



# **The New Forests Company** **CONSERVING FORESTS**



**Rwanda has set an ambitious trend to increase forest cover to 30% of the total national area by 2020. This precipitated the creation of Nyungwe buffer zone to avert any encroachment and in July 2011, government signed a 49-year concession agreement with the New Forests Company (NFC) to manage, develop and make productive the buffer zone.**

**Today, commercialisation of the buffer zone is conducted sustainably, jobs have been created for the locals and community development projects are thriving.**





# Ensuring generative buffer zone around Nyungwe Natural Forest

*The New Forests Company is Rwanda's fast growing only forestry and value added wood products company pursuing a triple bottom line investment model and simultaneously supporting the government's economic strategy of job creation, poverty alleviation; import substitution and economic growth.*

**I**n July 2011, the Government of Rwanda represented by the Ministry of Natural Resources and Rwanda Development Board (RDB) signed a 49-year concession agreement with New Forests Company (NFC) to manage, develop and make productive the Nyungwe forest buffer zone.

Today, The New Forests Company is managing an area of 10,046 hectares around Nyungwe National Park with a planted area of 8,215 hectares of which 65% is pine, 15% eucalyptus and 20% other species. Simbarashe Dube, the CEO of The New Forests Company explains that, the buffer zone was established for conservation purposes with the main goal of ensuring that people do not encroach the national park. After years of planting it was realised that there was actually a resource which could be exploited commercially and at the same time be done in a sustainable manner.

So it was in this spirit that The New Forests Company was contracted through a long tender process to



manage and commercialize something that was primarily for conservation.

The company is committed to tree replanting in all areas around Nyungwe forest with improved tree species in line with sustainable rotation and

socioeconomic management strategy where new species of trees are planted to keep the cycle going and to improve the carbon footprint. The company currently operates in three business units; wooden CCA treated electric poles mainly for REG – strategically supporting the government's high priority rural electrification programme; structural sawn timber for the growing Rwandan building and furniture industry and industrial charcoal renewable energy (biomass converted into energy). Because of the previous management regime, the forest is not yielding a lot of pole material that meets quality standards calling for external supply of raw poles from other 3rd parties.

"We have established a pole treatment plant in Nyanza with the capacity of treating 120,000 poles per year allowing us to meet current demand. This is the only pole treatment plant in Rwanda", explains Simbarashe, "And it meets the highest international standards of quality". NFC is able to win most of the tenders that come from REG due to lower logistic costs and significantly contribute to the "Made in Rwanda" campaign. The country is now saving \$7-10 million per annum in foreign exchange. In the past, treated poles were imported as final product from Uganda or shipped from as far as South Africa





but today, 100% value addition is done in Rwanda and the poles are affordable

In February 2016, NFC commenced its first saw mill operation with an annual input capacity of 13,000 cubic meters and the board of directors recently agreed to immediately double the capacity to 26,000 cubic meters by the 1st of July 2017. The company has already procured equipment and they are en route from the United States of America.

"We are doing this because after completing our market analysis for value addition, we will now need more volumes. So we started off with one mill and will double production," says Mr Dube. The company will also start kiln drying of timber by early 2018 so as to produce the best quality timber which will be the first of its kind in the country.

Timber value addition starts with proper drying of the timber, this allows for a stable product for use in construction and good quality furniture. With the kiln dried timber, NFC will start making construction materials like trusses, tongue and groove timber, various moldings, decking material, doors and door frames, window frames, ceiling which will all cut down the costs of importation of a number of products in the country.

### Benefiting the communities

Whilst NFC is a private company seeking to deliver profitability to its investors and shareholders, the company also fundamentally believes it must do the right thing for people and the planet by creating jobs, improving

the lives of workers, neighbours and protecting the environment by reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

NFC also supports local communities in building schools, beekeeping projects, among other communally owned projects. Currently, the Company is employing 350 people around the Nyungwe Forest that straddles across five districts. With the doubling of production and value addition, these numbers will definitely double to further benefit communities living around the forests. NFC also buys pole materials from out-growers and local farmers which encourage them to plant trees thus helping to preserve environment while earning an income.

