



GENOWA ECHO

MASHUJAA SPECIAL 20 OCTOBER 2023

IMMORTALIZING OUR HEROES



Tom Mboya, a son of our land, is unequivocally one of the most influential figures in Kenyan history. Born as Thomas Joseph Mboya on August 15th, 1930, his life was tragically cut short when he fell victim to an assassin's bullet at the young age of 39 on July 5th, 1969. His legacy still lives on

Endless Potential

SHUJAA NI WEWE!

Mashujaa Day is a special day in Kenya for its significance as the day we take a walk down memory lane to recognize and celebrate those who put their lives, skills, and expertise for us to have the society, infrastructure, and aspirations that we have today.

But, heroism is not confined to the past, it exists in the present. It is embodied by the ordinary Kenyans who make extraordinary differences in the lives of others. Our unsung heroes are the teachers who inspire our youth, the healthcare workers who treat and care for the sick, the farmers who feed our families, and countless other individuals who contribute to the progress of our county

On this Mashujaa Day, let us not overlook the immense potential that lies within us as a community. It is through harnessing, nurturing, and executing this potential that we can truly make a positive impact on the common good of our society.

Our heroes have shown us the way by their unwavering commitment and dedication to our county. Let us also look to the future and ask ourselves how we can continue their legacy.

In a world filled with challenges and uncertainties, we must draw strength from our heroes, both past and present. Their resilience, courage, and unity. Their sacrifices remind us that we must remain committed to safeguarding our gains and addressing the challenges that still confront us.

Together, we can build a Homa Bay that reflects the dreams of our heroes. Let us embrace this call to action with open hearts and minds. A place where justice, equality, and prosperity are not just aspirations, but accepted realities.

We have the potential to achieve great things as a people. Let us unite, nurture our skills and talents, and work towards the common good of our society. Only then can we truly honor the legacy of our Mashujaa and create a brighter future for ourselves and future generations.

**H. E Gladys Nyasuna Wanga,
CBS, Governor Homa Bay
County.**



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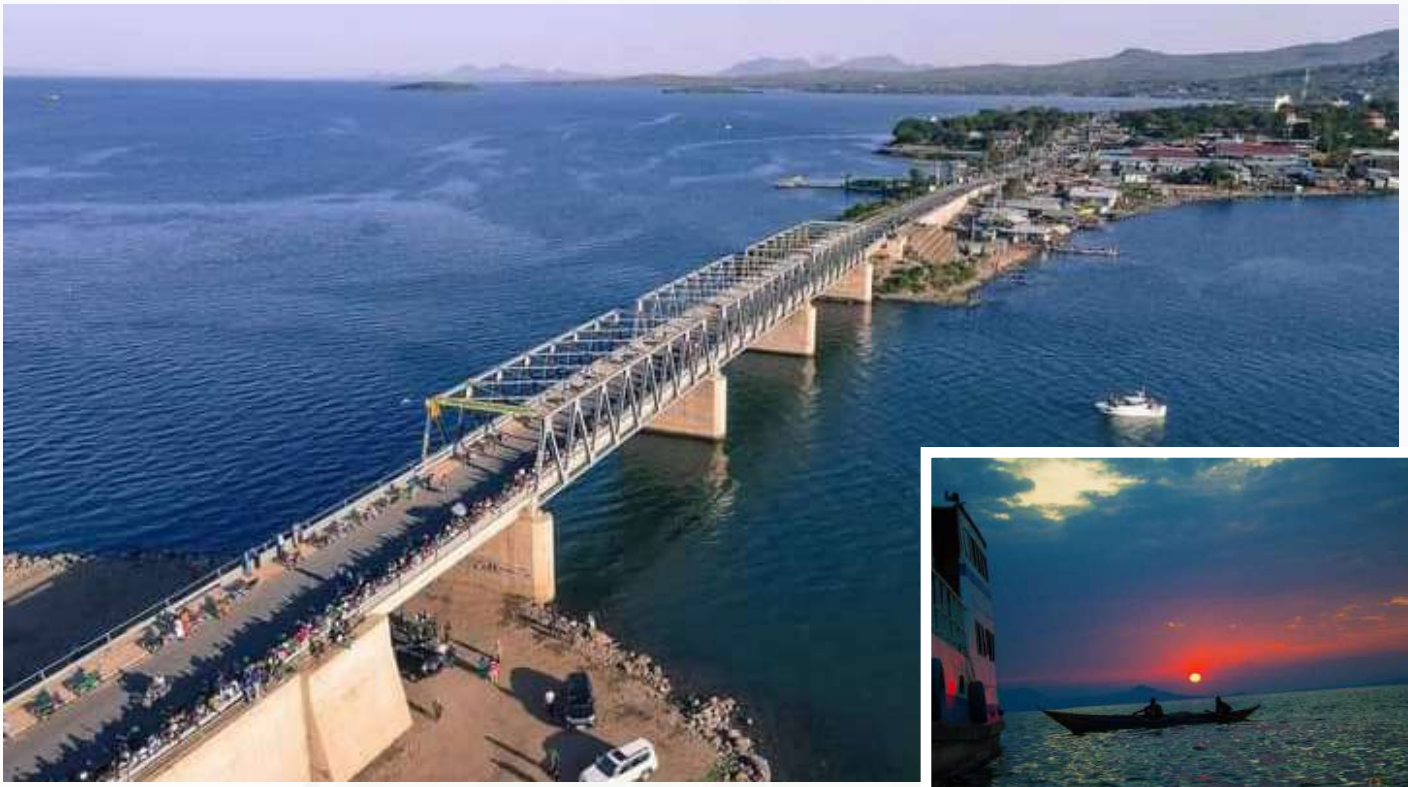
We are pleased to have Volume 8 of Genowa Echo serve as a special issue devoted to celebrating our past and current heroes and heroines who, in their service to the people, transformed the landscape of this county in a manner that only they could.

