those in positions of authority or influence. I was able to share these experiences years later when I visited Kibabii High School to speak to students.

Personally, I believe that this school rose to the level we see it today courtesy of some of Simiyu's tough decisions.

Over the years, I have been able, as a manager and leader, to relate and identify with Simiyu's thinking. Sometimes one has to make unpopular decisions for the sake of posterity. How many times do we shy away from making drastic changes that may be beneficial in future?

Suppose Simiyu chose to be a nice and diplomatic man and allowed his bright students to leave? Would Kibabii have risen to the status of a national academic giant?

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Travelling to Nairobi those days had its unique challenges. Getting lost or losing a valuable item was common. It happened to my parents once. In 1986, when my brother Matthew was awarded his Bachelor of Education degree (in maths and chemistry) by Kenyatta University, *Papa* Tom and *Mayi* Namarome travelled to the city to witness and celebrate his graduation.

Unfortunately, when they alighted in Nairobi, mum confused someone else's bag for her own. The bag looked exactly like hers. Consequently, she lost her bag and a nice dress that she had packed for the occasion. The bag she accidentally picked contained small pieces of wood. It was a huge disappointment.

But the real drama was yet to come. On his way from Kenyatta University on Thika Road to our brother's house in Uthiru on Waiyaki Way where the graduation party was to be held, *Mzee* got lost at the busy Kencom Bus Stage in Nairobi's Central Business District. While Matthew and mum boarded bus number 20 to Uthiru, *Mzee*, mistakably, boarded the one to Kikuyu. When the two arrived in Uthiru, *Mzee* was nowhere to be seen. The party was abandoned as a frantic search for him ensued. He was eventually found.

CHAPTER 7

THE COMRADE

True success comes from the ability to keep moving forward, even after failure - Winston Churchill

HIGHER EDUCATION in Kenya can be traced back to 1922 when Makerere College in Kampala, Uganda, was established to meet the demands for education of the three East African countries of Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania then under British colonial rule. Most early graduates from Kenya studied either at Makerere or went to colleges and universities in the West.

In 1956, the Royal Technical College (RTC) was established in Nairobi. RTC became Nairobi University College in 1963 following the establishment of the University of East Africa (UEA). The three constituent colleges of UEA were Nairobi, Dar-es-Salaam and Makerere. This regional university was affiliated to the University of London. In 1970, the UEA was dissolved to create the three

autonomous universities, namely the University of Nairobi (UoN), the University of Dar-es-Salaam and Makerere University (Kampala). Eventually, the University of Nairobi became the first chartered public university in Kenya.

I joined the UoN as an undergraduate student in 1987. As Kenya's premier university it had been in existence for 17 years. I was admitted to study veterinary medicine. My name was among over 1,000 that were published in the national newspapers. It was a moment of fame and glory back in Kibabii and in our village in Lwanda.

Before joining the university, I went through a three-month paramilitary training at the National Youth Service (NYS) in Gilgil. The women trained at Naivasha before joining us for the passing-out parade in Gilgil which was graced by President Moi.

Life in the NYS was tough. The institution had several barracks, each headed by a commander. My barracks was called Cameroon and was headed by one Mwema. Our daily routine included waking up at 4.00am for morning runs that took us through Gilgil hills. We were back by 6.00am, showered and then went for breakfast. The rest of the day was committed to military drills and exercises.

We were not trained to handle firearms, instead we used spades. Much of the training was geared towards promoting endurance and the trainers were ruthless and used mean and foul language. The most outstanding of them, in my assessment, was called Afande Kofa. He was

tall, slim and dark. He was a good athlete. He used to run a lot. He had a very loud and commanding voice. He and others did not hesitate to punish us for minor and even flimsy mistakes. Life at the NYS was a nightmare. I saw many students cry, broken by the insults of the trainers, the tough drills and relentless military style exercises.

The original goal of the NYS programme was to instil discipline and endurance in young people ahead of their admission to the universities. However, I am not sure this was achieved because some trainers went overboard and, in their exuberance and meanness, turned the whole exercise and experience into torture rather than training.

In our time, the Director of NYS was Geoffrey Griffins, the founder of Starehe Boys Centre, a school for bright but needy children that is one of the best performing institutions in national examinations in Kenya. Occasionally, Griffins and other prominent people, such as the Attorney General Mathew Guy Muli, and senior government officers came to talk to us about patriotism, economic development, service to the nation, the structure of government, among other topics.

On the day of our passing out, we mounted a match-past parade and performed drills. We were now ready to join our respective universities. President Moi never missed those graduations.

About two years after our passing out, the pre-university NYS training was abruptly suspended and was never re-introduced. I am not sure why it was abolished.

But I remember a nasty incident where university students who had graduated from the NYS mounted a parade for the leadership of the students of the University of Nairobi (SONU) in full NYS uniform.

This must have angered the authorities because the action appeared to make a mockery of guards of honour which are inspected by the Head of State. A different school of thought advanced the view that the pre-university NYS programme was supposed to instil discipline in the young people, but that they could think about imitating a guard of honour was proof the enterprise had failed miserably.

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My brothers John and Matthew preceded me at the UoN. John had settled in Uthiru, which is not far from the UoN. His wife, Mary Walela, was studying for her degree in agriculture. The couple helped me settle in smoothly.

In my first year, I had my classes at the Chiromo Campus, then in second year I moved to the College of Agriculture and Veterinary Sciences in Kabete (nicknamed Kabete Ng'ombe which translates literally to Kabete of Cows). Veterinary students started off by studying basic sciences at Chiromo before moving to Kabete to study more veterinary-oriented courses from their second to the fourth year.

The university was a place of transformation. We were being trained to go out and make a difference in Kenya's

communities. We lived a decent lifestyle. Critics have argued that because we were given a stipend, popularly known as *boom*, at the start of every term, we were being paid or bribed to study.

We used to receive about KSh. 7,000 per year from the government for our upkeep. This loan enabled us to buy books and discover Nairobi. Some students from poor backgrounds used this money to support their parents and siblings. I came across many families whose lives were changed because their sons or daughters used their *boom* to help them till the land, buy farm inputs and implements, pay fees for their siblings and generally provide for their families.

The flip-side of *boom* was not rosy. This money often confused many students. Excitement and celebrations were in the air as some even demanded that classes be suspended whenever we received *boom*. The idea was that students should be accorded time to spend their stipend and resume classes only after they had emptied their pockets and purses.

Lacking financial management skills, some students wasted the money on merry-making, drinking and other pleasures to which young people are attracted. Indeed, some students would only return to classes after they had used up all their money. Others performed poorly in class and messed up their lives for good. Nairobi's petty thieves knew when *boom* had been paid and it was common for some students to end up at the Health Centre after being

beaten up and injured as they returned to the hostels in the wee hours from drinking sprees.

I enjoyed this money too but I spent some of it on supporting my sister Maryam who was a student at Eregi Girls' School. My father, thanks to his large family, was burdened with a huge school fees bill. I chipped in to help him out whenever I could.

Apart from the *boom*, which we were required to pay back once we were employed, we also received free accommodation and food. Life was good. The menu included sausages, eggs, bacon and meat-balls. I saw and ate some of these foods for the first time at the UoN. This was a big departure from my background whose menu, both in school and at home, consisted of porridge, a mixture of maize and beans, rice and the inevitable ugali.

Despite the good tidings, we were always reminded to remain forever focused on our studies. Several checks and balances were put in place. Those who did not perform well in coursework were made to repeat a class, an examination or were discontinued altogether.

My course was demanding and the training was rigorous. I persuaded myself that I would have fun later and, therefore, spent most of my time reading. We were taught by several expatriates, including Dr. Chris Field, who later became my employer.

My other lecturers included Prof. Oduor Okello, Geoffrey Maloi, Peter Mbithi, J.G. Wandera, Eric Mitema and

Timothy Maitho, among others. They were knowledgeable and committed to their work. Most of them had attained their masters and doctoral degrees in Europe or America. We held them in high esteem and awe. By their manners and speech, you would have thought they were from those parts of the world.

However, there was one professor who, the minute he walked into class, began reading his notes. His was a monotonous droning from start to finish. I struggled to listen and write down what he was saying. I hardly had time to understand or digest what he was reading. And whenever a student asked a question, he quipped back sarcastically, "Since you are very clever and you performed well in high school to come here (university), go to the library and find out the answer to your question." I longed for the end of the semester.

Luckily, the veterinary course had plenty of practical work in anatomy, physiology, pathology, clinical studies, parasitology, pharmacology, and bio-chemistry which I really enjoyed. We used to wake up as early as 5.00am every day to take care of chicken, pigs, cattle, sheep and goats in the veterinary farm, that was located near Ndumbuini trading centre.

There were four of us from Kibabii in our UoN class. There was Augustine Tabani, Simplisius Mukoko, Wamalwa Kinanjwi and myself. Other notable classmates from other schools that we met at UoN included Paul Otuoma (who served as MP for Funyula and was elected

Governor for Busia County in 2022), Michael Mbito (who became Senator for Trans-Nzoia), Jeff Kamau (who is a prominent businessman in Karatina), Eddy Njoroge and Patricia King'ori (who worked for Unga Limited, the grain milling giant).

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When in Nairobi, we loved going out to meet and network with friends in the city, visit new places and meet people. We also liked to visit our relatives in the city. One day, I was relaxing in my room when Fred Wamalwa, my year-mate and friend who was studying agriculture, dropped by. He hailed from Sikusi village in Bungoma, which is not far from Lwanda.

"I'm going to Upper Hill to see my uncle, please come with me," he invited me to tag along. I was excited. These visits allowed us to meet working people, some of whom were employed as civil servants. This enabled us to know what it meant to be formally employed, the opportunities available and the very business of job hunting. We looked forward to getting employed and playing our part in building the nation. Most importantly, the trips to friends and relatives benefited us financially. The people we visited usually gave us some money for our upkeep.

Therefore, when Fred invited me to join him on a visit to Upper Hill, I did not think twice about it. I readied myself quickly and we left. We walked from our halls of

residence, passed through Uhuru Park and soon we were in Upper Hill.

His uncle, Maurice Khaemba, was a famous man in our village. I used to hear people talk about him when I was young. He was a well-regarded man, having studied in the United States of America. Some people claimed that he had seven degrees. He spoke with a strong American accent, the kind that villagers described as 'speaking through one's nose.' He had run for the Bungoma Central parliamentary seat in 1969 and lost. He vied again in subsequent elections but did not win.

I recalled that when we were young boys he would be accompanied by a lot of people whenever he visited Lwanda. It was whispered that the reason many people hang around him was that he had a lot of money and he could buy beer for the whole village. Khaemba attracted a lot of attention. He was also feared because he often intimidated and talked down people. He had a habit of belittling those who sought his help.

"Why do you have 10 children yet you are so poor?" he once asked a man in Lwanda. That was all I could recall about Khaemba. As we walked across Uhuru Park to Upper Hill to meet him, Fred mentioned to me that Khaemba had risen to be the CEO of the Kenya Sugar Board (KSB). He praised him as a man who held big jobs both in Kenya and abroad.

We arrived at his office and found about three people waiting at the reception. We took our seats in the queue and waited. Meanwhile, I continued conversing with Fred in Bukusu. We must have raised our voices without realising

it. Suddenly, Khaemba emerged from his office and shouted at us in his heavy American accent, "Will you stop making noise!" He banged the door shut as he went back into his office. We froze in our seats. I sensed danger.

Then one of the visitors went in. We did not know what the conversation was all about. We just heard Khaemba shout. "Get out of here!" The visitor came out looking nervous. He gave those orders in his American accent which to me sounded like gerarohia.

When our turn to go in came, I hesitated. Actually, I declined to go in. "Just meet him, I will wait out here," I told Fred.

When Fred entered the office, he greeted Khaemba in our vernacular "*Oriena, khocha?*" (How are you, uncle?) The uncle looked at him straight in the face and demanded that he address him in English "Will you speak English?" Khaemba shouted at his nephew. He was loud. I heard him well. Frightened and confused, Fred did not know what to do and before he could compose himself or find his tongue, his uncle asked him two unexpected questions in quick succession. "What do you want here? What can I do for you?"

"I came to greet you," Fred said in a halting voice.

And then came that nasty order I had heard earlier and which now made sense to me. "*Gerarohia!*" Yes, Khaemba was ordering his nephew to get out of his office. Get out of here is what he had told the visitor who went in before Fred and he was telling Fred the same thing. Get out of here!

We left Upper Hill dejected and deflated. Fred was silent as we walked back to the halls of residence. He could not believe that his uncle could behave that way. Furthermore, in the Bukusu context, your mother's brother, *khocha*, is considered one of your closest relatives. An uncle is not expected to forsake his nephew or niece. An uncle is expected to treat his sister's children the way he would his own. Fred was deeply hurt.

Khaemba did not have a wife or children. And, despite his global exposure, a good education, a good job and a big salary, he did not have a house in his rural village or in Nairobi. Years later, when he retired and retreated to Lwanda, he lived alone in a grass-thatched and mud-walled house. He used to walk to the river to have a bath and would be seen talking to himself as he looked for firewood. He still talked to himself and to villagers in his American accent. Here was a square peg in a round hole.

Everybody believed that something was wrong with this man. He often behaved strangely. His relatives suspected that he had been bewitched. Others argued that there was a cultural step he had skipped in life and was paying the price for that omission.

The elders from his clan eventually took matters in their own hands and took him for a cleansing ceremony known as khulicha. Nothing changed. Khaemba died a desolate man in 2000. I just heard from one of my neighbours one morning that he had been found dead in his house.

Opicho Weng'ang'a
my grandfather.

The King of Wanga,
Nabongo Mumia (Makokha)

My father Mzee Tom in 1951.

My mother Anna Namarome in 1981.

My father Mzee Tom in 1978.

My father in law Mzee Arap Sang Kendelo in 1999.

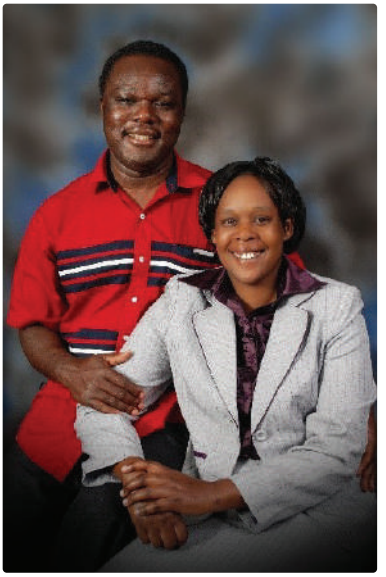
My mother in Law Rosebella Koskei gifting my mother and father during our wedding at Makutano in 2000.

From left to right sitting; Lucia, Arap Sang Kendelo, Mama Rosbella and Julia Koskei. Standing Martin Koskei, Tony, Terry Koskei, and Caro in Nairobi, 2021.

With my father in law Arap Sang and Mama Rosbella in Nairobi, 2021.

Lucia, Poly with our grand children in Ruai in 2019.

My brother in law Kiplimo with my mother in law Rosbella and father in law Arap Sang in Chepkanga in 1995.



With my wife Lucia in Nairobi in 2008.

My wife Lucia.

Lucia and her mother Rosbella during her graduation when she was conferred with a masters degree by the UoN in 2012.

My children Alex, Tony, Polly and Ian
at Kitale Club in 2004.

My mother Anna with my children Polly and Alex
at Makini School in Nairobi, 2005.

My family in 2008.

My children visiting Mzee Tom in Hospital in 2004.

With Alex and Lucia in Zanzibar in 2022.

Myself, Alex, Ian and Lucia
at Shimoni, Kwale, in 2007.

Lucia, Polly, myself, Alex, Ian and Tony
in Arusha in 2006.

With Polly and Tony at Lake Nakuru National Park in 2016.

Polly riding a bicycle in Karura Forest.

With Shedon Wasike, Sasha Opicho, Penina Wangila, Alma Opicho and the late Mercy Nang'unda at Lwanda in 2019.

Polly during her graduation.

Tony during his graduation

Alex during his graduation.

Ian during his graduation in 2015.

Ignatius, myself, John and Alex during his graduation.

With Tony at Karura Forest in 2018.

At the southern most part of Africa in Cape Town, South Africa, in 2023.

With Tony and Alex in Nairobi in 2023.

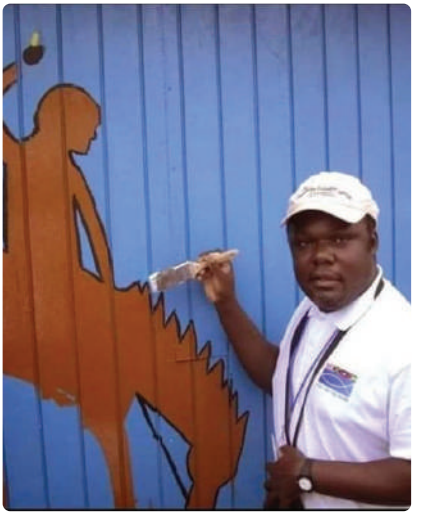
On the shores of the Red Sea in Djibouti in 2020.

With Isaac Gathirwa, Stanley Maindi, Damaris Muhika and Alice Kande in Alberta, Canada in 2021.

Lucia and Polly supporting social activism by Maasai women in 2022.

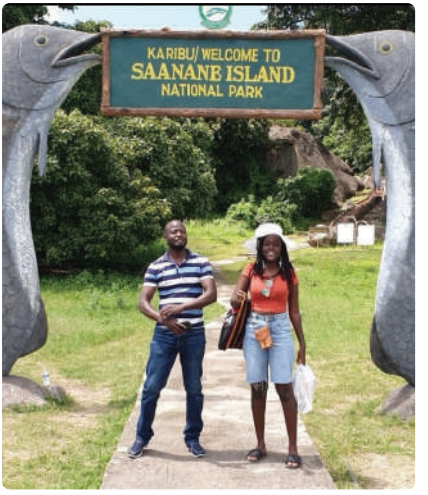
Shooting pool in Mombasa in 2022.

My nephews Dennis and Titus Mutoro.



Painting for children in Kingston, Jamaica, in 2009.

Myself, Alex and Lucia after climbing Mt. Longonot in 2015.



My brother Isaac and Polly at Saanane Island, Mwanza, Tanzania, in 2020.

Tony and Alex in Jinja, Uganda, in 2020.

At the Niagra falls, Ontario, Canada, in 2016.

With my sister in law Cheruto and her family in Bonn, Germany, in 2021.

With my wife Lucia in Cape Town in 2016.

Alex, Ian, Polly, Lucia and Tony in Nairobi in 2022.

Pupils of Thomas Mukhwana Primary School, in Lwanda in 2021.

With CS Rebecca Miano and staff and students of my former Kibabii Mixed primary school. Back to my roots.

With my niece Clementina Mutoro in Bungoma in 2015.

With my cousin Fred Situma in Nairobi in 2022.

Left to Right: Mary-Goreti, Alice, Fred Situma, Jordina, Videlis and Ignatius in Nairobi in 2022 sitting is Maryam Yusuf.

With Alex, Polly and Lucia in Namugongo, Kampala Uganda in 2020.

Uncle Rudolf Muchoe and Senge Brigida Nesamba at Makutano in 2022.

With family members during Clare Situma's dowry negotiations at Makutano in 2022.

With former Kanduyi MP Wafula Wamunyinyi and others in Tuuti Village in 2006.

Issaac, George (Senior), Ignatius, George (Junior), John Situma and Henry Simiyu at Lwanda in 2009.

Moses Mutoro, Eng. Godwin Wasike, Dennnis Mutoro, Titus Mutoro, Tiberius Mutoro, Myself, Dennis Wangila (Second right) in Rumuruti in 2012.

With Prof Adipala Ekwamu (CEO of the RUFORUM) in Abidjan. Ivory Coast, In 2019

Mama Annah at Lwanda shop in 1997.

Mayi Furumena (Left), Khocha John Murunga (Second right) and Mark Murunga in 2004.

(From Left - Right) Mark Murunga, Alfred Opicho, Jamin Situma, Matthew Murunga, Patrick Opicho, Myself, George Situma (Snr) and Henry Mukhwana. Sitting: Chris Wanjala, George Situma (Jnr), Ignatius Wangila and Martin Mukhwana in 2004.

Our first home at Makutano,
Kanduyi, Bungoma.

With my sister Mary Gorret Nafula
at Kibabii Catholic church in 2024

Mother in law Rosbella, Arap Sang and Lucia in Chepkanga in 2013.

Lucia and her friend Susan Chesang' at Kileleshwa Catholic Church in 2021.

My first car registration number KAA 561W in 1996.

At Kibabii High School (while I was in Form 1) in 1981

With Remmy Wanyonyi at Kibabii High school in 1983 (Form 3).

At Kibabii High School in 1984 (while I was in Form 4).

At the National Youth Service, Gilgil, in 1987.

At Nomadic Veterinary Services, in Bungoma 1996.

At the University of Nairobi, in 1991.

From left to right: Dr. Wamalwa Kinanjwi, the late Dr. Wepukulu and Dr. Augustine Namanda and myself at the University of Nairobi's, Kabete campus in 1990.

With a collegue while working at FARM-Africa (1993).

With Prof. David Some (Vice Chancellor, Moi University) examining a maize farm in Bungoma County in 2004.

Collecting data for my PhD in Wyoming in 2008.

In Fort Lauderdale, USA with a team from Lavamie Wyoming in 2008.

Analyzing soil samples in the lab at the University of Wyoming in 2009.

Collecting soil samples for my PhD work in Albin, South East Wyoming, in 2009.

Working at an oil drilling site in south western Wyoming in 2009.

