



Supporting sustainable access to clean water



Children collect clean piped water

BY PAUL NTAMBARA

The government of Japan through the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) supports the government of Rwanda development plans as enshrined in the Vision 2020 and the Economic Development and Poverty Reduction Strategy (EDPRS). The agency restarted its activities in Rwanda in 2005 and is gradually expanding, intervening in four key areas; agriculture, infrastructure, education and ICT, water and sanitation.

One key area of intervention by JICA has been in water and sanitation. Lack of access to safe clean water has been identified as a major challenge faced by Rwandans both in the rural and urban areas. JICA supports this sector through hard and soft activities.

WATER SCHEMES THAT WORK

The JICA water and sanitation intervention in the Eastern Province has helped the increased safe water access to around 70 percent. The government of Rwanda's target is to offer universal 100 percent water access to the people of Rwanda by 2017.

In Rwamagana district, Eastern Province, JICA implemented a 68 kilometer piped water supply system in the three sectors of Mwulire, Kigabiro and Munyaga. The scheme that draws its water from the Rwakibogo spring is composed of 3 pumping stations, 11 distribution tanks, pipeline and 63 public water stands.

Emmanuel Rwakayigamba, the Rwamagana

district official in charge of Environment and water says that with support from JICA, the district has made good progress in ensuring that its people have clean water. Currently 70 percent of the district has access to clean water; the target is to have 90 percent of the population with clean water by the end of the year.

"The availability of safe clean water has improved the quality of life of our people. There has been a considerable reduction in water borne diseases; this also has an impact on their economic welfare because when people are not sick they are more productive," the district official notes.

Ciprancia Nyiransabimana, a mother of 7, who used to trek long distances to fetch water is now a happy woman.

"Clean water is no longer one of my worries, Rwf20 for a 24 litre water jerrycan is affordable for many a household, we will work together as village members to ensure that the water system is well maintained," she says.

Management of the water is in the hands of the people through a cooperative, Ubuzima Bwiza. Money is deposited on an account known to the district and is used to pay workers, buy chemicals and do repairs on the system.

"We attach great importance on community ownership of these projects and so involve them in planning and implementation to ensure sustainability," says Ishizuka.

Kirenga Tharsis, the President of the cooperative says that water management staff have been trained by JICA through the PURASANI project.

"Because of the JICA support, we now have the skills to run the water system on our own," says Kirenga.

With support from JICA, the Mwulire, Kigabiro, Munyaga piped water system is under expansion to create more 100m3 as an addition to the 240m3 so as to meet the ever increasing demand for clean water in the three sectors.

MORE CLEAN WATER

The construction and rehabilitation of the Kazo-Mutenderi water supply system, one of the 7 piped water schemes, is another intervention by JICA. The scheme has a pipe length of 109 km with 109 water stands to be constructed. The water supply coverage in 11 sectors is designed to be improved from 41.6 percent in 2008 to 57.4 percent in 2014 with about 55, 000 beneficiaries in the districts of Kirehe and Ngoma in the Eastern Province.

TACKLING WATER LOSS

The intervention in non-revenue water is another component of the soft approach. For example in the Kigali water network, the non revenue water (water that doesn't generate revenue) rate is very high, JICA is working with the Energy, Water and Sanitation Authority to address the problem of operation and maintenance of the water network.

David Karangwa, Head of Water commercial unit in EWSA says that non revenue water accounts for 40 percent of the water produced translating into about Rwf5.7 million loss annually. The losses are attributed to authorized consumption - water that is consumed by EWSA itself, its branches, treatment plants, water that is

flushed in the network to clear blockages, technical and commercial losses.

With support from JICA, five EWSA employees were trained in Japan on how to reduce non revenue water and have in turn trained about 70 people on the same.

"Creating awareness is important, many people including our staff are not aware of non revenue water. We are hopeful to meet the target set by government to reduce non revenue water from 40 percent to 32 percent by end of June 2013," says Karangwa.

ENVIABLE WORK OF JAPANESE VOLUNTEERS

The major soft activity of JICA is the maintenance of the water systems and hand pumps to ensure sustainability. To achieve this, 8 Japanese volunteers have been commissioned to work with the communities with whom they share knowledge on repair techniques

Community members are expected to learn repairing techniques through joint work with volunteers so that they can handle future break-downs by themselves," says Ishizuka Fumiaki, the program manager, water and sanitation.

Shinya Sakurai, a JICA water and sanitation volunteer in Kabarondo sector says that in areas where water pumps are available, sanitation is relatively good. Recently, the volunteers assisted in the repair of a hand pump in Ruganzi Village that serves over 100 households.

For Yobu Musabyimana, the president of the water committee in Ruganzi Cell, the intervention of JICA in the repair came in handy.

"This pump has been broken for over a year; water borne diseases have been rampant because of using dirty water from the ponds. We appreciate the efforts of the Japanese volunteers who have ensured that it functions again, we pledge to maintain it," says Musabyimana.



"This pump was broken for over a year so water borne disease were rampant because of using dirty water from the ponds. We pledge to maintain it,"



JICA Technicians fixing a broken bore hole

"We attach great importance on community ownership of these projects and so involve them in planning and implementation to ensure sustainability,"