NFC gives seedlings to farmers at no cost to grow wood-lots, makes follow-ups on performance of the trees and advise farmers when it's time to thin & prune. To date, NFC has distributed more than 633,622 seedlings for over 495.4 hectares to private local growers.

"Our philosophy as a forest company is economic, social and environment oriented. So we look at all the three aspects; the community and how it should benefit from the forest; the environment and making a profit, making it a win-win situation for everyone." NFC has so far spent \$450,000 on community projects;

executed ten clean water projects in communities around the forest; built four classroom blocks; established 150 beehives in various cooperatives and supported third parties that grow seedlings for the company.

"Lastly we have launched a graduate training program and we are sending local foresters to Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University in George, South Africa to complete a three year diploma course," explains Simbarashe.

### NFC is proud to have RSSB and BRD as shareholders.

"With the good governance and the leadership of His Excellency the President of Rwanda, Paul Kagame, there is a clear indication that Rwanda is continuously being trusted by investors and we hope we shall realize the country's full potential in the next few years," Simbarashe notes. Mauritius based NFC has management services offices in Johannesburg and currently operates in the East African countries of Uganda, Rwanda and Tanzania. The company spent considerable efforts and time building good working relationships with the governments of these countries in order to build a business that will endure and meet East Africa's economic development goals.





# NYANZA POLE PLANT

## improving the lives in Nyanza

The New Forests Company's pole treatment plant located in Nyanza District in the Southern Province of Rwanda was established in 2014 and sits on 11.06 hectares with a capacity to hold about 450,000 poles, employs 62 workers including 26 permanent staff members while the rest are casual workers.

The establishment of the pole treatment plant in Nyanza has had a major impact on the population in the area. "The plant has given jobs to many residents here in Nyanza, also the neighbouring villages received electricity from NFC support and boosting business activities through consumption of different consumables by the plant and our staff" says Joseph Munyarukaza, the Corporate Social Responsibility Programme Manager of NFC.

Nyanza plant treats electricity poles and is the first company of its kind to venture in Rwanda. Most of the electricity poles are procured by Rwanda Energy Group and are supporting the country's electrification targets.

In spite of the availability of options for the transmission and distribution of electricity, wood poles remain the

most preferred. Experts are of the view that although other options may have fair share of the market, wood poles still dominate. Treated wood poles are the market leader in lower voltage transmission and distribution utility poles. Not only because it is cheap, but because for over 100 years treated wood poles proved to be most reliable with high-quality performance.

At the plant, Munyarukaza emphasises that NFC is very keen on safety measures and insists that a truly safe workplace is everyone's responsibility and that Safety Rules complement your own experience and knowledge of working safely around the pole plant. "They govern the way we work so that everyone – employees, visitors, and suppliers – comply with these safety precautions and procedures. By adopting and applying the Rules, we can all help mitigate safety risks" he adds.

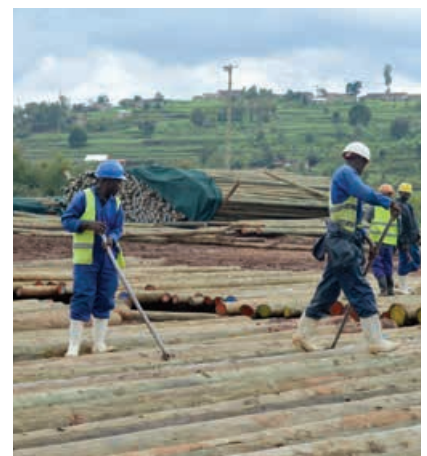
### Production process of treated wood poles

The pole production process at Nyanza pole treatment plant can be described in six main steps from when tree poles are

collected to the time they are treated and ready to transport away.

