



## Turning Laikipia VTCs into Business, Production Hubs



*Adjustable hospital beds produced by Nanyuki Vocational Training Centre*

By David Serem

**T**he rapid spread of coronavirus to all corners of the world caused a sudden disruption of global manufacturing and supply chains, creating an unprecedented shortage of the products in countries that rely on imports.

The resultant shortage has forced countries to turn to previously overlooked local innovations to plug in the deficits.

Locally, this need has brought into fruition efforts by the County Government of Laikipia to turn all the 10 vocational training centres into production hubs for various goods and services.

With the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic, the VTCs have positioned themselves at the forefront in the mass production of facemasks

and other PPEs to address the yawning demand.

But the latest inspiration is the production hospital beds by Nanyuki VTC to equip to which are in big demand as counties seek to equip their quarantine and isolation centres that they have established to curb the spread of coronavirus.

The institution is in the process of mass production of adjustable hospital beds, having successfully made working prototypes that have been approved by the Department of Health.

### Investments

The beds can be adjusted manually to fit a patient's comfort, giving it a competition edge against those in the market.

Nanyuki VTC manager Yusuf Ongeru will do the necessary investments to produce electrically-adjustable beds too.

CEC for Health Dr. Lenai Kamario last week led a technical team from the department who approved the design.

"The design is impressive...we are in the process of procuring over 200 of them for the ICUs

and HDUs in new isolation and quarantine facilities," Dr. Lenai said, adding that the locally designed bed, despite meeting the international standards, is way cheaper than the imported ones.

"Our neighbouring counties should consider this viable alternative to cut costs on procurement of the imported one," he said.

According Education CECM Tabitha Mbiriri the production of hospital beds by Nanyuki VTC is part of a wider plan to turn the technical institutions into fully fledged production centres.

"We are no longer training students for the sake of it by making these technical courses more responsive to the market needs and become frontiers of jobs creation," Ms Mbiriri said.

### Bakery

Elaborate measures have been put in place to enable the technical institutions reposition themselves as commercial production centres in diverse fields.

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**Laikipia Coronavirus  
Information Hotlines:**

**0110 094 440**

**0738 055 343**



## Laikipia Develops Model Quarantine, Isolation Centres



Fighting coronavirus with dignity: Nanyuki ASK Show Grounds and NTRH isolation and quarantine centres

**L**aikipia has developed what could pass off as model quarantine and isolation centres to the country as it accelerates the fight against the spread of Covid-19.

The Nanyuki ASK showground facility now has 30 quarantine rooms, up from the previous 14. All the rooms are self-contained, thanks to the renovations done to bring them to the required standards.

In its improved capacity, the centre now has a specially designed children's ward. The pediatric ward can accommodate four children and their caregivers. The children's wards are spacious to include playing spaces.

Dr. Timothy Panga, the ag. CEO of NTRH, which is in charge of the

centre, says the design for the children's wards was done in accordance to the guidelines from the Ministry of Health that stresses on the need for adequate space for children to play.

The hospital CEO says careful consideration has been made to ensure the medics allow the children take some scheduled walks to stretch.

"We are careful to ensure the wellbeing of the children that we might attend to in terms of hygiene, playing space and privacy. That explains the uniqueness in design and colouring," Dr. Panga said.

The medic however, advised parents to take care of their children to prevent them from the risks of corona virus infections.

"It is not our pleasure to have your children here. Take all the preventive measures," he said.

The facility is an extension of Nanyuki Teaching and Referral Hospital quarantine and isolation centre. The hospital has 17 isolation beds, five of which will be equipped to cater for patients in need of critical

### .....from pg.1 Laikipia VTCs Focus on Income-Generating Ventures

"There are immense opportunities in the areas we train our students in," says Ms Mbiriri. For instance, she says, almost each of the ten VTCs neighbours a boarding school which is a ready market for the bread," Ms Mbiriri said.

To tap into this ready market, the county government has invested in bakeries and catering facilities in Tigithi and Nanyuki Vocational Training Centres. Tigithi Bakery has the capacity of 700 breads per hour, meaning it is ready to go commercial. Nanyuki VTC will have a retail outlet targeting the population at the open air market.

