

## NEEMA PETRO MWALUKO (EAST AFRICA)



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*Councillor Neema Petro Mwaluko is a councillor for Kilimani Ward, Dodoma City Council, Tanzania.*

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### **What made you decide to enter local government?**

I had a strong desire to hasten development in the place where I lived, in order to help my fellow women, because I believed there were things I had the ability to do to help, such as educating them on various social, traditional and economic matters.

### **What has been your most rewarding experience as a councillor/leader/local government practitioner?**

One of my most rewarding experiences as a councilor was being able to face, and successfully solve, some challenges faced by citizens, which had previously not been able to be solved by others. In addition to that the cooperation from our leaders such as the mayor has been great as the mayor has done a great job in electing women councilors into various positions which is quite rewarding to witness.

### **What advice would you give to other women considering entering local government?**

Any woman considering joining local government must have the confidence and self-assurance to recognise that they can become a big part of solving various challenges, especially if they are able to become leaders. Women have a great capacity and are well tuned to societal problems so my advice to any woman considering joining local government, is not to hesitate to do so.

### **Why do you think it is important to increase the number and voice of women in local government?**

It will help because women are a major part of the society, economy and family, thus when more women are represented in local government, they can establish good foundations to solve many challenges and increase development in every aspect of life they are involved in.

### **As a woman, what has been your biggest hurdle in becoming a councillor – and in your daily public life?**

The system of the patriarchy has been a hurdle., There is still much stereotyping and discrimination leading to a lack of faith and confidence in female leadership, mostly due to our traditions and culture which have held women back from advancing making men look down upon

female leaders. In addition to this sadly enough even some of my fellow women have not helped due to internalized misogyny preferring to support male candidates even in the face of women candidates just as or better qualified.

**What has helped you the most to continue in your role?**

That would be the encouragement I received from people, after helping solve their challenges. This helped me see that I was worthy to be a leader of my community and inspired me to always keep pushing. It has made me relentless in working with great discipline to show that women can be great leaders, to make society accept that women can do it.

**As a councillor/leader in your community, how can digital technology be used to increase women's political inclusion?**

Technology has helped increase women's political inclusion through raising awareness such as the WhatsApp groups, created with the aim of educating women in politics. And the way technology has made everything so accessible, allowing women to get information easily and participate in various political affairs facilitated through technological communication.

**What innovative practices have you found helpful in encouraging more women to become more involved in local government in your country?**

Holding meetings in every ward to educate and inspire upon women on the importance of becoming leaders in society, as well as helping remove hurdles such as bad traditional practices rooted in society which have previously prevented women from participating in leadership.