

By Steven Nsamaza

In 2011, when the Rwanda government signed a 49-year concession agreement to make productive the buffer zone around Nyungwe forest, The New Forests Company conducted a Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) in 2013 that usually enlightens their commitment to the communities around Nyungwe.

When the local school, Groupe Scolaire Kitabi wanted to expand they approached The New Forests Company for support and the company was ready to comply on the commitment. “They built for us four classrooms and low cost ecosan toilets,” notes the Director of the school, Jean Claude Nsabimana.

“The contribution of The New Forests Company to our school is significant given the growing population of the school,” adds Nsabimana. Groupe Scolaire Kitabi is located in Kitabi Sector of Nyamagabe District as one approaches Nyungwe forest.

The school has both primary and secondary with 1,209 students in the primary and 524 secondary school students. Boosting education, sanitation and access to water brought many benefits like the intended decrease in the occupancy rate of students per classroom and this also led to job creation for teachers because more classrooms will need more teachers and the constructions works also employed more people.

The Corporate Social Responsibility Programme Manager of NFC, Joseph Munyarukaza says that although his company always conducts a Participatory Rural Appraisal to determine the needs of a community, the support to Groupe Scolaire Kitabi was a request by the school and local authorities.

“Supporting education is among our primary social commitments, therefore when we were approached to support the needs of the school we were happy to help,” said Munyarukaza.

NFC has supported communities living around Nyungwe forest with different initiatives including developing the out growers programme, where farmers are given free seedlings to grow wood-lots in their plantations, provision of trainings like on best silvicultural practices and land use, income generating schemes like bee keeping and availing clean water.

Access to clean water

Around Nyungwe buffer zone forest there are ten clean water projects for the communities that have been executed by the 'Kampanyi' as The New Forests Company is popularly known.

"The company became a solution to our woes," says Edward Nzeyimanaa resident of Sebukiniro village in Uwinkingi Sector in Nyamagabe District.

"Water was a major problem until the company benefited us." When the company started operating in the Nyungwe buffer zone we started meeting frequently and told them our major problem which was access to clean water, notes Nzeyimana who is also the head of Sebukiniro village.

"The closest water source for our village was one hour away," Nzeyimana says, "even with that delay and much effort we could not get clean water."

Currently, Subukiniro village has access to clean water which is also supplying a local school and a health post.