

Covid-19 War: Bold Laikipia SMEs Step In With Solutions

By David Serem

Small and Medium Enterprises nurtured under the Laikipia Innovation and Enterprise Programme have risen to the challenge of Covid-19 by going full throttle to plug imminent shortfall of protective gear for the frontline teams fighting the scourge.

The adage that every dark cloud has a silver lining has become practical for local SMEs as they convert the problem of Coronavirus disease into an opportunity to provide solutions and enhance their production.

County's SMEs have stepped in to provide solutions to the crisis, as demand for the protective gear has now outstripped supply the world over. Countries are suspending exports to meet their local needs first.

The county government of Laikipia is capitalizing on the existing partnership with Dedan Kimathi University of Technology to mass produce personal protective equipment which are critical in the management of covid-19 pandemic.

The first 1,000 body suits for medical staff who come in close contact with infected people and 7,000 face masks for distribution to local bodabodas, community health volunteers and enforcement officers expected to be produced by the end of last week.

The development comes at a time when the world is grappling to meet the demand for the protective gear, prompting some countries to suspend normal factory operations to focus on the manufacture of the productive equipment. By making a fortune through providing much needed solutions at this time of crisis, the Laikipia SMEs are living prove that every cloud has a silver lining. The homegrown solution will go a long way in propping the local economy during this financial crisis as Covid-19 impacts on production



Governor Ndiritu Murithi tries out a personal protective gown produced by a Nanyuki SME, Cleg Supplies Limited

"As a country, we are in a fight for survival against the Covid-19. We must do whatever we can do first even as we look for help from elsewhere," Dekut vice-chancellor Prof Ndirangu Kioni said.

Prof Kioni said his institution and the county government of Laikipia were seeking to fill in some gaps existing in the fight against the virus and the network of entrepreneurs under innovation programme had come in handy.

The university has trained a total of eight local manufacturers who are working with 40 sub-contractors. Ms Winnie Mwangi, the county head of innovation development programme, says the county government has linked up three of the trained manufactures with the Kenya Bureau of Standards and the Kenya Pharmacy and Poisons Board for a speedy approval of the PPEs. Under the partnership the two institutions are also working on mass production of ventilators and hand sanitizers through other SMEs that are under the Laikipia Innovation and Enterprise Development programme.

SMEs currently producing protective equipment like face masks and gowns are Clej Supplies Limited, Nanyuki Vision Tailors in Nanyuki town and Jimco operating in Nyahururu town. Nanyuki based EM Naturals, an SME dealing in cosmetics, has expanded production to include hand sanitizers to meet the demand. It is projected that number of Covid-19 infections will strain medical facilities and equipment like PPEs and equipment like ventilators after the Ministry of Health an-

nounced that the country is likely to have 10,000 coronavirus cases by the end of April. Mass production of the PPEs is part of the preparations that the county government is making as coronavirus cases in the country rise.

Although the county has not recorded any Covid-19 case so far, a model released by the department of Health indicates that more than 14,000 infections in a worst case scenario and up to 600 cases in the best case scenario.

There are nine production centres at the university and by individual SMEs in Nyahururu and Nanyuki. Four other SMEs under the programme are producing hand sanitizers.

Laikipia Covid-19

Information/Emergency Hot-lines:

0110 094 440

0738 055 343

0721 799 365



Medical Personnel in locally-made full protective gear at Nanyuki Teaching and Referral Hospital

NTRH Screening Visitors, Patients in New Measures to Curb Covid-19 Spread

In an effort to heighten Corona virus surveillance, everyone visiting Nanyuki Teaching and Referral Hospital will now be screened for symptoms of Covid-19, the hospital has announced.

In addition, the facility has converted a single entire ward into an isolation and treatment facility in its preparedness to contain a possible Covid-19 outbreak, said CEC for Health Services Dr. Lenai Kamario. The addition of more beds in the isolation units expands the county's capacity to handle the viral disease, added hospital CEO Dr. Timothy Panga. Others areas that have been set as isolation centres include the ASK Showground, which is set to hold

more than 200 beds once renovations are complete. The County government has teamed up with the British Army Training Unit Kenya and the private sector to renovate and equip the centre. Previously, the county had 11 isolation units with 53 beds in total. This is part of adjustments made by the hospital to protect patients, staff and visitors. This will be an extension to previous adjustments to minimize crowding of patients especially at the waiting bay. Further, patients with flu-like symptoms will be seen separately, with scheduled clinics being stopped to give way to emergency. Special attention will be given to patients in long term care, as they are at very high risk of the most severe presentation of Covid-19 if they get infected. These are patients suffering from cancers, HIV, hypertension,



A traveler undergoes temperature check at one of screening points to Laikipia. Similar screening is done at NTRH

asthma, diabetes, heart diseases and others. Additional interventions will include provision of facilities to enforce quarantine for suspected cases.

