

Urban THE NEW

March 2017

KISUMU COUNTY

Ahero Town Leaps Towards Urbanisation



Ahero Town residents, using their non-motorized transport for day to day activities

Ahero Town, whose name means “I love”, in the Luo language, is approximately 25 kilometres from Kisumu City. The town’s economic backbone is rice farming, with transport and commerce taking second place. While its urbanisation has the potential to become a pole for sustainable, inclusive and economic growth, Ahero

can also easily become an engine of exasperating inequality, poverty, disease and insecurity, if poorly governed and managed.

In the wake of devolution, more focus is being placed on county headquarters with smaller urban areas losing their image to sub-county structures and management. The SymbioCity Kenya Programme aims at supporting counties to

strengthen management, work structures and service delivery in urban areas, due to the nature and complexity associated with urban areas.

The programme emphasises collaborative work between counties and the local communities towards developing a more integrated and inclusive solution to current and projected urban challenges. In doing

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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.

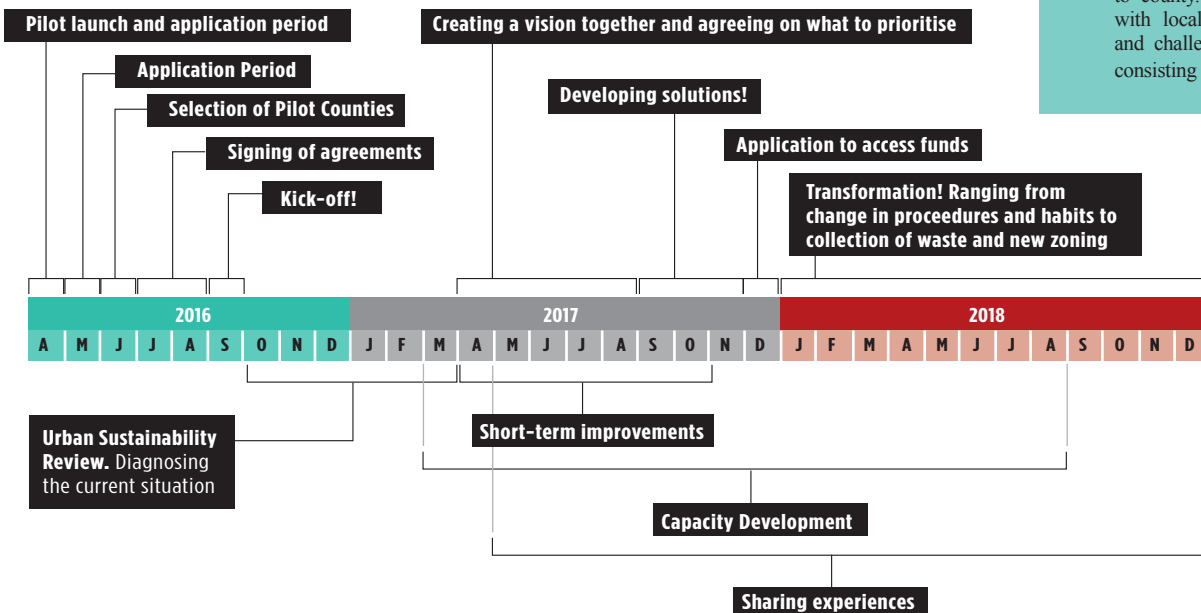
Who?

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.

Timeline for SymbioCity Kenya Programme in Kisumu County



THE SYMBIOCITY PILOTS!

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



This is how we do it!

This past January, Ahero Town brought to life the SymbioCity Model of “Building Synergies”, through a successful day long clean up activity. An environment officer, assisted by the SymbioCity Kenya Programme co-ordinator for the county, headed the exercise. The leaders set up a working group with members drawn from different departments of the county, and distributed to them tasks and responsibilities. In addition, the members consulted widely throughout the planning and implementation process.

This approach deviated from norm. Ordinarily most departments in Kisumu County work as independent entities, which has resulted in a

waste of time and resources. The “Building Synergies” Model strives to increase efficiency and develop better-integrated strategies through the combined expertise, ideas and solutions from inter-departmental collaborations. The model will be scaled up in future to other urban areas.

The decision to clean up Ahero Town was reached following wide consultations with the local community, who demanded for a clean and healthy environment. “This place called Ahero is my home and my work place. I have lived here for over 40 years. Your home should be clean to give you the courage to invite visitors,” said a member of the community.

1 Residents of Ahero Town clean up their town

2 Community members volunteer to support the cleanup exercise

3 Clogged drainages have become a nuisance and eye sore in Ahero Town

The town’s traders, businessmen and women, *boda boda* (bicycle taxi) operators, and representatives from the neighbouring Homabay County enthusiastically participated in the exercise, something that was attributed to the well-organised and coordinated approach of the working group.

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so, it stresses the need to leverage on locally available resources.

SymbioCity Kenya is organised in three tiers with the stakeholder group forming the base upon which the people voice their needs, challenges and solutions. The group is made up of representatives of traders, farmers, women, teachers, transporters *boda boda* (motorcycle taxi) operators, and persons with disability, among others.

The second tier is the technical working group consisting of middle-level county staff from the departments of physical planning, environment, energy, engineering, water, public health, education, sub-county administration, communication and the Office of the Governor. Together with the stakeholder group, and with the support of the SymbioCity facilitator, and specialised experts, this group synthesises input from the community and provides technical advice.

The steering committee forms the third level, and the top decision making organ of the county. It is responsible for policy advice, oversight, support and approval of on-going working group activities.

Kisumu County has made tremendous strides in its collaborative work approach, with a solid and active working group. Through continuous stakeholder consultations and engagements, the county has developed objectives, strategies and an urban vision that fits within the framework of its vision.



Ahero Town’s urbanisation poses a challenge to urban services such as waste management.

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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 Kisumu County.

What’s Next?



A section of polluted River Nyando

Nyando river day

River Nyando is the main source of water in Ahero, but due to damaging practices, it has in recent times caused destruction and poverty. For example, during the rainy season high levels of siltation push the waters of the river over the banks, resulting in flooding, particularly in the low-lying plains.

The SymbioCity Kenya Programme has set aside a day in the month of April to demonstrate to Ahero Town Community how mismanagement of River Nyando affects their environment and health. On the day dubbed “River Day”, the community will receive training and advice on how pollution has over time caused a reduction in the volume of water in the river, thus reducing their agricultural productivity.