
Civic Education: Politics, Political Parties & Democracy

A complete civic education guide on politics, political systems, political parties, how to join a political party in Kenya, the Orange Democratic Movement (ODM) and the leadership of Everlyne Koech — prepared for the people of Nairobi.

FIRST SECTION

What is Politics?

Politics is the process by which people make collective decisions about how a society is governed. It involves deciding who has power, how that power is exercised, and how resources, rights, and responsibilities are distributed.

Politics is not only about elections or politicians. It also includes everyday discussions and decisions about public issues, such as education, healthcare, environmental protection, housing, and civil rights. Whenever people with different interests or values negotiate how a community should function, they are engaging in politics.

In short, politics is the process of governing society and resolving disagreements about how people should live together.

Politics occurs at many levels, such as local politics, including decisions about schools, roads, policing, and community services; or national politics, such as issues to do with Laws, taxes, healthcare, defense, and the economy; and international politics involving cooperation and disagreements between countries on trade, climate change, security, and human rights.

Politics involves many participants, including Governments that create and enforce laws, Political parties that compete for public support and office, Citizens who vote, campaign, protest, or advocate for causes, and Interest groups and organizations that seek to influence public policy.

At its core, politics is about answering questions such as:

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- Who should make decisions?
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- What laws should exist?
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- How should public money be spent?

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- How should conflicts between different groups be resolved?
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Types of Political systems

A political system describes how a country organizes power, chooses leaders, makes decisions, and governs its people. There are several major types of political systems in the world. Any one country may have overlapping systems.

1. Democracy

In a democracy, political power ultimately belongs to the people. Citizens participate directly or indirectly in governing, usually through elections. For example, Kenya, the United States, the United Kingdom, Germany, and South Africa.

There are two broad forms:

Direct democracy: Citizens participate directly in making major decisions.

Representative democracy: Citizens elect representatives who make decisions on their behalf.

2. Monarchy

A monarchy is a system in which a king, queen, emperor, or other hereditary ruler is the head of state.

There are two important forms:

Constitutional monarchy: The monarch's powers are limited by a constitution, while elected leaders run the government. For example, the United Kingdom, Sweden, and Japan.

Absolute monarchy: The monarch exercises extensive political power. For example: Saudi Arabia.

3. Republic

A republic is a system in which the country is considered a public matter rather than the personal possession of a monarch, and the head of state is generally elected or appointed rather than inheriting the position. For example, Kenya, France, India, and the United States.

A republic can also be democratic or authoritarian, so "republic" and "democracy" are not exactly the same thing.

4. Presidential System

In a presidential system, the president is usually both the head of state and head of government and is elected separately from the legislature. This elected president normally serves for a fixed term. For example, Kenya, the United States, and Brazil.

5. Parliamentary System

In a parliamentary system, the government is formed from the legislature. The head of government, who is usually called the prime minister, is normally the leader of the party or coalition that commands a majority in parliament. For example, the United Kingdom, India, Canada, and Australia.

6. Semi-Presidential System

This combines features of presidential and parliamentary government. It usually has both a president and a prime minister, with executive responsibilities divided between them. For example, France and Portugal.

7. One-Party System

A one-party system is one in which a single political party controls the government and other parties are either prohibited or have little meaningful opportunity to compete for power. For example, China and, in a different historical context, the former Soviet Union.

8. Authoritarian System

In an authoritarian system, political power is concentrated in one leader or a small group. Political competition, opposition, media freedom, and citizen participation are generally restricted.

Some authoritarian governments hold elections, but those elections may not provide genuine competition for political power.

9. Totalitarian System

Totalitarianism is an extreme form of authoritarian rule in which the state seeks extensive control over political, social, economic, cultural, and sometimes private life. Historical examples include Nazi Germany and Stalin's Soviet Union.

10. Theocracy

A theocracy is a system in which religious authority plays the central role in government, and laws and political institutions are strongly based on religious principles. For example, Iran is commonly classified as a theocratic republic because religious institutions have substantial constitutional and political authority.

NOTE that a country can therefore belong to several categories at the same time. For example, Kenya can be described as a democratic republic with a presidential system and a multiparty political system.

SECOND SECTION

What is a political party?