Covid-19: Adhere to Directives, Keep Disease Away



While some local supermarkets are enforcing the 1.5 m social distancing, but some citizens are not complying with the directives meant to prevent Covid-19 transmission

A cross section of people continues to flout the guidelines issued by the National Government and implemented at the county levels. New developments indicate that the disease is spreading at an alarming rate, with failure to observe the health guidelines by the public resulting in possible deaths from the highly infectious disease in the coming weeks. However, in spite of the larger population being aware of preventive measures spelt

out, they continue to defy.

For instance people continue to crowd while doing buying goods in the market and shops and boda boda operators still carry two passengers in total defiance of the directives issued by the government. Health experts have warned that infections could be spread by those infected but not exhibiting any symptoms. Hence those appearing healthy are potential hazards as they could lead to multiple disease infection to the unsuspecting people around them.

Laikipia County has teamed up with the national government to ensure that the measures put in place are adhered to in order to curb the possible spread of the virus. This involves enforcing the measures put in place to minimize social gatherings and screenings at the seven entry points to the county.

Entertainment spots remain closed as the country enters into a critical stage of implementing drastic prevention strategy. Staying at home, observing social distance, adhering to basic hygiene of regular hand washing is seen as the most reliable prevention front.

County enforcement agencies have imposed strict measures which include businesses people comply with hygiene standards by placing hand washing facilities at their business premises.

Nanyuki SME Ventures into Production of Face Masks to Curb Covid-19



Right: A team producing face masks at Nanyuki Vision Tailors shop. Top: Mr Peter Maina displays two types of face masks the his SME is producing



A Laikipia SME owner has the talk of town after he started mass production of face masks to meet the growing local demand.

This development comes as the world grapples with a dire shortage of protective clothing for health workers and the general public in the wake of Covid-19 pandemic.

Peter Maina, chairman of Laikipia Vision Tailors in Nanyuki town is leading a team of more than 20 other workers who have now suspended routine making of clothes to concentrate on the production of face masks to meet the skyrocketing demand for the protective wear.

“We are working on overdrive to meet the demand. It has already exceeded our supply even as we train more tailors to

help us cope with the demand,” said Mr. Maina, who at the time of the interview was attending to customers who lined up outside his shop to pick their orders.

This development has seen his shop turn from a cloths making outfit to a point of production for face masks, churning out tens of face masks every hour. Maina says he and his initial team of three tailors had a fairly easy time producing the initial order of 500 masks, but an order for 2000 masks the following day caught him by surprise, prompting him to start training more tailors to expend production. The father of three is a beneficiary of a recent training on production of face masks from Dedan Kimathi University of Technology (DeKUT), under the sponsorship of the County Government of Laikipia’s Innovation and Enterprise Development Program. Trade CEC Biwott Tirop says the County has partnered with DeKUT to accelerate the production of the much needed personal protective equipment and other safety gear. “Three production units; two in Nanyuki and one in Nyahururu, have been trained to the accepted regulatory standards and they have embarked

on rapid production of the materials,” Mr. Biwot said. The training equipped Maina and eight other tailors with the knowledge to produce face masks that meet the health regulatory standards. His cloth-making outfit has now provided direct and indirect jobs for people who would otherwise be jobless at this time of a slow economic environment as big and small organizations shed off staff, with the outlook promising even better prospects. The tailor makes two types of face masks for his customers. One type is for single use while the other is reusable upon washing, disinfecting and drying.

His local market is mostly composed of market traders and boda boda operators, who have become proactive by using the masks to reduce chances of infection of the deadly disease because of their nature of work .

How to Use A Surgical Mask Effectively

..... follow these steps to be Safe

1. Clean your hands, either by washing with soap and water or by using an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
2. Before putting the mask on, inspect it for any tears or holes.
3. Locate the metal strip in the mask. This is the top of the mask.
4. Orient the mask so that the colored side faces outward, or away from you.

5. Place the top part of the mask on the bridge of your nose, molding the metal strip to the shape of your nose.
6. Carefully loop the elastic bands behind your ears or tie the long, straight ties behind your head.
7. Pull the bottom of the mask down, ensuring that it covers your nose, mouth, and chin.
8. Try to avoid touching the mask while you’re wearing it. If you must touch or adjust

your mask, be sure to clean your hands immediately afterward.

9. To take off the mask, unloop the bands from behind your ears or undo the ties from behind your head. Avoid touching the front of the mask, which may be contaminated.

10. Promptly dispose of the mask in a closed garbage bin, thoroughly cleaning your hands afterwards.

E-commerce Gives Laikipia Businesses Lifeline in the Midst of Covid-19



An empty Java House Nanyuki . The fast foods outlet has seen a rise in online orders as more people remain indoors to observe social distance

By David Serem

As Covid-19 takes a toll on businesses across the world, Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in Laikipia County are coming up with new ways of doing business to ensure they pull through the economic hard times.

