

African Entrepreneurs – Successful and Responsible

EPISODE 02

TITLE: The Kenyan Toilet Revolution – David Kuria

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Characters (Clips) / Narrators

	Women	Men	Age	Language
Intro/Outro	x		Unimportant	
Narrator		x	Unimportant	
David Kuria (clip)		x	30s	English
Customer 1 (clip)		x	40s	English
Customer 2 (clip)		x	30s	English
Gladys	x		30s	English

INTRO....

Hello and welcome to another episode of our Learning by Ear series African Entrepreneurs – Successful and Responsible. It introduces African businessmen and –women who are not only effective in what they are doing but also socially committed to the societies they live in. In today’s episode our journey takes us to the Kenyan capital city of Nairobi, where we meet a man who has changed the lives of many through his innovation of environmental friendly toilets.

1. SFX: Noise on the road, Car hooting, Touts calling passengers from a distance.

2. Narration

It's 5 am and David Kuria is already hitting the road, literally, doing what he loves most. He has just finished inspecting a public toilet next to a bus terminus in the city centre of Nairobi. And he has still several toilets to visit before he goes to the office located 8 km outside the city centre where work starts at exactly 8 a.m. It's a very chilly morning, but David has to make sure the toilets he loves to be associated with, are clean. The well lit and sparkling clean toilets operate 24 hours a day with staff working on shifts. David is an architect by profession and has been focusing on toilets for the last 3 years. He is spearheading a sanitation campaign in Africa, commonly known as the 'IKO TOILET' campaign.

3. OTON 1 David Kuria

“I have been working on urban development issues in the East African region for the last thirteen years and that's purely the genesis of the last three years of the Iko toilets. The truth is hygiene has been neglected throughout, and that's why every year we have cholera outbreaks in these countries, and when our cities start to get cholera outbreaks, it purely means our hygiene levels are very low.”

4. Narration:

David is the first individual to successfully construct and manage hygienic sanitation facilities in many Kenyan slums and other informal settlements.

Under his new organization ECOTACT, David engages the community to design and construct public IKO toilets. That is not only highly necessary in Nairobi, but also a market niche.

5. OTON 2 David Kuria (eng)

“Over the last 40 years since independence, I think it looked almost hopeless for the increasing urban population, which is quite high. Our municipalities were caught up in a situation where they were not sure which direction to take. There was a clear demand in improving sanitation in our urban cities, so what we wanted to do was not to replace the role of the Government but be a catalyst to the Government. So our transformational innovation is purely to see that it's doable!

6. Narration:

The idea has changed the face of many urban areas and informal settlements, especially in Nairobi’s Kibera Slum, one of the largest in Africa, where flying toilets are commonly used. That means, the residents use plastic bags to dispose their excrements through the windows not knowing exactly where they land.

Going to a public toilet in the city of Nairobi was something many felt ashamed of, but Kuria’s innovation has since changed this notion attracting many customers. We meet one of them at an Iko toilet place in the city centre.

7. SFX. : Business environment, people chatting, banging of steel doors

8. Oton 3 Costumer (eng)

“Iko toilets have changed our lives since their introduction, because of the hospitality, the clean environment and even other services like money transfer services via cell-phone. I don’t feel the pinch when I pay 10 Kenyan Shillings (which is about 10 Euro Cents) for the services. It’s worth it and it makes me feel really at home..! Actually it has reduced the foul smell we were used to before the introduction of these facilities in the city. I feel comfortable going to a public toilet.”

9. Narration:

Sanitation is not something that's openly discussed. It's a taboo in most African countries. But IKO toilets have changed this perception, providing job opportunities to many young people. IKO toilets even give opportunities to entrepreneurs because it works as a franchise system. That means that David doesn't open up toilets himself everywhere, but sells the business model and the brand name to entrepreneurs who want to start their own sanitary business. They finance the toilets through innovative financial schemes like youth funds or support from local or international foundations. Later on, they realize profit by proceeds from customer fees, or advertisements for companies like mobile phone or money transfer providers. They also earn some money by renting sales areas to small businesses like the shoe polishers.

10. OTON 4 David Kuria

“A lot of opportunities are arising because when you go to an Ikotoilet which they are now calling ‘toilet malls’, and you find shoe shiners. These kind of jobs are often done by young boys and girls from the informal settlements in the slums. One, is not only to address the hygiene aspect, but number two, is more how do we change our people's thinking on sanitation and public toilets. Our thinking on transformation is bringing in other social activities, like charging cell phones, shoe shining services, where we can now say ‘I am not just going to the toilet’. People are now queuing for shoe shine... where? At the IKOtoilet!. It's actually a one stop, what I would call a hygiene mall”.