The bakery will augment its catering services which currently runs the Laikipia County Assembly staff cafeteria. Nanyuki VTCs has assumed a multi-pronged approach to becoming a business centre. In its compound, the training centre grows vegetables in a small green house for the catering department, with a number of dairy cows and a fish pond to boost revenue generation. Another ambitious business venture is an automobile repair services. The VTC has invested in a digital diagnostic machine to boost efficiency on motor repairs. These machines are housed in a state of the art garage, which has a service pit that was constructed through a partnership with Total Kenya. The county government has expressed interest to have all its vehicles serviced

and washed at the facility. The institution has partnered with a private automobile maintenance firm to facilitate transfer of top notch skills transfer. On the other hand Nyahururu VTC, has been using its lathe machines to produce bolts and nuts, as well as learning materials for the ECDE centres. Under the new reforms by the County Government, each VTC department is required to develop a business plan that will make the centres self-sustaining business ventures, besides core role of imparting the technical skills to students. Students involved in the commercial production activities will have an

added advantage, as they will receive fee waivers to compensate for their input. To encourage enrolments to the VTCs, the county government provides Ksh8,000 per student who joins the VTC or TTI. "People should know that VTCs are no longer the places previously thought to be for failures," says the education executive, adding "in fact, we no longer admit students who have not completed secondary education. Driving technical institutions to assume business approach will enhance the country's industrialization process.



Tigithi VTC Bakery



# Locusts Invasion Complicates Laikipia's War Against Coronavirus

**L**aikipia is facing an unprecedented challenge to food security following the invasion by swarms of desert locusts late last year.

The situation made worse by the outbreak of the life-threatening coronavirus in the country which has dealt a big blow to the country economy.

Laikipia county and her neighbours are currently engaged in collaborative efforts to control the pests through aerial and vehicle mounted spraying, motorized pumps in some instances hand spraying. Virginia Wahome, director of the Cooperation on Peace and Development is leading the regional pest control campaign in Laikipia County.

"Laikipia recorded the first desert locusts' sightings in January inside Il Ng'wesi Conservancy, and we have remained on the ground to track them since," Ms Wahome says. Intensified aerial and ground surveillance have since traced the pests' invasion to Loldaiga, Ole Naishu, Nanyuki, and Ngobit. In the west the desert locusts have invaded Mwenje, Njorua, Kinamba, Mahianyu, Oljabet, Rumuruti, Mutara, Kifuko among other areas. Recently, the County Government concluded the training of personnel tasked with surveillance and control operations.

"We call out for residents to be on the lookout and report any sightings of the pests to enable us keep track of the spraying operations," Ms.



*The surveillance Team Monitoring invasion of locust in Laikipia and other neighbouring counties*

Wahome.

The pest control campaign has bought together multiagency teams from the national and county governments, the military, the National Youth Service, development partners and the private sector.

The surveillance and spraying operations for the region are organized from Isiolo coordination centre. So far, 240 thousand hectares of land in the affected countries have been treated with insecticides, and 740 personnel trained on deserts locust control since January 2020. This development has exposed an approximate 20 million people

to the risks of starvation in the countries affected, according to FAO. A recent situation update by the UN agency warned that the region should brace for a bigger wave of the pest invasion, which could be up to 20 times bigger, is making a bad situation even worse. The prolonged wet season has given the insects ideal conditions for breeding, leading to a dramatic increase in locusts' population. Like any other sector, the desert control campaign has been impacted negatively by the Covid-19 pandemic. FAO says restriction on movement of personnel and equipment has slowed down progress of the deserts locusts eradication campaign.

## What you Should Know About Desert Locusts



*A swarm of locusts perched on a tree in Laikipia*

The Desert Locust is one of about a dozen species of short-horned grasshoppers that are known to change their behavior and form swarms of adults. The swarms that form can be dense and highly mobile.

Locusts differ from grasshoppers in that they have the ability to change their behaviour and habits and can migrate over large distances, living individually (solitary) or forming swarms (gregarious).