A political party is an organized group of people who share broadly similar political ideas, values, interests, and goals, and who come together to influence government and seek political power, usually by

participating in elections. It is a group of people who organize themselves to win elections, form government, or influence how the country is governed.

A political party is a democratic organization through which citizens come together to pursue shared political goals, participate in elections, influence public policy, and seek to govern.

Political parties perform important democratic functions. They mobilize citizens, educate the public about policies, recruit and develop leaders, formulate policy positions, nominate candidates, and provide a platform for citizens to seek political representation.

Under Kenya's Political Parties Act, a political party is an association of citizens with an identifiable ideology or program that seeks to influence public policy and nominate candidates to contest elections. Political parties are therefore not merely vehicles for election campaigns. They are important institutions through which citizens organize themselves, develop policy ideas, participate in political decisions and identify leaders.

The law specifically recognizes roles such as recruiting members, nominating candidates, mobilizing citizens to participate in political decisions, articulating public-policy priorities, and influencing public policy.

Political parties are bridges between ordinary citizens and government. A citizen does not have to be a politician to participate in a political party. You can be a farmer, teacher, trader, student, professional, boda boda rider, businessperson, religious leader, young person, senior citizen, or community organizer, and still have a meaningful role in political party affairs.

What does a political party do?

A political party typically:

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- **Develops policies and ideas** – It proposes solutions to issues such as unemployment, healthcare, education, agriculture, security, and the economy.
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- **Chooses candidates** – Parties identify and nominate people to contest elections for positions such as President, Governor, Member of Parliament, Senator, or Member of County Assembly.
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- **Participates in elections** – Parties mobilize citizens to vote for their candidates and policies.
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- **Forms government** – When a party or coalition wins enough seats or an election, it can form the government.
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- **Provides opposition** – Parties that do not form government can scrutinize government decisions, criticize poor policies, and offer alternative solutions.

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- **Mobilizes citizens** – Political parties give citizens an organized way to participate in public affairs rather than participating only as individual voters.
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- **Represents people's interests** – Parties can bring the concerns of particular communities, regions, workers, young people, women, businesses, or other groups into national political debate.
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Political parties and democracy

Political parties are an important part of democracy because democracy is not only about voting every five years. It is also about citizens organizing themselves, expressing their views, choosing leaders, participating in public debate, and holding those in power accountable.

For example, in Kenya, citizens can join political parties such as Orange Democratic Movement (ODM) and participate in party activities, policy discussions, nominations, campaigns, and elections.

THIRD SECTION

Why Every Kenyan Should Consider Joining a Political Party

Every Kenyan must move away from being a political spectator to becoming an active participant in Kenya's democracy.

Kenya is a constitutional democracy in which every citizen has the right to participate in the country's political affairs. Every five years, millions of Kenyans line up at polling stations to choose their leaders. We vote for the President, Members of Parliament, Governors, Members of County Assemblies and other elected representatives. For many Kenyans, politics begins and ends on Election Day: voting for a candidate, listening to campaign speeches and then returning to everyday life. But democracy is not only about voting every five years.

One of the most important ways citizens can participate continuously in democracy is by joining and actively participating in a political party. Political party membership gives citizens an organized platform to influence policies, participate in leadership, hold leaders accountable, and help shape the country's future.

The Constitution protects citizens' right to make political choices, including forming political parties, participating in their activities, and campaigning for a political party or cause.

Democracy is about participation.

It is about having a voice in the decisions that affect our lives, our families, our communities and our country. It is about influencing the policies that determine how public resources are allocated, who gets

opportunities, what laws are passed and what kind of leadership Kenya gets.

One of the most practical ways for a citizen to participate continuously in democratic politics is to join a political party.

Why Should You Join a Political Party?

1. Your voice becomes part of an organized movement

One individual speaking about a problem may easily be ignored, but when thousands of citizens are organized around the same issue, it is much harder to ignore.

Party membership gives citizens an opportunity to organize around issues affecting their communities and the country. Members can participate in discussions, meetings, policy development, and other party activities.

Instead of simply complaining about the cost of living, unemployment, healthcare, education, or corruption, members can help develop proposals to address those problems.

Democracy becomes stronger when citizens move from complaining to participating.

2. You can influence party policies

Many Kenyans think political parties only need members during elections. That is not how democracy should work.

