

Corona: How Laikipia Has Embraced Video Technology to Keep Virus Away

Laikipia has lived the adage that every dark cloud has a silver lining. When many of employees stayed away from their offices following a directive to keep a social distance to avoid infection by Corona virus, the county government of Laikipia found a new, easier and cheaper way of holding meetings; use of video conference. HE Governor Ndiritu Muriithi held the first video conference with seven of his top officials who were in remote locations on Wednesday, 18th March 2020. They included CECMs Njenga Kahiro and Rose Maitai, Chief officer Donald Mogoi, Private secretary and senior advisor Kiama Kaara, and two others.

Another meeting in the afternoon brought together slightly more than 20 participants as people were sharing the screens.

By Friday the county's leaders including the county commissioner, DCCs, county police commander, CCIO, Senator John Kinyua, Laikipia West MP, Patrick Mariru and many other stakeholders were able to deliberate on county matter via video conferencing.

It attracted about 100 participants in total.

Laikipia religious leaders across the county were

able to hold two meetings with Governor Ndiritu Muriithi and sentaro John Kinyua through video.

Technology

The technology has come in handy for Laikipia which is almost 10,000 square kilometres. Health officers overseeing operations in various health facilities were able to report on the measure they have put in place to prevent Corona Virus infection.

It ushers a new era where an officer serving in a remote area like Luoniek which is 200 kilometres from Nanyuki town, does not need to travel all the way to attend a one-hour meeting at the headquarters. This technology will save money in terms of fare and allowances he would have been paid and the six hours that he would have spent travelling.

Following the break through in the use of video



A screen display of an ongoing online video conference in Laikipia

technology in the county, Governor Ndiritu Muriithi has announced that the county's inaugural UHC conference will be held by use of video conference technology. A link for joining the conference which would have been physically held on March 26 and 27, will be circulated widely.

Opportunity

The county government has already communicated to its staff encouraging them to use the technology even after the issue of corona virus is solved.

"Every problem presents an opportunity," Governor Ndiritu Muriithi said,

Following the national government's directive to have staff work from home in the wake of the Corona virus pandemic, Laikipia County leveraged technology to ensure government operations run unaffected.

Governor Ndiritu Muriithi held the virtual meetings with other government officials, religious leaders and other stakeholders through the Zoom online video conferencing platform.

Such a meetings also help government officers and other stakeholders to consult and make key decisions even on weekends as they do not need to travel and converge somewhere. This innovative move was informed by the need to hold critical managerial meetings that were disrupted by the health directive to maintain interpersonal distance of at least a metre.

According to the County Director of Communications the government will consider video conferencing for most

managerial meetings moving forward.

"The online platform is proving to be a cost-effective alternative to hold meetings as it will cut the expenses related to road travels and save time as well," he said.

Take an example of a person coming from Nairobi to Nanyuki for a two meeting with the Governor. It would take him at least three hours to Nanyuki, two hours for the meeting and another three hours going back, a total of eight hours. In the end, a two-hour meeting ends up taking a whole day, not to mention the monetary cost on fuel, and other miscellaneous expenses.

The six extra hours spent on the road could have been used to make outcomes in other service delivery duties.

Set pace

Laikipia has set the pace in the use of technology to ensure minimal interruption of service delivery to the citizens at a time when governments all over the world are facing a near shut-down of operations following the outbreak of the viral disease. This approach can be emulated by not only other government organizations, but also the private sector. To conduct such a meeting successfully, participants need to be alerted on time prior to its commencement to ensure they are on board simultaneously. This will ensure they are all set in a place with good network connectivity upon the start of the conference.

The fact that the platforms allow as many as 350 participants on board makes it a viable alternative.