With Prof. Jay Norton at our Lwanda home in Bungoma in October 2010 after the burial of my mother.

With Prof. Jay Norton on my graduation day at the University of Wyoming in 2010.

Graduation day at the University of Wyoming in 2010.

Graduation day at the Sacred Training Institute, Siritanyi Campus in 2011.

Presiding over a graduation ceremony at KCA University, in Nairobi in 2018.

Presiding over a graduation ceremony at Mount Kenya University Thika in 2023.

With the management of Mount Kenya University, Thika, in 2023.

CHAPTER 8

AMONG THE NOMADS

The hallmark of successful people is that they are always stretching themselves to learn new things - Carol S. Dweck

GRADUATION day of 1991 will always remain one of the happiest days of my life. I was full of excitement and hope as I wore my graduation gown. I was thrilled when I heard my name over the public address system. I had bagged one and I knew I would get another because I had been given the power to read and do all that appertains to my Bachelor of Veterinary Medicine degree. I was also ready to go out and serve.

Previously, the government used to employ and post veterinary officers to all parts of the country but this was stopped around 1989 during the famous Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) that was championed by the World Bank, IMF and other donor agencies. In a nutshell,

it meant that we had to look for (or create) our own jobs. It was argued that animals belonged to the people and not the government. Therefore, it was resolved that vets should go and work privately for, and with, the owners of livestock.

This was a tough call for those of us who were expecting formal employment. The idea of job creation and entrepreneurship was not well drilled in us those days, but we were told to go and create our own jobs. In fact, throughout our training, nobody talked to us about entrepreneurship. Our training was tailored to working for the government. However, as they say, when presented with a lemon, you make lemonade. It was a blessing in disguise.

Years later, the most prosperous and adventurous veterinarians in Kenya were those who ventured into private practice after failing to secure government jobs. Many of them started their own businesses such as agro-vets and veterinary clinics and did well for themselves.

After graduation, I went to stay with a relative in the Mathare North area of Nairobi. However, I quickly discovered that I was not welcome in his house. He was newly married and his wife did not like me. Her body language told it all.

One evening, the man came back from work and demanded that I leave immediately. It was around 8.00pm. He was in a foul mood. I begged him to allow me to stay the night and seek alternative accommodation the following day, but he refused. “Go now!” he said menacingly as his

sharp eyes bore into my face as if daring me to disobey the order and face the music.

I obeyed, grabbed my small worn-out bag that contained an extra pair of trousers and a shirt and walked into the darkness. I did not know where I was going. However, while out in the cold, I remembered that I had a brother-in-law called Protus Wafula who lived in Uthiru. Wafula was married to my elder sister Alice. He worked and lived in Nairobi alone. Alice and the children lived in Bungoma.

I took a bus and arrived at his house in Uthiru around 10.00pm. He looked at me, surprised. "*Mukhwasi, okenda sina musiilima?*" (my brother-in-law why are you walking in the dark?) He received me well. I shared with him my predicament and he assured me that I was free and welcome to stay in his house for as long as I wanted. I was greatly relieved. What a kind man, I thought to myself. I have always held him in high esteem since that humane gesture.

About two weeks later, while still living with Wafula, I was invited for an interview by Dr. Field, the CEO of FARM-Africa, who was once my lecturer at the UoN. That is when he flew me to the rough terrains of northern Kenya, as mentioned earlier in this book, to interview me and gauge my abilities. That is how I got my first job.

FARM-Africa had offices in Nanyuki but its activities were carried out mainly in the districts of Samburu, Isiolo and Marsabit. FARM-Africa employed me to treat the animals of the pastoralists who occupied these three areas.

The organisation supported the pastoralists with a view to making them self-reliant. I was always on the move in those areas. I was allowed to travel once after every three months to Nairobi for a 14-day leave, before resuming duty in the arid and semi- arid wilderness.

Living and working in Samburu, Isiolo and Marsabit was one of the most interesting experiences of my early working life. The climate was harsh and basic facilities and amenities associated with modern life were inadequate or non- existent. I stayed with the pastoralists in their makeshift huts commonly called *manyattas* and moved with them wherever they went in search of pasture and water. I carried along my box of medicines, syringes, a microscope and sample bottles.

To fit in this society, I discarded my formal clothes and dressed in a traditional shuka like them. I even carried a symbolic warrior's spear alongside my drugs and syringes. Members of the community gifted me cows and goats and I became a pastoralist just like them. We knew nothing about piped water, electricity or mobile phone communication. We were on our own in the jungle, living our modest, traditional, but very satisfying way of life.

I would return in the evening with the pastoralists and sit by the fire with them. They talked passionately about their past wars, their animals and the experiences of the day, among other stories. The conversations were mainly in their native language, but occasionally a friend would

volunteer to translate. I was just happy to sit there and listen to them talking and laughing. I enjoyed the experience. Eventually, I learnt a few words of the Samburu and Gabra languages to ease my communication with them as I treated their animals and advised them on how to look after their livestock.

The pastoralists, who comprised the Rendille, Gabra, Samburu, Burji and Borana, were very good people. They did not take me for granted. They held me high esteem as the person who treated their animals. They respectfully called me daktari (doctor). They regarded me as useful to them individually and collectively because I treated their prized assets. I was not seen as an intruder from some part of Kenya they did not know.

Whenever they slaughtered their animals, and which was common, they would set aside a choice piece for me. I owned a lot of animals which they donated to me. They helped me to take care of them. An old man would call me and point at a bull and tell me he was giving it to me. I would be lost for words and before I could say anything, he would continue. "That is yours, I have given it to you." He would keep it in his herd and continue feeding it as he had done before gifting it to me.

Several months later, I would go back to him and collect my animal. They were such forthright people. I felt like one of them. Indeed, I was one of them because they treated me as one of them. I was invited to their social

events such as weddings and felt at home among them. I used to tell them jokingly that among the Luyia if someone gifted you a cow or a bull, the best thing to do was to take it away immediately. If you came back a few days later to claim your bull, you may not find it because someone would have changed their mind along the way and sold it or simply decided that gifting you was a mistake in the first place.

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Besides treating animals for pastoralists, I was involved in finding markets for them. The best-known market was the Dagoretti Slaughter House in Nairobi. I used to visit the market to negotiate prices on behalf of my pastoralist friends. To ensure neither the buyer nor the seller incurred any costs in-between, FARM-Africa met the transportation costs.

FARM-Africa owned lorries and even hired others for transporting thousands of animals from Marsabit to Nairobi. Often, I went along and ensured that the deals between the buyers and sellers were concluded amicably. Occasionally, I played a pivotal role where I represented both the seller (pastoralists), the buyer (Dagoretti Slaughter House) and the transporter (FARM-Africa).

After selling the cattle, in most cases, I was given cash to deliver to the pastoralists. Sometimes I had so much money that I required police escort. I would then return to the *manyattas* and give everyone their dues. Unfortunately,

almost all of them had no bank accounts. I could only pay them cash. I was a mobile bank.

In the process of making payments, I realised that our communities were not the same. Many pastoralists were not bothered with the money. For instance, I could count KSh.500,000 and give it to a pastoralist. He would look at the notes for a while and then hand them back to me. "Keep it for me," he would plead with me. He would then stay for months without asking for the said money. I would pay another say KSh.200,000 and then he would ask me politely to tell him what he should do with it.

Others took the money and kept it in their shawls without bothering to count it. It appeared they had no plans whatsoever for their money, which appeared to suggest they had sold their animals because they wanted to cull their herds. They had no bills to pay, no food to buy, no markets to go to or luxury to engage in. In short, they lived a simple life where their food was basically meat and milk. Thus, a cow was much more valuable to a pastoralist than money.

I came to learn how our societies were different from each other. To the pastoralists those days, poverty was not lack of money but rather lack of animals. If one had a million shillings and owned no cattle, and another one had even a few cows and no money, the latter was considered the wealthier of the two.

Today, 30 years later, I am sure as I write these recollections, much has changed and the economy of

Marsabit is largely driven more by money and trade than cattle and barter.

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Besides giving me my first job, FARM-Africa also sponsored me to study for a master's degree in pharmacology and toxicology at the University of Nairobi. I treated animals in the arid areas while at the same time carrying out field work for my second degree. I carried out a number of tests in the field and collected various samples, mainly from camels, which I took to Nairobi for further testing and analysis.

I was supervised by professors Eric Mitema, Timothy Maitho and the late Moses Kyule and successfully completed my course and was happy to earn my second degree.

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One evening, I returned to the manyatta in Kargi village in Marsabit after a long day's trek. I was tired and sleepy. I went to bed early. From a distance, I could hear the pastoralists singing and dancing by the fireside. It was a daily routine. After a while, the camp went silent. It was around midnight and almost all people had retired to bed.

At around 2.00am, I was startled from my sleep by some unusual noises. Our camp had been attacked by animal raiders suspected to be from Ethiopia. Gunshots

rent the air. There was a prolonged exchange of gunfire. I was scared. Many herdsmen in the camp owned guns and fought hard to repulse the attackers. Several people in our camp were injured and many animals were stolen.

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Cattle rustling is a menace that has bedevilled Kenya's pastoralist communities for many decades. It is a practice that started in the pre-colonial era as a cultural rite but eventually became the biggest threat to the socio-economic development of Kenya's pastoralists. Spurred by the proliferation of illegal ammunitions, cattle rustling in its present form is a deadly menace. Unlike in the past when raiders wielded spears and arrows, the modern cattle raiders wield sophisticated firearms.

The origin of cattle rustling largely remains unknown. However, its effects have had far-reaching consequences. Since Kenya became independent in 1963, hundreds of lives have been lost, thousands of people injured, many others displaced, and hundreds of thousands of animals stolen. The menace is prevalent in Samburu, Turkana, West-Pokot, Isiolo, Marsabit, Baringo and Elgeyo-Marakwet, among other areas inhabited by pastoralists and cattle keepers. Cattle rustling is also prevalent in Uganda, pitting the Karamoja and Sebei communities against each other, and in South Sudan too. It often spills over the common borders with Kenya.

Initially glossed over as a cultural practice by pastoralists, cattle-rustling is today an economic activity driven by powerful forces who are said to arm and finance the so- called rustlers or raiders who hand them the booty that is the livestock they seize. Stories are told of stolen animals ending up in slaughter houses in Nakuru and Nairobi, among other urban areas.

Some people are alleged to steal animals for political reasons. It is whispered that if a politician wants to displace a community that does not support him in his electoral area, he is more likely to organise for rustlers to raid their *manyattas* and cart away their animals. Victims of such raids are likely to flee for fear of being killed.

As expected, fingers have been pointed at politicians who are accused of inciting, defending and protecting cattle rustlers. Apart from impoverishing populations, causing insecurity and disruption, and jeopardising the development of the pastoralist communities, the menace of cattle-rustling is employed as an election rigging strategy by politicians.

The government, for its part, has used various strategies to stamp out rustling, including establishing a special Anti-Stock Theft Unit (ASTU) in the National Police Service. Several Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) have been involved in initiatives aimed at brokering peace between the communities affected by the theft of livestock.

Under-development in these areas is largely blamed on cattle-rustling and general insecurity. Many schools are closed for long periods because teachers, especially those from outside the affected regions, usually run away. Hospitals and other key amenities are similarly attacked and vandalized. Business people willing to invest in the regions are discouraged by the banditry and take their money elsewhere.

Cattle rustlers, as I observed while staying with the pastoralists, often took advantage of the minimal presence or non-existence of security personnel or installations in many of these areas. We used to travel for many kilometres without sighting or coming across a police station or meeting security agents on patrol. The raiders had all the time to plan, attack and disappear with stolen livestock unchallenged.

To combat the menace, the pastoralist communities always armed themselves in what they said was self-defence. But they would also attack other communities and cart away their livestock using the same weapons they sought and acquired for self-defence.

FARM-Africa staff occasionally fell victim to acts of banditry. At one point we were saddened when Chris Morris, a British citizen who headed our administration and finance docket, was ambushed and killed by bandits as he drove on

the Isiolo- Marsabit road. He was shot at point blank range. This road witnessed many incidents that were blamed on bandits. We lived and travelled by God's mercy.

We occasionally travelled in a company car, especially when relocating or when I had an issue to sort out in our Nanyuki office. The poor, rough and gullied roads, gorges and sharp bends, often posed a great danger to motorists.

One day, in 1993, I travelled to our Nanyuki office to collect some medicine. I stayed there for about three days and gathered enough stock to last at least three months. As I was heading back to our camp in Samburu, our Toyota Land Cruiser pick-up truck, rolled several times along the Kisima – Maralal road. It was a terrible accident. I was hurled out of the vehicle and thrown into a roadside ditch. I lost consciousness.

As I was later told, well-wishers took me to Maralal District Hospital. The following day, I was flown to Nanyuki Cottage Hospital for specialised treatment. I had sustained multiple tissue injuries on my head, shoulders, back, hands and legs.

As I recuperated, our driver, Ahmed Osman, visited me in hospital and recounted to me horrific details about the accident. He was so worried about me. "I cannot believe you are alive. When the car rolled you were thrown out and landed in a ditch. The car landed on top of the ditch in which you lay and covered you. Luckily for you, not a single part of it touched you, hit you or landed on your

body. You would have been crushed to pulp," he told me. He said he called for help when he managed to get out of the overturned truck. I was then pulled from underneath the wreckage and taken to hospital. I could not remember any of that.

Osman had also been involved in that accident but he came out with no visible injuries. However, a few weeks later, he complained of chest pains and was admitted to hospital. Soon after, we received information that Osman had died of suspected internal injuries that he had sustained from that accident. I was gutted.

Osman was more than a driver to me. He taught me a lot about pastoralists and their way of life. He taught me how to talk to them, what to tell them, where and how. Some of his tips enabled me to not only settle faster among the pastoralists but also led to my being accepted fully in this community. His death pained me greatly.

CHAPTER 9

MY FAMILY

Families are like branches on a tree,
We grow in different directions,
Yet our roots remain the same - Suzy Kassem

PEOPLE meet and enter into lifelong relationships in different places and circumstances. Often, such meetings happen during events or moments the protagonists would never have imagined would happen, let alone bring them together. In many cases, some may have been to the location in question before or were setting foot there for the first time.

In 1993, when I was studying for my second degree and carrying out field studies among the pastoralist communities, I lived mainly in *manyattas*. After a while, I decided to rent a house in Kisima, one of the local markets that are found between Kinamba and Maralal. I kept this house because it accorded me an enabling environment and facilities, especially electricity, to work on my field samples

and thesis. I used to visit the house once a month to read and carry out other activities related to my field-work, such as analysing samples using the centrifuge and microscope.

One day, as I was busy with my work in this house, I heard some female voices from next door. They were conversing in English, a language that was rarely used in these remote areas, especially by women. Not many Samburu girls attended formal schools. Many were married off at the age of 16.

I was interested, indeed keen, to know the English-speaking women. I met the two women and learnt that they were teachers at Kisima Girls School. One of them was called Lucia. She had just completed her studies at Kenyatta University. She told me that her home was in Uasin-Gishu District, now County, in the Rift Valley whose principal town is Eldoret. She was uncomfortable in Samburu and wanted a transfer to somewhere better, preferably to her home district of Uasin-Gishu. She travelled to Nairobi frequently to pursue the matter with her employer, the Teachers Service Commission, better known by its acronym TSC.

Meanwhile, I continued with my engagement with pastoralists. I went away to Nairobi for about one month to analyse my samples in the lab. When I returned to Kisima I did not see Lucia again. There were no mobile phones so when people lost touch, it was not easy to reconnect.

FARM-Africa had an office in Baragoi, located about 200 kilometres north of the town of Maralal, where some

of our staff worked and lived. I was stationed there after completing my studies.

One day, about six months later, I went back to Kisima to collect the belongings I had left behind. I bumped into Lucia. She was also clearing from her house. Her request for a transfer had been granted. She had been posted to Tambach High School in Elgeyo Marakwet District, now County, near her home. We were both surprised and delighted to see each other.

We did not lose touch again. I visited her in Tambach and our bond grew stronger. I got to know her family and she came to our home too. Eventually, we got married in March, 1994. We formalised our union at a colourful wedding at Kibabii Catholic Church in December, 2000.

Lucia was born in Chepkanga village on the outskirts of Eldoret town in 1969, as the fourth child of *Mzee* Sang Kendelo, a prominent farmer in Uasin-Gishu. He is a man full of interesting stories and experiences. He honed his farming skills when he worked with a Boer farmer on the farm that he currently occupies. He is a highly skilled man. His knowledge of automotive mechanics is unrivalled. I once visited him and found that he had dismantled a tractor engine and was re- assembling it meticulously, piece by piece.

He told me that he drove his mzungu boss all the way to South Africa when he decided to relocate after many years of farming at Chepkanga. At 80, one cannot

help but be impressed when one meets *Mzee* Sang actively supervising activities on his farm. Though he talks little, he holds strong views on many issues.

Lucia's siblings include William Kiplimo, Josephine Cheptoo, Terry Tonui (a lecturer at Moi University), Julie Cherotich (married to my friend Dr. Namanda), Shila Cheruto Knuff (who is married in Germany), Stephen Kipkogei, Gladys Cherono and Martin Kipchirchir.

Lucia attended Holy Rosary School in Turbo, which is not far away from Eldoret, before joining Sing'ore Girls School for her O Level studies and later proceeded to Moi Girls Eldoret for her A Level course. She passed her exams and joined Kenyatta University for her Bachelor of Education (BEd) degree, specialising in English and Literature.

When we met in Samburu she was starting her teaching career. She later veered off this course and we were soon working together in our Agrovet called Nomadic Veterinary Services (NVS). Lucia later graduated with an MBA, specialising in Human Resources from the UoN. She now works as an HR Manager in a government agency in Nairobi.

Lucia and I are blessed with four children, namely Ian Wafula (1992), Tonny Wekesa (1994), Polly Naliaka (1997) and Alex Wanyonyi (1999).

Ian attended Moi Primary School and then Marel School in Bungoma before joining Kakamega High School. He studied Computer Science at the United States

International University - Africa (USIU - A). He works as a software engineer with an American company.

Tonny was also a student at Marel in Bungoma and later Makini School in Nairobi. He also attended Dawamu and Karengata schools. He holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in Political Science from the UoN. He is currently pursuing his Masters degree in Public Policy at Strathmore University, Nairobi.

Our only daughter, Polly, was also in Moi Primary School, then Makini School and later Lavington United Church Academy. She attended Juja Preparatory School and later USIU-A. She has a degree in psychology and works in curriculum development and assessment in the Technical Vocational Education Training (TVET) sector. She recently graduated with a Masters degree in Psychology from Daystar University.

Alex, our last born, also started his schooling in Bungoma and later joined Makini School in Nairobi. He attended Sunshine High School in Nairobi from where he proceeded to the UoN where he earned his degree in computer science in 2022. Alex has interests in artificial intelligence and data science. He is currently studying in Canada.

I consider it a blessing to have been born in a big family because I grew up with many brothers and sisters who have diverse talents and I learnt many interesting and important things about life from them.

My father had a total of 32 children. Most importantly, he ensured that all of us went to school. Only two of us did not complete secondary education. Between 1970 and 1990, my father had very many children in secondary school. Under pressure to raise school fees for all of us on time, at the start of each term, he would sometimes hit the roof. But he never stopped paying our fees. He took responsibility for taking all his 32 children to school, keeping them in school and seeing them through school.

Some men who have many children have ignored their responsibilities and passed certain duties to their wives or relatives but our father did not. *Mzee* Tom was steadfast. And his children were his responsibility. I honour him for that. He built a tradition of educating his children, which made a great difference in our lives. He bequeathed us the tradition of educating children which all of us have taken seriously.

Mzee Tom closely monitored our performance in school. In his sitting room he had set aside a table on which all our report cards were to be placed when schools closed. It was a punishable offence if you waited for him to ask for your report card or how you performed in the term ending examinations. The first thing each one of us did on reaching

home to start the holidays was to place one's report card on that table.

Then we waited with baited breath. You never wanted your report card to be on top of the pile, even if you had performed well. *Mzee* was unpredictable. Sometimes he was not interested in your class position but rather whether you dropped or improved in your performance as compared to the previous term. And he would take you to task over such.

Dad took his time to look through and analyse the reports, then he would summon everyone for a family meeting. The meeting was attended by all children and their mothers. At the end of the meeting some of us were punished. Sometimes the meeting would go on late into the night as *Mzee* Tom outlined his expectations of each of us. He also gave us a long-term view why we needed to work hard in school. Papa believed in hard work. He said this would guarantee us a better future. His strict approach to education paid off. His children were the first to earn degrees in our area.

There are many stories to share about my siblings. They all have good memories to laugh about and some childhood incidents they encountered that became vital lessons in life. I may not share about everyone but let me note a few things about the children of my mother, Namarome.

My elder sister Jordina was among the first girls who went to school in our village. She attended Luuya Girls Secondary School between 1971 and 1974 before going

on to train as a teacher at Machakos Teachers College in Machakos. She came back and taught in many schools in Bungoma, including Namilama and Mukhweya, before retiring in 2015. She married Moses Mutoro (a radiologist) and they were blessed with many children, including Berrick, Denis, Titus, Hilda, Clementine, Aggrey, Anthony and Immaculate. Jordina had a calling to serve the church and she has been passionate about it for most of her life. She currently serves as a catechist for Sikusi Catholic Church in Bungoma County.

My late brother William Simiyu trained as a teacher at Asumbi Teachers College, which is located in Homa Bay County, and taught in many schools around Bungoma. He was also a life coach. He married Mary Nambuye and together they begot Marlin, Maureen, the late Juma, Emma and Temba.

