

In Matungu, clan and tribe may decide the winner

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The battle lines for Matungu are being drawn and the contest could be a tough going by the political realignment on the ground. Matungu is one of the two constituencies which now form the newly-created Mumias District. The other is Mumias from which the constituency was hived off.

An assistant minister for Information, Mr David Were, will be defending the seat as he is seeking a second term. Those challenging Mr Were are businessman Mr Justace Murunga, former assistant minister for Education Dr Joseph Wamukoya, a former teacher Mr Raphael Welimo, Dr Charles Okumu, former magistrate Mr Francis Kadima and Mr Francis Muka Ometty.

Others are Mr Paul Posho, a senior East African Portland Cement manager Mr Ramadhan Mtimba and Ms Auxillia Nyamoma who is so far the only woman in the race. With a population of more than 132,000 people, Matungu is rated among the poorest in the sugar belt.

Though the area road network is maintained by Mumias Sugar Company, the constituency has very few health facilities while most schools perform poorly. The constituency is unique in that it is a cosmopolitan area. Apart from the dominant Wanga sub-clan, other smaller clans and people from communities like Bukusu and Luo reside in the area.

Mr Were may encounter hurdles in his campaign for failure to bargain for high cane prices. He is accused of not having used his influence as an assistant minister to convince the Government to subsidise farm inputs.

But he will get credit for the role he played in resolving industrial disputes in the sugar belt – notably that of cane cutters and transport workers. Mr Were is also credited for his continued effort to rehabilitate and build new classrooms, toilets and gates in various schools in the area.

Mr Were has, through the CDF, funded Matungu Hospital but the health centre lacks the capacity to serve all the constituents since there are no other medical facilities.

“My development track record speaks for itself and it is up to the people to gauge my achievements against my opponents,” said Mr Were. He cites CDF projects which are spread over 13 sub-locations.

He pledged to get on with rural electrification – which is to cover Matungu divisional headquarters, Kholela, Mirere, Harambee and Khalaba. The third phase is running from Matungu through Koyonzo to Munami.

Among the projects initiated by the MP are Bulonga Primary School, Namberekea and Butaliko primary schools. Clannism could feature in Matungu politics with the dominant Abashitsetse keen to reclaim the seat.

Mr Were is said to be of Luo origin whose parents migrated to the area long ago. Mr

Murunga is also said to be from neighbouring Bukusu community in Bungoma. The two may find it difficult if opponents harp on the issue of their paternity. Apart from Ms Nyamwoma, Mr Omettah, former Dr Wamukoya and Mr Welimo, others have good resources which gives them a headstart.

Mr Murunga is a former personal assistant to Embakasi MP David Mwenje and is expected to employ his vast experience in politics during campaigns. Mr Were has kept secret the party on whose ticket he will run.

In the recent past , he was spotted in the company of Kaddu boss Mr Cyrus Jirongo but he has not denied or confirmed that he has completely ditched Ford-K which sponsored him to Parliament in 2002. It widely believed that Mr Were won in 2002 due to the Narc euphoria.

Though he won the Narc ticket via Ford-K, he has since differed with party chairman Mr Muskari Kombo. Dr Wamukoya from the Abashitsetse clan made very little impact in the constituency when he became MP in 1997. But he could also not be underrated since he has a competitive edge, having known the constituency very well. Mr Kadima who has worked as a magistrate for about 21 years is another heavyweight. He said that his intention is to tackle poverty and is allied to ODM-K.

Mr Ometty who served as a teacher for more than two decades says his top agenda would be to put stronger emphasis on empowering teachers. He is also allied to ODM-K. Ms Nyamoma has been calling upon voters to elect a woman, citing the alleged failure by past MPs to bring meaningful change in the area.

She is a former clinical officer and Maendeleo ya Wanawake national official. Dr Okumu will be trying the seat for the third time. He was first given a run for his money by Dr Wamukoya in 1997 and lost to Mr Were in 2002. He is the ODM-K interim branch chairman in the constituency.

A major showdown might be between ODM-K and Narc-K. Kaddu suffered a major setback when Mr Welimo, the only candidate in the area, ditched the party to join ODM-K.

Source: THE NATION