A Desert Locust lives for about three to five months although this is extremely variable and depends mostly on weather and ecological conditions. The life cycle

comprises three stages: egg, hopper and adult. Eggs hatch in about two weeks, hoppers develop in five to six stages over a period of about 30-40 days, and adults mature in about three weeks to nine months but more frequently from two to four months.

### Plagues

During quiet periods desert locusts are usually restricted to the semi-arid and arid deserts of Africa, the Near East and South-West Asia that receive less than 200 mm of rain annually, covering an area of about 16 million square kilometres, consisting of about 30 countries.

During plagues, Desert Locusts may spread over an enormous area of some 29 million square kilometres, extending over or into parts of 60 countries. This is more than 20% of the total land surface of the world. During plagues, the desert locusts have the potential to damage the livelihood of a tenth of the world's population.

Desert Locust females lay eggs in an egg

pod primarily in sandy soils at a depth of 10-15 centimetres below the surface. A solitary female lays about 95-158 eggs. Females can lay at least three times in their lifetime usually at intervals of about 6-11 days. Up to 1,000 egg pods have been found in one square metre.

### Feeding

A desert locust can consume roughly its own weight in fresh food per day, which is about two grams every day. The young adult (pink in colour) is the most destructive, as it feeds more than the fully grown adult (yellow in colour).

A one square kilometer size of swarm contains about 40 million locusts, which eat the same amount of food in one day as about 35,000 people, based on a person eating an average of 2.3 kg of food per day.

### Control

Research on biological control and other means of non-chemical control of locusts is ongoing, with current focus on pathogens and insect growth regulators. Control by natural predators and parasites is limited since locusts can quickly migrate away from most natural enemies.



# Ndesh Engineering Develops Safe Hand-Washing Kit



Two sets of contact-free safe hand-washing facilities at the Nyahururu County Referral Hospital. (inset) Joseph Nderitu

By Muriithi John

You can always achieve what you want when you know your path. For 28-year-old Joseph Nderitu, popularly known as Ndesh, being a focused young man has solidified him as an innovator solving problems facing the society in this era of Covid-19.

Growing up in Nyahururu, Nderitu always wanted to be an engineer because of the unique nature of the course, but unfortunately fate had other plans for him. He never saw the gates of a high school. He instead joined a polytechnic to pursue a welding course.

His focus was rewarded in 2020 when he founded his welding and fabrication business, Ndesh Engineering.

With the health experts directive of regular hand-washing to avoid catching the coronavirus, Nderitu spotted a blunder that was happening as people sought to comply-when washing hands, people have to touch the tap when opening and closing it. This was a possible way of transmitting the virus. Nderitu saw it as a business opportunity and he embarked on devising a contact-free hand-washing tap and soap dispenser.

"Taps can be a source of passing the deadly virus because of the many users. This is why I came up with this innovation that ensures no contact with the tap as a way of helping contain spread of coronavirus," said Nderitu urging citizens to adopt the new way of washing hands.

In his development, he clearly indicates the peddle to step on for dispensing soap, and that one for releasing water from the tank. These are controlled by the legs and one can get the amount of soap needed and water as well.

## Innovation

He sells the technology as a set comprising of peddles for dispensing soap and for opening and closing tap, basin where water collects after washing hands, a tank, and the four-foot stands for supporting the tank. So far he has sold seven of the sets, the County Government of Laikipia being among his first customers.

The county has also been marketing Nderitu's work through the Laikipia Innovation and Enterprise Programme headed by Ms Winnie Mwangi.

Ms Mwangi directorate has a mandate of hand-holding young innovators like Ndesh Engineering to scale up the productions. She is current-

ly working with more than 200 SMEs cutting ranging from agriculture, manufacturing, food processing, among others.

"This is one of the latest innovations we have seen in the county. It offers a high level of hygiene which is critical at this moment when we are all trying to keep covid-19 at bay. It is an indication that dropping out of school is not a hindrance to reaching greater heights," said Ms.Mwangi while challenging others to come up with innovative ideas as the government is ready to help in all possible ways.