11. Narration:

Like in many African countries, job opportunities are hard to come by in Kenya, leaving many young people facing a dead end in search of white color jobs. It's a big relief to many of the city dwellers, as one of the customers puts it.

12. Oton 5 Costumer 2 (eng).

“We are paying a lot of taxes, yet we don't get simple services like clean and environmental friendly toilets, such as these ones. Look at the job opportunities that come with lko toilets. Now if it were to be implemented in all the urban cities how many jobs would be created?”

13 Narration

Looking back, the road was very rough for David to get where he is now. But what keeps David going is his patience, not commonly found in many young people, he says. It took him almost a whole year to convince the Kenyan Government authorities to start this kind of business.

14 OTON 6 David Kuria (Eng)

“Most people I talked to were saying you are just trying an idea that can not work! And especially being a sub-trained architect you have more opportunities, why waste time, and you have a career to pursue! It took time, almost a whole year, to engage with them. Those are some of the things the young people will not do.... Ten years back very few people would have gone to work in a public toilet, today we have applications... some people with diplomas and they want to work in an Ikotoilet!. Working in an Ikotoilet has become more decent. We wanted to transform the service....! We wanted to say this is a different service..! Working in an Iko toilet is not just working in a toilet!”.

15 NARRATION:

Gladys, one of the toilet attendants, shares David’s opinion.

16 SFX Noise of cleaning up a Toilet,

17 Oton 7 Gladys Toilet Attendant (Eng)

“I work for 8 hours. It’s not like working in a municipal toilet. We are not over worked unless there is a water shortage. We provide a wide range of services here. You can send money to your relatives right from the toilet! Just imagine! And again we are getting a good salary!”

18 Narration:

When he founded the Ecotact organization three years ago, David had a vision to transform and sustain hygiene in the African context. Now the same approach and model can be applied in other social services like managing water resources in Kenya.

19 Oton 8 David Kuria (Eng)

“The next level of innovation apart from lko toilets, will be to launch by the middle of this year a water supply. Almost using the same mode, we are going to drill boreholes across the whole country, putting in water kiosks and again franchise, that means we're leasing the kiosks to young people”.

20 Narration:

The model of sanitation is now being embraced by many across the Sub-Saharan region, and David Kuria’s immediate plan is to develop this program in all the public schools in Kenya, and plans are already underway to expand the same in other countries like neighbouring Tanzania where Ecotact has partnered with the municipality of the economic capital of Dar es Salaam in providing better sanitation. Despite all these efforts, David still is not a happy man, and what bothers him most is the hygienic behavior of people who take hygiene for granted.

21 OTON 10 David Kuria

“Our culture of even basic things like hand washing according to the World Bank report, is, only three percent of our students wash their hands, so you can imagine 97 percent have no idea about simple basic things like hand washing.

Similarly, we are providing soap and water in the IkoToilet, and you find men just walking out, although it’s queuing required and you’ve paid for it.. And then he will walk out and buy some snacks, or meets you and greets you on the streets having just been to the toilet..! So it really shows our level of understanding of basic hygiene!”

22 NARRATION

Iko toilet has made a significant impact in the society whereby in the year 2010 it served over 6 million people in Kenya alone. Every business comes with several challenges. Especially when one does not have the right managerial skills. But that doesn’t seem to bother David Kuria.

23 OTON 11 David Kuria (eng)

“I think it’s purely coupling up an innovation with the right professional drive, and that’s why I have 12 graduates here, all of them with different specializations. My task is to build a core team that can think in more than one line. A team that can think across multiple disciplines. That makes it a really good practice. So we have business experts here, we have engineers, we have sociologists, people who are looking at Ikotoilets as a social benefit!”

24 NARRATION

Running a project like the Iko toilets requires full time commitment, he says. But this has not changed David’s normal social life. There is enough time for family and spare time activities, he adds. He sees his business as an important and fulfilling part of his life. It has a lot of challenges, especially for young entrepreneurs.

25 OTON 12 David Kuria (Eng)

“Sometimes until 8 o’clock you will not only meet myself but also the staff doing their work and loving what they are doing. Look at the opportunities in sanitation where we are now creating jobs for young people. Ten years ago you wouldn’t have thought of such an idea. And even if you thought about it everybody would have said it can’t work in Africa. Go and try it in Washington or in Europe”.

OUTRO:

And with those words from David Kuria, the founder of Iko toilets, we come to the end of today’s program on successful and responsible entrepreneurs in Africa. Thank you for listening to this story, written by Eric Ponda. If you would like to find out more about this topic, or listen to other Learning by Ear programs, please visit our website at www.dw.de/lbe. And don’t forget to tune in again for our next episode. Good bye.