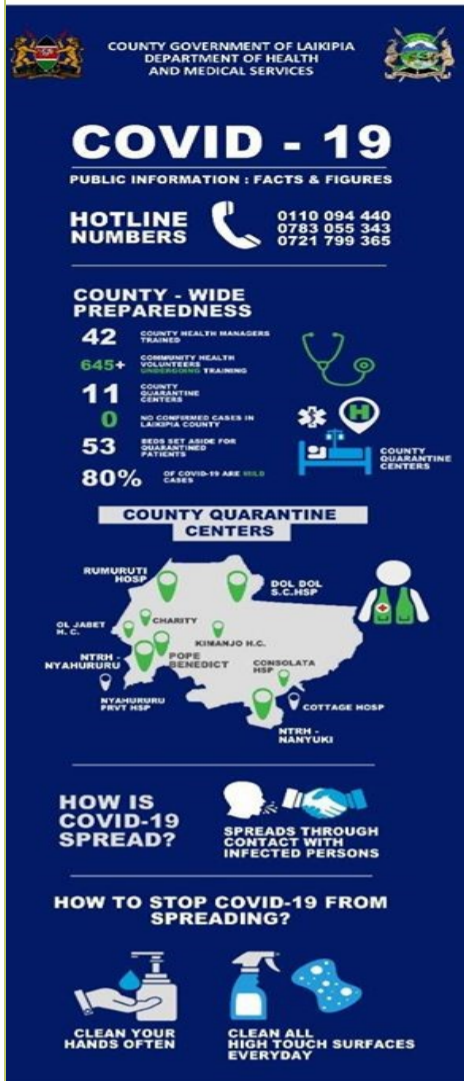
For all your queries, information or concern on Corona Virus in Laikipia

Emergency Hotline on

**0110 094 440
0738 055 343
0721 799 365**

Laikipia's Prepared For Covid-19 Pandemic

As part of preparedness for the Covid 19 pandemic, the county has put in place the following measures:-



- 42 managers have been trained
- 645 CHVs trained
- 11 quarantine centres established with a total capacity for 53 beds
- Health workers trainings are ongoing
- Triage / screening centres have been set up in all the major hospital
- Drugs and Personal Protection Equipment (PPEs) have been procure
- Intensive public awareness campaigns are ongoing
- Rapid Response teams constituted
- ♦ Emergency Hotline numbers where all queries, concerns and information on the disease are channeled; 0110 094 440 / 0738 055 343 / 0721 799 365.



SOME FACTS ABOUT CORONA VIRUS

- Laikipia has not had any case of the disease
- The Covid-19 infection causes mild infection in 80% of the cases.
- The fatality rate is 2%, meaning that for every one hundred of the cases, 98% recover fully.
- The disease is spread through coughing, sneezing and spitting and enters the body through the nose, mouth and eyes.
- The disease can be prevented

through fairly easy to do measures like regular hand-washing with soap and water, using hand sanitizers, coughing into the crease of your elbow, using disposable tissues while blowing your nose or spitting, avoiding shaking hands, maintaining a social distance of one metre, avoiding crowded areas and avoiding non-essential travel to areas, regions and countries with active Covid-19 transmission.

County Leadership Announces Extra Measures to Prevent the Corona Virus

Laikipia county has put in place extra surveillance and prevention measures for the Corona virus, following the detection of cases of the virus in the country a week ago. This happened as the county confirms that there is no case within its borders currently.

A woman who had been on a 14-day self quarantine, having flown into the country with the first Corona patient in Kenya tested negative.

The intensified surveillance measures by the county leadership are set to be implemented, with focus on minimizing disruption of the economy.

A total of 11 quarantine centres have been set aside in public, private and private health facilities, all with combined capacity of 53 beds. In addition, a total of 544 health staffs had been trained by Friday on the handling and management of corona virus cases. The trained staff are expected to team up with additional medical and enforcement staff who have been recalled from leave and deployed to boost operations on the ground.

Communities, too, will benefit from correct and factual information concerning COVID-19 from community health workers who are currently receiving training.

The officers will ensure the hand-washing points installed at public spaces are used to strengthen preventive measures. This, together with the observation of the health directive to maintain a social distancing and personal hygiene, are expected to greatly boost chances of containing the virus.

