

# Urban THE NEW

March 2017

## KAKAMEGA COUNTY



### Butere Women Speak Out

Butere stakeholders meeting in progress

Butere Town women are demanding adjustments in some economic and socio-cultural practices if their town is to advance. The women highlighted six, among many issues, that they believe if addressed, the SymbioCity Kenya Programme, and indeed other development initiatives in the town will excel.

The Programme Facilitator for Kakamega County, Gustaf Asplund, noticed that women's participation

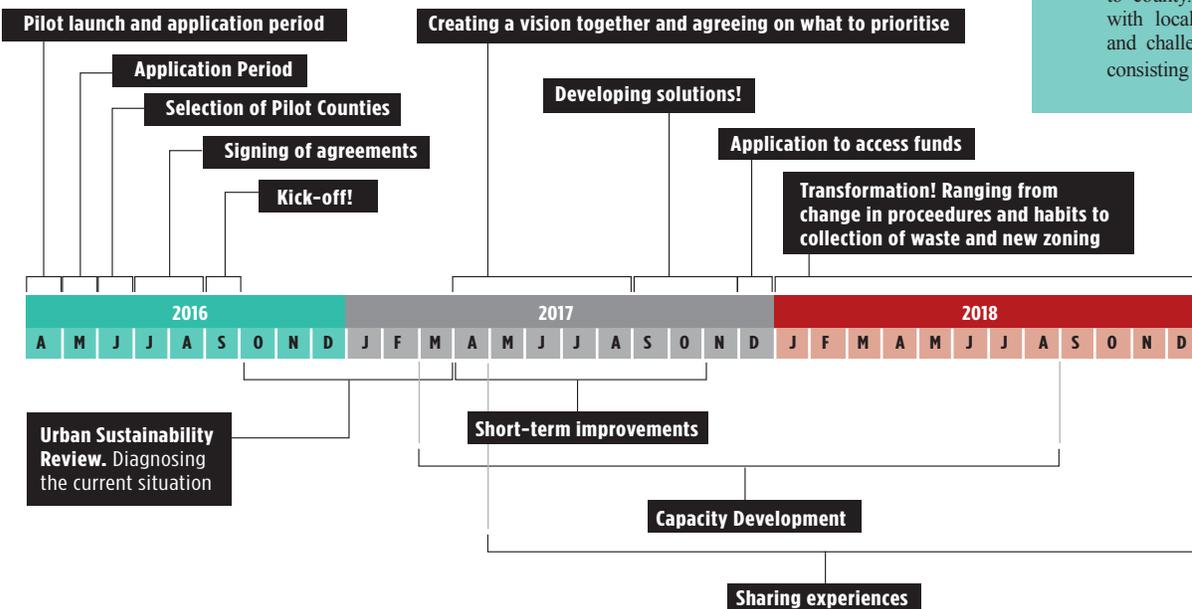
in Butere Town stakeholder group meetings was worryingly low. Not only did just a handful of women attend the meetings, but also they reluctantly participated in the conversations. With the help of the women's group representative, and the assistant pilot co-ordinator, Millicent, Gustaf organised a separate focused group meeting in the outskirts of the town, where 20 women participated freely and confidently.

They highlighted the following issues:

1. Exclusion of the community, especially women, from implementation of government or donor-funded projects has meant that their needs are not captured;
2. The practice of retrogressive culture, such as early marriage, wife inheritance, gender based violence, and sexual abuse, affect the women negatively;

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### Timeline for SymbioCity Kenya Programme in Kakamega County



### THE SYMBIOCITY KENYA PROGRAMME

#### What?

SymbioCity is an approach to sustainable development with emphasis on improving living conditions for the people living in urban areas. It doesn't provide ready-made solutions to all urban challenges. Instead it offers committed local elected representatives, officials and activists a chance to develop properly planned and managed cities where people work, access services and thrive! Urban areas with health, safety, comfort and quality of life for the people who live there. With efficiently managed urban services like waste management, mobility and water. And where the economic potential that urbanization brings is captured, while protecting the urban environment.

