

By Steven Nsamaza

Uwanyirigira Jeanine, 38, always wished when she would be connected to electricity grid yet above her house there were electricity wires running along the high way from Huye to Nyanza town.

She is a resident of Ngorongali village in Kibinja Cell, Busasamana Sector in Nyanza District, Uwanyirigira has a home and a small boutique on the main road. "I used to see electricity wires passing through my village and all I could dream about is tapping onto them," says the mother of three.

"When I asked why we can't get electricity, they always told me that it was not easy as I thought.

"Finally, when we got electricity it was an unlikely benefactor," Uwanyirigira said gleefully.

When The New Forests Company moved its pole production plant from Nyungwe to Ngorongali Village in Nyanza District, the villagers were not much optimistic thinking that the company would only mind its business.

"The Company started building a plant in our village but we didn't expect to be the first beneficiaries and even before the plant started operations most of the people in this village got employed directly and indirectly," narrates Uwanyirigira.

Before long, as the company connected their own electricity we were also connected and now me and my family are already enjoying the benefits, she says.

Uwanyirigira underlines that neighboring the company came with many benefits, although she is not directly employed at the plant but it has boosted economic activities around the village and people buying at her shop have increased, she was also able to rent her house to one of the employees at the company, a rent she otherwise would never have got without such a company operating in the area.

"Everywhere we have operations we work closely with the communities and we support them in basic and impactful developments like giving communities water, initiating small scale economic activities and any other development initiative the community chooses," said Joseph Munyarukaza, Corporate Social Responsibility Programme Manager of NFC.

The New Forests Company conducts a Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) to determine the needs of a certain community. When the PRA is completed, the company undertakes to invest into the venture that has been identified to benefit and bring development to the community.

Meeting with the villagers from Busasamana Sector composed mostly of the beneficiaries of the electricity project, Munyarukaza reminded them to use electricity they obtained to develop themselves.

“When we first came here, you wished to have electricity and we supported that initiative but as most of you get connected we ask you, what initiatives and new developments you have implemented,” Munyarukaza inquired from the community.

The in-charge of infrastructure development in Busasamana Sector, Emmanuel voiced the same calling on the residents to utilise electricity they received by developing their area.

He said that the infrastructure acquired is now for the community and they should own and benefit from it. The Corporate Social Responsibility Programme Manager told the congregation of about 150 villagers who had turned up to discuss the village’s developments that there are more development projects that the community could benefit.