

SYMBIOCITY KIMININI STUDY VISIT TO NAIROBI

Mr. Nicholas Musonye

Deputy Director of Environment - Trans Nzoia County

Tuesday 7th November 2017 saw the arrival of one of Symbiocity's Pilot City programme participants arrive in the Kenyan capital Nairobi, on a hands on 3 day study visit of various waste management projects in Nairobi and the neighboring Kiambu & Kajiado counties. An avid farmer and community mobilizer for more sustainable and Eco-friendly farming practices, **Mr Nicholas Musonye** is also the current Deputy Director of Environment for Trans Nzoia County. We were fortunate enough to have a sit down with him during the very busy study visit.

Interviewer: Mr Musonye, in your official capacity what would you say is the biggest challenge when it comes to waste and waste management in Trans Nzoia County?

Mr Musonye The biggest challenge has to passing the buck. There seems to be no sense of individual or collective responsibility when it comes to dealing with waste and the environment in general. Most people feel that it is other people's or the government's responsibility to deal with the matters.

Interviewer: Could you elaborate a bit more on this?

Mr Musonye For example, a person will litter and feel that his litter is too little to cause any harm. Now compound that by hundreds of people. Even when confronted, the same person feels it's the county or municipal's responsibility to clean up. On the other hand, different departments within the county governments feel it is the other departments' responsibility and then the county government ends up thinking that the central government also has a role to play.

Interviewer: How can this challenge be overcome?

Mr Musonye Individual & collective responsibility I believe is something that is inherent. There must be a re-awakening of that responsibility through education and training but beyond that, this education must be integrated into laws and policies thereby creating a framework within which the community is guided but also, to give a legal precedence and direction for various county government departments and authorities to work.

Interviewer: Given your position in the county government, what is your role in galvanizing the drafting and tabling of the necessary policies into laws and what receptions do such tabled motions receive?

Mr Musonye It is not an easy task pushing an environmental agenda in any developing city or county. There are always concerns that are considered requiring more immediate attention and so environmental and waste management issues are sometimes forced to take a back seat. Understandably, it is a difficult debate to have trying to push for the budgetary allocation of a garbage dumpsite versus the building of a new health centre. However it is important for any county government or town to understand that some of the other challenges they encounter stem from environmental and poor waste management.

Interviewer: What are examples of such challenges?

Mr Musonye If you have human waste poorly disposed and it ends up in the water system, people are bound to get sick. If there are areas people are throwing their domestic garbage and human effluent, the general outlook of the area deteriorates and so even trying to get investors in becomes difficult, which leads to more unemployment, which leads to crime, which makes the area even less likely to attract investment, then the little resources available are spent trying to combat crime. It is a vicious cycle.

Interviewer: Given all these challenges that you face in Trans Nzoia, are there any efforts geared towards Waste Management in place at the moment?

Mr Musonye Despite the challenges, there are a lot of efforts in place both by the county government and also private ventures. Within the government we are in the final drafting & tabling process of different laws to govern the county approach to waste management. The environmental department where my docket sits, has also been involved in a stronger push for allocation of more resources and finances so we can set up a dump-site and bolster youth groups that are involved in recycling and garbage collection. Various players in the private sector most notably Rotuba Limited & Tachoboa are already working with the community in recycling organic waste from the market places and farms. As the government, we have reached out to these two organizations and are in talks with them to see how we can partner and support each other. There is still a lot to be done but at least there is motion.

Interviewer: If there is one aspect you wish to take away from the study visit, what would that be?

Mr Musonye I am most keen to learn about treatment of effluent. In Trans Nzoia, most people dig pit latrines as a way to get rid of effluent. However, this seeps into the soil and ends up in river or water sources. I believe we urgently need to find sustainable and affordable methods of treating this waste; it is causing outbreaks of diseases and in some cases deaths.

Interviewer: Finally Mr Musonye, we have been made to understand that you are a community mobilizer, what are some of the activities you undertake during this mobilization?

Mr Musonye I work mostly with the youth. Unfortunately, most youth have a very negative notion of farming and my efforts are geared towards showing them that farming can be profitable and dignified rather than trying to move to a city to seek employment. Further, I encourage the community to practice agro-forestry since we are losing substantial forest cover every year.



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