We have listed quite a number, categorizing them according to their areas of specialization including politics, education, industry, and research among others. We could not have exhausted the list, but this being a new idea, those whom we have not recognized this year will have a mention next year.

As you read through the stories, feel challenged to enhance the legacies of our Mashujaa so we can individually and collectively make this county a better place that our children and their children will be proud to inherit.

Enjoy your reading!

HISTORY: A PROFILE OF HOMA BAY COUNTY



Homa Bay County, located in western Kenya, has a rich history that dates back to the early 20th century. During the colonial era, the region was and still is predominantly inhabited by the Luo and Abasuba communities, with the latter occupying the islands and shores of Lake Victoria. Both communities are known for their fishing and agricultural practices.

The area experienced significant changes due to the arrival of European missionaries and British colonialists, who established the Church and administrative structures and introduced cash crops like cotton and sisal.

Between 1963 and the onset of multiparty democracy in Kenya, Homa Bay County witnessed a transformative period following Kenya's independence. The region actively participated in the struggle for freedom and played a crucial role in the fight for more democratic space in the country.

With the establishment of a democratic government, Homa Bay County experienced increased investment in infrastructure, education, and healthcare. The county's agricultural sector expanded, with emphasis on cash crops such as sugarcane, maize, and pineapple.

The 1990s and early 2000s marked a period of political and economic change in Homa Bay

County. More districts were created, including the separation of Suba District from Homa Bay, giving the Abasuba their administrative unit and a new voice.

During this time, the county became a hotspot for political activities and witnessed the emergence of influential leaders such as the late Gerald Otieno Kajwang and Valentine Omolo Opere. These leaders not only advocated for community development but also for political and economic emancipation.

Efforts were made to improve infrastructure, including roads, schools, and healthcare facilities. The fishing industry continued to play a crucial role in the county's economy, with Lake Victoria providing abundant fish resources.

In recent years, Homa Bay County has seen significant development and progress across various sectors. The county government has focused on initiatives to enhance agricultural productivity, promote tourism, and improve healthcare services. Efforts have been made to diversify the economy beyond agriculture, encouraging entrepreneurship and attracting investments. Infrastructure projects, including road networks and electricity connectivity, have been prioritized to enhance connectivity within the county and with neighboring regions.



EDUCATION AND SOCIAL EMPOWERMENT

Rev. Dr. Naphtali Mattah (1966 – 2020)

"After Naphtali had finished serving God and Community in his generation, he rested and was buried among his ancestors."

Rev. Dr. Naphtali Mattah made an unparalleled impact on the religious and educational landscape of the Abasuba community. As a graduate of Moi University, he possessed a Bachelor of Arts Degree, a fiancée named Nereah Adala, and a devoted commitment to the Gospel. Despite lucrative job offers in cities and towns, Naphtali chose to dedicate himself to serving his Abasuba community, particularly on Mfangano Island.