My sister Mary-Gorreti Nafula went to Misikhu Girls High School in what is now Webuye Sub-County and later proceeded for further studies in agriculture in the United Kingdom. She has worked with several NGOs and, like Jordina, is passionate about spirituality. She serves as a leader of the Kibabii Catholic Parish where she lives.

Nafula would have made a great politician but she did not venture in that direction. A good public speaker, she has been actively involved in church and community affairs. She supports initiatives geared to empowering women and youth groups financially. Nafula is responsible

for the significant developments the parish has witnessed. She is married to Patrick Wasike, omukimwei, and they have been blessed with five children: Humphrey, Godwin, Denis, Leonard and Mike.

My brother John Situma attended Kibabii and later Strathmore School before proceeding to the University of Nairobi. He holds a Master of Science degree in hydraulic engineering from the University of Newcastle in the United Kingdom. He has worked for Kenya's Ministry of Water, the European Union, the East African Community, and has also served the County Government of Bungoma as Chief Officer. Situma runs private businesses in Bungoma. He is married to Mary Walela and they have five children, namely Allan, Noella, Bruno, Claire and Raphael.

Professor Matthew Murunga was the spoilt boy (read most loved) in our family. He always had his way. He was mum's favourite. She named him after her father Matayo Murunga and she treated him as a special child. He did not participate in most family chores such as looking after cattle, ploughing, planting or weeding. Unlike all of us who were assigned duties by dad or mum and given strict times within which to work, Matthew would choose what to do, when to do it and at what pace.

He was a very bright student at Kibabii High School and later at Kericho High School. He graduated from Kenyatta University with a Bachelor of Education degree and went on to acquire master's and doctorate in analytical

chemistry from the University of Eldoret. Until his death in 2019, he was a senior lecturer at the University of Kabianga in Kericho County. He was married to Beatrice and they had five children: Garry, Brian, Edgar, Becky and Pauline.

Prof. Murunga was followed by Euphresia Nekesa who has since passed on. Euphresia was always unpredictable. Her moods swung quite rapidly. You would be laughing with her one minute and the next minute you would have a fight. One required some skill and tact when dealing with her. All in all, she was lovable. She passed on while giving birth to her only child Mercy Nangunda who has also since passed on.

My sister, Alice Nanjala, is a professional accountant. She is the one that I follow. She served in that position at Bungoma High School and also previously headed a TVET college. Alice was dad's favourite. No matter how angry *Mzee* was, he hardly lifted a finger or raised his voice at her. He always addressed her kindly, often referring to her as *mayi*. Alice always got what she wanted from our father. As curious children, we became alive to this unspoken fact. Thus, if we wanted something from *Mzee* and we were not sure how he would respond, we sent Alice. She would get it for us.

Dad took Alice to a private high-cost school in Kitale for her A Level after her O Level studies at Mukumu Girls High School in Kakamega District, now County. She was awarded her undergraduate and post-graduate degrees by Masinde Muliro University and Kibabii University, respectively. She is a manager at Nzoia Water Services Company (NZOWASCO). She was married to the late

Protus Wafula, my very good friend who gave me refuge in his house in Nairobi after I had been evicted by a relative. Protus and Alice were blessed with five children, namely Owen, Joan, Mukhwana, Mulongo and Mercy.

Ignatius Wangila follows me. He is a friendly man with whom you can hardly pick a quarrel. A good speaker, he is always the master of ceremonies at family functions. Shunning controversy, Ignatius is a subtle and diplomatic man. Bravado is not part of him. Unless he is the master of ceremonies, Ignatius will likely arrive and leave unnoticed. A holder of a Bachelor of Education degree from the University of Nairobi, he has taught in several schools and is currently the Deputy Principal at Cardinal Otunga Girls High School in Bungoma. He is married to Martha and they have been blessed with three children: Edwin, Jael and Peninah.

My sister Marisella Nasimiyu (also known as Mariam Yusuf) holds a bachelor's degree in Business and Office Management from Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology (JKUAT). She was named after my father's mum who came from the clan of Balisa. Mariam is extremely social, generous and kind. She married Yusuf Machiva who is the current Principal of Bungoma Muslim Secondary School. They were blessed with five children: Ali, Salim, Salma, Samira and Samir.

My youngest sister Videllis Nangekhe went to Chwele Girls and later studied business. She was married to the late Wafubwa, *omutukwika*, and was blessed with four children: Mercy, Hillary, Carlos and Anne. Our youngest brother,

my good friend Isaac Opicho, was named after our famous paternal grandfather, he of the large cattle herd. From Bungoma High School he went to Catholic University of Eastern Africa where he studied accounting. He has worked with international NGOs and currently runs his own businesses in Nairobi and Bungoma. He is married to Patricia Muleshe and they have five children: Kelly, Alma, Sasha, Garnet and Tom Powell

With God's blessings, Mukhwana's children and grandchildren have done well in life, individually and collectively. *Mzee* Tom also brought up and took to school many neighbours and relatives, among them Gertrude Wepukhulu, Sibuywa Wekulo, and others. Helping others is a virtue dad bequeathed us. As I write these recollections in 2024, I run the Juma Mukhwana Foundation, a non-profit, which pays school fees for needy children and gives scholarships to deserving cases.

As a family, we founded a public primary school at Lwanda in memory of *Mzee* Tom. It is called Thomas Mukhwana Primary School and currently has over 400 pupils. We also helped build Lwanda dispensary.

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Reflecting on my childhood, I recall some incidences, actions and decisions that became key turning points in our lives. Ordinarily, in many African communities, especially the Bukusu, sons would inherit land from their parents and

build their homes. But *Mzee* Tom did not entertain that idea. His principle was that once you finished secondary school you vacated his compound and looked for your own land. He made that abundantly clear to all his sons. At first, we thought it was a joke but he stood his ground.

There was only one house, esimba, which he built as a 'holding ground' for the young boys. It was a huge six-bedroomed house. *Mzee* had many sons. The younger ones slept in the kitchen. As the older ones completed school, they were expected to move out and create space for the younger ones. No one was allowed to build his own separate house. Tough as it looked, this decision allowed most of us to be self-reliant. We stopped thinking about inheriting family land and focused ahead on acquiring our own parcels of land.

Mzee's message was simple. Work hard in school, get good grades, get a good job, buy your land and move out. No amount of persuasion or agitation would change that. Some of my siblings tried to push him to change course to no avail. *Mzee*'s word was final. Thanks to those tough decisions, most of my brothers became independent early in life.

It was only later in life, actually in 1998 during his sunset days, that *Mzee* Tom called his sons and allocated each of them a piece of land. At that time, most of us had settled elsewhere.

The sharing of family estate, especially in polygamous families, is an emotive issue because not everybody will be satisfied with what they are given. Some people will feel others have been favoured while others will cry foul, claiming they have been given a raw deal. In some places land

is shared out equally among mothers, who in turn parcel it out to their children. But Papa had a different approach. He called all his sons to a meeting and partitioned his farms according to a design he had drawn up earlier on a piece of paper. Once the partitioning was done, he let us leave his home. No one knew which piece he would be allocated.

About three months later, *Mzee* called us to another meeting at which he produced a piece of paper which detailed the division of his farms and the allocation of the plots to each one of us. He had written clearly on a piece of paper the pieces that each one had been given. The sharing was random. He did not follow any specific pattern, say age or the house one came from. *Mzee* had pieces of land in different places. He allocated some of us parcels in Chwele, others in Sichei and others got the Lwanda farm.

All the while he asked any of us who felt he had been hard done by to raise his concerns so that he could take back his land. In dad's view, to complain was akin to looking a gift horse in the mouth and he could not stand failure to appreciate a gift.

If you did not like what he was giving you, you were at liberty to leave it and go get yourself what you thought you deserved. He made that point clearly and with absolute finality. Everyone kept quiet. We knew that if you took him on, you would lose out. No one protested and so the matter was settled once and for all. A few murmurs emerged later after his death, but that was a closed chapter.

CHAPTER 10

DREAM DEFERRED

Do the best you can until you know better
Then when you know better, do better - Maya Angelou

MY FATHER and family have shaped who I am. I have always had company, a lot of company, around me. I grew up in a large family in which I had my own mother and four other mothers and, therefore, my own brothers and sisters, and my other siblings from my other mothers. My father inculcated in us the importance of a united family and the need for us to look out for each other and have each other's back.

We identified ourselves as Mukhwana's children and we knew that meant more because dad had style, standards, and standing. Unsurprisingly, *Mzee* Tom wielded the big stick of discipline. We knew our roles in the family at our various stages of growth, we knew our brothers and sisters, our uncles and aunties, our neighbours and the distant

relatives. Thanks to our parents, we knew our clans and we knew our community. That is why I have dedicated this book to the people of Bungoma County.

Mzee Tom drew the line at discipline and excellence. He was persuaded, and persuaded us too, that the latter could not be attained in the absence of the former. Dad was also persuaded, and persuaded us too, that education was the road that would deliver for us what he achieved and more. I believe strongly that dad's enduring lesson for us his sons was that we must at all times be ready to fend for ourselves, individually and collectively.

It is why he would parcel out his farms to us only after we had acquired our own farms and established our homes. He did not say it but he was proud of us because we had done him proud. In his view, and in the eyes of many of the people of our village, we had come good. But he was still dad and so he repeatedly asked anyone of us who was unhappy with his allocation to make his views known so that he could take back his land. My values have their base in my original home in my village of Lwanda, my socialization by my parents, family and community.

From my parents I learnt resilience and respect, patience and perseverance. On our farms over the weekends and especially during the school holidays and in father's pub, I learnt the value of work and especially hard work. I was to realise later that dad had, by making me work in the pub, taught me how to run a business, especially how to

manage the profit and loss columns. He was keen for me to see for myself that sympathy, empathy and friendship could not make for bedfellows with running a business. Or, put differently, I had to find a way of managing emotions and relations when seeking to run a business and make a profit.

When I left the University of Nairobi and went to work in northern Kenya, I may not have known what, in the Civil Service parlance, a hardship area was, but I had been hardened by actual work on my father's farms and his insistence on the dignity of hard work.

I could not wait to get to work in the Turkana, Isiolo and Samburu districts of northern Kenya upon leaving the University of Nairobi as a vet because I knew the importance of work and I had been trained to serve Kenya and Kenyans. I also knew that it was a matter of time before I returned to the lecture halls for my second degree. It was also just a matter of time before I tried my hand at running a business allied to my university training. I can confidently report that I have come a long way.

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I COMPLETED my Master's degree in 1994. It involved writing a thesis on the management and treatment of camels. I had now become an expert in the beasts just like Dr. Field. This was a rare feat because there were not many people in Kenya with such expertise.

Indeed, I had the opportunity to attend a conference in Australia and presented a paper on camels. Australia has many camels, most of which are wild. I also made a similar presentation in Morocco which has domesticated camels, just like Kenya. While in Morocco, I visited a camel zone near the common border with Mauritania.

Although I enjoyed my job among pastoralists in Samburu, Marsabit and Isiolo, I missed life on the other side of Kenya, so to speak. I longed to go back to a place where I could have electricity, potable water, easier transport and communication, and cooler weather, among other things that were rare in the pastoral north.

Eventually, I left FARM-Africa in 1994 and went into private practice in my home town of Bungoma. I had developed an entrepreneurial mind. I wanted to do something on my own and for myself instead of being employed. I had about 50 head of cattle and 400 goats that I had accumulated over three years. Most of them were donations from my friendly elders whose livestock I treated in the camps I visited. I transported them to Nairobi, sold them to a slaughterhouse in Dagoretti and made some good money.

I used that capital to start an Agrovet in Bungoma. I called it Nomadic Veterinary Services. This name was derived from the nomads that I had been working with in northern Kenya. I started out in a small room, with a small stock of drugs, animal feeds and farm inputs. I rode

a bicycle to treat people's animals in far-flung villages. That bicycle belonged to my brother-in-law, Protus Wafula. I was always dressed in overalls and gumboots and my desire was to establish myself as a businessman.

I picked the name Nomadic in appreciation of the nomads who had influenced my thinking and to signal that I would be moving from place to place to meet my clients. Unfortunately, many people in Bungoma were left wondering why I was not formally employed like my fellow graduates, some of whom were younger than myself.

It was difficult for them to understand that someone could go to a university and acquire a second degree, and then return home to ride a bicycle on dusty roads visiting dirty kraals and walking on cow-dung to treat animals. It was believed that an educated person was supposed to dress up formally in a suit and work in an office.

Even my good friend *Mzee* Makhanu Munata, he who leased to me the premises in which I set up my agrovet (an end-to-end shop providing farmers with seed, fertiliser, animal feed, and veterinary supplies) was skeptical. He seemed not to approve of what I was doing. He often asked me very many questions regarding the job I was doing. He would beat around the bush before putting his question: "Is this what your fellow graduates are also doing?" It dawned on me that our people appreciated and valued white-collar jobs even if they paid poorly.

As I moved from one homestead to another treating animals, some well-meaning but obviously misguided people told my mother that I had a problem and urged her to make haste and save me from further destruction. "Why, and how come," they asked, "all graduates from this area, except your son, are employed by big companies or work for the government in big offices? Look, there is a problem, your son has a problem. Think about it, Namarome!"

My mum felt the pressure and it took a toll on her. She paid me a visit in my small veterinary clinic in Bungoma. She was crying. "Please, go and look for a job," she begged me. "We did not take you to university to come back home and suffer like this," she said. She had been made to believe that the work I was doing amounted to suffering.

That today's small businesses are tomorrow's big firms and that today's multi-national companies were yesterday's small businesses did not cross the minds of our people. Put another way, the mindset of our people was that they put their children through college so that they may be employed. It did not occur to them that armed with our knowledge we could become creators of jobs rather than seekers of them. Perhaps, they did not want us to toil slowly, one day at a time, and build businesses. Or did they not know that building an enterprise and, therefore, wealth is slow and painstaking business?

BOWING to pressure, and keen to relieve my mother of the pressure being heaped on her by her peers and other people in the village, I started looking for a so-called white-collar job. One day, in 1995, I came across a newspaper advert by the Manor House Agricultural Centre (MHAC) in Kitale. They were looking to hire an Executive Director. They wanted an agriculturalist. I was not one but I applied for the job.

I was surprised when they called me for an interview. I went through the whole process and emerged the best candidate. I was offered the job. This was my first stint at management. I was tasked with providing leadership for not only over 30 staff members that worked under me but also for the larger population of students and farmers who were part of this institution. I was then 30 years old.

At MHAC, I worked under Davies Nakitare (who later became a Member of Parliament for Saboti) and his American wife Polly Noyce who were the founders of the institution. They ran it as a charitable organisation which supported farmers to learn, embrace and use organic farming.

The MHAC Board of Trustees comprised big names such as Prof. Richard Musangi (Egerton University), Prof. David Some (Moi University), Elakana Odembo, Calistus Juma, Betty Adembesa, Chief Noah Kuto, Engineer Francis Gichuki and Prof. J.G. Wandera, among others.

It is here that I met and interacted with Prof. Some. We

became very good friends. He was at the time the Deputy Vice-Chancellor of Moi University. He later rose to become the Vice-Chancellor of the same university. Whenever I needed guidance regarding my duties at MHAC, I always approached him because his friendly demeanour made him easy to work with. MHAC organised short courses for farmers and also awarded certificates and diplomas in organic farming. We also carried out research and outreach programmes.

I did not last long in this job. Barely a year down the line, I resigned. I think the entrepreneurial bug had bitten me. Furthermore, I wanted something more challenging.

After leaving MHAC, I joined Moi University in 1996 as a lecturer in the School of Medicine. I taught pharmacology and toxicology. But it was not long before I started missing my cattle, sheep, goats, and dogs. I wanted to go back to the field. I was uncomfortable with theories and being tied down to the office and classroom. I just wanted to go back and work with farmers, solve their problems and do what I liked best. I talked to Prof. Some about it and he understood my situation.

In 1997, after a year of teaching, I resigned and returned to my Agrovet in Bungoma. My wife had resigned from her teaching job at Tambach High School. We focused

all our energies on growing our enterprise. One could say that we were two restless souls who had found each other.

During the el-nino rains of 1997, I was awarded a tender by the European Union, through the Government of Kenya, to vaccinate over 60,000 animals in Migori District in what was then Nyanza Province. I was paid handsomely. Clearly, things were looking up.

However, I did not tell my mother that I had gone back to treating animals. I hid this fact from her even when I visited her in the village. I let her believe that I held a big office at Moi University. I told her the truth several years later when my business was well-established and flourishing. This time, she did not frown on what I was doing. She actually supported my entrepreneurial prowess.

Together with my wife we ran Nomadic Veterinary Services for 18 years and grew it into a big and reputable business. We supported many farmers to improve their animals and productivity. Ours became one of the most successful veterinary businesses in Bungoma. We inspired upcoming veterinary officers to start similar ventures. We were glad to support and mentor them. We ventured into wholesale and became distributors of drugs, animal feeds and farm inputs. We employed many workers and opened branches in Nairobi and the neighbouring Ngong town.

CHAPTER 11

STANDING UP FOR FARMERS

Earn your success based on service to others,
not at the expense of others – H. Jackson Brown Jr

ONE GOOD idea, so the adage goes, always leads to a better idea. In the process of running my veterinary clinic, I developed a bigger idea and started an institution to train farmers to improve the yields of their crops and livestock. I named it the Sustainable Agricultural Centre for Research and Development in Africa (SACRED-Africa). It began operating in May, 1997.

I was dreaming big. In my imagination, Africa was not too big to change. I had noticed in the course of my work that we needed something more grounded, more universal, and more development-oriented. I had a big dream and big ideas which I was convinced would change Africa. SACRED-Africa planned to work with small-scale farmers to improve their crops and livestock, and, hence, their livelihoods.

I had noticed when working as a vet in Bungoma that most of the problems farmers faced resulted from lack of knowledge and information on basic matters such as tick control, how to feed livestock and control common diseases in poultry, among other things. I realised that selling to them drugs and feeds would not solve the problem. They needed knowledge and information to improve the way they tilled the land, tended their crops and managed the harvest, storage and movement of their crops, and the way they reared their animals. Because both crops and livestock farming were in jeopardy, we needed a holistic solution.

In SACRED-Africa I built a formidable grassroots organisation that purposed to train and build the capacity of farmers. I also came to appreciate the difficulties and challenges that one faces when one is trying to translate theory and science into practice to support farming. It was a journey of self-discovery, with the realisation that even what looked like straightforward challenges that seemed to have straightforward answers, were actually more complicated than they appeared. I conducted numerous workshops using the rural appraisal approach in a bid to understand the challenges facing farmers and prescribe possible solutions for them.

I forged linkages with the Kenya Agricultural Research Institute (KARI) and its Ugandan equivalent, the National Agricultural Research Organisation (NARO) and several universities, locally and internationally. Through these partnerships we, for example, introduced new cassava

varieties that were resistant to cassava mosaic disease. Cassava production increased with this bold undertaking.

We also introduced a new upland rice variety called New Rice for Africa (NERICA). This variety could grow without irrigation. It had been developed in West Africa by my good friend Dr. Monty Jones. The idea was to have farmers diversify their agricultural produce and stop over-reliance on maize. The rice did well but we lacked milling facilities. Unfortunately, most people did not like the taste of the new rice variety. They preferred the local varieties to NERICA.

With time we spread our production and marketing activities beyond Bungoma and into Mumias, Butere, Kakamega, and Busia in Western province, and Siaya in Nyanza province. We also worked with farmers in Uganda and several other African countries. We were heavily involved in the growing, processing and promotion of indigenous food crops and vegetables, especially among the farmers in Busia.

Dr. Monty was the Minister for Agriculture in Sierra Leone. We met at the Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa (FARA) in Accra, Ghana, in 2001. By 2005, SACRED-Africa was working with more than 3,000 farmers' groups comprising over 30,000 farmers. It became a formidable farmers movement, championing their rights and empowering them to make money and adopt new farming technologies that guaranteed high yields.

The community believed in our work. Out of this goodwill, several heads of our farmers' groups were elected to positions of political leadership. Among them was Chrisanthus Dabani (chair of Mayanja Cereals Bank) who was elected Councillor of the Tuuti-Marakaru Ward in Bungoma. David Juma (chair of Naitiri Cereals Bank) was also elected Councillor of the Naitiri Ward. They both campaigned on the platform of our good work. Our results were becoming evident.

SACRED-Africa collaborated with Moi University and, later, the University of Eldoret, to train young people in sustainable agriculture, community development, animal production, business management and entrepreneurship. This journey was given impetus by my friend and confidant Prof. David Some when he was the Vice-Chancellor of Moi University. He believed in our ideas and allowed Moi University's professors to work with us to deliver practical training that was tailored to local needs. We were among the earliest institutions to work jointly with the University to deliver community-oriented training.

Earlier on, while serving farmers under Nomadic Veterinary Services, I realised that I was treating cows, sheep and goats with conditions and diseases that emanated from lack of knowledge on the part of the farmers. In other words, while I was treating animals, the farmers too needed a different kind of treatment - give them knowledge and make them aware of what caused the afflictions their cattle suffered. Many problems among dairy cattle emanated from

poor nutrition, lack of pasture and failure to manage ticks.

SACRED-Africa, therefore, focused on training farmers on how to take care of their animals and crops. We taught them how to feed, control diseases and vaccinate their animals against common diseases, among other basic things. It did not take long before our work at SACRED-Africa took hold. I guess my team and I had exceptional passion and resilience.

When doing community work and training at SACRED- Africa, I met an extraordinary man called Dr. Paul Lester Woomer. He was an American citizen who came to Kenya to work with an international organisation. I met him in Kampala in 2001 at an agricultural conference. He made a presentation on sustainable soil fertility while mine centred on our work with farmers in western Kenya.