### Pole collection

The plant gets its supply of poles for treatment from local suppliers and from neighbouring countries like Uganda, Kenya, Congo and Burundi. The poles that conform to the standards of NFC are transported on trucks and delivered to the plant. The company offers expertise







training to its local suppliers on how to identify the right poles in order for them to deliver poles that will not be rejected thus reducing losses. About 90% of the poles that are received for treatment at the plant come from suppliers. "We hold meetings with our suppliers every three months where we give them a document and take them through the required specification" explains Patrick Inshuti, the Pole Preparation Supervisor.

The Pole Graders help at this stage, they are chosen according to their level of literacy and who have had previous knowledge but given in-house training on how to identify different species. "When it rains, there is a challenge to get poles from the forest because roads become impassable and we maximize by transporting a lot of poles during the dry season like 500 poles a week from our own concession" he says.

### Receiving yard

At the initial stage, newly harvested poles from the forest that arrive at the treatment plant are taken to the receiving yard where they are counted and recorded in the registrar depending on their origin.

According to the pole receiving supervisor Clemence Ndikubwayo, at this stage the poles are checked for moisture content that determines the amount of water in the wood and after, they are staked according to their origin and moisture content.

All details about delivery is captured here including the defective poles that are rejected, then quality specification



form is made which suppliers use to make invoices and to receive payment for their deliveries.

The received poles are then graded by use of markers into varying customer specifications and grades.

### Stacking

Poles are stacked in the open air according to grades or customer specification to dry. Depending on the size of the pole, weather conditions and

place of origin, open air drying can last from four months. Here moisture content monitoring is done from 50% in first week to 25% thus losing 2% water per week.

Open air drying has been the traditional method but there now other technologically advanced methods of drying to shorten the drying time between 7 to 10 days.

Nyanza pole plant is in the process to start using these alternatives that include vacuum chambers, warm-air kilns or high temperature kilns.



Clarisse Abayisenga, the treatment plant operator.

### Pole preparation

Egide Ruhumuriza, the Nyanza Plant Foreman notes that, at this stage poles are subjected to peel to remove the inner bark in order to make the surface smooth and even.

Here all customer specifications are executed before treating the poles, for example; pole markings, drilling and any other fabrication required by the customer.

Pole dimensions, moisture content and quality are also checked in accordance with acceptable standards. "Prior to treatment, poles are trimmed to ensure flat tops. Both tops and butts are fixed with galvanized gung nails (anti split plates) to prevent them from splitting," says Ruhumuriza.

### Pole treatment

The poles are treated with chemicals that will prevent from insect attack and to last longer. Depending on customer specifications, the treatment chemical used could vary between creosote and copper.

Two different preservatives are applicable: creosote and chromated copper arsenate (CCA). For either, to allow complete impregnation, all sapwood must be dried to moisture content (MC) below fibre saturation point (FSP) prior to treatment.

Any remaining free water would directly prevent full penetration as well as evaporate and expand in the inner part of the pole due to the heat being raised to ca. 120 °C during the creosote preservation process.

According to the treatment plant operator Clarisse Abayisenga, they measure and mix quality chemicals with water after sucking the air from the Vacuum tank which they later flood to 90% and put in the poles and close the tank for 30 minutes. "We balance the

pressure and remove the chemicals and the total cycle of the treatment takes one hour and 45 minutes then another batch of poles is loaded" Abayisenga explains.

### Dispatch yard

From the fixation yard after treatment, poles are staked according to size and customer specifications since they are now finished product and arranged ready to be dispatched to the client.





The final inspection of the poles is done and approval for the quality of the finished product is conducted at the dispatch yard. Nyanza pole plant has the capacity to treat 120,000 poles in a year.

### Sustainability of the plant

Since the cost of production is most of the times the top consideration when establishing electrical networks, wood will continue to dominate.

Apart from cost, even when other factors like performance life, post-construction expenses for inspection, maintenance, repair, replacement and disposal are examined; wood poles still reign.

