



## KENYA RIVERS & WATER RESOURCES

"If the bee disappeared off the surface of the globe, then man would have only four years of life left. No more bees, no more pollination, no more plants, no more animals, no more man."

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, GOOD NEIGHBOURINESS, WATER IS LIFE

# Master Plan for Nairobi River Basin



Date: **November 8, 2016** **Master Plan for rehabilitation and restoration of Nairobi River Basin**

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The Cabinet Secretary of Water and Irrigation Eugene Wamalwa has revealed a master plan for rehabilitation and restoration of Nairobi River Basin. He plans to achieve that with participation of residents' organisations, international agencies and governments.

The Nairobi River Basin comprises three main rivers namely; Ngong, Nairobi and Mathare. The rivers join east of Nairobi and meet River Athi, eventually flowing into the Tana River that flows into the Indian Ocean. Other tributaries of Nairobi River Basin include; Kamiti river (Gathara-ini), Rui Ruaka, Karura Ruiru and Kirichwa. The rivers are mostly narrow and highly polluted.

Currently about 56 percent of the capital City residents live in 46 highly congested informal and middle class settlements mainly located along the Nairobi River banks. The Rivers are polluted with uncollected garbage; human waste from informal settlements; industrial wastes in the form of gaseous emissions, liquid effluents, agro-chemicals, petrochemicals, metals and over-flowing sewers.

It critical to note that some of the key green recreation areas the main one being the Nairobi Arboretum Forest are being chocked by the polluted Kirichwa river within middle class and high rise buildings. As a result Nairobi residents no longer have clean air during sporting or holding communal events at the Nairobi Arboretum.

A recent survey showed informal settlements along a small stretch of 5 kilometers of the Ngong River riparian has 6,800 inhabitants. Industrial buildings, informal economic activities such as markets and "Jua Kali" commercial enterprises along the rivers also discharge their wastes into the rivers.

This situation has occasioned spread of water-borne diseases, loss of livelihoods, loss of biodiversity, reduced recreational parks availability and they portend insidious effects of toxic substances and heavy metal poisoning which affects human productivity reduces potential of the rivers becoming source of safe potable water.

### Nairobi River chocking from domestic, medical and industrial pollution

The same toxic effects are being experienced by downstream populations of the Eastern and Coastal provinces of Kenya. Most worrying being the industrial and medical waste harboring toxic chemicals and heavy metals that end up in the Indian Ocean. Worse domestic and international tourism sectors are also not spared with visitors getting concerned whether there favourite sea food is safe.

In an endeavour to fulfil our mandate to the citizens, the GOK recognises the importance water and sanitation plays in the performance of key sectors of the economy and the livelihoods of Kenyans. Our Vision 2030 and its associated Medium Term Plans (MTPs) highlight the need for strong policy and effective environmental management in the light of rapid industrialisation in order to sustain economic growth.

Rapid urbanisation such as that witnessed in Nairobi, is exerting immense pressure on the declining natural resources, limited utility services and the fragile environment. Vision 2030 therefore, advocates reducing hazards related to unhealthy environment as the main goal under this thrust. This entails reducing disposal of untreated wastewater and solids from domestic, hospital and industrial sources to ensure a clean, healthy and secure environment for Nairobi residents and Kenyan as a whole

In the case of Nairobi rivers, there have been numerous efforts by the government and other stakeholders aimed at reversing the extensive environmental degradation, and ultimately restoring the rivers to their near-natural state. The most notable among these initiatives was the Nairobi Rivers Basin Rehabilitation and Restoration Program in Phase I of 2003 -2006 and Phase II of 2006 - 2009. The program was a multi-stakeholder initiative that brought together the Government, development partners, the private sector and civil society.

The Programme was supervised by the Office of the then Prime Minister, while the Ministry of Environment and Mineral Resources provided leadership and coordination of a series of start-up and program development activities involving seventeen key Government ministries and agencies. The main objective of the Programme was to rehabilitate, restore and sustainably manage the Nairobi River Basin in order to provide improved livelihoods, enhance environmental quality and values through well-regulated economic and recreational ventures.

The program formulated a ten point strategy through which the objective would be achieved. These included:

- Creating an awareness and assessing social impacts
- Survey and delineation of the Riparian reserve
- Stopping illegal discharges
- Completing work of 2.5 km Demo stretch
- Relocating economic activities and informal settlements
- Developing and implementing an integrated solid waste management system
- Rehabilitation of Nairobi dam
- Repairing and installing sewerage and associated infrastructure
- Developing a Master Plan for economic utilization of riparian zone
- Landscaping and beautification of the riparian zone.

The program registered significant progress but ampered by budgetary limitation, among other constraints, the program did not fully achieve its objective. Some of the notable achievements include:

- Rehabilitation of 2.5km demo stretch from Museum Hill to Globe Cinema
- Removal of 6000 tons of solid waste at the Demo stretch
- Process of on-going stoppage of 367 illegal discharges that were identified
- 4000 tree seedlings planted in the upper catchments
- Delineation of riparian reserve
- On-going land acquisition for relocation
- Land for transfer station at Kariobangi are surveyed and fencing on-going
- 3 main abandoned quarries identified for alternative land filling prior construction a sanitary land fill
- Land construction a sanitary land fill identified at Ruai
- Population census and business along the riparian reserve undertaken
- Six public awareness forums on the importance of the program held
- Repairing and installing sewerage and associated infrastructure undertaken

The Cabinet Secretary says his Ministry has now embarked on building on the above initiatives with the aim of putting in place mechanisms for sustainable managing and development of the Nairobi River Basin. To this end we are mobilizing resources and building synergies with our partners.

### Nairobi River clean up exercise

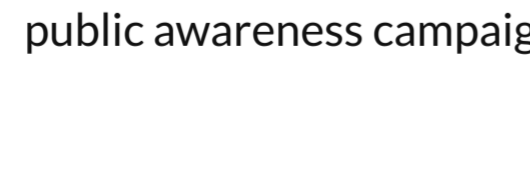
"My ministry further aims to make the Nairobi River Rehabilitation and Restoration Programme more people-centred by targeting contribution change among the residents and institutions whose operations are contributing to the pollution of Nairobi River. We aim to have the institutions hold a stake in the initiative therefore a cleaner Nairobi river and better corporate image for the institution involved. Some of the entities my Ministry aims to collaborate with include County government of Nairobi, Water Resources User Associations (WRUAs), Youth and Women groups, Residential associations, land lords among others. My ministry will also hold regular consultations with Ministry of Environment and Mineral Resources for any potential contribution in the programme."

The Ministry aims to mobilize resources from both public and private institutions operating and having a negative effect within the Nairobi basin into fund kitty that will on a rolling basis be targeted to the Nairobi River Basin Rehabilitation and Restoration Programme.

"My Ministry is targeting to have established "Green Zones" within the Nairobi basin where self-governed communities will be working towards less polluted environment," adds the Cabinet Secretary.

Mr Wamalwa is extending an appeal for partnership to Nairobi River Basin residents' organisations, industrial corporates, international environmental agencies and governments. The ministry is in partnership with National Environment Management Agency (NEMA) which has launched a major public awareness campaign.

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