He was impressed with our work and we became good friends and partners. We engaged in joint research projects. Eventually, he took a job with SACRED-Africa as research director. Dr. Woomer had a huge impact on the growth of SACRED-Africa and of myself as a person. And I will forever remain grateful for meeting and working with him.

Through him I expanded my horizon from veterinary medicine to crop and soil science. And that led me into choosing soil science as my field of study for my PhD.

Dr. Woomer was no ordinary person. You needed tact, skill and patience to work with him. Many people gave up on him. They thought he was domineering and could

also be quite loud. But I took time to understand him and worked with him nonetheless. It was not my intention to change anyone but I worked with people as they were. I tapped into his expertise to improve farming in Bungoma. And it worked well for me and for SACRED-Africa.

But there was an elephant in the room. While adopting new technologies brought big harvests and hope to farmers, there were no reliable and profitable markets. Our markets were exploitative and peopled with heartless middlemen.

The life of a rural small-holder in Kenya is torture at its best. They wake up early, work the whole day, eat poorly and have no reliable health facilities. And yet among them or at the nearby market, there are middlemen waiting to pounce on their produce and make a kill. Give it to them, middlemen play a crucial role in linking farmers to markets. But the whole relationship is acutely tilted in favour of middlemen.

My studies on this subject around 2000 showed that among the people who experienced hunger, 70 per cent described their main occupation as farming. Therefore, if farmers could not afford to feed themselves, how could we as a country, rely on them to feed us?

We carried out a value chain analysis which showed the percentages of the final prices of various farm products and who were the main beneficiaries of the value chains. Maize farmers, we found out, earned only 15 per cent of the final value from this chain. Coffee farmers got 40 per cent,

while milk farmers received 43 per cent. The middlemen received higher percentages. The exploitation of the farmers was blatant.

After deep reflection on this matter, in 2003, we started a pilot marketing project we called Maize Marketing Movement (MMM). Through it we wanted to disrupt the market and hopefully create a revolution in favour of the farmers.

The model was simple. Farmers in a given locality would come together and establish a community cereals bank in which they bought shares using their commodity such as maize. Many farmers pooled their produce and we trained them on how to clean, sort, grade and ensure that their produce was of good quality and quantity.

And we put in a dedicated marketing team that visited millers in Eldoret, Kisumu and as far away as Nairobi to secure contracts to sell the maize. The farmers got good prices because they were now directly selling their maize to millers. We extended soft loans of up to KSh400,000 to each group so that they could buy more produce from their neighbours and sell in bulk.

The farmers got good financial returns. They gained a better understanding of the market and, for the first time, realised why their produce had previously fetched them peanuts. They carried out extensive study tours to enable them understand the complexities of marketing. Through this initiative, we propagated the idea that production was

only half the job done. The other half was to market the produce profitably.

But I soon realised that turning farmers into marketers was a tall order. Extensive training was required for them to remain focused on the bigger picture. The more some of them understood the market, the more they sought to become middlemen themselves thereby abandoning production. Some thought they should balance the two.

These limitations saw us run into headwinds. We started having cases of unhealthy competition among members for leadership. Trust was not always sufficient and theft and loss of produce was common. Few members who now had an idea where good markets were dealt with those markets directly and secretly as individuals rather than groups. They started undercutting our system.

Our problems were not confined to farmers. Unscrupulous millers also took advantage of farmers. They manipulated weighing scales, performed wrong quality tests and delayed payments. They found out that once one hired a lorry to deliver commodities, say to Kisumu, Nakuru or Nairobi, one became vulnerable if they reneged on the prices that had been agreed earlier. The project was becoming a mountain to climb. Dishonesty was also rampant. For instance, there was a miller who notoriously manipulated the moisture content. While our meter indicated 14 per cent moisture, his read 17 per cent. He would then use that excuse (of excess moisture) to lower the price of maize.

And so, what started as a noble and innovative idea slowly mutated into a disturbing phenomenon that needed to be dealt with. We used to store maize in bulk as we waited for prices to improve but the laws and policies of the government at that time did not favour farmers.

For instance, we had cheap imports of maize, sugar, and rice, among other farm products, that made it impossible for our farmers to compete in that market. Farmers would store their produce in anticipation that prices would go up, then, imports would flood the market and reduce the prices of our commodities by over 50 per cent.

I once made personal attempts to bring this setback to the attention of the then Agriculture Minister, Kipruto Kirwa, and other senior leaders from western Kenya. I urged them to push for changes in our laws and policies to favour Kenyan farmers. They promised they would, but did not. I later learnt that most of those cheap imports were brought in, often illegally, by well-connected people in the government.

After moving from one office to another and holding talks with high-ranking leaders, it dawned on me that our farmers were actually on their own. The leaders were not interested in the plight of farmers. They simply paid lip service by making many good speeches that meant very little. It was clear that they did not have the desire to change the situation in favour of the farmers.

But I kept pushing. I wanted to see positive results for farmers. Using my global networks, I implored the World Bank to support modifications to the system to include Warehouse Receipt Financing (WRF). This would have allowed farmers to deliver their produce in registered warehouses and get all or part of their money as they waited for prices to improve. Usually, grain prices are low during harvests but increase with time.

The World Bank supported a feasibility study on WRF so that we could understand better how it could work in our situation. Therefore, I spent nearly six months with fellow consultants Jonathan Coulter and John Walker from the Natural Resources Institute of the United Kingdom, carrying out a feasibility study on WRF in Kenya.

We visited many farmers (small and big), talked to millers and middlemen and held workshops to refine the system. We analysed our import trends and came up with a clear and realistic plan. But I realised that middlemen and importers did not like the WRF system because they benefited from the prevailing confusion and desperation of farmers.

I had stepped on a live wire. The middlemen came out fighting and I became a marked man. My life was in danger. I received all manner of threats. A business man approached me angrily, demanding to know why I was planning to ruin his enterprise. "Did you go to school to come and disrupt our business? Why are you misleading

farmers? You are such a poor man and you want to help farmers to be rich? Help yourself first before you attempt to help farmers," he lectured me.

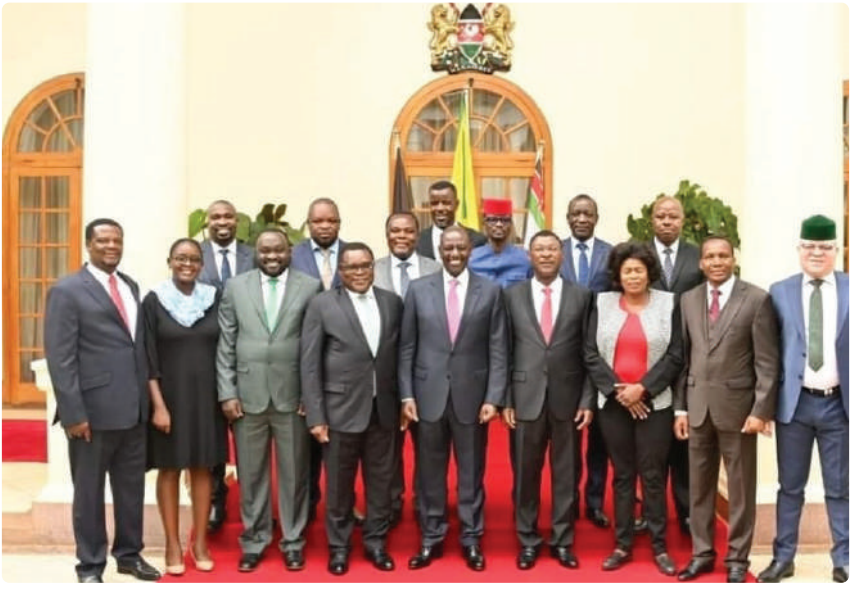
I silently went back to the farmers and told them quietly: "You are on your own. Nobody cares about you. The middlemen and millers feed on you. Worse still, your leaders are not concerned about your plight. They actually desire to see you remain poor. They only talk niceties to you at public rallies and other functions but act contrary to that in private."

I realised that the biggest impediment to successful farming in Kenya was, in fact, the people who were supposed to help farmers to produce and sell better. They were the ones involved in importation of cheap produce. The relationship between farmers and other players in the value chain was heavily skewed against the farmers, who, as a result, always got the short end of the stick.

Fast forward to 2017. Seventeen years since we carried out the feasibility study on Warehouse Receipt Financing, the Government of Kenya embraced our idea and passed the law to implement it and also established an institution to promote the same.

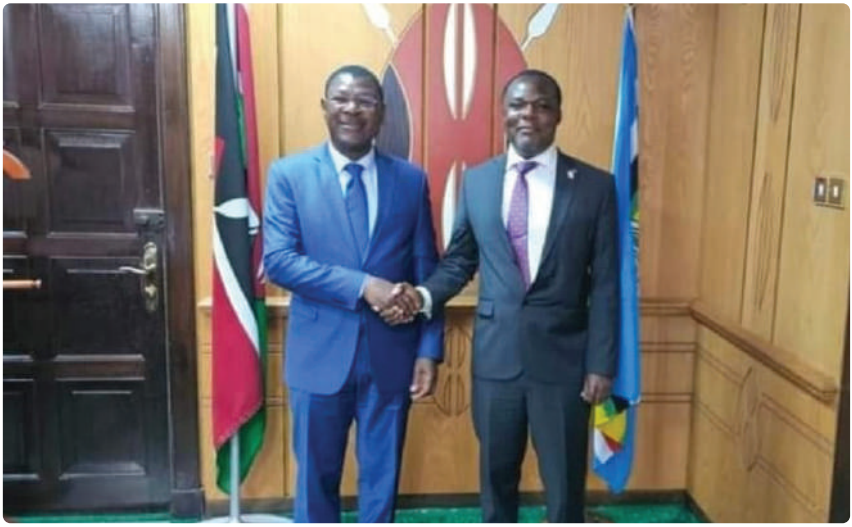
With HE. Dr. William Ruto the President of the Republic of Kenya at State House, Nairobi in 2023.

With HE. Dr. William Samoei Ruto the President of the Republic of Kenya at State House, Nairobi in 2022.

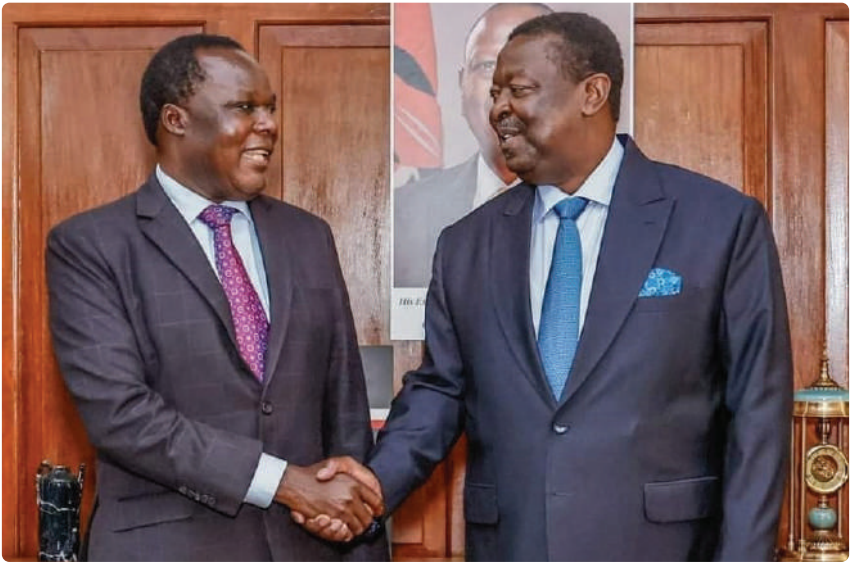


With Members of Parliament and other leaders from Bungoma County at State House, Nairobi in 2022.

Receiving HE. Dr. William Samoei Ruto in Embu in 2023.

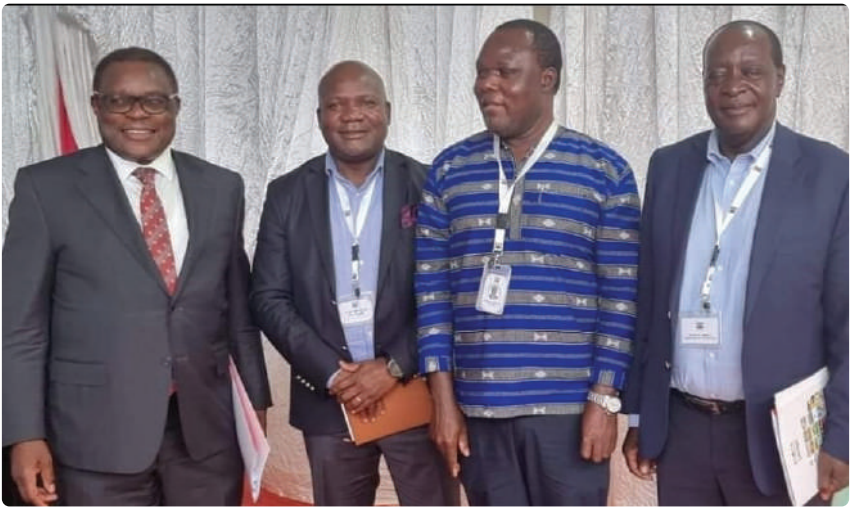


With the Rt. Hon. Moses Wetang'ula at the National Assembly, Nairobi, in 2022.



With HE. Prime Cabinet Secretary Musalia Mudavadi in Nairobi in 2023.

From left to right: CS Moses Kuria, Prof Kiama Gitahi (Vice Chancellor UoN), Cabinet Secretary Rebecca Miano and Mercy Wanjau at the University of Nairobi in 2024.



With Govenors Ken Lusaka of Bungoma, Fernandes Barasa of Kakamega and Wilber Ottichilo of Vihiga in Kiambu in 2022.

With Trans Nzoia Governor George Natembeya in 2024.

With Siaya Governor James Orengo in Siaya in 2023.

With Machakos Governor
Wavinya Ndeti in Machakos in 2024.

With the Head of the Public Service Felix Koskei in Nairobi in 2023.

With Attorney General Justin Muturi in Embu in 2023.

Receiving the First Lady Rachael Ruto at a cultural function in Nairobi in 2024.

With Liberia's President HE. George Weah during a higher education conference in Monrovia, Liberia, in 2017.

With World Trade Organization General Secretary Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala and Cabinet Secretary Rebecca Miano in Osaka Japan in 2023.

After officiating at a function at the National Defence University of Kenya in Nakuru in 2021.

With the Vice Chancellor of the National Defence University of Kenya Lieutenant Gen. Jonas Mwangi in Nakuru in 2021.

Potrait of myself by an artist in Bungoma in 2005.

With. Kofi Annan former UN Secretary General, in Bungoma in 2007.

A visit by a team from Rockefeller Foundation to Chwele Community Based Cereal Bank in 2003.

Dr. Paul Woomer teaching farmers in Vihiga in 2001.

With Kofi Annan at Kisumu Airport in 2007.

During a visit to Kingston, Jamaica in 2008.

With Wole Soyinka (second from right) and others in Munyonyo, Entebbe, Uganda in 2002.

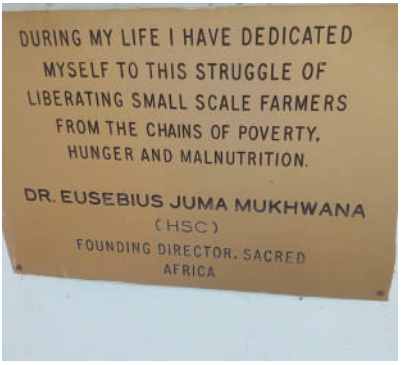
SACRED Africa staff and board members at a meeting in Nairobi in 2006. From left to right standing: Lucia Juma, Richard Walukano, Dr Reginalda Wanyonyi, CPA Boniface Wanyonyi, Dr Stella Makokha abd Connie Nyongesa. Sitting: Johnstone Odera, Chrisogunus Mumelo and Prof Prof Simiyu Wandibba.

With staff of Laramie High School Wyoming after giving a talk to students in 2008.

Prof. Jay Norton trying out weeding of maize at Lwanda in 2009.

Uzurla Norton giving a pep talk to students of Lurende Primary School in 2010.

Teaching farmers how to increase sorghum production in Makueni in 2012.



My commitment to the people of Africa about empowering farmers.

From left to right: Prof Walter Oyawa, Dr. Flora Karimi, Prof. David Some and Prof. Anne Nangulu and myself at Commision for University Education (CUE) in 2015.

With KNQA Board members in Naivasha in 2020. Standing: Isaac Gathirwa, Isaiah Ochelle Hirji Shah, Eng Stephen Ogenga, CPA Damaris Muhika, CPA Rosemary Njogu. Dr Kipkrui Lang'at, Dr Mary Gaturu and CPA Joseph Nyamora. Sitting: Dr Kilemi Mwiria, PS Julius Juan and Bonaventure Kerre.

Attending a Ruforum meeting at Makerere University, Kampala, Uganda in 2019.

With Principal Secretary Dr. Kevit Desai Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) and Kenya National Qualifications Authority (KNQA) Chair Prof. Bonaventure Kerre in Nairobi in 2018.

With the Kenya National Qualification Authority staff in Naivasha in 2021.

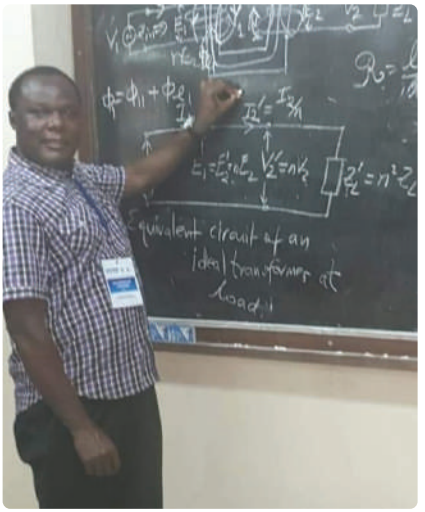
Promoting Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) with CEO of Jua kali Association Richard Muteti in Machakos in 2021.

With Prof. Ratemo Michieka at the KNQA in 2022.

With Geoffrey Wafula at an African Union meeting in Dakar Senegal in 2019.

With the founder of Mount Kenya University Prof Simon Gicharu and Chief Administrative Secretary Zack Kinuthia in Thika in 2020.

With the Catholic Archbishop of Nairobi, His Eminence Philip Anyalo in 2019.



At a teaching factory in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, in 2018.

Addressing the Kenya-Mozambique Business Council in Maputo, Mozambique in 2023

With Dr Akinwumi Adesina, President of African Development Bank (AFDB) in De Moine, Iowa USA in 2016.

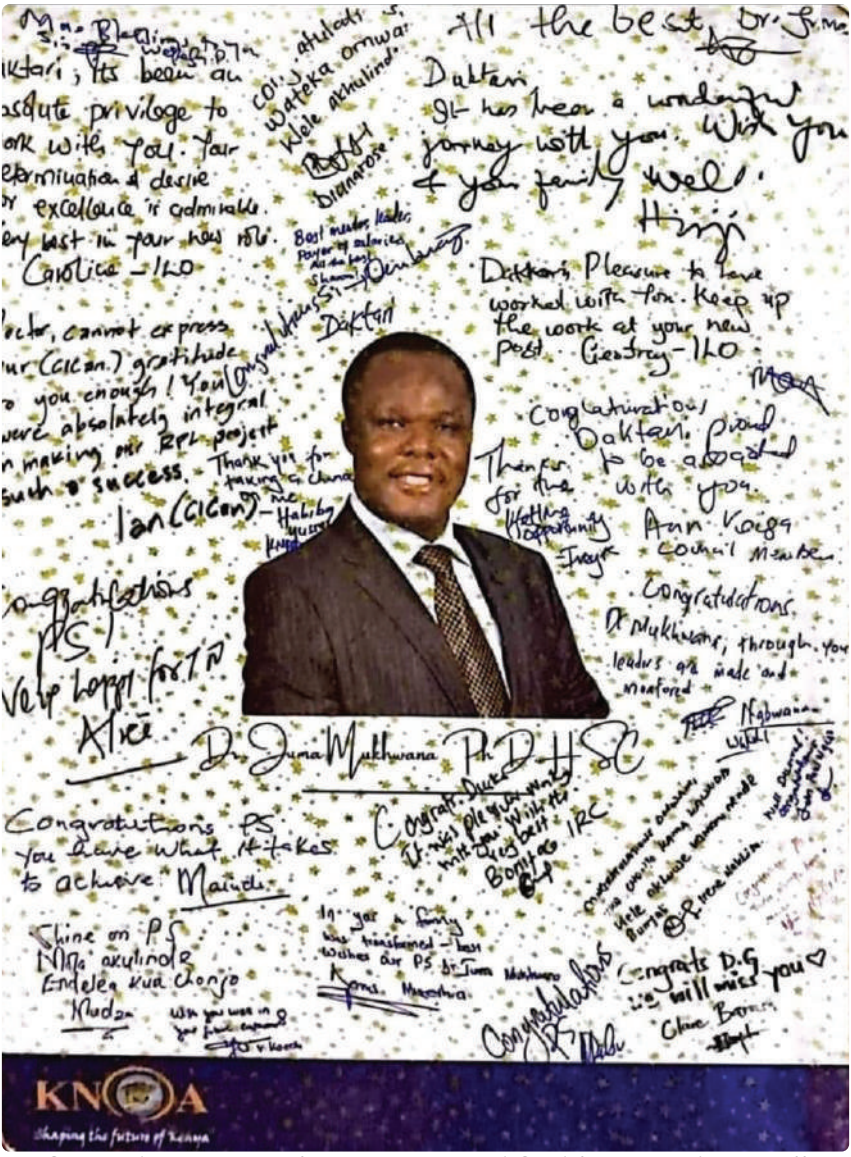
At a Ruforum board meeting in Lusaka, Zambia in 2018.

