

By Dias Nyesiga

With its mountainous terrain, Nyaruguru district has been grappling to close the access to health services gap that has seen more people walk long distances to get treatment. In some areas people walk up to 3 hours to reach a health facility.

According to Statistics, the district has a shortage of 20 health posts which are expected to be closer to people at a cell level, reducing the distance to 30 minutes walkable distance. The district has one hospital, 16 health centres and 33 health posts and two which are yet to be completed.

Janvier Gashema, the acting Mayor for Nyaruguru district says that there is still a challenge of people taking long distances to access health services which affects them social-economically.

But with Society for Family Health- SFH Rwanda on Friday penning down a partnership agreement with Japan Embassy in Rwanda to construct an improved Second Generation health Post in Ruhinga cell, Nyabimata sector, the districts hopes of bringing health services closer to people came into light.

“The services that will be provided by this health posts have not been provided in our health posts in the district, this is another indication that we will achieve our health indicator targets,” said Gashema.

The partnership signed on Friday at the district headquarters will see Japan financing the construction of an improved health post at a cost of USD 75,401 under the framework of Japan’s Grant Assistance for grassroots Human Security Project GGP.

“I learned that Ruhinga does not have a health post and a nearest health post is two and half hours away on foot, this is absolutely heartbreaking for me, as a mother of two,” said Ms Yukako Ochi, Charge d’Affaires ad interim of the Embassy during the signing ceremony.

To access health services, a person in Ruhinga cell to access Nyabimata health centre, they have to spend over Rwf5,000 and Rwf7,000 to Munini district hospital or walk 3 hours and 5 hours respectively, with this Health Post cutting it down to 30 minutes walkable distance.

Nathan Ntakirutimana, the president of the sector’s council said that the area has

been having a challenge of dental related diseases which has seen the need for dental services go up.

“There is a big challenge of dental diseases around here but we don’t have a health facility with these services here, with a strong toothache most people struggle to reach the health centre,” he said.

The project is the grant’s 101st since the grant was launched in Rwanda 20 years ago that has seen Japan support Rwanda in sectors of health, education and water.

“Working with Rwandan government in areas of health is our priority.... Our working relations with Rwanda are very important for us in our diplomacy for Africa,” she said.

Yukako says that the project is part of its commitment to support the government of Rwanda to further achieve its development agenda especially in health using Smart health initiative which saw Japan taking a leading role in global health.

The health post will provide special services such as maternity, laboratory services, Dental and ophthalmology.

“We are happy to be partnering with the district of Nyaruguru to implement President Kagame’s vision to have every Rwandan access health services in walkable distance,” said Manasseh Gihana Wandera, Executive Director, SFH Rwanda.

According to Ministry of health, most of these services are provided by a health centre at a sector level, which shows the impact of second generation health posts in communities.

“From our previous experience where we placed second generation health posts, we have seen mothers able to go for antenatal care and giving birth from a health facility,” Gihana said.

Rwanda’s efforts to achieve Universal Health Coverage (UHC) by availing healthcare services for all through financial protection mechanisms and equitable distribution of health facilities at grassroots has shown a positive outlook over the years.

SFH Rwanda continues to partner with different funders to establish more Health Posts. Currently, there are 15 SGHPs that are under construction in Nyaruguru,

Kirehe, Burera, Musanze and Rubavu Districts.

“we are optimistic that the SGHP to be established will contribute to the Improved access to essential health services for community members of Ruhinga cell which will later contribute to improved health outcome of community members of Ruhinga cell,’ he added.

With the support of different partners, 1,117 Health Hosts (HPs) have been established in underserved communities (remote areas) in Rwanda.

Among these, SFH Rwanda with its partners has constructed and equipped 179 health posts countrywide, 21 of these health posts were upgraded to Second-Generation Health Posts (SGHPs) that offer special services such as maternity, laboratory services, Dental and ophthalmology.

Through a Public Private Community Partnership (PPP) model, SFH has so far constructed 179 Health posts in Bugesera, Rwamagana, Kirehe, Gatsibo, Nyagatare, Gicumbi, Kamonyi, Burera, Gakenke, Gasabo, Nyanza, Gisagara, Nyaruguru.