A further enthralling reason for wood poles are preferred is environmental friendliness. Wood resources are harvested from nature and in properly managed forests, the renewability can continue for a long time. As such, harvesting wood does not pose significant threat to the environment.

After harvesting, they are impregnated with chemicals through a simple process at the treatment plant. The amount of energy used, and the emissions to the environment is one-quarter to one-tenth for steel, plastic or concrete.



## 'The Dispatcher'



*Denise Karabukirwa, the Dispatch Supervisor and Vice-President of the association of staff members at NFC.*

When The New Forests Company (NFC) started operations in Kitabi, Nyamagabe District, Denise Karabukirwa had completed her secondary education with no job but was able to get employed at the company.

More than four years with NFC, the 27-year old is now married and has garnered vast experience in pole related business.

Karabukirwa is currently the Dispatch Supervisor at the Nyanza pole treatment plant and the Vice-President of the association of staff members at NFC.

She is the representative of staff at the plant, a role that involves advocating for fellow members and ensuring that workers are well catered for.

"When the company started, I was there," says Karabukirwa, "we started operations with planning in Kitabi and was among the few employees the company first recruited and when the plant was moved to Nyanza I came along."

"Working with the New Forests Company has been life changing experience for me," she notes. Karabukirwa started working with The

New Forests Company in 2012 in the planning department, moved to pole sourcing and when they moved to Nyanza she became the receiving supervisor and worked her way to poles preparations, treatment and now at the stage of the Dispatch Supervisor.

She has conducted various trainings both in-house and outside trainings, notable among those is the Quality Management System trained by some international trainers. Karabukirwa is now a certified auditor in the poles business able to put her skills at work at NFC or anywhere else.

"The company has empowered me, now I possess recognizable skills," Karabukirwa says smiling.

Gaining skills is not the only benefits from the company but among the few pecks gained along, she narrates, but getting the job helped me with my family and has been able to enroll back to school.

Karabukirwa is now pursuing her bachelor's degree in Rural Development at Université Catholique du Rwanda (UCR) in Butare town, Huye District.

## Pole Supplier

Born in the western province, Kamanzi Eraste is now a wealthy man with lands obtained from selling poles for the last three years. Kamanzi almost failed to pay back the bank loan that he had acquired and it was evident that the bank was about to take his land because of defaulting. Kamanzi is one of the many pole suppliers of NFC and has been doing this for the last four years since the company started its operations in Nyanza. Previously, Kamanzi was dealing in timber and charcoal at a small scale which was not earning him enough.

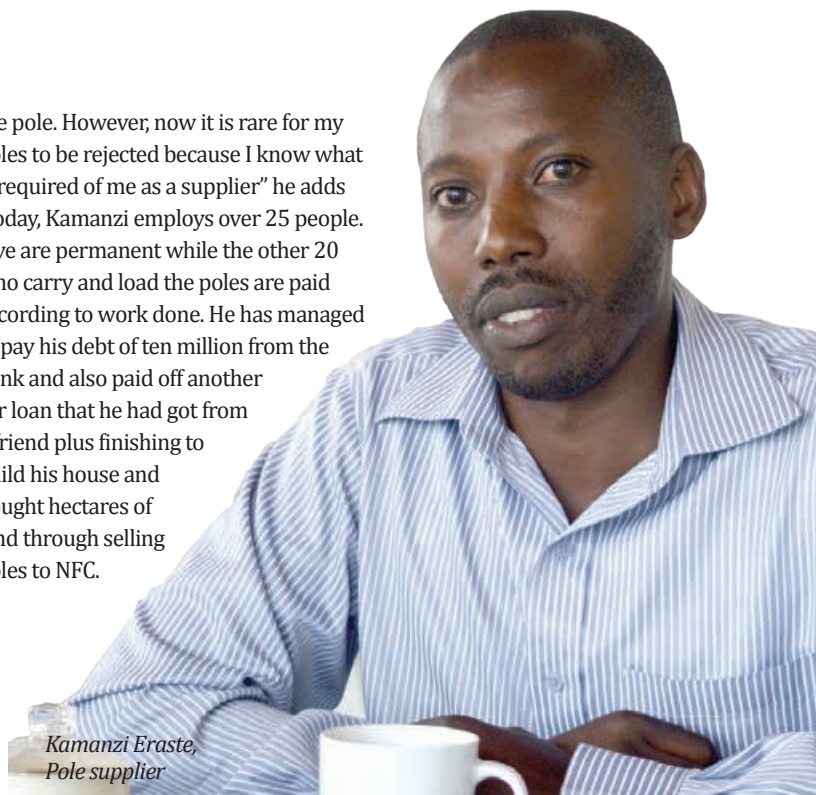
So in 2013, he heard of NFC and that they were buying poles from those that could supply, so he changed strategy and joined pole suppliers. "I approached the management here at the pole plant for business and after winning a tender to supply poles, I knew that the sky was the limit" Kamanzi told The Dispatch. Kamanzi says that as pole suppliers, it's a long process though now they have gained experience through the training offered to them by NFC.