The price of the new hand-wash system is Ksh 6,000 and Ksh 13,000 depending on size. It has seen Mr. Nderitu change the lives of three people who are now depending on him for their daily bread.

He looks forward to more clients flocking to this noble technology. He is thankful to the county government for linking him to potential customers and for the general support.

## Hand-holding

"I'm grateful to the County Government of Laikipia for the way it has marketed me. It has purchased two sets and installed them at Nyahururu County Referral Hospital. We will work together with the government in eliminating Coronavirus in the county," he said.

He looks forward to expanding the new business to cater for the increasing demand and offer job opportunities to more people.

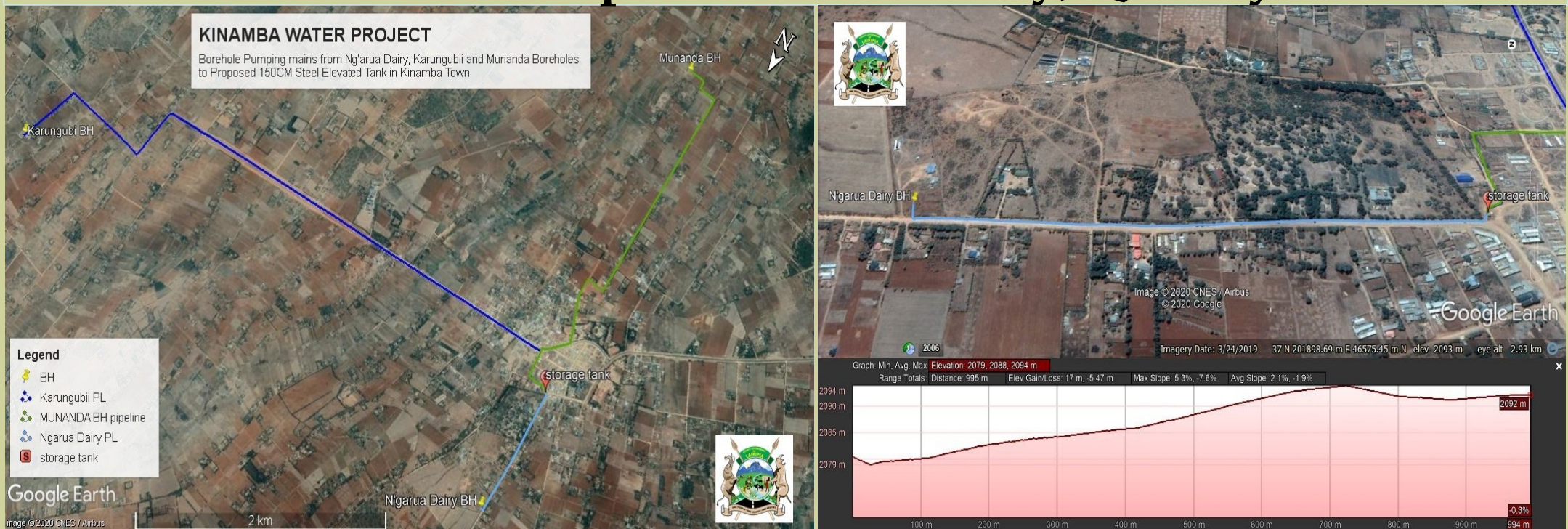
Speaking after receiving the two tanks, the County Director of Medical Services and ag. Nyahururu hospital CEO Dr. Waihenya Mwangi described the contact-free hand-was as an outright novelty that will positively change the lives of Laikipians.

"We have embraced the peddle technology as it is ensuring that we do not contaminate the taps with germs. The technology is ensuring no contact with the dispenser or tap, thus improving the hygiene in our county," said, Dr. Mwangi who is also the acting CEO of the facility at the moment.

Regular washing of hands using clean running water and soap for at least 20 seconds is one of the ways of being hygiene and killing Covid-19 germs according to WHO. Others are wearing of face masks that cover mouth and nose, and maintaining social distances of at least one-metre apart.



# Kinamba Water Will Improve Productivity, Quality of Life



An aerial plan detailing the water distribution lines for the 60 million shillings Kinamba Water Project in Laikipia West. The project will benefit over 5,000 residents and is set to be completed in October 2020.

