



**UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI**

**CITATION ON**

**PETER KIHARA MUNGA**

**ON HIS CONFERMENT OF**

**THE DEGREE OF**

**DOCTOR OF LETTERS  
(*HONORIS CAUSA*)**

**OF THE**

**UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI**

**ON**

**4<sup>TH</sup> DECEMBER 2015.**

**(PHOTO)**

**MR. PETER KIHARA MUNGA**

**PETER KAHARA MUNGA** was born on August 28, 1943 at Nyagatugu village on the slopes of Aberdare Mountains in Rwathia Location, Kangema Division in Murang'a County. Peter Munga's philosophy of life is anchored on philanthropy. This was as a result of his humble background in rural Murang'a that was nurtured by his father Benson Kahara, a worker (dhobi or Washer man) and his mother, Beth Nyambura, who was a peasant farmer and casual labourer in the plantations. Like many boys of his time, he spent his early childhood performing domestic chores and herding his neighbours' animals, mainly cows and sheep, because his family at this point possessed no herds.

Munga's journey through educational life was a long torturous walk full of uncertainties. He started off his education like everyone else at Nyagatugu Primary School where he was enrolled for class1 at an early age. This was of course the post-war period during which in Kenya as elsewhere in the world, families were busy trying to rebuild and establish strong economic foundations. Inspired and mentored by a new group of indigenous entrepreneurs from his home area, the Rwathia group of companies, Munga's father quit employment to start his own hotel business at

Gikomba market in Nairobi. In 1952, young Munga and his mother left Nyagatugu to help his father in the new business venture. Mungawas enrolled in class 2 at St. Peter Clavers School, Nairobi. In October of the same year the British colonial government slammed the State of Emergency as part of its draconian measures to quell the Mau Mau armed freedom struggle.

Munga's father, the family's sole breadwinner, was detained at Many detention camps at the Coast and his mother forced to move from Nairobi to the newly created 'concentration villages'. Munga was forced to drop out of school in 1953 and to return to his Nyagatugu village practically as a destitute. "This was the heavy cost of freedom," he said years later. Every cloud has a silver lining. An Italian Catholic priest, Father Clemenceau, spotted Munga and offered him a scholarship that enabled him to enrol in class 4 at Tuuthu Primary School. At Tuuthu, Munga passed his Common Entrance Examination. He was admitted to Mugoiri Intermediate School, but he could not raise the Ksh.250 required as tuition fees. Instead, he went to the more affordable Kiangunyi Intermediate School after trading places with another boy. At Kiangunyi (1956-1959), Munga

passed his Intermediate examinations (CPE) and joined Gaichanjiru secondary School where he successfully completed his Cambridge School Certificate in 1963. Munga proceeded to high school where he completed his Cambridge 'A' level examination in 1965.

Peter is a consummate family man. Several years into his working career, he met and eventually got married to a beautiful secondary school teacher, Rose Njambi Kieme. Together they were blessed with seven children five boys and two girls. They currently have nine grand children and certainly more are on the way. Apart from his nuclear family, Munga keeps very close to his extended family and has greatly supported a lot of his step-brothers and other relatives as well as his neighbours at home to settle down in life.

Munga joined the public service in the mid-1960s as an officer in the then Provincial Administration. During his time in the civil service, Munga advanced his education at the Kenya School of Government and the United States of America (USA). He acquired a certificate in Certified Public Secretary-Kenya (CPS), Diploma in Human Resource

Management, a second Diploma in Financial Management and a third Diploma in Public Finance and Planning (Harvard). He also became an associate member of the Kenya Institute of Management (KIM). These qualifications facilitated Munga's steady rise in the public service.

In 1966, he was appointed Human Resources Manager in the office of President. By 1978, he had risen to the position of Chief Human Resources Manager at the Ministry of Agriculture, becoming Under-Secretary in the same Ministry in 1980. In the Ministry, Munga pioneered the computerization of the budgeting process. In 1983, he became Deputy Secretary in the Ministry of Tourism, where he helped formulate the Ministry's 1985 Tourism Strategic Plan. Munga also served as Director in various government corporations in the 1981-1985 period, including the National Cereals and Produce Board; alternate Director at the Agricultural Finance Corporation (A.F.C); Cereals and Sugar Finance-Treasury; Trustee, Catering Levy; Utalii Hotel and Bomas of Kenya.

Between 2007 and 2014, he was the Chairman of the National Oil Corporation of Kenya, the Kenya Artificial Insemination Centre and the Micro-Enterprise Support

Programme Trust. Munga's dedicated public service won him accolades at the national and international levels. In September 2009, he received the YARA award in Oslo-Norway for his contribution to transforming small holding farmers and business people in Africa. In 2011, former President Mwai Kibaki decorated Munga with the prestigious Elder of Burning Spear (EBS) award for his outstanding contribution to nation building.