Some of the measures reached to intensify surveillance and control of COVID-19 are public service vehicles are to

transport fewer people to maintain social-distance, and screening points mounted at all points of entry into the county. Under the new measures;

- All public service vehicles must maintain a passenger manifest and are encouraged to transport fewer persons in line with observing social-distance.
- There will be screening on all points of entry into the county in collaboration with the law enforcement officers.
- Religious leaders have been instructed to encourage their faithful to pray more but keep off from gatherings that can compromise their health; and are encouraged use technology and local radios to reach out to their members
- Due to the effect of alcohol on rational judgement, the operations of alcohol outlets will only be allowed between 5.00pm-8.30pm. No night clubs and discos during this period.
- The county will also be enforcing screening, social-distancing, handwashing and general hygiene and paperless transactions at all food market places, retail shops and supermarkets.
- Livestock markets play a critical role in the county's economy hence we are going to establish makeshift holdings for animals with controlled entries and exits. Citizens are urged to observe the guidelines that will be issued to ensure smooth operations in the faces of this disease. Citizens should to use cashless transactions as much as possible.
- Funeral meetings have been cancelled while we encourage families bury their dead within the shortest time possible and with limited number of people.

County Executive, Assembly in Joint Effort to Sensitize Public on Corona Virus

Laikipia County Government has stepped up efforts in readiness to combat a possible public health crisis occasioned by Corona Virus, as it embarks on joint sensitization efforts with the County Assembly.

The Department of Health and Medical Services on Tuesday 17th March briefed the County Assembly on the steps the government has taken to monitor and contain the virus should it be detected in the County. More importantly, the Health Department sought to bring the County Legislators up to speed with the factual development of the epidemic as the House goes on recess in observation of the national government directive to narrow down the size of staff working within close quarters.

As the County Assembly of Laikipia proceeds on the temporary recess, it will play a critical role on sensitizing the public

on the disease from an informed point of view. This move is aimed at averting the effects of the spread of misinformation on the disease transmission, prevention and treatment to the public.

Laikipia County has remained steadfast in preparation to contain the viral epidemic. Currently, the County has an isolation capacity of 53 beds in different health facilities.

Of these, Nanyuki Teaching and Referral Hospital has a 10-bed isolation unit, Nyahururu County Referral Hospital has eight, Pope Benedict Hospital in Nyahururu has seven, while Consolata Mission Hospital. Additional beds in isolation units are in Oljabet Health Centre, Rumuruti Sub-County Hospital, Charity Medical Hospital and Nanyuki's Cottage, and Nyahuru Private Hospitals.

Hand washing facilities have also been placed in Rumuruti, Nyahururu and Nanyuki markets and bus stops.

In addition, the County has procured 5,000 personal protective equipment sets, with more additional equipment acquisition underway.

New NTRH Point-of-Care Testing Boosts HIV Interventions



In Kenya, an estimated 37,000 to 40,000 infants contract HIV every year, a 2017 study shows. Most of these cases are transmitted from mother to child during pregnancy, labour and delivery or post-natally through breastfeeding.

A major hurdle to scaling down the impact of the viral infections is lack of testing facilities for most of the patients.

The scarce facilities end up extending the period of test returns, greatly narrowing down the chances of life-saving interventions for many patients.

To plug this gap, Laikipia County has a Point-of-Care testing facility at the Nanyuki Teaching and Referral Hospital to test for viral loads in patients.

Waiting time

The facility, the first in the region, will cut the results-waiting time from the previous highs of 70 days to less than a day. Previously, patients had to wait for samples to be sent to Kenya Medical Research Institute in Nairobi, an arrangement put medical interventions in

jeopardy as the delays resulted in HIV related complications and deaths on infants.