By David Serem

The Kshs 60 million Kinamba water project is shaping up as the county government of Laikipia makes yet another stride in its quest to provide clean water to the residents.

The long-awaited project, which is expected to serve over 5,000 people is another boost to the efforts of converting Kinamba town into a smart town after its streets were upgraded to tarmac standards just a few months ago.

While the project will mainly water for domestic use, households are expected to start kitchen gardens which should go a long way in improving nutritional needs of the family members.

In addition, the project is expected to put an end to the persistent water shortage that has delayed social economic development in the area for decades, with productivity lying way below the potential. Water will be sourced from several boreholes, with piping systems connecting them to storage tanks. Additional pipeline network will deliver the commodity to homesteads.

Already, survey for the 25-kilometer main pipeline has been done, with the completion of environmental assessment, public participation, and the procurement process expected to set the project implementation into full motion. Site mapping for the first 225 cubic-metre of water tanks has also been completed.

By availing clean water to the households, the project is expected to reduce water-borne diseases, with the improved community health translating to higher productivity.

The water project is also set to relieve health systems in the area of the strain of managing sanitation-related ailments.

Production of vegetables in kitchen gardens will improve nutrition and economic wellbeing of the households around Kinamba area.

Provision of water for production is a key focus of the government as a strategy to growing the county's economy.

The Kinamba water project is seen as a critical investment for the area, as it will complement other recent developments like tarmacking of the town's streets and construction of a cereal warehouse. These developments are expected to increase productivity of the local community. The area has seen an increase in horticultural activities in farms around Wangwachi Dam, in addition to the growing grain milling enterprises.

## Governor's Plea: Ensure Food Aid Goes To The Deserving

Governor Ndiritu Muriithi has urged residents to be responsible enough to ensure success of newly launched feeding programme targeting needy households who have been left vulnerable by corona virus.

Governor Muriithi encouraged the people of Laikipia to demonstrate personal and communal responsibility in identifying the deserving households to avoid possible cases of unfair distribution of the food aid.

The governor further urged the residents to be champions of responsibility in observing the health guidelines to help halt the spread of corona virus.

In particular, the governor stressed the need for the people to restrict movement as this raises the risks of infection.

"The virus does not move on its own. People move it. So stop unnecessary travels," the governor said.

"The more we become reckless, the more we are going to be hurt by the effects of poor economy," he added.

The county government has started the process



A food distribution exercise in Laikipia West



of food support for approximately 40000 vulnerable households who have been identified through various data collection initiatives such as the county economic survey through Mjali, the national government cash transfer programme for the old and the national census. Those who have lost their jobs recently are those to be included during the data update exercise.

The County Government has enlisted the help of community representatives to clean up and update the data to ensure the food aid exercise is transparent.

The use of an electronic voucher to distribute food has ensured success of the programme that targets to reduce congregation of people.



# Laikipia Communities Actively Fighting Covid-19 Through Alerts

By Muriithi John

**W**ith the onset of the novel coronavirus communities in Laikipia have joined in the fight against the spread of the disease by participating in its surveillance.

Equipped with knowledge on the signs and symptoms exhibited by a Covid-19 patients, citizens have become more vigilant as they report any suspicious cases.

This has assisted in checking the spread of the deadly virus.

Those who jet into the county from hotspot countries or counties but fail to adhere to government's directive on self-quarantine are being exposed by vigilant a society.

A recent case involved three individuals, a Chinese and two Kenyans from Mombasa County who had visited a construction site in Kona-Mbaya area, Ngobit Ward. The case was reported by local residents on April 17 2020 as they saw strangers in the area. Disease Surveillance Officers visited the site and ensured were on self-quarantine. Their samples were also collected and sent for analysis at the National Influenza Laboratory in Nairobi. Addressing the matter, Governor Ndiritu Murithi thanked the area residents for the tip.

"I salute and thank the area citizens who through their own vigilance and alertness were able to report the matter. This is indeed a testimony to the fact that we are in this together and we shall win this together through joint action, partnership and support," he said.