#### Who?

SymbioCity Kenya is a cooperation between Council of Governors and its sister organization, the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions. Seven counties have been selected, after a competitive application process, to become so called SymbioCity Pilots. Each county has selected a secondary town to be in focus for the piloting activities.

#### How?

Project activities are delivered by the Council of Governors, Urban Support Team, under the Land, Planning and Urban Development Committee. We are a team of mixed backgrounds and nationalities, with emphasis on Kenyan and Swedish urban specialists. In the respective pilot counties, a Working Group has been established, to guide the work in the county. The composition of the Working Group varies from county to county. The Working Group in its turn engages with local stakeholders when consulting on needs and challenges and report to a Steering Committee consisting mainly of County Government officials.

### THE SYMBIOCITY PILOTS!

Pilot	County
Mbita	Homabay
Butere	Kakamega
Ahero	Kisumu
Kwa Vonza	Kitui
Makutano	Meru
Njoro	Nakuru
Kiminiini	Trans Nzoia



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*This newsletter has been put together by the SymbioCity Kenya team. The purpose is to share information with stakeholders on the process and progress of SymbioCity in Kakamega County.*

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3. There is an urgent need to create employment avenues in the town as, having men seeking employment in other towns and urban areas like Kakamega,

Kisumu and Nairobi, leaves women, children and other dependents, destitute;

4. The area is facing food insecurity due to reducing agricultural land sizes caused by land sub-divisions from increased population; unfavourable weather

patterns; and the use of old farming methods;

5. Rising youth unemployment rate has led to increased substance (alcohol and bhang) abuse, which renders them too lazy to till the available land; and

6. Most women don't have a proper grasp of devolved governance, hence ignorant of the procedures and channels to follow to access services from the county government.

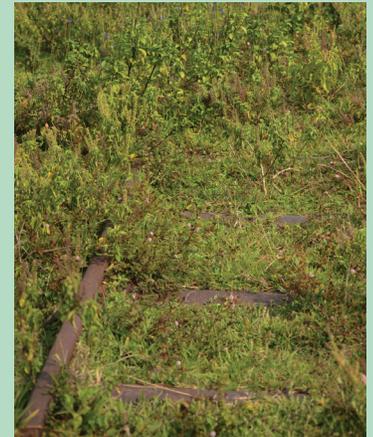
From the issues the women raised, and their hesitancy to participate in joint meetings, it is apparent that the women

of Butere need special attention to discuss their issues. It is therefore vital that programmes or projects that are implemented in the area identify the appropriate channels of enhancing their participation and inclusion.

## Transport an Economic Stimulant in Butere



A street in Butere Market



The railway line covered by vegetation

Butere Town was once known as a railway terminus, locally referred to in Swahili Language as, *mwisho wa reli*. The terminus was the branch line of the pre-independence railway line that was completed in 1932. The line ran from Mombasa, via Nairobi, to Kisumu. In 1990, railway passenger services begun to dwindle due to financial losses, and the "iron snake" finally screeched to a halt in early 2000. The Railway Station has since become a shadow

of its former self, a dilapidated office building with the railway line as a symbol of its history.

In its prime, Butere Town was a buzz of economic activity, which even attracted a sizable number of Asian traders, known for their merchant prowess. Today, business is reduced, as most people lost jobs and income with the death of the train services. The increased unemployment has resulted in insecurity, laments a local retired teacher. "We live in fear, as

youth from neighbouring areas steal our livestock, sometimes ending in death. We have enhanced community policing through the Nyumba Kumi Initiative," adds the resident.

Sabatia Town, which is in Upper Butere, and located one kilometre away from the railway station, currently serves as the economic centre for upper and lower Butere. This is attributed to the road network that has increased community access to other towns like Kisumu, Busia

and Mumias. Through continuous engagement, the community has urged the County Government of Kakamega to develop a bus park to cater for cross county bus services. Residents project that the investment will spur economic activity, thus increasing revenue to the county.

The SymbioCity Kenya Programme is working with the community through a multi-stakeholder and multi-sectoral approach, to develop the Butere-Sabatia Town Strategy aimed at ensuring that the projected growth benefits all residents.