One of his first achievements was spearheading the mobilization of resources to translate the Bible into the Basuba language, an endeavor that took 18 years to complete. In 2011, the Abasuba community promulgated the New Testament in their language, allowing the Gospel to resonate deeply with the Basuba people.

During his journey, Dr. Mattah recognized the devastating impact of HIV/AIDS on his community, leading to countless orphans and widowed women with bleak futures. In



response, he founded the Gethsemane Garden Christian Center in 2003. This educational institution has since provided education to thousands of children from Mfangano Island and surrounding areas, serving as a beacon of hope in a place where optimism had been lost.

Dr. Mattah's remarkable accomplishments earned him an executive appointment as the pioneer County Executive Committee Member (CECM) of Education and ICT in the newly formed County Government of Homa Bay (2013 - 2017). During his tenure, he initiated the establishment of Tom Mboya University, initially as a constituent college of Maseno University and later as a fully-fledged university.

Driven by an unwavering passion for his community, Naphtali Mattah's contributions were duly recognized upon his passing. The community memorialized him by inscribing the words:

"After Naphtali had finished serving God and Community in his generation, he rested and was buried among his ancestors."





MS. LILIAN NGALA

Over 15 years ago, Lillian Ngala embarked on a professional journey that would lead her through various industries, ultimately bringing her to her true passion – community service.

In 2022, Lillian was honored as one of the Top 50 Leaders Shaping the Future of HR in Africa by the Human Resource Institutes. She was also acknowledged by Nation Media Group as one of the Top 20 Women Making a Difference in Kenya and featured on Citizen TV as a Mwanamke Bomba, highlighting her exceptional community service.

Today, Lillian is a highly respected Human Resource professional in Kenya, known for her significant contributions to policy formulation, talent management, workforce planning, coaching and mentoring, and culture management, among other HR agendas.

As the Group Head of Human Resources at Diamond Trust Bank, Lillian leads the HR function and ensures its alignment with the organization's overall goals. In addition, she holds positions on several boards, including the Institute of Human Resources, Kenya Institute of Bankers, National Industrial Training Institute, and KENIC. Her expertise and insight have earned her recognition within the profession and beyond.

Beyond her professional achievements, Lillian is deeply committed to making a difference in the lives of others. Through her foundation, The Lillian Ngala Foundation, she has brought about extraordinary change in her rural home of Gwassi. Her efforts include building homes for the homeless, providing education opportunities for students, and connecting individuals with job opportunities. Furthermore, she has provided much-needed relief and financial support to the underprivileged. The people of Gwassi hold her in the highest regard for her selfless contributions to their community.

Lillian values integrity, collaboration, communication, and fairness and actively promotes these principles in her role as a leader. She is a strong advocate for employee wellness, organizational agility, and the future of work. She firmly believes that to succeed in



the marketplace, a company must first foster a winning workplace environment.

Lillian Ngala's journey from humble beginnings to esteemed HR professionals and community servant serves as an inspiration to others. Her relentless drive, passion, and thirst for knowledge have propelled her to achieve remarkable accomplishments and make a lasting impact on the lives of those she serves.



Culture, Heritage and Tourism



The Kachia-Kagan Traditional Dancers

The Kagan Kochia dancers are a group of traditional dancers from the Rangwe Sub-County. The group has a strong history, being founded in 1965, and since then its members have dedicated themselves to entertaining guests at countless national celebrations and holidays, private events, as well as internationally as part of the Folklife Festival in the UK and the USA at the Smithsonian Folk Festival.

As well as this they are determined with their performance to preserve the incredible Ramogi dancing, a mainstay of traditional Luo culture. Ramogi was the patriarch of the Luo people, and this centuries-old dance is performed by mature men to beseech his spirit to possess them. Some moves of the dance represent the movements of birds, reflecting the ostrich feathers that the dancers wear.

Led by Alfred Migire, they have built a reputation for themselves as one of the most exciting groups to perform traditional Luo music, with their vibrant regalia and dance moves to match. Their brightly colored outfits (replacing the more traditional clay colors that dancers would adorn themselves

with) are augmented by attention-grabbing ostrich feather headdresses (the ostrich, a symbol of beauty and courage, represents the courage they will need to entertain) and monkey fur. They are accompanied by drumming, and the Tung', the Luo horn.



