

Students from the department of Real Estate and construction management joined other students in a visit to the Nthange river oil spill for a cleanup exercise. The invitation for the trip which was sent by Kenya Pipeline Company offered the students with a firsthand experience in industrial waste management.

According to Eng. Joseph G Gikonyo, who took them through the site, the spillage is the largest to have ever occurred in the country. It has subsequently drawn attention from various sectors both private and public including the National Environmental Management Authority and partnerships with local universities among them the University of Nairobi.

The students were taken through the process of managing the spillage and restoring the affected area. They were shown the methodology being used to clean up the river and why it was being used. They learnt that the contracted company was using a method called bioremediation which is the use of naturally occurring organisms to remove or neutralize hazardous substances by making them less toxic or eliminating the toxicity completely. This method is used on site to treat contaminated soil while the oil in the water is being removed by separation. Deep rooted leguminous plants are also planted in affected soils to try and cure the soil naturally, the main idea being treating the soil without involving any additives so as to maintain the soil composition. They were also shown the equipment for separating the oil from the water and tanks used to treat the contaminated soil.

The students will also be required to make subsequent trips for monitoring and evaluation of the project. This will help expose them more to the industry and especially waste management which has numerous entrepreneurial opportunities.

They took a tour of the affected site and were shown the extent of the oil spill. They were also shown the well from which the oils spill was first detected. It still has a layer of oil on the surface.

The forum also included local leaders who emphasized on the need for local youth to see the opportunity in waste management as currently there is no local company that can handle a disaster of that magnitude. They encouraged the students to learn all they could from the current disaster so as to gain knowledge to fight future disasters.