A party member has a right to participate in debates on issues affecting citizens, contribute to policy-making, and participate in relevant party forums, subject to the party's rules and procedures. If citizens stay outside political parties, they leave much of this conversation to other people.

This means members can help influence:

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- Party manifestos
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- Policy proposals
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- Development priorities
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- Election platforms
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- Leadership programs
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- Nomination rules
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- Positions taken by the party on national issues
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3. You can participate in choosing leaders

Political parties are important training grounds for democratic leadership.

Membership gives citizens an opportunity to participate in party elections and, where eligible, contest for positions within the party.

The Office of the Registrar of Political Parties recognizes a member's right to participate in party elections and to seek party leadership positions, subject to the applicable rules and eligibility requirements.

This is particularly important for young people and women.

Instead of waiting for political leaders to "discover" them, citizens can begin developing leadership experience from the grassroots.

4. You can participate in candidate nominations

Political parties play a major role in identifying candidates for elections.

Eligible party members participate in the nomination process according to the party's nomination rules and procedures. This gives ordinary members an opportunity to influence who represents the party in elections.

If you want better leaders, one place to start is by becoming involved in the process of choosing them.

5. You can contest for political office

Party membership can provide a pathway for citizens who aspire to become political leaders.

A member who meets the applicable legal and party requirements can seek a party position or pursue nomination to contest for public office. This is particularly important because democracy should not be reserved for political "families," wealthy individuals, or established politicians.

Leadership should be open to ordinary citizens with ideas, integrity, competence and commitment to public service.

6. You can hold your own party accountable

Membership is not a blank cheque. Being a party member does not mean agreeing with everything a party leader says.

A democratic political party should allow members to ask questions, debate policies and challenge decisions through established party procedures.

Members have rights relating to participation, access to party information, debate and accountability.

A strong political party is therefore not one where everybody agrees with the leader.

It is one where members can disagree respectfully, debate ideas and resolve differences democratically.

7. You become part of a political community

Politics is ultimately about people. Joining a political party allows citizens to meet people from different professions, communities, generations, and backgrounds who share particular political values or objectives. Political participation therefore becomes a school of democracy.

This can create opportunities for:

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- Civic education
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- Leadership development
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- Community organizing
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- Policy discussions
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- Mentorship
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- Networking
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- Grassroots mobilization
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Political parties belong to their members

A political party should not be viewed as the property of a handful of prominent politicians.

It is an organization made up of members.

The stronger the membership, the stronger the opportunity for ordinary citizens to influence the party's direction.

Kenya's Political Parties Act requires political parties to promote inclusiveness, democracy and public participation in the formulation of policies and nomination of candidates.

That means party membership should not simply be about displaying party colors or attending political rallies. Members should ask questions, participate in meetings, contribute ideas, demand accountability, and help shape the policies and leadership of their party.

FOURTH SECTION

How do you join a political party in Kenya?

The process is relatively straightforward.

Step 1: Choose a political party

First, decide which political party best reflects your values, political beliefs, and vision for Kenya. Do not join a party simply because a famous politician belongs to it. Your political membership should reflect what you believe.

Before joining, ask:

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- What does this party stand for?
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- Read its constitution, manifesto, Ideology and values, its policies and public record, its internal democratic structures, and leadership structures.
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- Understand its position on issues that matter to you.
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Step 2: Confirm that you are eligible

Under the Political Parties Act, a Kenyan citizen who has attained the age of 18 may join a political party, subject to the law and the party's requirements.

Under Kenya's political party membership framework, membership is for eligible Kenyan citizens who are registered voters. A person cannot belong to more than one political party at the same time.

If you are already registered as a member of another political party, you must first follow the lawful resignation process before joining another party.

Step 3: Complete the membership application

The Political Parties (Membership) Regulations provide a membership recruitment process in which political parties can recruit members manually or electronically.

For manual registration, the applicant completes the prescribed membership documentation and provides the required identification. The party then processes the application and submits the membership information through the Integrated Political Parties Management System (IPPMS).

Step 4: Provide your identification details and consent

Nobody should register you as a member of a political party without your consent.

The ORPP states that registering a person without their consent is an offense. Membership records are also subject to verification and validation. Therefore, never give your ID details to someone simply because they say they are "registering people for the party." Know exactly what you are signing or consenting to.