In Nanyuki town for instance, groceries and hotels in an effort to reduce social contacts as per Government directives have resulted to home deliveries for their clients. At a time when many people are weighing the options of shutting down businesses, Mr Festus Mutie, a hotel operator in Nanyuki says delivering food to his clients at their homes has ensured his business is up and running, though not as it would normally.

"We are adjusting to new business environments we have never considered before. The new developments will favour the innovative business people" says the Horizon Hotel owner adding that the trend is picking up and is giving him optimism to pull through these difficult times.

Mr. Mutie's approach is fairly simple as opposed to conventional online commerce. It takes a phone call from a client who places their order. Boda boda operators are used to deliver the orders to the customers at the comfort of their home or place of work. Payment is done through mobile money aiding in the efficiency on the whole transaction. Mr. Mutie is not the only entrant into the business of delivering goods to his customers in Nanyuki. Christine Karendi owner of Mama Kim Groceries at the junction of Cottage Hospital on the Nanyuki-Nyeri Road has been in the business for a while now. She says as more people remain indoors, direct deliveries of goods to her clients keep her in business.

The fruits and vegetable dealer delivers to her clients some outside Laikipia County. She is however concerned that direct deliveries might not pick up fast enough to match the income she used to get from the pedestrian traffic along the highway. On the online business front, the coffee outlet Java House in Nanyuki Town is also feeling the effects of the shutting down of eateries. Ms Beatrice Mumbi, a supervisor at Java Nanyuki branch, says online orders, are starting to pick up. "We have scaled down operations but with the rising trend in online orders, we might spare ourselves complete closure," she says.

The restaurant has partnered with a local delivery agency to make deliveries while several customers now prefer sending in motorcycle taxis to pick their orders. Like any other business during a teething stage, the new practice has its fair share of challenges. For Mr. Mutie, it means his deliveries will be limited to solid food, only, denying him a good deal of income from food and drinks. Nevertheless, he feels he has a solution to it. The hotel owner predicts that packaging of food and other products for direct delivery will present a new competition front in the near future. He says the more the businesses venture into e-commerce, the better the odds for those offering special packaging, and he is confident he is well prepared. "It calls for a complete remake on packaging. I am exploring options available to package drinks for delivery if I am to sustain my business," Mr Mutie says. The County Government of Laikipia is playing a significant role to ensure e-commerce take off. Deputy Governor John Mwaniki

stresses that the government is keen to promote e-commerce as a new economic front even during post-Covid-19. Mr Mwaniki says the government is working to facilitate transition into large-scale e-commerce operations in Laikipia.

To achieve this, the devolved unit has partnered with the Kenya Chamber of Commerce and Industry- Laikipia Chapter and technical internet solutions providers to bring on board players providing essentials such as food and medicine on a common platform to enable them continue offering the much needed services. The technical partners have developed a phone application that will enable government agencies such as the public health department ensures the actors on the platform adhere to health and other regulations standards. The phone application, which will enable buyers and sellers to exchange contact details, will be hosted under the Destination Laikipia website. "The Covid-19 crisis is introducing changes in habits, and we must sustain the innovative solutions to these problems even afterwards" says the Deputy Governor. He says the government will adopt the teleconferencing technology for all its managerial meetings even after the Corona crisis to ensure time and resources are saved for other service delivery duties. Since the onset of Covid-19 pandemic, Laikipia county government has been conducted cabinet and managerial meetings online.

Water for Production to Targets 1,000 Ngobit Farmers

Approximately 1000 farmers in Ngobit ward are set to benefit from a multimillion shillings water project. The 88 million shillings water project, whose implementation is near completion, will bring 1,000 acres of land under irrigation, meaning each farmer will irrigate an acre each.

The project involves the construction of an 8.1 kilometre canal to channel water from River Ngobit into the

farms. Works on the canal commenced in June 2019 and is currently over 98 per cent complete. It involves excavation and lining of the canal, and the installation of control gates.

The development is a welcome move to farmers as it revives irrigation that has for years stalled due to siltation.

Under the project, farmers will be educated on the

economic utilization of the water flowing through the canal. The farmers will be introduced to sprinkling method of irrigation, which is more economical than basin irrigation. Farming on the expansive fields has already commenced.

Excitement As Leased Equipment Heads Marmanet, Segera Wards



(Top Left) A road under rehabilitation of a road using the leased construction equipment. (top right) A recently improved road in Marmanet Ward

After a successful road upgrading stint in Olmororan and Salama Wards, the County leased construction equipment programme now moves to Marmanet and Segera Wards.