With Stanley Maindi and Swiss Ambassadar to Kenya HE Dr. Ralf Heckner in 2018.

With Governance Expert Catherine Musakali in Nairobi in 2017.

With USIU Vice Chancellor Prof. Paul Zeleza in Nairobi in 2017.

Attending African Continental Qualifications Framework (ACQF) Conference in Johannesburg, South Africa, in 2021.



Congratulatory messages from Kenya National Qualification Authority staff when I left the institution in 2022.

Promoting youth talents in Bungoma with Senator Wafula Wakoli and MPs John Makali, Martin Pepela, John Chikati and Majimbo Kalasinga. Also present was the Bungoma County Assembly Majority leader Joseph Nyongesa.

Planting trees in Embu in 2023.

From left to right: Dr. Mukhisa Kituyi (former Minister for Trade and Industry) and former Vice President Moody Awori in Ndalu in 2004.

With Mzee Patrick Wangamati at Lwanda in 2004.

Addressing members of the public at Khalusi games in Khachonge in 2014.

Giving a keynote address on higher education in Cotonou, Benin in 2018

With Archbishop Eliud Wabukala, chair Ethics and Anti Corruption Commision (EACC) in Nairobi, in 2021.

With Bishop Mark Kadima of the Catholic Diocese of Bungoma at Kibabii University in 2022.

With board members of Thomas Mukhwana Primary School Lwanda in 2021. The school is named in honour of my father.

With DC Joseph Irungu, Mr. Mamu and Councilllor Majimbo Okumu. During a freedom from hunger walk in Bungoma in 2006.

Receiving the President of Kenya HE Uhuru Kenyatta at Bumula in 2017

With HE William Ruto during my campaings at Amutallah Stadium, Kimilili

During my 2017 Senatorial Campaings.

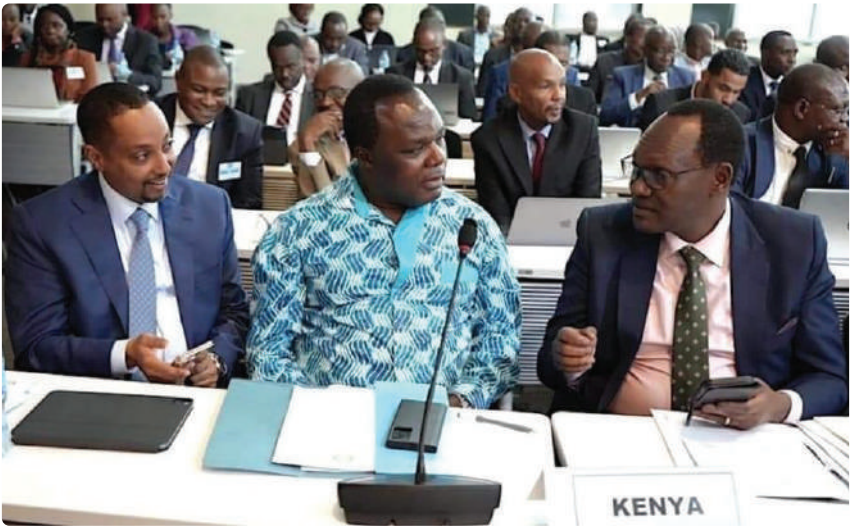
During a campaign rally in Chesikaki in Bungoma in 2017.

With my campaign team at Bungoma airstrip in 2017.

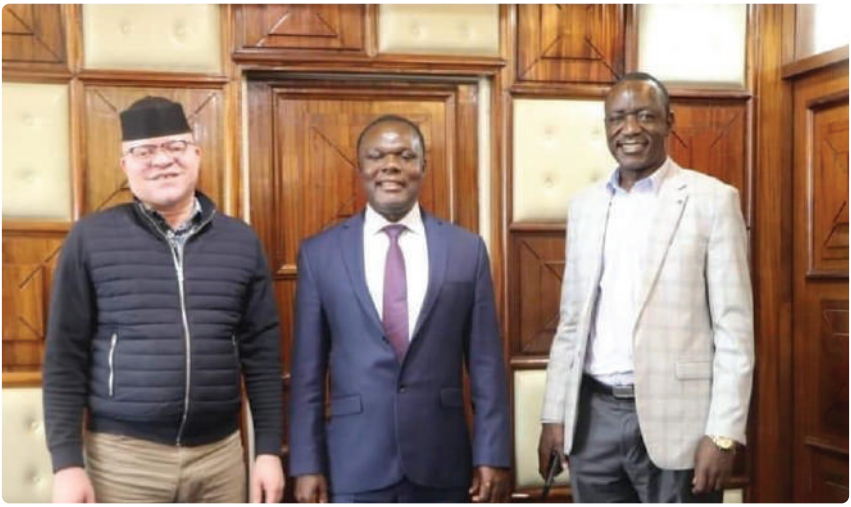
With Musikari Kombo, Boniface Otsyula and Eugene Wamalwa in 2017.

-During my campaign in Myanga, Bungoma in 2017.

With Principal Secretaries Harry Kimtai and Prof. Edward Kisiangani in Nairobi in 2022.



With Principal Secretaries Abdi Dubat (EAC) and Dr. Chris Kiptoo during an EAC Council meeting in Arusha 2023.



With Member of Parliament Martin Wanyonyi and John Makali in Nairobi in 2023.

With Prof. PLO Lumumba at the University of Cape Coast, Ghana in 2019.

With Embu Governor HE Cecily Mbarire in Embu in 2023.

With Mombasa Governor Abdullswamad Sherrif Nassir and investors in Mombasa in 2023.

With Nairobi Governor Johnson Sakaja in Nairobi in 2022.

With Charles Muga, Ndu Okoh and Eric Latiff after an interview on Spice FM in Nairobi 2022.

With Phyllis Wakiaga from the Tony Blair Institute, in Vienna Austria, in 2023.

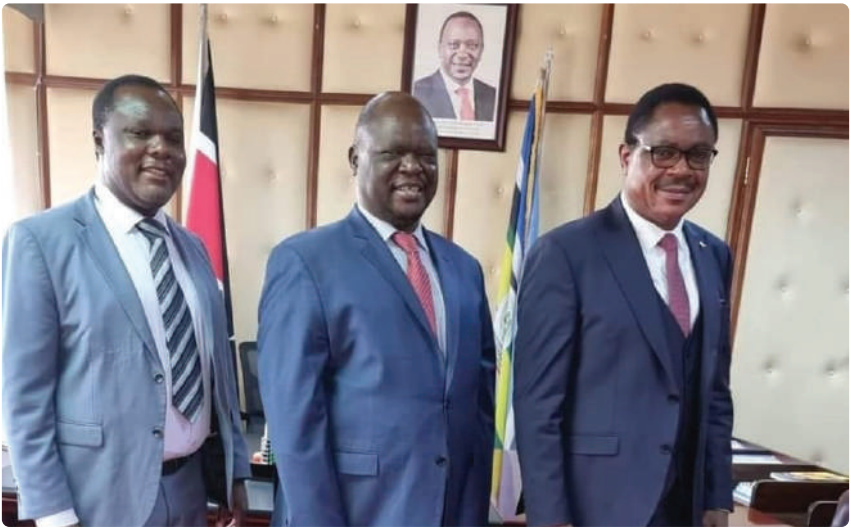
With the Govenor of Kisumu County Prof Anyang Nyongo and Member of Parliament Marriane Keitany in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia in 2023.

With Dr. Kilemi Mwiria an academic and politician and former Director of Criminal Investigation George Kinoti in Nairobi in 2021.

National Assembly Speaker Moses Wetang'ula with members of "True Daughters" Women Group at Makutano, Bungoma, in 2023.

With Rt. HE. Moses Wetang'ula in Kajiado in 2023.

With Mzee Dominic Wetang'ula at Kibabii University in 2022.

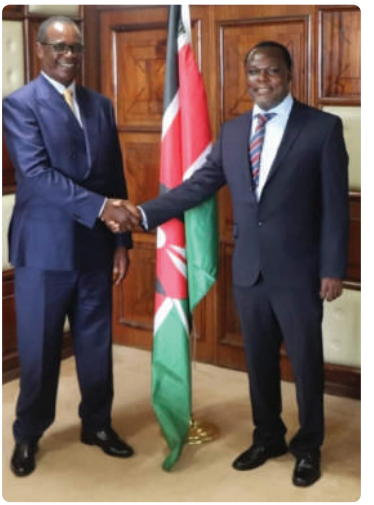


With my friends Chris Khaemba and Amb. Simon Nabukwesi in 2021.

With Auma Obama, Sister to former USA President Barack Obama at the KNQA in 2018.

With Charlene Ruto in Nairobi, in 2022.

With Cabinet Secretary Debra Mulongo, Cabinet Secretary Wycliffe Oparanya, and Farouk Kibet in Kakamega in 2024.



With former Nairobi Governor, Evans Kidero.

With PSs Abubakar Hassan and Alfred Kombudo and Cabinet Secretary Moses Kuria in Nairobi in 2022.

In a Technical and Vocational Education and Training testing lab, in Berlin Germany, in 2018.

During the launch of the Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Journal at Eldoret National Polytechnic in 2019. From left to right Prof. Bonaventure Kerre, Uasin Gishu Governor Jackson Mandago and Principal Josphat Sawe.

Distributing cotton seed with Homa Bay Govenor Gladys Wanga in Homa Bay in 2023.

Distributing cotton seed to chiefs in Bungoma County in 2023.

With Chinese investors in Guangzhou, China in 2023.

While attending the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) in New York, USA in 2023.

With UNIDO Country Director Tally Elnav and MITI Cabinet Secretary Rebecca Miano in 2024.

Meeting with CEOs of all state agencies in the state department for Industry with Cabinet Secretary Rebecca Miano in 2023.

With CS Susan Nakhumicha while visiting a pharmaceutical factory in Kilifi in 2024.

Visiting Humber College, Toronto Canada in 2021.

With TVET CDACC CEO Dr. Lawrence Guantai (third left), Chair Prof. Charles Ondiek (forth left) and staff during accreditation of the examination body by the KNQA in 2018

With Eng. Simiyu Wabwile, Director of KITI and Narendra in Nairobi in 2023.

With United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) DG. Gerd Müller and Kenya's Amb. Mary Mugwanja in Vienna, Austria, in 2022.

Testing a new Honda motorcycle in Kumamoto, Japan.

With Chinese industrialists in Shanghai, on a mission to persuade them to come and invest in Kenya in 2024.

Representing Kenya at the Kenya - Ghana business forum in Accra in 2022.

With the former Prime Minister of Kenya, the Rt Hon Raila Odinga in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, in 2024

With BIDCO Africa chairman and Chief Executive Officer Vimal Shah (third from right) and other investors in Nairobi in 2022

Listening to Kirinyaga Govenor Anne Waiguru in Nairobi in 2023.

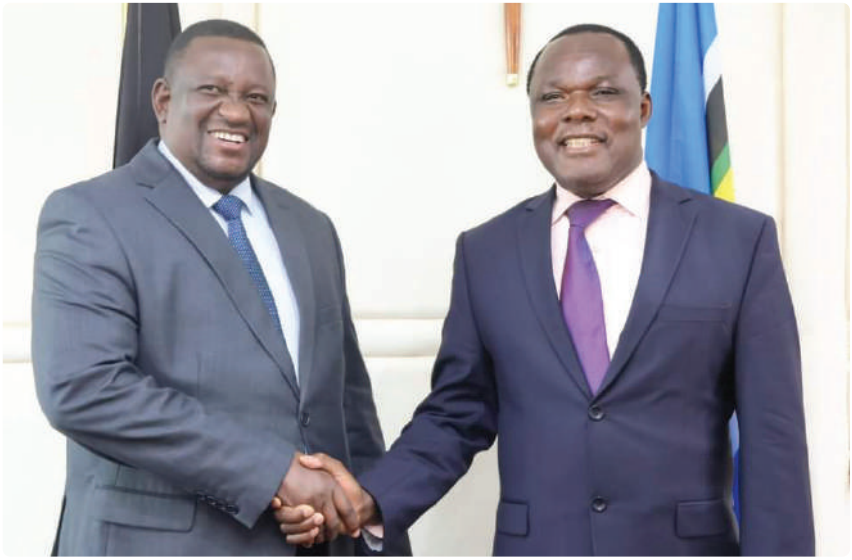
With Cabinet Secretary Moses Kuria and Vihiga Governor Wilber Ottichilo during the launch of Vihiga County Aggregation Industrial Park (CAIP) in 2024.

During a trip when I accompanied HE William Ruto to a visit to Mozambique in 2023.

Attending an Indian Festival in Nairobi in 2022.

With the pioneer Kenyan made car "Nyayo Pioneer " in Nairobi in 2022

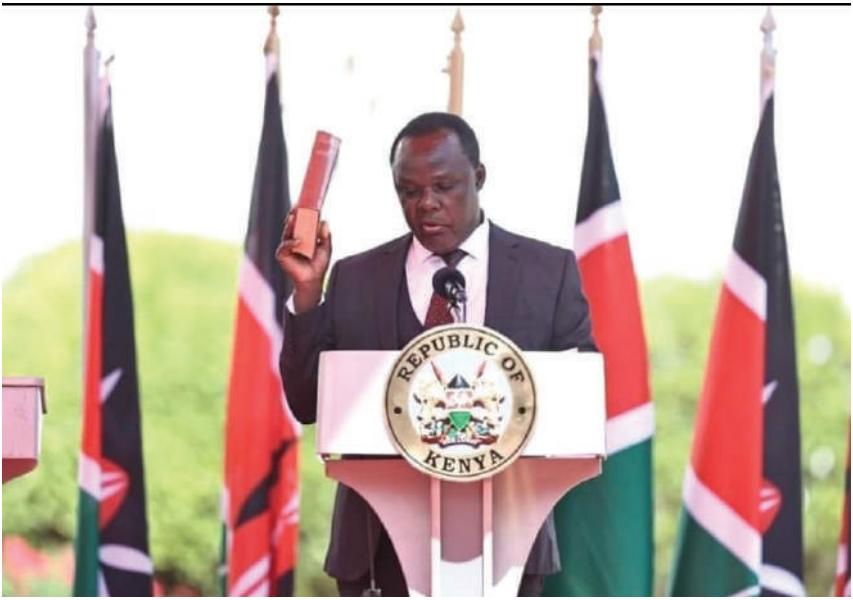
With Cabinet Secretary for Ministry of Investments, Trade and Industry (MITI) Rebecca Miano in Nairobi, 2024.



With Cabinet Secretary for Ministry of Investments, Trade and Industry HE. Salim Mvurya in Nairobi in 2024

Escorting Malawian President Lazarus Chakwera in Nairobi, 2024.

With former British Prime Minister Tony Blair in Nairobi, 2024.



During my swearing in as PS Industry in 2022.

Receiving a recognition certificate and award as one of the best performing PS's in the State Department of Industry in 2024.

CHAPTER 12

SCHOLARLY WORKS AND AWARDS

Finding satisfaction in the pain of others
Will never bring you true happiness - anonymous

THROUGH SACRED-Africa I undertook and published numerous research works in animal science, soil productivity, new crop varieties, how to work with farmers, what works for small-scale farmers, challenges and opportunities of rural agriculture, among various other related topics.

These results were disseminated in the many meetings that I attended and I have also published (alongside fellow scholars) more than 200 papers and contributed chapters in over 20 books, featured in over 100 newspaper articles, and appeared in numerous radio and TV interviews. I grew in leaps and bounds and in ways that I had not dreamt of. My works have been widely cited by scholars, students, extension workers, policy-makers and even the Government of Kenya.

In the process, I have established a formidable international profile courtesy of which I have been invited to many countries as a key-note speaker in conferences and for consultancy services. Out of the 54 countries in Africa, I have visited over 40 of them. I have been to every continent, participating in high-level meetings. Over the years, I became a much sought-after speaker on matters related to farming in Africa and later on leadership, higher education, TVET and governance, among other subjects.

From a two-week trip to map out and study organic agriculture in the United Kingdom, to presenting my vision of transforming small-holder farming at the Green Revolution conference in Oslo, this has been grist to my industrious mill. Preserving, processing and utilizing the indigenous knowledge of farmers, was my presentation at a conference in Addis Ababa in Ethiopia, while in Alexandria in Egypt, I explored how biotechnologies could help transform small- holder farming in Africa.

And in 2004, when an association of African NGOs working in agriculture was started, I became its first chairman. This association has its headquarters in Accra, Ghana. I have also served on the boards of numerous local and international NGOs and organisations. I also served as a board member (and chair of the audit committee) of the Regional Universities Forum for Capacity Building in Agriculture (RUFORUM), which is based at Makerere University in Kampala, Uganda. This is an association of 130 agriculture-based universities from Africa. Since

inception, RUFORUM has awarded scholarships to over 3,000 post-graduate and 1,000 PhD students in African universities to complete their studies.

Through these meetings, networks and interactions, I learnt plenty about Africa including, but not limited to, our shared history, culture, aspirations and challenges. Our motherland has suffered greatly and for a long time which led me to the realisation that we needed joint efforts to address common challenges.

Actually, it became clearer to me that there was no difference between a farmer in rural Malawi and his or her counterpart in Kimilili in Kenya. The more I travelled, the more I realised that you cannot change the fortunes of farmers in one African country without changing the fortunes of all of the continent's farmers. I became convinced that we needed collective efforts to liberate African farmers.

I also realised that Kenya and many African countries have a number of good and promising technologies, some of which have had positive impacts on farming. But these islands of success do not speak to each other. A farmer in the Democratic Republic of Congo is unlikely to know about improved maize varieties in Kenya. We need a system that brings Africans together to share experiences and technologies that can transform their agriculture. The fact that Africa has mostly small-holder farmers present unique challenges and opportunities. We need more continental efforts to address the challenges of small-holder farming, for example.

Productivity is still very low in most African countries. Poor soil fertility, low yields, and poor markets are a big impediment to African farming systems. But Africa is huge. In our efforts in western Kenya we hardly scratched the surface but we learnt valuable lessons that can be shared. So, I gladly joined any efforts that promoted learning and sharing information that could change the lot of farmers.

In this journey, I received great support from many individuals and organisations. The Rockefeller Foundation was one of the first institutions to realise and believe in my potential. I worked closely with colleagues such as Dr. John Lynam, Joe de Vries, Akin Adesina, who became President of the African Development Bank, among others.

Unfortunately, many African countries do not fund or support research. Our research institutions are on their deathbeds. Many of our agricultural research institutions were founded by our colonial masters and are mostly funded by external donors. Our research priorities are decided by outsiders and the research findings remain unused. Africa's research institutions need to prioritise what is important for the continent's farmers.

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I revered Dr. Kofi Annan. He was the Secretary General of the United Nations. His work at the UN was not questionable. He was a global figure who had achieved a lot at this global body. Then one day, I received a call from the

Kofi Annan Foundation. I was told that he was impressed with the work of SACRED-Africa and had decided to visit me. I could not believe it. Kofi Annan coming to visit me in Bungoma? How? I took a long to absorb that piece of news.

And it came to pass. Eventually, I received Dr. Annan at the Kisumu Airport on 18th July, 2007. He stayed in Bungoma for two days during which I took him to various farms across the district. He wanted his visit to be a low-key affair but given his global stature that was not possible. He was accorded heavy security, with the Western Provincial Commissioner and the Bungoma District Commissioner attending all his meetings. The media took a lot of interest in the visit. Annan met groups of farmers in Kimilili, Naitiri, Chwele, Webuye, Bukembe, Mayanja, and Kimaeti, and other places.

Many farmers were excited to meet this global icon. Annan visited the farm of *Mzee* Pharis Wekesa in Bukembe. Wekesa shared his experiences as a farmer and how SACRED- Africa had helped him get better yields which in turn earned him a better income. Addressing farmers at Wekesa's home, Annan said that the revolution that aims at making the African continent self-sufficient in food production was in the offing. He thanked me for the role I was playing in helping farmers improve their crops and livestock.

Annan told the farmers that most "scholars and researchers that I meet from Africa are interested in making

their lives better. But this man, , has dedicated great efforts in changing your lives. He is special. Take good care of him. We need more of this kind of people in Africa. Juma is my hero." I was humbled by these words from Annan.

Earlier in 2005, President Mwai Kibaki had awarded me a Head of State Commendation (HSC) in recognition of the work that I was doing in supporting farmers to access fair and profitable markets. In 2007, the United Nations declared our maize marketing project one of the most innovative initiatives in holistically supporting farmers to come out of poverty in Africa.

In 2009 I was awarded the Norman Borlaug Award for leadership in agriculture in Africa. It came with a prize of KSh20 million. Years later, in 2023, President William Ruto awarded me the Chief of the Order of the Burning Spear (CBS). This has been the story of a mustard seed that has grown into a large tree that has borne fruits and given shelter to its people.

CHAPTER 13

POLITICAL LEADERSHIP

History is not there for you to like or dislike
It is there for you to learn from
And if it offends you, the better
Because then you are less likely to repeat it
It is not yours to erase, it belongs to us all - Winston Churchil

IN 1963 there were only three electoral constituencies in Bungoma District, namely Bungoma South, Bungoma East and Mount Elgon. In the General Election of that year, the Bungoma South seat was won by Chief Sudi's son, Henry Kerre, on a Kenya African Democratic Union (KADU) ticket, while Mark Barasa, also of KADU, clinched the Bungoma East seat. Daniel Moss was elected on a KANU ticket in Mt. Elgon constituency. KANU and KADU were the main political parties in the country, with the latter being federalist and the former centralist.