The move was informed by the need to have a HIV test facility within reach. For instance, of the total 8,823 viral loads tests done in 2018, 16 per cent needed urgent intervention because the viral load was higher than expected, thus informing the need for facility-based test device for instant response.

Cutting Edge

The HIV point of care testing facility is set to boost the County's strategy to bring down HIV mother-to-child transmission from the current 13 per cent to below five per cent. The cutting edge medical technology, which comes with the advantage of minimal errors, is part of a strategy to make Nanyuki Teaching and Referral Hospital a centre of medical excellence.

The facility puts Laikipia a step in the right direction of the UNAIDS' 90-90-90 treatment target. Under this program, the UNAIDS targets to have 90 per cent of HIV-positive patients know their status, 90 per cent put on treatment and 90 per cent put on viral suppression treatment.

Same day

With the point of care test kit within reach, more lives will

be saved as the quick return of tests results gives health workers an opportunity to initiate life-saving interventions. The 9.4 million shilling HIV viral load test system is part of a plan to expand the HIV/ Syphilis diagnostics including Early Infant Diagnostics and viral load monitoring.

One-stop

Under the Point-of-Care testing, patients will now have their test results on the same day of visit, giving room for medics to make early decisions that will save more lives.

The project was made possible through the partnership between the County Government and the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund, UNICEF.

The medical facility serves Laikipia and the neighbouring counties of Samburu, Meru, Nyeri, Isiolo and beyond.

The one-stop testing machine will be used to test samples brought from different health facilities across the County.

This will be done through the use of motorcycles for faster delivery of results.

How Solar-Powered Boreholes Are Transforming Lives in Laikipia

By David Serem

At the height of the severe drought last year, residents of Lorora and Ngare Mare villages in Sosian Ward did migrate in search of water for domestic use and for their livestock as well, in stark contrast to previous drought seasons.

Two solar powered boreholes provided a lifeline for hundreds of residents and their sheep and goats numbering in thousands.

Solar powered boreholes are providing a cost effective solution to provide water to people whose ways of life are subject to the sway of weather patterns. That's how the focus on water for production is transforming the lives of thousands of Laikipian.

The two boreholes are just part of the many other similar water projects spread across Laikipia, and whose impact is a more settled populations as shortage of water previously led to more people moving constantly even when livestock pasture is not yet depleted.

Solar powered boreholes are coming in to solve a decades-long problem that has persisted even as the county sits in abundance of underground water and the renewable solar energy. The cost-effective approach is fast replacing the costly diesel and electricity powered pumps, with the efficiency a welcome relief to communities who have been drawing water from the back-breaking manual pumps.

The county government is moving to harness the re-



newable power to pump up life-transforming water to thousands of people living off the grid across the county. Schools, health facilities and security posts are benefitting immensely from these transformative water projects. Doldol and Luoniek solar powered boreholes are now providing water to hundreds of people in the two trade centres and the adjacent villages, a possibility that residents previously thought was achievable. These

sustainable water projects have promoted security among communities as water related conflicts drop. Increasingly, more farmers are adopting solar energy to pump water into farms, providing tens of constant job opportunities even during the dry seasons.

Equipment Leasing Frees Up More Cash for Projects



Gachwero Bridge in Umande ward

A report on the progress of the roads upgrade program using the leased equipment program has revealed the financial benefits the approach has achieved. The report shows that the leasing approach is three to five times cheaper than ordinary contracting, with additional benefits on timely delivery of the projects. Through ordinary contracting, a kilometer of road costs the tax payer approximately 1.5 million shillings, while the leasing program costs 300 thousand shillings for every kilometer. The resulting financial savings is a ripple effect on the entire county road construction program, as the leasing program frees up more cash to accom-

modate more contractors to do even more projects. Contrary to a previous notion that the leasing program is edging out contractors, the approach instead allows the government to engage even more contractors on more road projects in urban centres and drainage works in the rural roads. This financial year, contractors are set to take up at least 41 kilometres in roads improvement projects in Laikipia North alone. Contracts have already been awarded for the 18 kilometre Chumvi Bridge Arjijo Road Junc-