To register as a member, you will generally need your National ID or passport and any other information the party requires.

Step 5: Pay the prescribed membership fee

Kenyan law allows citizens to join a political party by paying the party's membership fee and complying with the party's other requirements.

The exact fee is set by each political party, so prospective members should confirm the current amount directly with the party.

Step 6: Receive confirmation of membership

Once your information has been properly processed, verified, and entered into the party membership register, you become a member of that political party. Parties may also issue membership cards according to their own rules.

Keep your membership details safe.

Step 7: Become an active member

This is where real political participation begins. Don't join a party and disappear. Membership is not just a card. It is participation.

Attend meetings. Participate in discussions. Learn the party constitution. Join relevant party structures. Volunteer. Engage in policy discussions. Participate peacefully in grassroots activities. Hold leaders accountable.

Joining a party does not mean surrendering your conscience

This point is extremely important.

Party membership should not mean that you stop thinking for yourself.

A good party member should be able to support the party where it is right, question it where it is wrong, propose better policies and demand accountability from party leaders.

Political parties need citizens who can think critically – not political followers who simply applaud everything their leaders say.

A mature democracy requires members who can disagree peacefully.

You can be loyal to your political party while remaining loyal to the Constitution of Kenya, the rule of law and the national interest.

Political parties should unite Kenyans, not divide them

Kenya's political history has taught us the dangers of politics based on ethnicity, hatred, intimidation, and political violence.

Joining a political party should never mean joining an ethnic camp.

Political parties should provide platforms where Kenyans from different communities can come together around ideas, policies, and a shared vision for the country.

The law itself recognizes the role of political parties in promoting national unity and inclusive representation.

Our politics should therefore move from:

"My tribe must win." to: "Kenya must win."

Move from: "My politician must win at all costs." to: "The best ideas and leaders should prevail democratically."

Move from: "Politics is for politicians." to: "Politics belongs to every citizen."

The responsibility that comes with membership

Membership comes with responsibilities as well as benefits.

A responsible party member should:

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- Respect the Constitution and the law.
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- Respect other citizens regardless of political affiliation.
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- Reject political violence.
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- Reject hate speech and ethnic incitement.
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- Participate peacefully.
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- Respect internal party rules.
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- Demand transparency and accountability.
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- Promote issue-based politics.
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- Avoid spreading false information.
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- Respect the democratic choices of other citizens.
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A political party is only as democratic as its members are willing to make it.

Democracy needs participants, not spectators

Kenya's democracy cannot be strengthened by politicians alone.

It needs farmers, workers, business people, professionals, young people, women, persons with disabilities, students, community leaders, and ordinary citizens to participate.

Voting is important. But voting is only one part of democracy.

Join a party. Attend the meetings. Read the manifesto. Question the leadership. Contribute ideas.

Participate in nominations. Support good candidates. Challenge bad ideas. Help shape policy.

That is how democracy becomes more than an election-day ritual.

"Who will I vote for in 2027?"

The question every Kenyan should ask is not simply:

"Who will I vote for in 2027?"

It should also be:

"What am I doing today to shape the Kenya I want to vote for tomorrow?"

Democracy is not something politicians give us. Democracy is something citizens participate in, protect, and strengthen.

Your voice matters. Your membership matters. Your participation matters.

FIFTH SECTION

How to Join ODM

If you choose the Orange Democratic Movement (ODM), the party currently provides an online membership application on its official website. The application asks for basic personal and electoral-area information, including your name, phone number, ID number, county, constituency, and ward.

ODM's constitution provides that membership is open to adult Kenyan citizens with a valid national ID card or passport who accept the party's principles, programs, constitution, and discipline, and who are not members of another political party. It also provides for membership applications through party offices or approved digital/electronic means. You can therefore begin by visiting the official ODM membership page:

Join ODM – Official Membership Page

Prospective members should always check current requirements, fees, and registration procedures directly with the party, as procedures can change.

WHY ODM and not others?

ODM's strengths lie in its history, ideology, democratic credentials, policy agenda, inclusivity, and

opportunities for participation.