Unfortunately, Kerre died barely a year after his election and was replaced by Joseph Khaoya. By then,

Nathan Munoko represented Bungoma in the Senate. Independent Kenya started off with a two-tier legislature, but the Senate did not last long. It was abolished barely a year later. However, Senators were retained as MPs.

In the 1969 General Election, Bungoma's constituencies had been increased to four. They were: Bungoma Central, Bungoma South, Bungoma East and Mount Elgon. Munoko won in Central, Khaoya in South and a new entrant, Elijah Wasike Mwangale, took Bungoma East. Moss retained the Mt. Elgon seat. There was no KADU because the party had been dissolved in 1964 and merged with KANU, rendering Kenya a de facto one-party state.

In the 1974 elections, Mwangale retained his Bungoma East seat, while Munoko moved to South and won it. Bungoma Central elected Fredrick Masinde, kicking out Khaoya in the process. In Mount Elgon, Moss continued to rule.

Come the 1979 General Election and a huge political wave swept across Bungoma District. Only Mwangale retained his Bungoma East seat. Bungoma Central elected Peter Kisuya, Bungoma South went to Lawrence Sifuna, and Mount Elgon ended Moss' 15-year reign by voting in Wilberforce Kisiero.

There were no changes in 1983. The four MPs won back their respective seats during the snap General Election that President Moi called in the wake of the failed August 1, 1982 coup attempt staged by elements of the Kenya Air

Force. It is widely held that Moi called the snap poll to weed politicians he thought were not loyal enough to him out of the system. Before he called the election Moi told a hushed political rally that there was a traitor who was being used by foreign powers to destabilise Kenya. It was Mwangale who named Charles Njonjo, then Minister for Constitutional Affairs, as the traitor.

In 1988 the Bungoma constituencies were increased to five and renamed Kimilili, Sirisia, Kanduyi, Webuye and Mount Elgon. This was the year of the infamous queue voting, known in Kiswahili as *mlolongo*, which was adopted for the KANU primaries, and of the massively rigged election proper. The mighty Mwangale comfortably won his fourth consecutive term in Kimilili. Kisuya and Sifuna were bundled out. In came Joseph Muliro in Sirisia, Maurice Makhanu won in Kanduyi and Joash Wamang'oli emerged in Webuye. Kisiero retained his Mount Elgon seat.

The 1992 elections were the first to be held in the multi-party era. This came after section 2(a) of the constitution of Kenya was repealed to return the country to plural politics after a generation and fierce struggles to end KANU's monopoly of power. Section 2(a) which was inserted in the constitution in 1982, declared that there shall be only one political party in Kenya, the Kenya African National Union. Many parties were formed following its deletion, the most notable of which was Forum for the Restoration of Democracy (FORD) led by the late Jaramogi Oginga Odinga and the late Masinde Muliro.

Unfortunately, Muliro, one of the great and good of Kenya's freedom struggle and politics, died as Kenya neared these elections. This saw FORD, which pulled the trigger on KANU's political monopoly, split into two FORD-Kenya and FORD-Asili. A majority of Muliro's supporters went to FORD-Kenya which was led by Jaramogi.

Many KANU candidates, especially in Bungoma, were swept aside in the 1992 General Election. The FORD-Kenya wave was very strong. The notable fall from grace was that of the mighty Mwangale in Kimilili. He had represented the constituency for 23 years. He was ousted by Dr. Mukhisa Kituyi of FORD-Kenya. In Sirisia, Joseph Muliro of KANU was floored by John Munyasia of FORD-Kenya. Musikari Kombo, also of FORD-Kenya, won the Webuye seat. Sifuna made a comeback, winning the Kanduyi seat on a FORD-Asili ticket. Kisiero retained his Mount Elgon seat on a KANU ticket.

This is the year Moses Masika Wetang'ula, a lawyer, entered Parliament as KANU's nominated MP. Nominated MPs represent special groups, such as minorities, youth, and people living with disabilities, among others, in Parliament

There was a by-election in Webuye in 1995 after Kombo's election was nullified by a petition court which found he had influenced voters through a ritual known as khulia silulu, which is considered to be a way of 'binding people through an oath.' Saul Busolo won the by-election. From 1992 to 1997 many Bukusu people underwent political persecution for not supporting the KANU government.

Violence was rampant in the Mount Elgon area where many Bukusu people were killed, others injured and many more evicted from their homes.

In 1997 Bungoma had six constituencies, which included Sirisia, Kimilili, Kanduyi, Webuye, Bumula and Mt. Elgon. Kombo regained his Webuye seat as did Kituyi (Kimilili), Munyasia (Sirisia) and Sifuna (who went to Bumula). A new entrant, Wafula Wamunyinyi, captured the Kanduyi seat. In Mount Elgon, Kisiero lost to a newcomer, Joseph Kimkung.

In 2002, Kituyi, Kombo and Wamunyinyi (Kanduyi), retained their seats. In Sirisia, Munyasia was floored by Wetang'ula who crossed over to FORD-Kenya and fought to win and establish himself as a politician in his own right. Sifuna was ousted in Bumula by the comical Bifwoli Wakoli, a teacher-turned-politician. In Mount Elgon, Kimkung was ousted by John Serut.

This is the year when the National Rainbow Coalition (NARC) came to power at the expense of KANU, with Kibaki as President and Michael Kijana Wamalwa as Vice President. NARC was a coalition of many parties, among them the Democratic Party of President Kibaki, and FORD-Kenya of Wamalwa. Unfortunately, Wamalwa died in office in August, 2003. The VP's seat was given to Moody Awori while Wamalwa's Saboti parliamentary seat went to Davies Nakitare, my former employer at Manor House Agricultural Centre (MHAC) in Kitale. Kombo became the FORD-Kenya party leader.

CHAPTER 14

THREE TIMES UNLUCKY

Become the good fire that genuinely lights up others,
Not one that ruins the joy, goodwill,
And expectations of others - Anonymous

AFTER WORKING with the communities, especially farmers, for over a decade, I realised that the problems they faced emanated from policy positions that could only be dealt with properly at the legislative level. After thinking carefully and for long, and after equally careful deliberations with family and friends, I threw my hat in the ring for the Kanduyi parliamentary race in 2007. Wafula Wamunyinyi of FORD- Kenya was the incumbent.

My sole intention was to go to Parliament and help to push for a favourable playground for farmers. I moved around and explained my vision to the farming community. In my manifesto farmers were my priority. I remember telling them: "If you want your situation to change, you must have

your defender in Parliament. I have been defending and I will continue to defend your rights as farmers. I understand your situation very well." This message was received well by the voters. They assured me of their votes in the forthcoming General Election.

However, the tricks of politics and the craziness of democracy soon set in. My participation in elections exposed me to the ugly side of party politics. There was rampant violence, vote rigging, bribery, backstabbing and excessive propaganda. To say that many have been ruined completely by their attempts to join parliament, especially in Kenya, is an understatement.

During President Moi's one-party era we witnessed candidates with long queues declared losers and those whose queues were shorter announced the victors in the infamous *mlolongo* system. Part of the reason many Kenyans agitated for multi-party democracy was to introduce free and fair elections and allow the people's will to prevail. But nothing changed with the coming of multi-party politics. Same monkeys, different trees, went the refrain of dejection.

In the run-up to the 2007 elections I joined NARC-Kenya at the invitation of Dr. Mukhisa Kituyi. I worked closely with him. This newly-formed outfit had rotational leadership. Dr. Mukhisa could chair it for a month and then hand over to Martha Karua and others.

However, when NARC-Kenya opted to join the Party of National Unity (PNU) coalition to which Wamunyinyi

and FORD-Kenya belonged, I feared the obvious and decided to look for another party. I knew I could not be given a nomination certificate. I decamped to the Orange Democratic Movement (ODM) led by Raila Odinga, William Ruto, and others. ODM had not yet made inroads in Bungoma. ODM was born in the lead up to the 2005 referendum on the draft constitution. ODM led opposition to the draft which was backed by the government. The Kibaki-led government lost the referendum. The movement metamorphosed into a political party and readied for the 2007 General Election.

But FORD-Kenya was the dominant party in Bungoma. Therefore, I was among the first people who ran around Bungoma selling the ODM agenda to the electorate. Other ODM aspirants in Bungoma included Alfred Khang'ati (who was my rival for the Kanduyi seat), John Waluke (Sirisia), Adrian Mukhebi (Bumula) and Alfred Sambu (Webuye).

I expected a free and fair nomination exercise during the ODM primaries given the credentials of our party leader, Raila Odinga, who was, by popular repute, a stalwart defender of democracy and human rights. I expected some degree of decorum and sincerity among aspirants and party officials. I was dead wrong.

When the primaries were called, we witnessed a lot of confusion, dishonesty, violence and open theft. The exercise was shambolic. On the day of nominations, election materials had not reached our constituency by 4.00pm. We

were told that the vehicle transporting them to Bungoma had broken down. But nominations were going on in the neighbouring constituencies.

I was not sure what to make of the situation. Then a few minutes after 5.00pm, the ballots arrived. I was of the view that the nominations be postponed to the following day to give party members time to vote. In any case, it was getting dark and most of our voters had given up and gone to their homes after waiting from morning to evening.

But officials told us that they had been instructed by the party headquarters in Nairobi to carry out and complete the nominations that day. Voting, therefore, went on at night with, needless to say, poor turn-out and lighting posing a major challenge. Nobody had made arrangements for alternative lighting despite most of the polling stations having no electricity. All the same, around midnight results from about 10 nearby polling stations were brought in. I was leading by a big margin.

Because of the gruelling campaigns, I had not slept well for several days. I chose to have a nap at our party offices. A few minutes after 3.00 am, I was awakened by a call from one of my supporters who informed me that the returning officers were at a nearby hotel announcing the results of the nominations. We rushed there only to find that they had already declared Khang'ati the winner.

I sought redress from the party headquarters. They lied to me that the nominations would be repeated in two

days' time because the initial exercise had been adjudged not free and fair. However, as we went around the constituency informing the party rank and file to prepare for a repeat poll, we ran into Khang'ati's team thanking voters over its public address system for nominating him as the ODM parliamentary candidate. Of course, two days later, a Sunday it was, there were no repeat nominations.

I again called the head office and they told me that the initial nominations were adjudged free and fair. That is when I came face to face with favouritism in political parties. Party officials carried a bigger say than party members. If the officials liked you, you got the certificate even if you were whitewashed in the nominations. If they were not on your side you would not go anywhere even if you won by a landslide. The members of the party, who are told they are the owners of the outfits, had no say in this process.

Despite the nomination's fiasco, I did not give up on my quest for the Kanduyi parliamentary seat. I decamped to KADDU, an outfit that was formed only the previous year, and went all the way to the ballot. Khang'ati eventually won, defeating Wamunyinyi and I in the process.

By the end of the 2007 elections in Bungoma, only Sylvester Wakoli (Bumula) and Moses Wetang'ula (Sirisia) retained their seats. In Kimilili Mukhisa Kituyi lost to Dr David Eseli. In Webuye Musikari Kombo lost to Alfred Sambu.

The battle between Kituyi and Kombo was the most

interesting contest throughout Bungoma District. Kituyi campaigned more in Webuye constituency than in his Kimilili turf to ensure Kombo lost and Kombo campaigned more in Kimilili than Webuye to ensure Kituyi lost. They succeeded in their quest to bring each other down. They lost to their rivals in their own constituencies.

Immediately after the elections, Wetang'ula showed his hand in regard to his future in party politics and in Bungoma District. He ousted Kombo and took over the FORD-Kenya leadership in 2009. Therefore, as Kombo and Mukhisa fought each other into political oblivion, Wetang'ula's political star was rising.

Prior to the 2013 General Election, Bungoma constituencies were increased to nine comprising Kanduyi, Bumula, Kimilili, Tongaren, Sirisia, Kabuchai, Webuye East, Webuye West and Mt. Elgon. I moved from Kanduyi and contested the Kabuchai seat. This time I ran on New FORD-Kenya ticket, under the leadership of Eugene Wamalwa.

I won the nominations and was, in fact, rightly declared the winner. I was very happy. In the lead up to the nominations, the demands of politics had kept me away from my family for a while. After clinching the nomination, I decided to visit my daughter Polly who was in school in Juja, Thika. She was preparing for her examinations and I

had not seen her for a long time. I was in her school when I received a call from a senior official of New FORD-Kenya. He instructed me to report to our Nairobi office urgently.

I cut short the school trip and left for Nairobi. At the New FORD-Kenya office, I was informed that my nomination certificate had been revoked. "Why?" I kept asking but every official I asked would refer me to another official who would in turn refer me to yet another official. It was a circus. Finally, cornered for an explanation, one of them mumbled that I had been involved in electoral malpractices but he could not substantiate his claim. Just like that, the certificate was given to my competitor, Philip Mukui, who has since passed on.

Political truths, deals or secrets do not remain under wraps forever. I was to learn from someone within the New FORD-Kenya leadership that the reason I had won and then lost the nomination in quick succession was that the party high command was uncomfortable with me. I was informed that the office felt that I was far too independent minded to fall into line quickly or be controlled by the head office. Therefore, I was not seen as a 'candidate of the office.' Stunning. The same party officials who had been smiling with, and at, me all through had stabbed me in the back. This incident opened my eyes and taught me to expect very little or nothing from people, especially those who often cut the image of being close to me and having my back.

In the elections, Suleiman Murunga clinched the

Kimilili seat, Eseli won in Tongaren and Wamunyinyi made a comeback in Kanduyi. He had been given an ambassadorial posting to Somalia after he lost to Khang'ati in 2007. Other winners were John Waluke of ODM (Sirisia), James Mukwe (Kabuchai), Bonface Otsyula of New FORD-Kenya (Bumula), Alfred Sambu of ODM (Webuye East) and Daniel Wanyama (Webuye West). John Serut defeated Fred Kapondi in Mount Elgon.

Ken Lusaka was voted in as the first Governor of Bungoma County, with Moses Wetang'ula clinching the Senate seat. Wetang'ula defeated Kituyi and Kombo. There was a petition which Wetang'ula still won. The Women Representative seat went to Reginalda Wanyonyi.

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After the elections, as I drove back to Nairobi with my wife Lucia, I received a call from the senior New FORD-Kenya official who had revoked my nomination. I was hesitant to pick his call because he had frustrated me greatly. He extinguished my dreams of becoming a Member of Parliament. He treated me with arrogance and contempt. He seemed to enjoy humiliating me.

He called several times before I answered his call. He greeted me cheerfully and with a friendly tone. He asked me where I was. I told him that I was on the road travelling to Nairobi from Bungoma. Specifically, I had gone past

Nakuru. He told me he was also travelling to Nairobi and was behind me. He asked me to wait for him at a popular stop-over called Kikopey in the Gilgil area. He did not tell me why he wanted to see me but I was curious so I stopped and waited for him.

He arrived about half an hour later and went straight to the point. "I called you because I need your help. I'm both glad and relieved that you are on this route. I don't have fuel, I am running on empty," he told me.

Not only did I fuel his vehicle but I also bought lunch for him and his team of about five people. My wife was furious. She wondered why I was still entertaining a man who not only humiliated us but had also gone out of his way to bad-mouth me on the ground in Bungoma. But I took it easy and chose not to revenge.

In 2017 I threw myself into elective politics again. This time I chose to run for the Bungoma senatorial seat on a Jubilee Party ticket. Jubilee was the governing party under President Uhuru Kenyatta and his Deputy Dr. William Ruto. The two were seeking a second term having won their initial election in 2013.

In Bungoma County I campaigned alongside Kenneth Lusaka who was also seeking a second term as Governor, and Reginalda Wanyonyi who ran for the Women

Representative's seat. The party had a strong battalion in the county which included John Waluke, Dan Wanyama, Didmus Barasa and Fred Kapondi.

We put in a spirited campaign and covered virtually every corner of the county. But I was not lucky for the third time. I lost to Moses Wetang'ula. Lusaka lost the Governor's seat to Wycliffe Wangamati, while Reginalda was trounced by Catherine Wambilianga. But, in what looked like a promotion, Lusaka went on to become the Speaker of the Senate.

Other strong candidates in our Jubilee team who did not make it included Dr Wanjala Iyaya who lost the Webuye East seat narrowly to Alfred Sambu, Dr Murumba Chikati lost the Tongaren seat to Dr Eseli Simiyu, Majimbo Kalasinga lost the Kabuchai seat to the late James Mukwe, Boniface Otsyula was beaten in Bumula by Mwambu Mabonga and Chrispinus Mukoche was defeated in Kanduyi by Wafula Wamunyinyi. Majimbo Kalasinga later became the MP for Kabuchai following the death of James Mukwe in 2020.

Jubilee was new and we laboured to introduce it to our people amid deafening shouts of *Jubilee tawe* (No to Jubilee), the slogan which had been coined by FORD-Kenya, the dominant party in Bungoma.

Nonetheless, Dr. Ruto was instrumental in the Bungoma County campaigns. I had met him in 1987 during our pre-university NYS paramilitary training. We were year mates at the University of Nairobi. He was in the Botany and Zoology class, while I was in Veterinary. He and I started

off at the College of Biological and Physical Sciences at the Chiromo Campus. I knew Ruto as a dedicated member of the Christian Union. But one could also tell that he was a go-getter and a man on a mission. He was destined for bigger things in life.

After university, he did not take long before he joined politics but what surprised me was how he easily trounced veteran politician Reuben Chesire in Eldoret North constituency, and later on took on and defeated bigger players such as former cabinet ministers Henry Kosgey, Sally Kosgei, Nicholas Biwott, Gideon Moi, among others, to become the political kingpin of the Rift-Valley.

In 2022, he became the 5th President of the Republic of Kenya, defeating veteran politician Raila Odinga. I was not surprised by his huge success. He was the first presidential candidate to win the seat at his first attempt since the introduction of multi-partyism in 1992.

In many ways I admired his politics and how he navigated the political landscape. My admiration was accentuated by the fact I had not been successful in my own attempts to win an elective office. I could not help but admire Ruto's political shrewdness. So, when I found myself in the same party with him in 2017, I was keen to learn the ropes from him. He was already streets ahead of me and was my senior. He was, after all, the Deputy President of Kenya. But he came across as a committed and extremely hard-working politician.

I was amazed by the ease with which he seemed to remember every one of us, the places we visited and even the projects that the government was implementing. He has a very sharp memory. After attending all our campaigns in Bungoma, he told our group that I was the best campaigner in our team, that I had the best message and approach despite having lost the contest. He said my future in elective politics was bright.

Another politician that I have studied keenly and really respect is Moses Wetang'ula. I consider him my elder brother because we come from the same area and our fathers were good friends. Throughout his political career, Wetang'ula has demonstrated shrewdness, acumen and mobilization skills not seen before in our region. He belongs in the league of veterans Masinde Muliro and Michael Wamalwa Kijana. Famously nicknamed 'Papa wa Roma', his political ingenuity speaks for itself.

Over the last 32 years Wetang'ula has served as an MP, Assistant Minister, Minister, Senator, and now Speaker of the National Assembly. He has been in public life since I graduated from the university. As my senior, I always look up to him for advice.

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Campaign time in Kenya is frenzied. Candidates have to dash from place to place and meet women, youth, clans, attend funerals and hurriedly arranged fund-raisers to take

advantage of the mad season. It is like the fabled wildebeest migration of the Maasai Mara. Many start the journey from Tanzania's Serengeti National Park but few finish it and make the return trip. Many are eaten by the hungry crocodiles that lie in wait in the Mara River of Kenya's politics. Some of those who successfully cross the river are badly wounded.

When the stampede is over and the dust settles, many failed candidates have destroyed the wealth of their families and ruined their businesses, many are emotionally broken, have no jobs, have ruined the futures of their children, and left to rue their investment of hard-earned money in chasing political dreams. Many families break up or in some cases divorce is never too far from the equation. Kenya's politics sometimes resembles a torture chamber.

For the winners, a new life begins. How do you run away from the electorate without being noticed? How do you deliver on the many promises you made on the stump knowing fully well that you would not keep them? How do you remain human after such inhuman acts have been meted out on you?

Although I did not succeed in my political endeavours, I am not sure whether to complain or celebrate. But I have learnt crucial life lessons. I learned to expect very little from people and to trust my instincts. Politics made me to become increasingly analytical. Even on straightforward issues I still ask myself difficult questions before I make a decision.

Politics removes class. You have to interact and work with all kinds of people. This calls for simplicity. One must keep one's messages as simple as possible. Politics builds your mobilization skills and also brings out the hunter's instincts in you. It teaches you how to pounce on prey and make a kill. Furthermore, one has to read between the lines in order to decode the spoken and unspoken messages being delivered.

When I look back at my short and uneventful political life, not only did I learn extensively about our people, their aspirations and life in general but I also learnt about myself. It was a self-revealing journey for me. It led me to higher goals. I realised how resilient I could be. You need patience, understanding, shrewdness and formidable hunting instincts all rolled into one. Most importantly, you need God's grace.

But there were many things that I was unable to do. Probably, that is why I did not quite succeed in that adventure. For example, my supporters and those close to me complained that I was too honest. They faulted me for always speaking the truth and delivering on promises. I was reminded repeatedly that that is not how a (Kenyan) politician behaves. But I chose to be myself. I kept reminding them that that is who I am.

Kenyan politics can be a huge burden. It will test your patience, resilience and even your humanness. The fact that I came out in one piece speaks volumes about the emotional stability that God endowed me with.