"In order to avoid losses, before cutting and ferrying the poles to the pole plant, we send out scouts who identify the poles that fit the specifications of NFC and then we cut and load them on trucks and deliver them to Nyanza" Kamanzi explains. According to him, they receive payment for the poles that fit the standards of NFC as soon as they are inspected and accepted by the company. He however sights challenges that they face as pole suppliers that are related to poor poles and the dry season where poles split before being delivered to the Pole plant.

"We used to make losses before we received training. Poles were rejected because they did not meet the required standards by the company and this was hurting because we already had paid for



the pole. However, now it is rare for my poles to be rejected because I know what is required of me as a supplier" he adds. Today, Kamanzi employs over 25 people. Five are permanent while the other 20 who carry and load the poles are paid according to work done. He has managed to pay his debt of ten million from the bank and also paid off another car loan that he had got from a friend plus finishing to build his house and bought hectares of land through selling poles to NFC.



*Kamanzi Eraste,  
Pole supplier*





# The saw mill



URUS machine used for harvesting and extraction of logs.

**T**hough Nyungwe buffer zone concession was awarded to The New Forests Company in 2011, the Company started its first saw milling operation in February 2016 with an annual input capacity of 13,000 cubic metres which capacity will immediately double to 26,000 cubic meters by the 1st of July 2017.

The Saw Mill which is located in Kitabi sector employs approximately 48 workers many of whom are people living around the concession zone.

As you drive up to the saw mill, you see a fleet of trucks with capacities of various tons delivering logs. Most of these vehicles are hired to ferry in logs from the buffer zone. After the trucks deliver the logs, large trucks operating with mounted cranes lift the logs, sort and pile them according to size and deliver them to the breakdown sawing machines that cut the logs into different timber sizes.

Here the logs are cut into timber using equipment such as circular saws and

band saws. This is called 'conversion'. The first stage of conversion is a process called 'breaking down', which means rough sawing. The second stage is called 're-sawing' and refers to more accurate / precise cutting and finishing such as planning and further machining.

According to the Saw Mill Supervisor Zacky NShimiyimana, the saw mill operates six machines three of which are breakdown Wood-Mizer machines, two pin blade machines as well as multi-purpose heavy-duty handling machinery for its material handling.

"Each of the three breakdown machines cuts a minimum of 70 logs per day meaning over 210 logs are cut and the timber is piled according to size and dried by smoking" says Nshimiyimana.

When a tree is felled, it contains a large proportion of water / moisture. Many, felled trees have forty to fifty per cent water content.

Seasoning or drying of natural wood is the process through which excess water /

moisture is removed, leaving typically fifteen-twenty percent water content. The company will also start kiln drying of timber by early 2018 so as to produce the best quality timber which will be the first of its kind in the country. According to Nshimiyimana, after the saw mill starts kiln drying the timber, NFC will then start making construction materials groove timber, various moldings, decking material, doors and door frames, window frames and ceiling materials which will all cut down the costs of importation of a number of products.