These are some of the strongest highlights showing why every Kenyan of goodwill should join the ODM Party:

1. A strong history in Kenya's reform movement and the 2010 Constitution

ODM traces its origins to the 2005 constitutional referendum, when the "Orange" movement opposed a proposed constitutional draft and advocated reforms including devolution, human rights and democratic governance. The movement subsequently evolved into the Orange Democratic Movement.

This gives ODM a distinctive identity as a party associated with Kenya's struggle for constitutional reform and multiparty democracy.

One of ODM's most important historical roles is in the constitutional reform movement that culminated in the 2010 Constitution. Devolution, the Bill of Rights, democratic governance, and equitable distribution of resources are central elements of the reform agenda it has championed.

2. Social-democratic orientation

ODM is a social democratic party. Its philosophy combines democratic governance with social justice and equitable access to opportunities and resources. ODM believes that economic growth should be accompanied by social justice and inclusion.

In practical terms, this means its political philosophy emphasizes:

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- Economic opportunity
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- Social protection
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- Reduction of inequality
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- Access to healthcare and education
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- Protection of vulnerable groups
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- Equitable distribution of national resources
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3. Devolution is a major pillar with Emphasis on social justice

Devolution is one of the clearest features of ODM's political identity.

The party advocates strong county governments, equitable resource sharing, and greater citizen

participation in local governance.

This is significant because devolution has fundamentally changed Kenyan politics. Citizens no longer have to look exclusively to Nairobi for government services and development.

ODM explicitly identifies social justice as one of its core ideological principles.

Its stated objective is to address inequality and ensure that marginalized and vulnerable communities have fair access to opportunities and resources.

ODM plays a key role in promoting conversations about poverty, informal workers, women, youth, persons with disabilities, and historically marginalized communities, and is always at the forefront, championing strategic actions to address these issues.

4. Commitment to human rights and constitutionalism

ODM's current statement of ideology places considerable emphasis on human rights, fundamental freedoms, constitutional rule and democratic governance.

Its party constitution also outlines a vision of a Kenya in which citizens enjoy social, economic, and democratic rights and live with dignity.

ODM can be judged not only by the people it elects, but also by the constitutional principles it defends.

5. ODM is has a national identity

The ODM Party carries a national political footprint.

The party prides itself as a national movement seeking to build a united Kenya in which citizens from different communities enjoy equal opportunities. One of ODM's values includes "Unity in Diversity" and inclusivity of all communities and stakeholders in Kenya.

ODM's stated philosophy provides an alternative narrative: politics based on shared national interests rather than ethnic exclusivity.

6. Space for women, people living with disabilities and youth participation

ODM's current materials explicitly emphasize the participation of women, youth, and marginalized groups, including people living with disabilities (PWD), in political leadership.

The party has a strong and vibrant Women League, Disability League, and a Youth League. ODM does not simply ask women, PWD, and young people to provide votes during elections. The Party provides pathways to organize, lead, contest, and influence policy.

7. A broad economic agenda with a clear vision of "Maisha Bora"

ODM currently frames its overall vision around "Maisha Bora" — a better and dignified life for every Kenyan. Its stated objectives cover governance, healthcare, education, employment, infrastructure, poverty reduction and security.

ODM's current manifesto emphasizes economic justice and shared prosperity, alongside job creation,

industrialization, SMEs, entrepreneurship and equitable distribution of resources.

Its stated objectives also cover employment, agriculture, manufacturing, trade, infrastructure and poverty reduction.

This gives the party a platform for discussing not just political rights, but also the economic concerns that affect ordinary Kenyans.

8. A culture of political opposition and holding government accountable

Historically, ODM has occupied a significant role in Kenya's opposition politics. The party describes its history as challenging established political power and advocating reforms.

A healthy democracy needs credible opposition because opposition parties can scrutinize government decisions, raise alternative policy proposals, and give citizens an alternative at elections.

Joining ODM should not simply mean getting an orange membership card. It should mean acquiring a platform through which you can participate, organize, debate, vote, seek leadership and influence the direction of the party.

Every Kenyan should consider ODM because of what the party represents, what it has historically stood for, and the opportunity it provides citizens to participate in democratic governance.

ODM for Reform. Democracy. Devolution. Social Justice. Human Rights. Inclusion. Economic Opportunity.

SIXTH SECTION

WHY EVERLYNE KOECH?