CHAPTER 15

LIFE IN AMERICA

Don't let your past decide
The kind of future you need to have.
Failures or limitations of the past
Have no control over the greatness in you - Derek Rydall

I NEEDED a break away from the politics of Bungoma and Kenya and away from the daily grind of earning a living. I needed to be away from Kenya, but I had to be busy doing something I liked or something I had wanted to do but had not got round to doing it. What came to my mind immediately as I sought to put the failure to get elected behind me was my dream to undertake my PhD studies. The name that came to my mind was that of Emmanuel Omondi.

Omondi was my contemporary at the University of Nairobi. He studied agriculture. We met again at Manor House Agricultural Centre (MHAC) in Kitale where he was a training coordinator. I was his boss. We worked well together before he got a scholarship to study for his Master's

degree in agronomy and later a PhD at the University of Wyoming in the United States.

It was time for me, I thought excitedly, to become a student again. It was time for my PhD. It was something that I had postponed for a long time. I got in touch with Omondi who linked me with Prof. Jay Norton and, within no time, I secured a USAID scholarship in 2008 to undertake a PhD in soil science at the University of Wyoming.

I arrived at Denver Airport in Colorado after a 27-hour journey from Nairobi in May, 2008. I was received by Prof. Norton who eventually became my supervisor and mentor. I will forever be grateful to Prof Omondi, who currently teaches at the University of Tennessee, for the connection. He helped me fulfil my lifelong dream.

Joining Wyoming helped to kill several birds with one stone. It allowed me to pursue my long-held desire of acquiring a PhD. Being away in the US also gave me a welcome break and relief from the disappointment of my 2007 poll loss.

Prof. Norton was a tall, bearded gentleman who was intensely curious about the goings-on in Africa. He was a professor of soil science in the Department of Renewable Resources, where I enrolled. My study project involved working with wheat farmers in southeastern Wyoming and sugar beet farmers in the north of the state to test various soil improvement technologies and the economics of production. Having worked with farmers in Kenya, this

was familiar territory for me. I hit the ground running.

Wyoming is mostly a ranching state with small pockets of wheat and sugar beet farming. The farms are mostly large (about 3,000 to 7,000 acres) and are highly mechanised. In most cases, the farms only have two or three workers. The farms are in rural areas and the farmers know very little about the rest of the world. Most of those I met had never heard about Kenya, so the best I could do when asked where I came from, was to say that I was from Africa.

I found farming in the US quite different from what I knew. The farmers told me that they only grew crops for which they had been contracted. The contract specified the crop that a farmer was to grow, when to deliver the produce, the quality of the produce and its price. The crop is usually insured against natural calamities such as hailstones and general crop failure. Even the price to be paid is agreed in advance. I found that some farmers had sold in advance some of the crops that they were to grow in the next five years.

That means by the time a farmer is planting he knows which quality he must produce and what price the crop will fetch. This allows the farmer to make a rational decision on which inputs to use in order to achieve the desired results, and which costs to incur and which ones to avoid so that the venture remains profitable.

On behalf of African farmers, I felt rather jealous of the predictability of the American farming system. When I

reflected on the confusion, exploitation and large number of cartels and middlemen in the farming system in Kenya, I felt sorry for our farmers. We truly lived in different worlds.

Furthermore, the technology I worked with in the US was very advanced. For example, one day I visited a farmer and found him with a driver-less tractor. All he needed to do was survey his farm, feed the data into the tractor and it would go on to plough the said farm or part of it, driven by technology. This tractor could also spray herbicides and harvest crops.

If the tractor ran out of fuel it sent a text message to the farmer. When it completed the task assigned it, it similarly alerted him. When it finished harvesting, this complex machine recorded data on yields in terms of quantity, moisture content, among other things. Such a farmer could plough 10,000 acres of land, plant his crops and harvest them with ease. It showed me that Africa and African farmers have a long way to go.

I spent most of my time in the field with farmers, collecting samples and analysing them in the lab. The machines we used to analyse the samples were sophisticated and automated. I first had to be trained on how to use them. They were set up in such a manner that I would line up to 600 samples and go home. The machines would then analyse them throughout the night, compile the results and send them to my email address.

We had also installed sensitive monitors in the field

that observed the soil moisture and temperatures and periodically sent me data which I analysed and reported as part of my dissertation. When away from college or out in the field for research, especially in summer, I would occasionally take time off and travel to Utah, Montana, Colorado and even Michigan. I often travelled with Prof. Norton to Utah for skiing during the winter. I visited national parks and went hunting with the professor, who was a licenced hunter.

As part of my scholarship, I was expected to teach undergraduate students. I became an object of curiosity among my students and even my own classmates. Wyoming was inhabited mostly by white people and it was clear to me that their children had not previously been taught or interacted with black lecturers. They found me and my accent different and strange. They had interesting stereotypes and I remember one young man who tried hard to prove that I was ignorant or that he knew better than I did. He would always try to disapprove what I taught.

Then there was one of my classmates who would not miss a chance to ask me how I had fared in my assignment. He was keenly interested to know how I performed. Tough luck. I always did better than he expected. He was quite surprised to know that I scored better than he did in most subjects. He believed in white supremacy and was never comfortable with my performance in class. Ultimately, he and others got used to me. I did not bother to change myself for anyone. But just like any other society, the university had

many considerate and caring people. They donated to me a vehicle, winter clothes, and electronic devices, among other things, and I will forever be grateful for these kind gestures.

Prof Norton was about 50 years old. His wife, Uzurla, was from eastern Europe and they had one son, Carsi, aged seven. Uzurla had also completed her PhD in the USA and was one of my supervisors. I had five supervisors in total who included Thomas Thurrow, Dannelle Peck and Theighs Kelleners.

I arrived in the USA in the middle of an electioneering period. These are the elections that ushered in the country's first black President, Barrack Obama. I followed their campaigns closely and compared them with ours. In Kenya, we promise to set up things such as potable water, electricity, roads, rail, schools and universities when we get elected. In the US, all these things are in place for almost everyone.

Their campaigns hinged on social welfare and international issues. How to take care of the old, the unemployed and the vulnerable, medical care and what they called kitchen table or pocketbook issues. Unlike Kenya where candidates are milked dry by the electorate, in the US the people raised funds to support their candidates. Several groups contributed money for their preferred candidates. A candidate was called to a meeting to be helped but in Kenya you are called to a meeting to help.

Wyoming, the home state of Vice-President Dick Cheney, votes for the Republicans or the Grand Old Party.

It is what the Americans call a red state, as opposed to a blue state, by which they mean one that votes for the Democratic Party. I was impressed that as part of his legacy Cheney built the multimillion-dollar Cheney International Centre at the University of Wyoming to support the teaching of international programmes. This is a good example of how one can give back to society.

When I arrived in Wyoming, an old acquaintance donated to me an old Mercedes-Benz car. I later acquired my own car at $500. We also had charity shops where one could buy household items at affordable prices. In this part of the world, the rich took it upon themselves to help those in need. And they did so without seeking attention or wanting to be noticed or appreciated. I found myself thinking about how many old clothes, shoes, and books, among other items, we keep instead of donating to those who need them.

As a Catholic faithful, on Sundays I would join the Laramie Catholic community where I also made friends. In 2009, we went on a 10-day charity trip to Kingston in Jamaica to support the needy. Such occasions made me understand some societies better.

Many are the times Prof. Norton promised to 'buy a drink this coming Friday'and being Kenyan, I would look forward to multiple beers when the appointed time came. But he would buy me only one beer and go back home. We were different and we both came to appreciate that even

as we worked alongside each other. When Prof. Norton, his wife and parents visited me in Kenya, we spent time reflecting on our cultural differences.

The professor was a simple and down-to-earth man. He preferred to be addressed simply as Jay. He was very social. He invited me to his house for dinner many times. We shared a lot about Africa and the situation on the continent.

Unsurprisingly, this led us to develop a joint project that was funded by USAID to the tune of $5 million to support farmers in Kenya and Uganda to adopt conservation agriculture. The project focused on small-holder farmers and enabled Prof. Norton and his team to visit Kenya for the first time and many times thereafter.

Most of my supervisors also came along and appreciated first-hand the difference between our farming and that practised in the US. They saw our struggles and pitied us. They also took time to visit our national parks. I took them to my home in Lwanda and found my mother on the farm weeding her crops.

My mother had a hoe and Prof. Norton took a keen interest in how she went about weeding the crops. He had not seen something like that before. He took the hoe and tried it out. He kept asking questions. “How many hits does she need to weed one acre?” “How long does it take to weed one acre?” “How much energy does she need to do so?” I had not thought about these issues before. We just arm

ourselves with hoes, go to the farm and get busy.

But the professor was genuinely concerned that manual weeding was tedious and strenuous. He suggested that we carry out research and find a better alternative. In the next few years, we spent time trying to fabricate alternative equipment for weeding, but we never got the desired breakthrough.

In August 2010, I graduated with a PhD in Soil Science. Though American farmers and even the university wanted me to continue working with them, I opted to return to Kenya immediately. Some Kenyans in Wyoming could not understand why I was in a hurry to return home to suffering and hardship instead of taking up the good job that I had been offered. I knew in my heart of hearts that home was best.

I remember telling my colleagues in the US that success lay in the person and not the place where one lived. If one is destined for success, one would succeed even in Kenya; and if one was meant to fail, one would fail even in the US. I had seen many such cases during my travels across the world. There are many Kenyans, and Africans, out there in the West who are not successful.

Back in Kenya, I found our equipment for soil analysis rudimentary. It was not possible to carry out many tests as

it was in the West. Even equipment that was considered obsolete and had been retired in the USA had not reached Kenya yet. That is one area that we needed to work on as a country and continent.

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For most of the time I knew him, Prof. Norton was enthusiastic about skiing. In winter, he attempted several times to teach me this sport but he gave up when he realised that I was not interested. He took me several times to Salt Lake City in Utah for skiing. Most of the time I just watched as he rolled down the snow-covered mountain. I made little effort to learn the sport.

I was greatly saddened in March, 2022 when I read this article online:

> *The University of Wyoming has released the name of a professor who died in an avalanche on March 17, 2022. According to an email from UW, University of Wyoming professor and UW Extension soil fertility specialist Jay Norton, 61, died while skiing in the Game Creek drainage on the western slope of the Tetons near Victor, Idaho.*
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> *"We have lost a talented and beloved member of our community," UW President Ed Seidel said in the statement. "Our hearts go out to his friends and family as we all grieve his loss." According to an Associated Press article, Norton was one of two skiers who were caught in*

an avalanche in the Teton Mountains near Victor, Idaho. The AP says skiing companions were able to dig them out before rescuers arrived. The other victim was not identified but survived.

"Dr. Norton was a consummate scholar who was committed to the improvement of Wyoming agriculture and support of its natural resources. He was able to engage with students at both a personal and professional level at a rare level, and he brought a high level of energy and goodwill to every activity," said the head of the Department of Ecosystem Science and Management Professor Scott Miller in the email.

I remembered the last time Prof. Norton came to visit my mother in Lwanda in October, 2010. He arrived a day after we had buried her. He was devastated. I was gutted by the news of my professor's death.

CHAPTER 16

STRENGTHENING UNIVERSITY EDUCATION

The whole purpose of education is to turn mirrors into windows - Sydney J. Harris

I CAN confidently say that I am well familiar with Kenya's higher education sector and the workings of the country's system of university education. I served for close to 20 years in the sector, starting off as a lecturer in the School of Health Sciences at Moi University in 1996, before moving to the University of Embu where I was the chairman of the department and acting Dean of the School of Agriculture from 2011 to 2013.

Beyond that, I have been involved both as a teacher and as an administrator at the universities, which enabled me to gather first-hand experience in both disseminating knowledge and, therefore, preparing young people for their futures and roles in developing Kenya, and in making policy for our institutions of higher learning.

In 2013 I joined the Commission for University Education (CUE), which was established in 1985 as the Commission for Higher Education (CHE), when it mainly regulated private universities. At the time, each public university had its own Act of Parliament and was generally self- regulating. However, with the enactment of the Constitution of Kenya 2010, there was need to align the university sector with the new constitution. CHE was renamed CUE. It was then recommended that all universities, public and private, be regulated by CUE under a single Act of Parliament.

Hence, in 2012, all laws regulating universities were repealed, including the CHE Act and a new Act was enacted. With these new laws CUE took on the responsibilities of accrediting and regulating all universities in Kenya. The role of regulating technical and vocational training institutions (which CHE had been doing) was vested in the TVET (Technical Vocational Education and Training) Authority (established under the TVET Act of 2013). Vocational training institutions were subsequently devolved to the county governments. CUE was run by a Commission and had a Chief Executive Officer, who also acted as its secretary.

I was employed as the Deputy CEO in charge of Planning, Research and Development. My specific roles included enacting policies to support and facilitate universities to foster a culture of research, invest in research infrastructure, and generally support improvement of

human resources to handle national challenges. Also in my docket was innovation and development of new technologies to accelerate national development.

Universities were supposed to carry out research and deliver findings that would help solve Kenya's challenges. CUE's desire was to build a competitive university sector in Kenya. Among our key priorities was to ensure a high quality of learning and teaching, easy access to universities by all Kenyans, and to offer programmes that were relevant to the job market and industry.

Steadily, the higher education system in Kenya has undergone tremendous expansion. As at 2024 there were 35 public universities, six public constituent colleges and one open university. When it comes to private institutions of higher learning, Kenya has 25 private universities, three private constituent colleges and eight private universities operating with letters of interim authority. The total number of institutions offering university education stands at 78. This number is expected to increase with time.

Over the past 50 years our university education has produced outstanding professionals in many fields including medicine, engineering, law, education, agriculture and the social sciences. This has contributed immensely to the development of our country. Kenya's scholars rank among the best in the East African region, the continent and beyond. Many Kenyans are currently serving in different countries across the globe and contributing immensely to

our country's development through the monies they remit back home.

Geographically, Kenya is not as endowed as its neighbours. Seventy per cent of Kenya is arid and semi-arid. Our neighbours have good soils and enjoy good climates too. But Kenya stands out because of its hard-working, resilient and patriotic citizens. This is what our education system and culture have produced.

Higher education in Kenya has fostered equitable growth, national cohesion and solidarity. When I joined CUE in 2013, universities had a total enrolment of about 300,000 students. By 2016 this number had risen to about 600,000. This rapid enrolment was good for the students and the country but it also strained the available resources such as lecture halls, libraries, computers and hostels.

This forced some universities to establish satellite campuses across the country. However, they lacked libraries, laboratories, ICT centres and other facilities meant to enable proper learning. As CUE, we closed many of these satellite campuses.

In the struggle to take our higher education to the grassroots, many universities were established in rural areas. While this was a noble idea, it also promoted ethnicisation, especially of the staff, at the universities. A majority of these universities hired staff from the locality, hence undermining national cohesion.

To improve the quality of education, CUE also put in place mechanisms and incentives to promote publication of research results in peer reviewed journals. Motivating the teaching staff in the universities was key to improving academic standards.

It is worth noting that no country has ever grown by neglecting its academicians and the research that they do. I also felt that it was important to work out a national plan on how to harness intellectual and research outputs. It has been established that the GDP growth of a country has clear links to its research productivity and how this research is used to inform policy-making and to address the challenges facing the citizens.

However, one problem that we needed to solve urgently as a country was the high numbers of students who dropped out of universities. About 70 per cent of students enrolled for post-graduate degrees completed their studies, and only 50 per cent of PhD students completed their studies on time.

While postgraduate courses are expected to take two to three years, some students in Kenyan universities had still not graduated five years after they embarked on their programmes. Many Kenyan employers have on their databases resumes which indicate that staff have ongoing post-graduate or PhD programmes. Ten years later, some CVs will still categorise such programmes as on-going.

Many students do not complete studies on time. Therefore, research at this level is not informing our

development the way it is anticipated. Students often take too long to complete their programmes because of factors related to supervision, issues concerning the students themselves, and institutional factors.

I noted that the root cause of low completion levels resulted from the type of students who enrolled for the post-graduate programmes. Many of them were working people who could not balance the demands of work and scholarship well. Faced with this situation, most delayed their academic pursuits. I also noted that in some universities, students completed their course work on time but took long to complete their research projects. Some students attributed the delay to being frustrated by their supervisors.

On supervision, capacity needs to be built and better incentives put in place to encourage supervisors to do their work. Two, while CUE has regulated the number of students that one supervisor can take charge of, this is not always adhered to. Three, there is poor matching of students with supervisors and there are no clear methods of resolving conflicts between the two when they arise.

On matters regarding students, it is clear that most of the graduate students are adults who are juggling work, family and learning. Our design of academic programmes does not often recognise this reality. So, while many students complete their coursework on time, some slow down and fizzle out when carrying out research.

It also emerged that some students enrol for courses before they are ready for the rigours of scholarship or for the wrong reasons. Some enrol because it is a requirement for a job they are chasing or for purposes of promotion at their place of work. In my view universities need to put in place better mechanisms for aligning a student's objectives with the academic objectives of the institution in order to resolve this challenge.

Personally, I have encountered many complaints from students, especially regarding supervision. A supervisor is ordinarily supposed to guide and walk with a student through his or her graduate studies but some supervisors become impediments to the progress of students. This has seen many students abandon their courses or take too long to finish because they lack effective supervision.

We also have cases where some supervisors envy the success of their own students. They see their students as competitors and delay or even fail the students. Other supervisors are merely good at wasting time. Because some of them took more than five years to finish a graduate course, they cannot allow the students they are supervising to take shorter time than they did. I have seen students waiting for up to one year to defend their research proposals and commence collection of data.

There are supervisors who are often careless with their work and lose thesis chapters, forcing their students to do them afresh. Then there are supervisors who may have

suffered trauma during their days as students and choose to exact revenge on their students. This delays the students' progress and affects the quality of their work. These are some of the setbacks that we should eliminate in our higher education sector.

I also found out that piracy and plagiarism were common and our universities were ill-equipped to handle them. Nothing would stop a student from one university copying a thesis from another university and graduating with a Master's or a PhD. In countries such as the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, Germany, Sweden, Denmark, Norway and others, there is a system for checking plagiarism.

It was also not possible for many universities and the government to determine the exact number of students we had, what they were studying or what they had graduated in? How could we plan for a sector in which we did not have clear data? In many developed countries, there is a national online system for admitting students which feeds information directly to the university administrators for informed and swift decision-making.

So, I developed a tool to support collection of data on enrolment, programmes, lecturers, teaching resources, among other key aspects of learning and sought to automate this process. I also started research on strategic university issues in Kenya. This included students' enrolment vis-à-vis the country's needs. I focused more on the sectors that were driving the economy. I further sought to establish the

number of PhD holders among our academic staff, their gender, ethnicity and their impact on university education.

I thought we needed a national conference to discuss the university sector, its contribution to national development and the challenges it faced. I thought this would ignite a national dialogue around the issues that affected our universities. So, in 2016, I organised the first ever international conference on the state of university education in Kenya. It was held at Kenyatta University. It was given wide publicity and was graced by local and international speakers.

What we needed were bold ideas and steps to revamp the higher education sector and I thought we were running out of time. Kenya needs a national online system that can be used to list all students admitted in public and private universities. This will make it easier to monitor the numbers of students and graduates in various fields. It will also support planning for this vital sector. It is in the interests of all stakeholders - students, parents, staff and the government - that these changes be made urgently to reinvigorate Kenya's universities.

CHAPTER 17

UNTANGLING OUR EDUCATION

Accept your past without regrets,
Handle your present with confidence
And face your future without fear - Abdul Kalam

AFTER leaving the Commission for University Education in 2017, I was appointed Chief Executive Officer of the Kenya National Qualifications Authority (KNQA) in August 2018. The mandates of the two institutions were related because they both focused on the quality of education.

The KNQA offices were located on the sixth floor of Uchumi House in Nairobi's Central Business District. I was expecting a vibrant institution when I was hired as CEO. I was wrong. The Authority was based on the western wing of the building which was not partitioned. The place was strewn with old and broken chairs and tables and acted as a resting place for the building's cleaning staff. In one corner

of the floor there were desks and chairs that were reserved to serve as offices for the chairman, CEO and secretary of the authority. It was a neglected and dilapidated place to say the least.

The job of the CEO of KNQA had been advertised about a month earlier when I was out in Rwanda consulting for the Rwanda Commission for Science and Technology (RCST) on the development of their five-year strategic plan. I applied for the job as soon as I returned to Kenya. After the interviews, I emerged as the winner and received my letter of appointment a few days later.

I had assumed that the institution was big and well-established. I was wrong again. Because our interviews were conducted in Naivasha, I did not have a chance to visit the organisation before I was appointed CEO. Although the law that established the agency had been enacted in 2014, nothing had been done to lay the foundation for this important institution.

Johnstone Nanjakululu, an employee of the Ministry of Education, had been appointed by the then Cabinet Secretary Jacob Kaimenyi, as the acting CEO, three years earlier. Prof. Bonaventure Kerre, a professor of technology education at the University of Eldoret, was the board chairman. However, Prof. Kerre's term expired two months after my arrival. He was succeeded by Dr. Kilemi Mwiria, a respected scholar and a former Assistant Minister for Education.

I tried with the skeleton team that I found in place to develop the nascent institution. The other members of staff I found in place had been deployed from the Ministry of Education and included Mary Thiiru (Supply Chain Management), Ephraim Munene (Principal Technical Officer) and Catherine Muthui (my secretary). By the time I arrived, there were about 70 applications that had been waiting for recognition and equation of qualifications for nearly a year. They had not been processed.

