



MARGARET MAINA

Women
Mashinani
of Water
and Waste
Management

In an average week, Margaret Maina will be heading to Limuru Water and Sewerage company where she is Managing Director, she will be leading activities for the Women in Water and Sanitation (WiWAS) for Kenya and taking time to work on curriculum and certification work as a member of the water sector skills advisory committee. For Margaret however, it has become ever more necessary to look at solid waste management as well: "Daily littering of the banks of the Ngong River leads to foaming and blockages along the flow. If we want clear, clean water, we have to take out the rubbish ourselves, its not covered by municipal cleaning plans."

Recently, Margaret drew on all her resources to form a new association for grass roots women, they are trained in waste picking, and the safe handling and better sorting of recyclables that can be sold locally for a modest revenue. The new community-based organization, known as the Women Mashinani of Water and Waste Management, is now active along areas of the riverbank and slowly building up its expertise and reputation in the local recycling market. It took great efforts to get the group going but Margaret is passionate about empowering women and cleaning rivers: "You can't always wait for the problems to be solved, there are no waste bins along the river and those that are set up are sometimes stolen for recycling themselves, so we need another solution."

The Women Mashinani of Water and Waste Management provides local women an opportunity to work in a safe setting with a meaningful purpose, to earn a modest income from a waste problem that is affecting them directly in their own environment, and by removing waste from the water ways fewer materials will end up in the oceans and so the women are helping to reduce a major environmental disaster as well, albeit indirectly.

This week Margaret called on all her networks and friends to join a major "do it ourselves initiative" to clean up the river banks of waste matter. There has been a drop in the amount of visible and floating waste during the Covid-19 lockdown measures and with the ongoing rains at this time the river appears to be self-cleaning: so the idea is to take advantage of this phase in an all hands welcome clean-up operation.

As Margaret remarks on LinkedIn recently. " ...for those who have walked with me through this journey in the last three years and promised to be part of this, time has come. Let us do something for our generation and give back to Mother Nature. It is a monumental task but somebody's gotta do it."