Common citizens have now taken upon themselves to relay any information they feel is worthwhile in combating the virus to the authorities. By last week Laikipia County Coordination and Communication had received more than 112 alerts from citizens through the Covid-19 hotlines. Their action is not driven by



Officers at the Laikipia Coordination and Communication Centre

malice but passion to stop the spread of the deadly virus.

Deputy Governor John Mwaniki hails the move, terming it as a demonstration of communal responsibility which should extend to other areas such as security.

"We encourage our people to be extra vigilant and report any suspicious cases for a quick follow up," the DG said. He emphasized the need to revive the Nyumba Kumi Initiative to foster general community welfare. Mr Silas Meshami, Segera Location Chief, has been receiving alerts of people involved in wrongdoing from members of the public. "The locals are cooperating in enforcing the health directives. For example on March 28, 2020, I received a tip from people in Endana Shopping Centre through the Command Centre of a person hawking *Muguka*. Together with the OCS we warned him to stop and we are happy that he complied," said Mr. Meshami. Residents have been utilizing the county hotline numbers by either calls or short text messages. The hotlines have been used to make enquiries,

complaints and feedback. As of 23<sup>rd</sup> April 2020, there were a total of 112 alerts from the community surveillance.

This was confirmed by the CEC Health Dr. Lenai Kamario. "We thank the members of the public, our community surveillance team and also the national government agencies who have continued with surveillance and hence so far we have received 112 alerts of possible contacts, travelers and suspected and probable cases," said the CEC in a press statement while at the same reiterated that there is zero cases of Covid-19 in the county. Laikipians have not been shy in asking whether they could be infected with the virus after experiencing excessive cough. Extreme cases have seen disease surveillance team take up the matter and ask individuals practice self quarantine for 14 days. Hospital cases where patients experience high fevers, coughing and chest pains have seen samples taken from the patients and sent to Nairobi for further analysis. Luckily, all have turned out to be negative.

## How Laikipia Coordination and Communication Centre Works

For surveillance of Covid-19 spread, the Laikipia's multi-agency team established a central command centre and developed a tool to help in doing so. The tool, *Command Centre – Laikipia County*, has been developed by the ICT department to help the Multi-Agency team track cases regarding Coronavirus for systematic follow up in order to keep the virus at bay. Proper coordination among various departments then follows. "This tool shows transparency and accuracy in whatever we do as it is computer generated unlike the old fashioned ones of using pen and paper. Follow ups can also be done by an authorized person remotely," says Duncan Kinyua from ICT.

The Centre is manned 24/7 by officers from intergovernmental agencies and County departments of ICT, Health, Enforcement and Kenya Police on three shifts of eight hours each, from 7am. On every shift, each department has a representative. Upon beginning of every shift, all the present members key in their

names for any authorized personnel to know in case of any queries. "We register ourselves upon reporting to work. The tool is effective for a follow up can be done and questions can be directed to those in charge. The information gathered can be useful for analysis," John Kanyora from enforcement. When a call is received, the details of the caller are recorded. This includes the name, phone number and location of where they are calling from. This is important in case clarification is needed. Next the issues are listened to and recorded as well. If the issue is a congratulatory message or mere feedback, the case rests. However, inquiry, misconduct and alerts go to the next level. On inquiries, appropriate feedback is given and recorded also. For misconduct cases like failure to practice social distancing, enforcement officers in charge of the location are contacted and alerted on the issue. If the case involves report on suspected signs and symp-

toms of Coronavirus, the health officer at the Centre listens and determines whether or not it's a serious case. The mild ones that could be for common cold are communicated. The severe ones are linked to the Disease Surveillance Officer in charge depending on the locality. The health staff can at times direct the suspected victims to the referral hospitals, either in Nyahururu or Nanyuki. Over 112 cases have been reported and captured in the tool and appropriate actions taken. The tool is a show of how Laikipia is heavily prepared to combat the global menace. "The system we are using is one of a kind. It has reduced the tiresome paper work, keeps the records of all occurrences and their time, those who handled the cases and the actions taken. It is visible to all the decision makers," says Bernard Matu, an ICT officer.