Ms. Anne Eboso Okong'o



UNESCO's Red Book of Endangered Languages [2003] has identified the Suba culture and its language dialects as endangered. By establishing the Rusinga Festival, Anne has effectively positioned Rusinga as a prominent cultural tourism destination within the Western Kenya Tourism Circuit. This achievement places the festival on par with other renowned cultural events, such as the Lamu Cultural Festival, Maralal's Camel Derby, Maragoli Cultural Festival, and Turkana Cultural Festival (Tobong'ulore).

In addition to showcasing cultural exhibitions, Anne utilizes the festival as a platform to promote other tourist attractions near Rusinga, including Ruma National Park, Mawanga Rock Arts, Abasuba Community Peace Museum, and the picturesque resorts that grace the shores of Lake Victoria.

When Anne launched the Rusinga Festival in 2012, her main objective was to investigate the possibility of a culture fading away. Today, the festival is recognized as one of the top twelve Kenyan festivals, worthy of inclusion in one's calendar.

Spanning two days on Rusinga Island in Lake Victoria, the festival serves as a deliberate platform for celebrating and distinguishing between the Abasuba and Luo cultures through a diverse range of artistic expressions. These expressions include music, fashion, film, cuisine, art, literature, sports, and thought-provoking conversations.



A performance by the lake shore in a past edition of the Rusinga Festival

HEALTH, SCIENCE, AND RESEARCH



Prof. Joseph Ouma Muga

Born in Rangwe, the late Prof Muga was known for his exceptional brilliance, but his life was not without controversy. He was implicated in the failed 1971 coup against President Jomo Kenyatta, which led to his imprisonment.

During that time, Prof Muga was a professor at Makerere University in Uganda, a renowned institution for higher education in East Africa. However, in the 1980s, with a new leadership in place, he managed to overcome his tarnished reputation and embarked on a new political journey. He successfully won the Rangwe parliamentary seat and became the assistant minister for Environment and Natural Resources in President Daniel Arap Moi's cabinet.

Prof. Ouma Muga gained public recognition when he achieved the highest scores in the Kenya African Secondary Education (KASE) exams at St. Mary's Yala. He continued to excel at the national level when he sat for the Cambridge Overseas School Certificate in 1957.

After obtaining his Bachelor of Science degree in Geography from Makerere University, Prof. Muga pursued further studies and obtained an MSC in Australia. He then completed his PhD in fluvial geomorphology in an impressive timeframe.

Notably, Prof Muga conducted extensive research in the field of Science, with his work on the Ozone Layer gaining international recognition.

Before his political career, Prof Muga served as the Vice Chancellor of Moi University, where he also founded the School of Environmental Studies. His dedication to environmental issues and his contributions to academia paved the way for his successful election as the Rangwe Member of Parliament in 1989 under the KANU party.



Dr. John Malago Magwanga

Despite currently serving as the director for finance at the Kenya National Chamber of Commerce and Industry Homa Bay Chapter, Dr. Malago is synonymous with Matata Nursing Home, Oyugis.

In 1992, the then 33-year-old Malago founded the hospital with a dream to offer the residents of Kasipul and the neighboring areas an alternative but quality healthcare. True to his vision, Matata Hospital has over the years become not only a landmark of the bustling Oyugis township but a center of medical excellence, admitting referrals from far and wide, both from public and other private institutions.

But Dr. Malago went further beyond the walls of

Matata. In 1995, he founded the Matata Foundation, a social corporate responsibility vehicle with which he has managed to train over 200 community health promoters, and constructed eight community health facilities within the catchment of Oyugis town. This has been done besides conducting several free medical camps, sinking shallow wells and water pans, drilling boreholes, and renovating and improving several primary and secondary schools across the county



SPORTS & TALENTS



Michael Olunga Ogada

talisman, Olunga is trading his profession is Qatar Stars League club Al-Duhail.

While still a student at the Upper Hill School, Olunga began his career with the Liberty Sports Academy in the Nairobi County League. After initially reported to be attending trials in France, Olunga signed for Kenyan Premier League side Tusker on a one-year loan deal from Liberty and after finishing the 2013 season with two goals for Tusker, Olunga was loaned to fellow Premier League side Thika United for another year, before joining Gor Mahia at the beginning of the 2015 season. He finished the season as the club's top scorer in the league with 19 goals to help the side win a record 15th league title without losing a single match, including the second goal in a 2-0 win over Muhoroni Youth on their final league match of the season.

