UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI'S DEPARTMENT OF LARMAT PARTICIPATION AT HOMA BAY INTERNATIONAL INVESTMENT CONFERENCE 2024

Lizzel Wanyama Makokha, a Master's student pursuing Master of Science in Land and Water Management at the Department of Land Resources Management and Agricultural Technology (LARMAT), University of Nairobi, took centre stage representing the Homa Bay Blueprint at the just-concluded Homa Bay International Investment Conference 2024 (HoBIIC2024). The Homa Bay Blueprint is an initiative aimed at revolutionizing water sanitation in Homa Bay County along the shores of Lake Victoria, and is a collaboration among Global Partners for Development (GPFD), 374Water company, the County Government of Homa Bay, the University of Nairobi, and the Ministry of Water, Sanitation and Irrigation and the Homa Bay Water and Sanitation Company (HOMAWASCO).

The conference, attended by regional and international investors keen on exploring opportunities in the blue economy, agriculture, water resource sector, and other potential areas, highlighted the urgent need for sustainable solutions especially in water sanitation. The partnership with GPFD and 374Water underscores a commitment to addressing the critical issue of water sanitation in the Lake Victoria Basin region.

A key focus of the partnership is the introduction of 374Water's AirSCWO technology that aims to transform organic waste, particularly faecal sludge and other solid wastes in wastewater, into clean water and minerals which will be used as fertilizer for agricultural use, contributing to sustainable farming practices. Furthermore, the system generates heat, which will be harnessed to dry seeds and fish, benefiting local businesses.

The significance of this technology extends beyond waste management; it holds the potential to revolutionize the entire wastewater management system in the region. The ambitious goal is to enhance the water quality of Lake Victoria by about 20 percent within the next few years.

The University of Nairobi has positioned itself at the forefront of research for development in the water and sanitation sector, a sector which is often overlooked in terms of funding. During the Conference, pertinent questions were raised, shedding light on the critical link between water resource investment and the need to address sanitation challenges comprehensively.

This initiative stands as a testament to the University's dedication to leveraging research and technology and linkage with the industry to create sustainable solutions for pressing societal issues. As the researchers from the University of Nairobi, led by Dr. Stephen Mureithi, Snr. Lecturer at the Department of Land Resource Management and Agricultural Technology (LARMAT), and Dr. Benjamin Nyilitya, Water Quality Scientist at the Ministry of Water, Sanitation and Irrigation, and the involved students and interns contributes to propelling the Homa Bay Blueprint forward, the ripple effects are poised to contribute significantly to the betterment of water quality in the Lake Victoria Basin and beyond.

Fig. 1. Governor Gladys Wanga, Governor Anne Waiguru and the US Ambassador to Kenya Meg Whitman among other delegates visiting the Homa Bay Blueprint booth.

Fig. 2. Delegates from Lake Victoria Water Works visiting the Homa Bay Blueprint booth.

Fig. 3. Lizzel Makokha, Homa Bay Blueprint Research Fellow and Master student at the University of Nairobi engaging with water sector service providers and investors during the Homa Bay Conference engagements.

Fig. 4. Homa Bay Blueprint participants, from left - Clara Onyango, Dora Akeyo from GPFD, Lizzel Makokha, Research Fellow (and Master student at UoN) and Dina Kodhier, Intern.