Timber value addition starts with proper drying of the timber; this allows for a stable product for use in construction and good quality furniture. Seasoned wood is used to make furniture and most other wood based products, because it is less likely to 'deform' and 'warp'.

It can be shaped accurately with tools such as planes, saws, routers and hand tools. Adhesives can also be used with seasoned woods. Raw material is brought in by road and graded to specifications. Training is carried out in house and externally.

Orders are tracked and the timber is cut according to the specifications in the order book.

Quality and impeccable service remained the top priority of the company. For the last three years, Nshimiyimana who a graduate of forestry from Kibisabo has worked for NFC and achieved a lot from the company "I have managed to build myself a big residential house in Muhanga, married and bought one hectare of land where I have planted trees plus paying school fees for my siblings."

### Preparation of logs from the forest to the sawmill

The 'felling' of a tree, is the first stage of preparing the timber for commercial use. According to the transport coordinator Vincent Sindikubwabo, the cutting of the trees is normally carried out during both the wet and dry seasons though more trees are cut during the dry season.

"We have a target to deliver 200 logs per day to the saw mill regardless of the season. So we cut at least 300 trees during the dry season and between 150- 170 trees per day during the wet season and this helps us balance the constant number



of 200 logs that we have to deliver daily"

Mature trees are selected by a forestry workers and the felled trees are replaced with saplings. Consequently, the forest is sustainable (it should not run out of trees). A team of NFC forestry workers fell hundreds of trees being harvested every day, alternatives especially designed 'tractors' with cutters and grabbers, are also used here.

After, the tree trunks (logs) are stored / stacked in a clearing along the road in the forest. Sometimes when more logs have been cut, they are stored in the forest until they are needed at the saw mill.

The logs are then loaded on trucks using vehicles equipped with lifting gear and transported to the saw mill. The rationale of having NFC wood processing company was because there was no large-scale commercial wood processing company in Rwanda, the domestic demand for processed wood products remains high and growing; huge imports for wood and wood processed product as well as poor quality product from local pit saws and woodshops currently fill this demand.

Increased demand for energy, emerging environmental challenges with respect to greenhouse gas emissions and increasing use of the convectional energy (fuel, gas, firewood) remains a challenge thus

need of alternatives on energy sector in Rwanda.

Thus, the company will serve as an opportunity in reducing the use of fossil fuels for heating purposes and reliance on imported processed wood product for furniture and construction industry and to improve value chain for extractive industry – significant scale up beyond tree chopping and pit sawing and to improve product quality as well as helping Rwanda's forest products overcome the trade imbalance.

The New Forests Company will focus mainly on two critical issues among others are the production of diversified value added wood products, such as treated timber, kiln dried sawn wood and graded wood which will ensure durability of wooden structure and increased life of wood in the service, hence reducing pressure from forest ecosystem and reduce reliance on expensive imported wood inputs.

Utilization of wood residues waste materials into value-added products to provide renewable biomass fuel (industrial charcoal) to near resident and commercial markets, reducing the use of fossil fuels for heating purposes, thereby reducing overall energy costs in an environmentally responsible manner.



# Growing own seedlings

With a mandate to reforestation and afforestation, NFC started growing some of its own seedlings particularly to serve where trees have been harvested in the buffer zone.

The company's seedlings nursery bed in the forest is grown depending on the need but has capacity of 200,000 seedlings.

Mukarugaba Dativa, the in-charge of NFC seedlings nursery bed said they are employed as four permanent workers and other casual workers engaged depending on the need.

"Working with The New Forests Company has increased my skills in forestry," Mukarugaba says. Before joining NFC she worked in tea plantations in Kitabi and that was all the knowledge she had.

A resident of Kagano cell in Kitabi Sector, Nyamagabe District, the mother of three says the job at NFC has ensured and raised her livelihood. "This job raised my salary and now I am able to care for my children and family.