Two construction brigades have pitched tents in the respective wards, with the programme aimed at bringing about unprecedented acceleration of roads rehabilitation in Laikipia County. So far, a total of 41 kilometres of road has been done in the two wards. The new roads maintenance approach comes with additional benefits of value for money and the realization of rapid results. For instance, it is three to five times cheaper to do a kilometre of road under this programme than common contracting. It takes approximately Ksh300,000 for a kilometer of road under this programme compared to about Ksh1.5million for a road of similar length under routine contracting, not to mention delays on project delivery. In the initial phase, the county government targets to upgrade over 3,000Km of roads across all the 15 wards. The leased construction equipment programme is an innovative solution to achieve rapid results. This approach frees the government from the strain of equipment maintenance, in addition to freeing up more cash to do more roads. Doing roads the old way where the government goes into normal equipment procurement takes up a huge chunk of resources, leaving little for the actual projects the machines were procured for. Slow procurement processes grounds equipment worth millions of shillings. The result is heavy expenditure with no project delivery to show. Through the leased equipment construction programme, normal contracting and the road maintenance levy fund, the county is better positioned to accelerate its road network to promote social-economic activities as well as boosting security.

Governor roots for Online Shopping to Reduce Crowding

Laikipia Governor Ndiritu Muriithi has encouraged the public to exploit opportunities that online shopping provides to meet their shopping needs.

His call comes in the wake of the Covid-19 outbreak which is threatening some of the business following Government's directive to keep social interactions at the minimum.

Utilizing of Bodaboda taxis to shop for supplies in shops and supermarkets is one of the proposals by Governor Muriithi, noting that the riders are flexible and within easy reach most of the times.

Simplified distance shopping would involve a customer calling their grocery to order supplies, then use motorcycles to deliver the goods to their homes. The entire transaction could be paid through mobile money to minimize hard currency exchange that poses great risks of spreading the Corona virus.

Mobile money service providers such as Safaricom's Mpesa have significantly lowered their transaction costs to limit exposure of hard cash

in circulation which health experts have warned could be a contributing factor in the spread of the virus.

Doing business online is one of the strategies to cushion traders from being pushed out. Restricted movement has adversely affected conventional businesses, calling for innovations to stay afloat in this moment of great anxiety.

Residents of major urban centres like Nanyuki and Nyahururu have an opportunity to exploit this strategy at this time of slowed commercial activity.



HE. Governor Ndiritu Muriithi

Reprieve for Consumers as Nawasco Suspends Disconnections



Nawasco water treatment plant. The firm has suspended disconnections to enable consumers access enough water to wash hands to keep Covid-19 away

By John Muriithi

Nanyuki Water and Sewerage Company (NAWASCO) has suspended water disconnections to defaulters as a mitigate effects of covid-19 pandemic will not be disconnecting your water.

NAWASCO Management has announced a grace period for those currently unable to clear their last month's water bills and also extended the gesture to customers residing in low income areas who maybe struggling to clear accumulated bills.

NAWASCO Managing Director Eng. Kennedy Gitonga said the bold move is aimed at ensuring water flows in all areas of their jurisdiction at this time when Government has launched a hand washing campaign as a strategy to contain spread of Corona virus.

Informal settlement areas such as Likii A, Kwa Mbuzi and Majengo will have adequate clean water with Eng Gitonga noting that it is un-

fair to deny its customers the vital commodity while at the same time claiming to fight the menace.

"We have joined hands in fighting this pandemic and it would be unfair of us to disconnect water at a time like now when it is needed most. Washing of hands using soap and running water plays a vital role in curbing the spread of the killer virus" said the MD.

Health experts are advising on regular and proper washing of hands and general hygiene to minimize the transfer of virus from an infected person to another. The government is also keen on seeing people maintain physical distances of at least a metre to contain the pandemic which has claimed one life in the country and has seen over 50 confirmed infections by end of March.

"Train yourselves to frequently wash your hands. Use soap and running water to do so and the demand for sanitizers will drop," Health Cabinet Secretary Mutahi Kagwe has been advising during his regular media brief on COVID-19 situation in the country.

Public amenities require more water in this period to cater for the needs of many people who visit them and NAWASCO, as part of its social responsibility has connected water in all such places for free.

So far, the company has provided at least 14 tanks each with a capacity of 1500 litres at different areas of

Nanyuki, including two in Majengo, two in Likii and one at Central Park, for hand washing and promotion of hygiene which is vital in prevention of the deadly virus.

Other areas with hand washing sports include the main matatu stages in Nanyuki Town. Traders working in the area have expressed their gratitude to the water company.

More than 15,000 households are served by NAWASCO and include people residing in neighbouring counties of Nyeri and Meru.

Through uninterrupted provision of water, the company has been at the forefront in assisting in curbing spread of the killer virus by providing hand washing points with continuous running tap water at designated points for washing hands.

The Transformation of Nyahururu Godown Road Phase II