Over the years, Munga's career as a public servant profoundly changed his material life from poverty to relative empowerment. More significantly, the experience and networks he acquired enabled him to become one of Kenya's top investors and a serial entrepreneur with a foothold in different sectors of the economy in Kenya and the larger East African bloc. As an entrepreneur, Munga has extolled a form of "capitalism with a human face." For him, investment must be driven by the large moral goal of uplifting humanity's life. Investment should empower the people, particularly the young, providing them with opportunities, skills, knowledge and resources and not throw them into poverty. Philosophically, Munga is a realist. "You have to start somewhere. The problem with people is that they

expect you to start something today and explode it into success immediately,” he says.

Munga is best known as the founder of Equity Bank, Kenya’s biggest bank by customer base that has revolutionized lives. The idea of equity has a humble beginning. In 1984, he started the Equity Building Society as a micro-finance institution based in Kangema town. Equity started off with a small capital of only 5,000 Kenya Shillings only and 5 employees. Munga discovered that the majority of low-income people such as rural farmers have no or limited access to financial services. This sparked the revolutionary business idea of ‘banking the unbankable’ or availing financial services to the low-income segment of the population.

Today, Equity Building Society has grown exponentially to a full-fledged bank with over 70 branches in Kenya, presence in Rwanda, Tanzania, Uganda and South Sudan and has plans to expand to 10 African countries. Equity boasts a market capitalization of Sh.177.7 billion and a net profit of Sh17.2 billion as of December 2014 when its 8,690 employees catered to the needs for the 9.7 million

customers. Munga has remained the chairman of the bank. He provides oversight control over his brainchild. It is he who steered the Bank into making its debut at the Nairobi Securities Exchange (NSE) on August 7, 2006. The sale of the Bank's shares worth billions of shillings has soared Kenya's financial market to unprecedented heights.

Munga has invested heavily in the industrialization and transformation of lives in the agricultural sector. In 1994, he established the Equatorial Nut Processors Limited as an agribusiness to process macadamia nuts, peanuts and cashew nuts. The company exports nuts to the United States, Central Europe and the Far East. The company has created employment opportunities to over 1,000 Kenyans.

Munga has recently moved to cotton growing and processing. He owns Meru Ginneries that has boosted local textile industries, created a local market for approximately 300,000 cotton farmers in Meru, Embu, and Tharaka Nithi counties and created jobs for nearly 100 people in the ginnery. Last year alone, Munga distributed 200 tonnes of cotton seeds to the farmers who in return have offered his ginnery a steady supply of cotton.

Munga has also invested in Britam. He is a non-executive director in a number of companies including British American Insurance Company (Kenya) Ltd, British-American Investments Co. (Kenya) Ltd, Freshco International Ltd, and Housing Finance Corporation. In 2014, Munga ventured into the energy and lighting sector when he established the Greystone Industries Limited, a concrete poles business with a capacity to cast 80,000 poles annually, and with ability to scale up capacity to about 120,000 poles per year. It currently employs 450 people and is helping the Kenya Power and Rural Electrification Authority to move away from treated wooden poles that have a shorter lifespan to the eco-friendly and long-lasting concrete poles. Through the new technology, Munga is revolutionizing electricity supply in the country and the efforts to light our cities.

Munga is also an accomplished educationist whose initiatives in education are positively changing lives. He established the Pioneer Group of Schools, which includes the 15-year-old Pioneer High School with a student population of 1,500 and St. Paul's Thomas Academy both in Maragua, Murang'a County. In 2005, he started the Pioneer International University (PIU) as a Nairobi-based College. Last year, it received a letter of interim authority from the

regulator and started offering degree programmes.

Charity is the hallmark of Munga's contribution to society. In 2011, he established the Peter Munga Foundation that is devoted to reducing hunger and poverty in rural areas through sustainable agriculture, development of local markets and encouragement of innovation and entrepreneurship. The Foundation has partnered with international organizations such as the Commonwealth Secretariat to support youth and aspiring entrepreneurs to set up businesses through a *Youth Enterprise Development and Mentoring Scheme*. The same year he launched the Wings to Fly Program with support from The MasterCard Foundation. The program aims at providing grants and scholarships over to 10,000 students with the guiding principle being academic training to gifted yet economically and socially marginalized young Kenyans.

Also in 2011 he launched the Murang'a County Initiative (MCI), a non-partisan platform for professional and business leaders who hail from Murang'a County with over 1,800 registered members. Since 2011, MCI has offered scholarships to the needy and vulnerable students from the County. The initiative offers scholarships to the needy and

vulnerable students in the county. As a long-serving public servant, entrepreneur, industrialist, educator and philanthropist, Munga has transformed thousands of lives and given hope to humanity.

Ladies and gentlemen, it is in recognition of his philanthropy and charitable work that the University of Nairobi Senate and Council have decided to award Mr. Peter Munga the degree of Doctor of Letters (*Honoris Causa*).

Ladies and gentlemen, I have the honour to present to you Dr. Peter Munga.

**LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, DR. PETER  
KIHARA MUNGA.**