

Mama Jael

MBOGO

A BIOGRAPHY

She is most famous for nearly defeating the late former President Mwai Kibaki in the 1969 Bahati parliamentary race.

BY MAKENA BRANDON

Introduction

Jael Mbogo is a Kenyan politician, women's rights campaigner and social worker whose public career began under colonial rule and continued into the multi-party era. She was the first female shorthand typist employed by the City Council of Nairobi, a nominated Nairobi councillor before independence, chairperson of Maendeleo Ya Wanawake, a columnist for the Daily Nation, and a parliamentary candidate for Bahati constituency in 1969 and 1974, and again in 1997.

The Daily Nation describes her 1969 contest against Mwai Kibaki, then Minister for Finance and later the third President of Kenya, as widely recognised as the first case of poll rigging in postcolonial Kenya. She was later a founding member and the first national organising secretary of the Forum for the Restoration of Democracy (FORD).

In 2018 she was decorated at State House, Nairobi, and in 2021 she received an award on Mashujaa Day. Despite this, the historian Anaïs Angelo notes that she is virtually absent from the academic literature on Kenyan political history.