Born Michael Olunga Ogada on 26 March 1994 in Kabondo, Rachuonyo East, Michael Olunga is currently the leading football star and export from Kenya. Besides being the current national team's skipper and

Olunga then sought pastures anew, seeing play in Sweden, China, Japan, and now Qatar. Back home, the striker has been involved in sports and talent development, founding the Michael Olunga Football Academy, and already has a team playing in the lower tiers of Kenyan football.

George Otieno Solo

Alongside Tairus Omondi, Tobias Ochola Jua Kali, Peter Otieno Bassanga, Austin Oduor Makamu, Isaiah Omondi Japolo, Anthony Ndolo Suzuki, Abbas Khamis Magongo Zamalek, Peter Dawo, Charles Otieno Engine, John Zangi Okello David Ochieng Kamoga, George Nyangi Odembo, Jaffer Mwidau, Sammy Onyango Jogoo and Enock Obwaka, George Otieno Solo was a stalwart of the Gor Mahia team that conquered Africa when they lifted the Nelson Mandela Cup in 1987. The feat in Tunisia, after beating the hosts

Esperance on away goal rule remains the only continental trophy ever won by an East African team.

Born in the Mfangano's Yokia village, Otieno Solo had no desire for football until his high school years. He would go on to have a prolific career with Gor Mahia, staying on with the club even after he had hanged his boots in the early 2000s.

As a member of Gor's technical bench, Otieno Solo looked back home and began to mentor prospects to join his beloved team. Through this, Tillien Oguta and Francis Odhiambo also went on to become household names in Mfanagano and beyond while turning out for both Kogalo and the national side Harambee Stars.

Solo nowadays spends his time coaching juniors at school and community levels, impacting them positively and challenging them to go one better than he did. When the history of football in Kenya is finally written, there will be a chapter or two about George Otieno Solo



George Otieno Solo (seventh from right) at the starting line up before their penultimate match in 1987

GOVERNANCE AND ADMINISTRATION

Paramount Chief Paul Mboya (1895 – 1981)



circle-from herds-boy, domestic worker, soldier, teacher, clergyman, public administrator, senior civil servant, legislator, and even diplomat. Other than being an outstanding author with a diverse range of books, he is also a notable lexicographer, bible translator, cultural leader, human rights defender, and respected political advisor.

He rose from semi-naked herdsboy to wearing starched white shirts and dinner jackets hobnobbing with the elite of European society in Kenya and also in England, twice invited to a garden party at Buckingham Palace as the honored guest of two different British monarchs. He became the first African Secretary of an African District Council.

The story of Paul Mboya is the story of Kenya. When he was born in 1895, colonial rule was yet to start, and by the time he died in 1981, colonialism had run its course, and Kenya was already two decades into independence and on its second president. The intervening period represented decades of epochal historical change characterized by profound social, political, cultural, and even religious transitions, not just among the Luo people of Kenya but all around Kenya. Nothing remained the same again. By the time of his death, Paul Mboya had gone full

He went on to become the first African member of the East African Central Legislative Assembly where he was joined by Chief Abdiel Shangali of Tanganyika and Michael Kawalya-Kagwe the Katikiro of Buganda. The British honoured him with various titles and he was officially the Hon Paul Mboya KM, BEM, and MBE.OBE. Upon retirement, he went on to become Ker, or supreme leader and the custodian of cultural precepts of his people, leading them into the promise of the 21st Century

TRAILBLAZING WOMEN IN POLITICS AND COMMUNITY SERVICE



Hon Phoebe Asiyo

A winner of both the Order of the Golden Warrior (OGW) and Chief of the Burning Spear (CBS) Mama Phoebe Asiyo is one of the most respected and influential women leaders in Kenya. She is a former Member of Parliament for Karachuonyo Constituency, the first African chairperson of Maendeleo Ya Wanawake Organization (the largest grassroots women's organization in Kenya), and Ambassador to UNIFEM.

Mama Asiyo began her career as a teacher having successfully trained at Embu Teachers Training College. Although brief, her stint in school classrooms was a stepping stone to the future. She later joined the Prisons Service, which was male-dominated, but she rose through the ranks to become the first female Superintendent of the Kenya Prisons Service. It was during her time at the Prison Service that women's prisons were established across the country.