Everlyne is not just another politician. She is a representative who understands that leadership is about service, legislation, accountability, and transformation.

That is why Ms. Everlyne Koech is offering herself to the people of Nairobi as the next Woman Representative of Nairobi County.

The question is not simply, "Who is running?" There will be many names on the ballot. The real question is: Who has the vision, courage, experience and commitment to make the office of Woman Representative truly work for the women, youth, children, persons with disabilities, informal workers, entrepreneurs and vulnerable families of Nairobi?

Our answer is Everlyne Koech for the following reasons:

Nairobi deserves representation, a representative who will legislate, debate, oversee public resources, champion national policies, and bring Nairobi's concerns to the center of national decision-making. Everlyne Koech, Mama Mashinani, intends to build a "Mama's Office" that is accessible, transparent, accountable, and responsive, located in every ward so that every Nairobiian can bring their concerns and expect action.

Everlyne understands the Nairobi that statistics often hide. Behind the skyscrapers are mothers running small businesses from market stalls, hawkers struggling for survival, young people searching for employment, women operating informal enterprises, families living from one day to the next, and young innovators trying to build businesses without access to capital. Everlyne's politics begins with these people. Her philosophy is simple: Development must reach the people who are usually left behind. That is the meaning behind her vision of "Mama Mashinani"—bringing transformation to the grassroots and making government opportunities accessible to ordinary citizens.

She will turn NGAAF from a fund into an opportunity. NGAAF public funds should not merely be distributed; they should be used to change lives sustainably. The objective is to innovate and create opportunity, dignity, and economic independence for everyone accessing them.

Everlyne sees Nairobi's informal economy as an asset, not a problem. Nairobi's Mama Mboga, hawkers, small traders, boda boda operators, artisans, domestic workers, street vendors, and informal entrepreneurs are not statistics. They are workers. They are taxpayers. They are parents. They are business owners. They are the people who keep Nairobi moving. Instead of asking: "How do we remove them?" we should be asking: "How do we support them to grow?" She has answers to these questions, including better access to finance, skills, digital platforms, markets, social protection, and government opportunities.

Everlyne believes Nairobi's youth deserve more than political slogans. Nairobi's young people are not asking politicians to speak on their behalf forever. They are asking for opportunities to build their own futures. Everlyne's vision therefore places youth innovation and entrepreneurship at the heart of her agenda. Her proposed Nairobi Tech-Moms and Nairobi Tech Vijanas, together with ward-based innovation hubs, are designed to connect young people and women with technology, skills, enterprise, and markets. Her message is clear: We do not want to prepare Nairobi's youth merely to look for jobs. We want to help prepare them to create opportunities.

Everlyne believes legislation must solve real problems. She believes that good legislation should not remain inside Parliament. It must be felt in the home, the market, the workplace and the community.

Everlyne brings a grassroots perspective to a city that needs one. Nairobi is often discussed in boardrooms, conference rooms, and at political rallies. Everlyne wants to bring the conversation back to the people. Her leadership philosophy is rooted in listening to communities, understanding their daily struggles, and designing solutions that meet their real needs. Everlyne is "Mama Mashinani; Changing the Game, Bringing Transformation". This is more than a campaign slogan; it reflects her leadership philosophy.

Transparency and Accountability begin with the Everlyne. She believes that if public office is entrusted with public resources, the people have a right to know how those resources are being used. Her proposed Mama's Office will be OPEN, TRANSPARENT, and ACCOUNTABLE. The people of Nairobi should not have to beg their representative to explain what their office is doing. They should be able to ask, and their representative should be prepared to answer without delay.

Nairobi needs a woman who will fight for women without leaving anyone behind. Everlyne's campaign is

unapologetically centered on women, but it is not exclusive. She believes that a stronger woman means a stronger family, a stronger family means a stronger community and stronger communities mean a stronger Nairobi. Her agenda therefore connects women's economic empowerment with children's welfare, youth opportunity, healthcare, social protection and community development. When a Nairobi woman succeeds, an entire household can change.

Everlyne's leadership will be measured by what happens after the election. Everlyne wants voters to ask a different question: "What will you do after we give you our vote?" Her agenda is built around measurable priorities, community engagement and accountability. The vote should not be the end of the relationship between the representative and the people. It should be the beginning.