



SYMBIOCITY KIMININI STUDY VISIT TO NAIROBI

Ms Simone Andersson

Environmental Communication Officer for Waste and Water at Symbiocity Kenya Program

Leading the charge from the front in matters concerning liquid and solid waste for the seven pilot cities in Kenya, Ms Andersson was key in organizing and liaising the Study Visit by Kiminini Town team between 7th & 9th November 2017 in Nairobi and the neighboring Kiambu & Kajiado counties. An ardent cyclist & passionate advocate for conservation and recycling, Ms Andersson accompanied the visiting team throughout the period of the Study Visit and spared a few minutes to chat with us.

Interviewer: What are some of the most frequently asked questions regarding waste management?

Ms Simone It has to be questions regarding value. Is there value in dedicating time and resources in waste management? Is there any value in waste? Some forms of waste like metal or copper seem to be more readily accepted as valuable but other types are viewed as garbage something to be gotten rid of and forgotten.

Interviewer: So is it a question of out of sight out of mind when it comes to waste?

Ms Simone It's more as a lack of awareness of what garbage is. It's a non-issue until you start talking about it and then everyone has an experience and opinion about it. So it's almost like the elephant in the room, everyone sort of ignores it until someone is brave enough to bring it up.

Interviewer: Would you say then the first step in combating waste & waste management then is through sparking the debate?

Ms Simone Definitely, as soon as the curtains are drawn back then you start to hear how the waste is affecting the people and people are concerned for example is effluent ending up in the water they drink or industrial waste is being dumped where they live and what effects that has on their health and overall dignity.

Interviewer: : Is the question then, how do we deal with our waste and the waste around us once the debate starts?

Ms Simone Yes but very quickly after "how do we do this?" The question that arises is "How do we finance these efforts?" This is a question not just from government positions but even private ventures. Like we just left Taka Taka Solutions (A waste collection, management and disposal company based in Banana - Kiambu County) and initially people think such entities are make a lot of money off their waste, but aspects such as transportation, licensing, labour and other expenses mean that the initial and on-going expenses are quite high. So at the very top of any way forward there's a huge monetary question.

Interviewer: It seems county policies and legislations are yet to be set in most places with regards to waste and waste management, would you say the lack of these policies & acts as a hindrance when it comes to things like enforcement and even basic allocation of funds?

Ms Simone As it stands there is no National integrated waste management solution. That means that each county is grasping at whatever solutions it can afford. The lack of this national guideline means that there are no fiscal plans associated with waste management. Any sort of planning in the county levels must be augmented on a broader national level, given that waste management falls under the environment portfolio, what ends up happening is that priority is given to other aspects and there aren't enough funds to reach the waste management projects. In effect, we are looking at a situation that is almost requiring 47 different counties coming up with their own way of structuring and financing waste management.

Interviewer: So are to understand that there are no laws and policy in place at all?

Ms Simone : No. There are laws and policies in place, like the ban on polythene bags just came into effect, what we are saying is that the laws and regulation constantly need to be maintained and changed strategically to suit and evolve into workable and sustainable solutions. This still brings us back to finance because the laws need to be clear to the public and then enforced and that costs money. Leaders both political and religious need to be the first to understand the impact of poor waste management.

Interviewer: Say we are drawing up a pyramid of hierarchy of needs for proper waste management, what would this pyramid look like from your perspective?

Ms Simone First I would say is Finance, then policy, then civic education and sensitization, enforcement of laws and policies, lobbying and finally a simple approach and solutions model.

Interviewer: Tell us more on this simple solutions approach and model?

Ms Simone On most occasions, processes and approaches are overcomplicated and so they are too resources and energy intensive even before they take off. A dustbin is a dustbin, just having one is already a leap rather than thinking of trying to set up different bins for bottles, batteries, electronic waste, paper... Start small. Put a simple sign with an image showing how to use the bin and finally a thank you for the people doing their part. That will go a long way better than newspaper circulars announce grand schemes and plans.

Interviewer: Over the past 2 days, the sites we have visited during the study visit have all been private initiatives in waste management. Given that the private sector seems to be spearheading waste management efforts albeit for profit on their part, do you believe that the future of waste management not just in the pilot cities but through out the country lies in private public partnerships?

Ms Simone It does. The private sector has taken a leap and made certain advances, so for governments and municipalities to partner with them it means getting a head start on projects. Regulations and policies governing these partnerships must be drawn up of course but I believe that this is a good way forward. Both bodies can learn and benefit a lot from these collaborations.

Interviewer: What were your aims and expectations in organising the study visit and are the outcomes of the visit satisfactory when weighed against the aims?

Ms Simone The aim was to show tangible proof of concept. That it is not just theoretical. There are people and organisations doing it and even profiting from waste management and I must say the results were almost immediate. You could almost see the wheels turn with every site we visited and every question the participants asked. So I am very pleased and I am hoping to see applications on the ground in the coming months.



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