

's Gifter Aber the newly elected mayor of Laroo-Pece Division in Gulu City. Key issues to address are waste management, insecurity, low revenue collection and corruption.

BY JAMES OWICH

On a sunny Thursday, May 21, Gifter Aber took the oath of allegiance and oath of office as the newly elected mayor of Laroo-Pece City Division in Gulu City, at the division headquarters, amidst cheers from her supporters.

The inauguration was not an ordinary one since she made history by becoming the first elected woman mayor in the Acholi Sub-region.

Aber beat veteran politicians Moses Abonga, the former division chairperson of Laroo and Geoffrey Otim, the incumbent, to win the hotly contested election.

The NRM party flag bearer garnered 8,081 votes against her closest rival, Mr Geoffrey Otim, of the Democratic Party, who managed 5,403 votes. Moses Abonga of the People's Front for Freedom came last with 1,005 votes.

Her opponents said she needed to gain more experience in leadership. While some attribute her success in the election to luck, the fact that her opponents have been in politics for a long

WASTE MANAGEMENT

Gulu City generates 130 tonnes of solid waste daily, but only 47 percent is collected and disposed off properly. Out of the total revenue collected annually, nearly 40 percent goes towards waste management. The city currently has only two garbage trucks.



Ms Gifter Aber (centre), swears in as the new mayor of Pece-Laroo Division of Gulu City. PHOTO BY JAMES OWICH.

What awaits Gulu's first woman mayor

time could have worked in her favour.

Aber was the woman youth councillor for Queens' Ward before joining the mayoral race. In her maiden speech, Aber cut a reconciliatory tone, observing that while the election was bitter, it was time to move forward and deliver services to the people of Gulu City.

After being sworn in, she promised to fight against corruption and insecurity. Among the challenges Aber now faces, are solid waste management, insecurity, low revenue collection and corruption.

Gulu City generates 130 tonnes of solid waste daily, but only 47 percent is collected and disposed of properly.

At the Gulu Main Market located in the Laroo-Pece Division, Aber has an uphill task in gar-

bage management. The facility generates nearly 10 percent of waste in the city.

The city currently has only two garbage trucks. The trucks travel 12km each day to dump waste at the Pabwo dumping site.

The construction of a Shs7.5 billion waste plant is nearing completion.

The new mayor will have to double her efforts in revenue collection.

Annually, the city division projects to collect Shs2 billion in local revenue. Out the Shs2 billion, nearly 40 percent of the revenue goes towards waste management.

Each year, the city spends nearly Shs300 million on managing solid waste generated by residents in the central business district.

Aber has since promised to en-

sure that revenue is safeguarded. "Our revenue officers will be in trouble if they touch local revenue," she said.

She also pledged to spend three of the five days working in the office, while the remaining two days will be spent in the field, monitoring government programmes.

Aber comes at a time when there is deteriorating security in the city and its suburbs.

One of the victims was Chris Nyeko, a laboratory technician attached to Gulu University Health Centre IV. Two days after she was sworn in, Nyeko was killed by unknown assailants.

Nyeko's body was found in the middle of Laroo Road, located

500 metres from Gulu University Police Post.

The mayor has since promised to work with security agencies to restore order in the city.

She has already held meetings the police and the UPDF leaders to address insecurity in Gulu City.

In the last two months, the city has witnessed a sharp rise in homicide cases and gun-related violence.

Since the year began, at least 10 people have been murdered. Homicide cases have been attributed to shooting and domestic violence, among others.

Aber also faces a challenge of poorly maintained roads, espe-

cially in the annexed areas.

Lt Gen Charles Otema Awany, the commander of the Reserve Force, urged Aber to ensure that roads are in good condition.

"Local investors want to invest in areas where roads are in good condition. There is power and water. Please ensure that sure that roads are in good condition," he said.

In Gulu City, fewer than 20,000 people are connected to the national grid. Meanwhile, only 13,000 have access to clean water.

Nearly 80 percent of the road project was funded by the World Bank and the Japanese government through its development agency, JICA.

Among the roads earmarked for upgrade are Bro Elio, Okidi Dakamoi, Phillip Ojok, Mama Cave, Bishop Wani, Alex Ojera, Peter Abe, Princess, Louis Otika, Lower Churchill Drive and Ben Ocan.

In the last four years, the total road length in the city increased from 249.2 km to 482.3 km. This follows the elevation of Gulu from a municipality to a city by an Act of Parliament in July 2020.

**SHS300M
SPENT ON WASTE
MANAGEMENT**