tion and the 23 kilometre long Murupusi-Kimanjo Road. Laikipia roads upgrade program through the leased equipment started late last year. In less than five months, the program has seen the improvement of 41 kilometres of road in two wards, even as heavy rains slowed down the progress of the projects. Under the program, two construction brigades are working concurrently, making unprecedented progress on rural roads improvement. Olmoran and Salama Wards are the initial beneficiaries of the roads improvement program, with new and improved road networks covering 20 and 21 kilometres for both wards respectively. With additional equipment and a drier season coming in, the road rehabilitation in Laikipia is set to hit peak. Under the program, the government is set to upgrade more than 3,000 kilometre network of new and existing roads in all the 15 wards. Using the three approaches of road construction of leasing, ordinary contracting and the road maintenance levy fund, Laikipia County is set to establish a robust roads network to promote commerce and security within its borders.

Why Laikipia Smart Towns Provide Immense Opportunities

Researchers are predicting that Africa's population will more than triple by 2050, rising to an estimated 1.4 billion people. This sharp growth in population is expected to occur in urban environments as more young people migrate towards modern technology, connectivity, and entrepreneurial opportunities in city life.

But even with such developments, city planners are not always prepared. The result is unregulated urban growth which puts a strain on social amenities such as transport,

health and housing infrastructure.

Poor planning to accommodate the rural-urban migration will lead to a spike in the number of jobless people. Joblessness spawns informal settlements, which in turn puts pressure on waste management resulting in toxic environments for the populations living there.

For Laikipia, however, the government is determined to forestall the lurking social-economic dangers of poor urban planning. The ambitious Smart Towns Initiative seeks to establish people-friendly cities to accommodate this predictable surge in urban populations.

The urban renewal program itself has already created tens of direct and indirect jobs for the people working on the different projects of roads, water, lighting, bus stops and



social facilities like parks and social halls. Jobs along the supply chain have also created for the locals.

Investments are set to stream into the smart towns, providing sustainable jobs to the hundreds of youth settling in the towns.

With the efforts to modernize towns in high gear across most of Laikipia towns, the county is readying itself to accommodate populations moving into the towns in well-planned, spacious

towns conducive for youth entrepreneurial startups.

Street and market lighting initiatives, a component of the modern towns, will boost efforts to have 24-hour businesses. The far-sighted strategy will see the future urban settlers benefit from adequate health, education, water, social and recreational services within reach.

How Laikipia Innovation Development Programme Is Benefitting Youth



An piece of art by a Nanyuki artist who is in the Laikipia Innovation Development Programme. More youths should join the programme to create jobs for themselves and others

By John Muriithi

Getting jobs among youth has become hard in this generation with so many graduates but few job opportunities, especially in the formal sector.

What remains is for young people to use their knowledge to come up with income generating activities. The County Government of Laikipia has been a major boost to ensure small businesses thrive, thus improving the living standards of Laikipia people.

Through the Laikipia Innovation Development Program (LIDP) which helps all innovators regardless of their age, some youths have been boosted and have been helped to market their products even outside the country.

Young people are encouraged to be creative and innovative as the government is ready to fund them and support them their prosperity. The program so far has helped 290 small firms drawn from all areas including creative economy, ICT, agriculture, and many more.

Laikipians, including young people are also provided with working spaces. At least nine innovators have so far been provided with such spaces. A case example of a youth benefitting from the program is Martin Ngugi popularly known as Martin whose company is situated in Nanyuki town and deals with artistic design and illustrations- interior design and painting. Through the county innovation program he has been trained enhancing business skills, marketing, book keeping and the need to commercialize art. This has seen him glow and occasionally employs about 10 people for a period of three months depending on demand.

Martin advises young people to focus on what they are doing; provided it is beneficial and can generate income. He also encourages the youth to be patient with whatever they do to reap hugely in the long run and not to expect to get rich overnight.