My work was cut out and I hit the ground running in my endeavour to facilitate reforms and transformation in the education sector. The idea of qualification frameworks is a new phenomenon. It is a growing international practice. Qualification frameworks bring better coordination and harmony to education. The oldest qualifications framework in Africa is that of South Africa, which was established in 1994.

We started working on policies, standards and guidelines on curriculum development, quality assurance, assessment and examinations, and credit accumulation and transfer. Most importantly, we also started services such as recognising qualifications, accrediting Qualifications Awarding Institutions (QAIs) and recognition of prior learning.

We were invited to share our experiences at many fora. We started participating in the making of the African Continental Qualifications Framework (ACQF) whose aim

was to help facilitate workers and students to move freely with their qualifications across Africa in order to support intra-Africa trade. Kenya became a leading example of how to develop and implement a national qualifications framework to ignite reforms in the education sector. I was excited to be part of this new and bold experiment.

Unfortunately, some malicious detractors, whose main aim was self-glory and preservation, were busy at work. They were not happy with the new institution and our mandate and had been waiting in the wings to strangle it. But I resisted their schemes. In our first year, I made sure that all our systems were working effectively. I requested and received 24 additional staff from the Ministry of Education and hired 23 more. We were growing steadily and our impact was being felt.

One of our roles that did not go down well with some powerful forces was that of cracking down on fake certificates and qualifications. Our research revealed that up to 30 per cent of academic certificates in Kenya's job market were fake, fraudulent and/or falsified. Furthermore, Kenya had many institutions that awarded qualifications that were suspect. Our mandate was to tackle this menace. Unfortunately, some people ensured that we did not move. They erected roadblocks everywhere we turned to immobilise us.

The purpose of establishing the KNQA was to adequately address the challenges that Kenya faced in regard

to qualifications so that they could meet the requirements of our labour market. We needed to improve the quality and relevance of our qualifications and also to ensure a smooth transition of students from basic education into Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) and universities. We were ridding the system of the many roadblocks and bottlenecks students encountered and to succeed in this we worked closely with employers and professional bodies.

Cases of forged academic certificates were rampant and disturbing, which forced us to engage several partners to help in fighting the menace. These included the Directorate of Criminal Investigations, the Ethics and Anti-Corruption Commission, the Attorney General's chambers, and the immigration office, among others. But this initiative did not take off smoothly. KNQA's detractors quickly rushed to court to block us from implementing the crackdown on fake academic credentials.

At some point, I became concerned that we were spending more time in court defending our work, instead of being in the field implementing the qualification framework. I suspect that more powerful people were involved in the background, including those who possessed fake documents.

With time it became clear that the real intention was to ensure that KNQA never took off. I started to understand why this important institution had remained in limbo for a

long time. The institution had great potential to transform education and training in Kenya but it stood in the way of a few people's ambitions and they vowed to fight it. And fight it they did. Surprisingly, our detractors were able to enlist many people in this negative crusade.

Legally, it was the mandate of KNQA to develop and maintain a national database of all qualifications. This was one of the most important functions of the organisation. This is so because Kenya had many qualifications awarding institutions spread out in many ministries. But nobody knew who had been awarded which qualification. That's why we needed a central repository and database of all our qualifications. But some institutions became overly protective of their databases. This encouraged the proliferation of fake certificates in our market as the databases were scattered and not easy to deploy to verify qualifications.

To weed out this problem, we set up an online system for members of the public to report fake certificates anonymously. We called it *cheti mwitu* (a certificate from the bush). We signed Memoranda of Understanding with various public and private institutions to fight the menace, among them the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (IEBC) where we sought to verify the qualifications of aspirants to political office.

For us to collect data and populate our databases, the law allowed us to link with qualifications awarding institutions so that they supply us with all the genuine

qualifications they had awarded their graduates. But our detractors, for reasons best known to themselves, prevented learning institutions from putting data in our system. They must have been scared that we would unearth anomalies.

I realised that navigating the qualifications landscape was not easy. Several institutions also claimed that this mandate was theirs and not KNQA's. It was a tough ride. Things did not work out the way we had anticipated. The war against fake certificates was slowly being lost on our watch. I could see the frustrations on the face of our chairman, Dr. Kilemi Mwiria, a seasoned and respected academician. Little wonder as we approached the 2022 General Election, he resigned to run for a political seat in Meru County.

Despite the struggles, we made significant progress in a short time. We established a national database of qualification awarding institutions (QAIs), the qualifications they awarded, and their graduates. This process was fully automated through the National Qualifications Information Management System (NAQIMS). We also established a vibrant recognition, equation and verification system that was automated through the Kenya Recognition, Equation and Verification (KREV) portal.

One of our most significant efforts came through the promotion and recognition of prior learning (RPL). This is where a candidate's skills and prior learning were assessed and recognised. This helped to bring thousands of people working in the informal sector into our formal employment system. This was in appreciation of the work done by *jua kali* (informal

sector) artisans. This move attracted a lot of attention, and saw neighbouring countries visit us for benchmarking.

Working with the KNQA gave me the opportunity to have a 360-degree view of Kenya's education sector. It was not clear how students who had performed differently in KCPE and KCSE would progress through the TVET and university systems. We made it clear that if one got a C+ at KCSE, one could proceed to study for a bachelor's degree at the university; those with C- and above, would study for diplomas while those with D plain and above, would start at certificate level. And we made it clear how long and how many credits the certificates, different diplomas, and different degrees would take to complete.

We identified, mapped and classified all the diploma courses such as ordinary diploma, postgraduate diploma, higher national diploma as well as the various degrees and how they related to each other. We also created uniform credits for all certificate courses, diplomas, and degrees in all fields and put in place a uniform and transparent system for transferring credits from one level to another.

We aligned this with international education systems and spelt out clearly how students who had taken Kenyan, British, Ugandan, and even American, education systems related to each other, and the equivalence in each system.

I was also involved in integrating our qualifications framework with those of other East African countries, the Inter-Governmental Agency on Development (IGAD)

region, and the rest of Africa through the African Continental Qualifications Framework (ACQF). I was part of a team of six experts who developed the ACQF.

In the process of doing this work, we found that more than 80 per cent of those who were working as masons, electricians and plumbers, did not have academic papers and the few who had them and had even performed well in school, were not able to do the jobs that they had trained for.

The law allowed us to develop a system of national regulations for implementing recognition of prior learning (RPL). We developed the RPL policies, regulations and standards and started piloting the assessment of candidates. The system was received very well, especially by the *jua kali* sector.

This ended the era where our artisans moved around with photo albums as proof of what they were capable of doing. They deserved certificates because they knew what they were doing. Many of them were well versed in modern technologies. RPL was a game changer that opened opportunities for some to work in the Middle East, Europe and elsewhere.

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TVET education started in Kenya in 1924 when the Native Industrial Training Depot (NITD) was established at Kabete in Nairobi (the current location of Kabete National Polytechnic), to support the maintenance of the Kenya-

Uganda railway, built between 1896 and 1903. During the Second World War (1939 to 1945) NITD was used as a place of recruiting soldiers to serve in the war. Much later, the institution reverted to training young people in masonry, carpentry and electrical installations.

TVET education in Kenya is also anchored in the Fraser Commission of 1908 which introduced African education to serve white settlers. Natives were taught how to build houses, fashion agricultural implements, make spears, knives, hoes, axes and even cooking utensils. Initially, the system emphasised teaching of industrial education and agriculture.

After World War II, more training areas were introduced, including driving, mechanics, plumbing, wielding, among others. TVET grew to another level in 1954 following the establishment of the Royal Technical College of East Africa (RTCEA) in Nairobi. This was followed by the establishment of the Kenya Polytechnic in 1961. These institutions offered basic craft courses. After independence, Kenya took a different trajectory which favoured training in 'white collar skills' which prepared Africans to take over office jobs held by white men.

It was not until 2013 that real focus returned to the TVET sector. Kenya enacted the TVET Education Act (2013) and the KNQF Act which established the TVET Authority, TVET CDACC and the KNQA to drive policy development for this critical sector.

CHAPTER 18

INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION

The journey of a thousand miles begins with one step – Lao Tzu

IN NOVEMBER 2022, His Excellency Dr. William Samoei Ruto officially became the fifth President of the Republic of Kenya. As he formed his cabinet and the executive branch of government, I was priviledged to be appointed the Principal Secretary in the State Department for Industrialization, which falls under the Ministry of Investments, Trade, and Industry (MITI). I was glad to be accorded such honour and opportunity to serve my country in this capacity.

Industrialization is increasingly important in the development of any nation and for humanity in general. This is because the sector drives the economic development. Developed nations, especially the USA, Germany, the UK, China, Japan, and South Korea, among others, became

economic giants because they industrialized.

That is why I equate the role industrialization plays in the development of a country to the role that an engine plays in a motor vehicle. Without a properly functioning engine, the vehicle cannot move; likewise, without industrialization there can be no meaningful development in a country. It is only through an industry that one can create 5,000 jobs in one place, for example, for the road to economic development can get under way

In Africa, we are yet to go full blast into industrialization. The continent has a population of 1.3 billion people, which translates to 17 per cent of the world's population but Africa's share of the world's manufactured products is only 3 per cent. Now the population of Europe is 9 per cent of the world, and yet the continent accounts for 24 per cent of the world's manufactured goods.

Furthermore, only 20 per cent of the manufactured products consumed in Africa are produced on the continent. The remaining 80 per cent come from Europe, the USA and Asia. This does not augur well for Africa because for every item we import, we in turn export jobs yet the continent's productive youths continue to languish in joblessness.

To correct the anomaly, Africa needs to move strongly into manufacturing, as a matter of urgency. Industrialization not only creates jobs and increases incomes, but it also leads to improved lifestyles and even increased life expectancy.

For instance, in Europe, women and men can

live up to 83 years and 81 years, respectively, thanks to industrialization. While in Africa, women live up to 59 years while men live up to 57 years, which is significantly different. The reason for this difference is good jobs, good nutrition, and balanced and healthy lifestyles. Industrialization benefits everyone, including people with low levels of education, farmers who supply raw materials, engineers, transporters, have your pick.

Although industrialization is generally low in Africa, Kenya ranks among the six countries that have made some good steps in the right direction. We lag behind South Africa, Egypt, Morocco, Algeria and Nigeria, but lead in the East and Central Africa region.

Luckily for Africa, most of the raw materials required for manufacturing most products are found on the continent. We have good amounts of gold, diamond, oil, uranium, iron, and copper deposits, among other minerals, that are key in manufacturing. The continent's climate and soils also favour farming. This enables us to produce enough raw materials that are needed for industrialization.

Unfortunately, most of these materials are exported without any form of value addition. We also have a large pool of young, strong, educated and skilled labour. Essentially, we have no reason to lag behind. This is the mindset I came with when I joined the Industrialization docket. I strongly believe that we have the capacity to do more, not just to add value, but also to multiply value.

Over the last two years, the government has come up with measures to increase manufacturing in Kenya. With the support of the President, the ministers (Moses Kuria, later Rebecca Miano and now Salim Mvurya), the PSs within MITI and other leaders in the national government and counties, have put in place measures to increase our manufacturing.

I am proud to be associated with the County Aggregation Industrial Parks (CAIPs). This is an an ambitious plan for transforming Kenya's industrial landscape, especially because it targets all people, beginning with the bottom of the pyramid, who harbour an idea about going into manufacturing, using the smallest implement to the most grandiose innovation. The CAIPs initiative presents a significant opportunity for home-grown investors to enter and help grow Kenya's manufacturing sector.

Because it is county-based and driven by devolved governments, with the close support of the national government, the CAIPs initiative fits in with the Bottom-up Economic Transformation Agenda (BETA) whose objective is not to leave a single region behind in developing Kenya. Needless to say, CAIPs is part of a broader strategy of turning Kenya into an industrialising country.

By facilitating industrial aggregation, CAIPs is primed to enable small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to thrive by providing shared resources, infrastructure, and access to markets.

Investors looking for lucrative opportunities will find CAIPs particularly attractive because it provides a level of security and assurance for investors. The Kenyan government's commitment to enhancing manufacturing capacity creates a favourable regulatory environment.

CAIPs also provides essential infrastructure, mainly roads, utilities, and communication networks. This not only reduces the initial investment burden for businesses but also enhances operational efficiency.

With the majority of the Kenyan population engaged in agriculture, CAIPs facilitates the processing of raw materials locally. Essentially, investors can capitalize on the vast agricultural resources in the region while contributing to value addition, which is crucial for economic development.

By investing in CAIPs, businesses will contribute to job creation and skill development within the local communities. This not only improves the livelihoods of residents but also fosters a consumer base for the goods produced. It is important to note that the selected counties for the CAIPs are strategically located to maximize access to both local and international markets. This positioning is ideal for export-oriented businesses looking to penetrate regional and global markets.

Kenya is the first country in Africa to introduce CAIPs as a model of development. The success of CAIPs depends on collaborative efforts between the government, local authorities, and the private sector. That is why the ministry has engaged key stakeholders in feasibility studies and regional economic blocks to develop viable business plans tailored to each county's unique resources and strengths. This inclusive approach ensures that the parks meet the specific needs of businesses while also aligning with national economic goals.

CAIP is a game-changer for Kenya's industrial sector It is poised to transform the economic landscape through enhanced manufacturing capabilities and sustainable growth. For investors, CAIPs offer a unique opportunity to be part of a movement that fosters community development and economic resilience. As Kenya embraces this new industrial era, the prospects for success are bright, making now the perfect time to invest in Kenya's future.

Under the CAIPs concept, one does not need to spend millions of shillings to construct their own factory in order to engage in manufacturing. It's a case of plug-in and play. Even a small-scale trader who has five bags of maize can engage in the manufacture of, say, maize flour.

To complement the manufacturing process and reap the benefits, availability of the market is key. Thus, in a move aimed at creating a market for our local manufacturers, the government, through the Buy Kenya Build Kenya initiative, declared about 10 years ago that 40 per cent of items used

in public institutions (be they machines, furniture, apparel, or foodstuff) should be locally made.

It is a typical case of protecting and rewarding hard-working citizens. This has seen many local manufacturers reap substantial benefits. This initiative has greatly supported local manufacturing.

Continentally, President William Ruto has worked hard to foster intra-Africa trade where Africans can trade more with themselves. His efforts have seen most African countries sign the Africa Continental Free Trade Area (ACFTA) accord. This agreement, together with the East African Community (EAC) common market, guarantees one access to markets for one's goods across the continent.

You can package your flour in Bungoma and sell to consumers in Angola, or add value to your potatoes in Nyandarua and send them to Libya. That is the Africa that we look forward to having. We have bold ideas for transforming this continent.

Globally, the President successfully negotiated with the European Union (EU) who agreed to allow Kenyans to export their goods to the grouping of 27 countries duty-free and quota-free. We also sell numerous products to the USA under the Africa Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA).

Generally, the market for manufactured goods is available both locally and internationally. As a Ministry, we encourage Kenyans to seize the opportunity and engage in manufacturing at any level of their liking. Currently,

industrialization accounts for about 7.8 per cent of Kenya's Gross Domestic Product. But we can do more. The government plans to increase it to 15 per cent by 2025 and eventually grow it to 20 per cent by 2030. And by 2050, Kenya hopes to be a fully industrialized nation where manufacturing will contribute to over 40 per cent of our GDP. It is a revolution that the government is determined to achieve, and I am happy to be contributing to this great dream.

Africa is a sleeping giant. Statistics indicate that the continent has 60 per cent of the world's arable land. This means that Africa can easily feed the rest of the world if we organise ourselves and carry out mechanised farming. We can also use our agricultural produce to spur industrialization on the continent. Despite this potential, Africa spends KSh. 4 trillion annually on food imports.

Our continent is also well endowed with minerals. We have 8 per cent of the world's crude oil and 7 per cent of the world's natural gas. In a nutshell, the future of industrialization in Africa is bright.

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In the 1970s and 1980s, when were growing up in Bungoma, cotton was one of the crops for which the district was known. We had a ginnery in Malakisi that produced cotton seed cake, soap and even oil. Those days Kenya boasted of several textile factories, including the Eldoret-based Raymonds, Rivatex and Ken Knit; Kicomi (Kisumu Cotton Mills) in Kisumu, to

which cotton from as far afield as Busia District was ferried, and Mountex in Nanyuki. Kenya had a fashion house dubbed Deacons which sold clothes around the country.

But things went south when in 1990 the World Bank and IMF came up with the Structural Adjustment Programmes for Kenya which entailed, among other things, opening up the country to a liberalised market. This opened floodgates for the importation of new and used clothes into Kenya. It did not take long before all our factories went under. Cotton farming and production dwindled as well.

However, when the Kenya Kwanza government came to power in 2022, a number of value chains were identified for driving the economy. One of the sectors identified was the cotton, textile and apparel (CTA) sector. Different state departments were assigned champion status for different value chains. The State Department for Industry was tasked with championing the CTA sector.

I took up the assignment with gusto. Some of the main challenges in the sector included lack of cotton and cotton seeds, and inadequate ginning capacity, among other limitations. For instance, in 2022 Kenya was growing less than 5,000 acres of cotton. We pushed this to 40,000 acres in 2023 and are targeting more than 100,000 acres in 2024.

We are also drafting a new CTA policy and strategy that targets seed production while unlocking the bottlenecks in the value chain. This sector is key to the revival of our industrialization agenda and vision.

CHAPTER 19

REFLECTIONS

Sometimes you have to look back in order to understand the things that lie ahead - Yvonne Woon

I LOOK back with nostalgia as I reflect on my life and the many dreams I have realised, the ones that eluded me and those that I am still chasing. I look at or think of my wife Lucia and my mind races back many years to arid northern Kenya where I met her and then in my mind's eye I see the career, business, family and life paths we have walked with our eyes firmly fixed on the future, our future, our children's future. It has been one long and winding journey. Initially, I did not know where this route was taking me, and for what purpose. With time, things have become clearer.

The path that I have taken has crossed many rivers, valleys and mountains. On the way, I have met many people. It has been a journey of self-discovery. That a village boy from Lwanda could travel this far and wide, explore and meet many people, and touch many lives, is a humbling experience.

From the games I played on the banks of Chwele River, the makeshift football my friends and I kicked about and chased, the hide and seek and wrestling we engaged in, to transitioning to adulthood and later moving to my Makutano home, it was nothing but a miracle. It all looked very difficult. It was like taking a winding walk in a forest that had many thorns, listening to the birds singing and chirping and the lions roaring.

I have walked, I have run, I have stumbled and I have fallen. But I have always picked myself up and chin held high, tried again. It has worked for me. But, more importantly, I have learnt many lessons. I am a better person now – more prepared to teach and guide and learn more.

Life is a long and tedious learning curve. The more we grow, the more we learn about ourselves and the things around us. The more we interact with different people from different walks of life, the more we learn and understand. The more we travel, the more we learn. The more we see and hear, the more we learn. The more we are offended or heartbroken, the more we learn. Ultimately, the more we advance in age, the more we realise that most of the things we run after and battle for in life, do not deserve the undue attention we give them.

I have come to the realisation that nothing comes easy in this world and one has to be patient and understand their abilities and help others. When you help others, you also help yourself. I like the words of the motivational speaker

who said:

> *"When I'm lonely, I think over life critically, I realise that sometimes, to succeed in life you need people who will mock you, so that you can run to God. You need people who will try to intimidate you, so that you can be courageous. You need people who will say 'no' so that you can learn how to be independent. You need people who will disappoint you so that you can put all your trust in God."*

You need people who will work to make you lose your job, so that you can start your own big business. You need people who will sell your 'Joseph' so that 'you' can get to Egypt and be a Prime Minister in a strange land of captivity. You need a cruel landlord so that you won't be too comfortable in someone else's house and build your own.

But sometimes when we are disappointed we feel very bad and we tend to remain in the same spot, not knowing that the end-point of disappointment is the beginning of one's new journey. We have to keep trying to overcome the disappointments of failure and soldier on.

You cannot see a new open door while you are still putting all your attention, time and energy in trying to force the closed one to open. Many doors will close and many will open. We must thank those who make things happen for us. So, as we crawl, walk and run, we need courage and wisdom. We also need to realise that we did not come here to serve ourselves. We came to make a difference in the lives of others. That is where true value emanates from.

I am grateful for who I am, and for the great work that my parents Annah and Tom did. I am grateful to the many friends I met. I am happy with whom I became: more thoughtful, more adventurous and more useful to the society. I thank God for everything.

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In conclusion, remember the words of Charles Haanel, an American author and philosopher who said that, *'A human being is part of a whole, called by us as 'universe,' a part limited in time and space. He experiences himself, his thoughts and feelings as something separated from the rest – a kind of optical delusion of his consciousness. This delusion is a kind of prison for us, restricting us to our personal desires and to affection for a few persons nearest to us. Our task must be to free ourselves from this prison by widening our circle of compassion to embrace all living creatures and the whole of nature in its beauty. Nobody is able to achieve this completely, but the striving for such achievement is in itself a part of the liberation and a foundation for inner security.'*

He goes on to say, *'Once you know the law of attraction, you can make the best discoveries about yourself by listening to what you are saying. When you state something as an absolute fact, realise that it is something you really believe, and that belief is creating it in your life. As you hear your word and realise that you are saying something you don't want, switch immediately and rephrase your sentence with the words of what you want. You will*

learn so much about your past experiences and what you have created when you listen to your words. And then as you catch your words and change them, you are changing the entire course of your future!'

He concludes thus, *'Remember this is one of the most difficult as well as most wonderful statements to grasp. Remember that no matter what the difficulty is, no matter where it is, no matter who is affected, you have no patient but yourself; you have to convince yourself of the truth which you desire to see manifested.'*

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