In 1979, she ventured into politics, contesting for and winning the Karachuonyo Constituency parliamentary seat, which she held for two consecutive five-year terms, making her the first woman in Kenya to serve that long in the history of the National Assembly. Mama Asiyu lost her seat during the infamous Mlolongo elections of 1988 only to bounce back to Parliament in the 1992 multi-party elections.

After retirement from politics in 1997, she was

appointed to the defunct Constitution of Kenya Review Commission (CKRC) as a commissioner. She has since devoted her time and energies to community work and philanthropy.

Her benevolence and love became the beam of light that awakened the conscience of her generation to the need for gender equality. She works closely with the State Department for Gender Affairs to mentor upcoming female leaders and in the promotion of women's agenda.

LEST WE FORGET

Homa Bay County Leading the Way on Gender Parity in Elective Positions

Since independence, there have been debates upon debates, motions upon motions, and several pieces of activism aimed at bridging the gender divide in both appointive and elective positions in the public service. Whereas the former is easier to implement, sometimes just requiring an executive fiat to implement, achieving the latter has been very elusive. But amidst this national discourse, Homa Bay County has been able to achieve it in the last two elections without much struggle.

Currently, arguably leading in Kenya, Homa Bay County has the highest number of women elected leaders, and a substantial number of nominated women, both in Parliament and the County Assembly. The County has six elected women members of the county assembly, three women elected members of parliament representing

single constituencies, and one representing the women.

Governor Gladys Wanga is the first woman to have been elected county chief in the entire Western Kenya Region, having been the pioneer Woman Representative for Homa Bay County under the new political dispensation ushered by the Constitution of Kenya 2010. An alumnus of Kisumu Girls High School and a graduate of Kenyatta University, Governor Wanga has been a trailblazer of her own making. At the university, she was the first female to have been elected the secretary general of the university's student union. While serving as a County MP, she became the first woman member to chair the powerful standing committee on finance and helped stabilize the country's economy after it deteriorated under the adverse effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.



Group photo Governor Wanga and a section of women leaders from Homa Bay County after the launched the Homa Bay County Women Caucus early this year

Hon Millie Odhiambo is serving her fourth term as a member of parliament, having been first nominated in 2007 before winning the subsequent elections. An accomplished international and human rights lawyer, Hon Millie first made a name for herself when she founded The CRADLE Children Foundation which she used to advocate for the rights of children and women and their protection from sexual and gender-based violence. Besides her parliamentary duties, Hon Millies also serves as a member of the Kenya Task Force on the Implementation of the Sexual Offences Act and Child Welfare Society of Kenya, Adoption Committee.

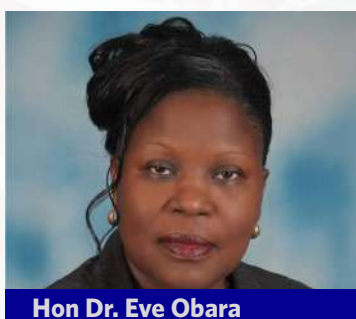
Dr. Lilian Achieng Gogo is an accomplished food scientist and an advocate of the High Court and now serving her second term as the MP

for Rangwe Constituency. A former lecturer at Egerton and KeMU universities, Dr. Gogo is an embodiment of steel after having triumphed over seasoned politicians in her Rangwe backyard on two consecutive occasions.

After a successful tenure at the Kenya Literature Bureau, Dr. Eve Akinyi Obara ventured into politics just at the right time. A new constituency was being created from the former Kasipul-Kabondo and Dr. Obara wasted no chance in joining the race to be the new Kabondo-Kasipul MP. Now in her second term, Dr. Obara's demeanor continues to endear her to her constituents and many see her as their role model.



Hon. Millie Odhiambo



Hon Dr. Eve Obara



Hon Dr. Lilian Gogo

Leaders who also made Homa Bay great



Gerald Otieno Kajwang



Peter Nyakiamo



Philip Okundi



Shem Ochuodho



Orwa Ojode



Ochieng Mbeo



Riaga Ogalo



Odhiambo Mbai



Apolo Okeyo

“Mashujaa Day serves as a reminder that each one of us has the potential to be a hero in our own lives and within our community.”

~ H.E. Gladys Wanga