Anyone with innovative ideas are encouraged to visit the LIDP for guidance and training for better results.

How New Rumuruti-Sipili-Kinamba Road Has Stirred Up Horticultural Activity



A section of the Rumuruti-Sipili-Kinamba road

By David Serem

Laikipia's landscape is fast changing. Scores of shiny greenhouses are popping up in the countryside; replacing what has been rolling plains of grazing land, shrubs and bushes. Driving along the newly tarmacked Rumuruti-Sipili-Kinamba road in the west, vast swathes of land adjacent to the tarmac, which for ages have only been used for grazing, have been fenced off and cleared for commercial development.

The completion of this transformative transport infrastructure a year ago has spawned new businesses. Expansive greenhouses have mushroomed as investors capitalize on ease of movement provided by the tarmacked road to access virgin land to unlock their immense potential.

"With no permanent rivers, the horticultural entrepreneurs are using underground water. That's why as a government we are now focusing on harnessing water for production to bring in even small-scale farmers on board to increase acreage under irrigation," Laikipia county executive for water Njenga Kahiro said.

Laikipia is the latest frontier of horticulture investment. According to the county's 2019 statistical abstract, the land under irrigation has increased 15 times in a span of two years- from 258 hectares in 2016 to 3,758 ha in 2018.

Dozens of shopping centres are springing up along the highway, as some entrepreneurs seek to meet housing demand for the growing number of labourers working in the horticultural farms. Thanks to the robust road network, horticulture firms are now able to source labourers from far-flung areas with ease, to the convenience of the workers who are picked and dropped by buses at just a walking distance from home.

In its latest survey on overall county business environment for MSEs, the Kenya Institute for Public Policy and Research Analysis (Kippra) ranked Laikipia among the top five.

Luoniek shopping centre on the extreme north-western edge of the county seem to vindicate this survey as it has seen the number of licensed retail businesses grow from 50 to 120 in less than three years.

The county's new appeal for investment is not only in the horticultural sub-sector. Last week, a local airline Let's Fly Aviation started four flights daily between Nairobi's Wilson Airport- Nyahururu-Nanyuki routes.

"We are providing these services to meet the rising demand for air travel for business people, professionals and tourists who seek faster links to Nairobi and beyond," said Captain Allan Mwangi, a pilot at the airline.

Retail chain store Tusksys Supermarkets, started operations at the Nanyuki Shopping Mall where it replaced Choppies as the anchor tenant.

In 2018, the county tourism grew by 12.5 percent with international tourism increasing by 37 percent and local tourism by nine percent, Trade, Tourism and Cooperatives executive Biwott Tirop said.

For instance, the county is gearing up for the third edition of Nanyuki-Luoniek Amateur Fun which involves drive across the scenic Laikipia North in a con-

voy of vehicles to promote corporate tourism.

Several new hospitality establishments have upped the stake for the growth of the county as a tourism destination. High end Luxury hotels firm Elewana has added Lodo Springs Hotels as its 15th establishment in its portfolio. The establishment is located within the 70,000-acre Loisaba Conservancy owned by America's The Nature Conservancy. Mugie Conservancy has also opened Governors Camp Hotel.

Other key investments in the Laikipia tourism landscape include a Shs1 billion hotel coming up on a 200 acre piece of land at Ilingwesi Group Ranch in Laikipia North and a new 48-room hotel coming up in Nyahururu town.

Mr Tirop attributes the robust business activity to efficient business licensing regime and cleaning up and digitization of the Nanyuki lands registry.

"We have made deliberate efforts by his administration to promote tourism and enhance business environment through innovative ways," he said.

Infrastructure upgrade has also led to a near-craze subdivision of land and a flurry of property sales as real estate firms pitch tent seeking to satisfy the growing demand to own a house. Regeneration of smaller market centres under the county's smart towns initiative have led to upsurge of property value as speculators rush to gain a foothold in the areas.