Mukarugaba says that, her job pays for all her basic needs at home, school fees, health insurance and she joined village savings and loan groups (Ibimina) in her locality.



*One of the NFC nursery beds with seedlings ready to be transplanted in Nyungwe Buffer zone.*



*Mukarugaba Dativa, a worker at NFC seedling nursery bed.*



# Better alternatives to forest encroachment

By Steven Nsamaza



*Ex-encroachers working on their nursery.*

“It was difficult to accept change but as humans change is part of life,” notes Theogene Nzeyimana, President of ASUKO, a cooperative of former encroachers to Nyungwe buffer zone plantation.

With proximity to the forest, we felt Nyungwe was our only hope for survival and were always in conflict with authorities but The New Forests Company brought us alternatives, narrates Nzeyimana.

In July 2011, the government signed an agreement with The New Forests Company (NFC) to manage, develop and make productive the Nyungwe buffer zone plantation. The agreement put an end on all encroachment activities on Nyungwe and the surrounding communities who depended on such activities thought to look for alternatives.

Nzeyimana with fellow villagers in Uwinkingi Sector in Subukiniro Village overlooking the forest thought their livelihoods were almost over until they met with representative of NFC. “We used to farm in Nyungwe belt but when the company came all that stopped but we met people from the company and they showed us better alternatives.” He says.

The cooperative held discussions with NFC to identify income generating projects and settled on growing seedlings given that it was an easy project to undertake with a ready market from the company itself.

“The company gave us the capital to start the project totaling to Rwf5,008,500,” Marie Niyonsaba, treasurer of ASUKO cooperative revealed. “We were able to buy all necessary requirements and the

project kicked off.

“We sale 98 per cent of our seedlings to the company,” underlined Marie Niyonsaba, the treasurer of the cooperative. During the first season, the cooperative sold 120,000 seedlings to NFC and the second season production was raised to 140,000 seedlings which were all bought by NFC.

Niyonsaba notes that, the company fronted the capital and is ready to buy all seedlings produced. “This is incredible,” she says “their support has not stopped there but have also availed water to our village and have helped to make our village accessible through making roads and building bridges.

“The arrival of the company changed our lives for the better,” she adds. Paul Hanganimana, NFC Extension Forester says his company buys a lot of seedlings for out growers program while supporting income generating projects like that of ASUKO and sometimes finds itself with a shortfall, therefore for its own replanting they established own seedlings nursery bed.



*Ex-encroachers' nursery beds in Rugogwe Cell, Uwinkingi Sector in Nyamagabe District.*





*Emmanuel Bikorimana, the president of KOVUKA examines one of the beehives in the field.*

# Support to community income generating projects

By Joseph Mudingu & Steven Nsamaza

**T**he New Forests Company has so far supported four cooperatives in different areas by providing them with 50 modern bee hives to each cooperative plus harvesting equipment including honey extractors, a store and fencing for the hives.

According to Nsengumuremye Theophile, President of CODAPE (Development of Apiculture and Environment Protection Cooperative) that deals in bee keeping says that NFC has helped transform the lives of the cooperative members.

The cooperative started its operations in Nyugwe in 2010 and comprises of 125. The New Forests Company has given them 50 hives, bee hive keeping gear, honey extraction equipment plus constructing for them a Honey collection center.

"The funding from NFC helped us to increase our production and last year, we managed to harvest eight hundred and

seven kilograms (807KG) of honey that we sold to UBWIZA BWA NYUGWE Union where all cooperative are members" explains Emmanuel Bikorimana, the president of KOVUKA (Koperative yabaVunvu muri Karambi)

He also says that, NFC has greatly benefited his cooperative by giving them 50 modern bee hives, harvesting gear and honey extractors among other things.

"We only had 60 traditional bee hives, meaning now we will more than double our production in the next season," Bikorimana happily states.

Modern bee hives raise the production by 150% as compared to the traditional hives; therefore KOVUKA is looking at harvesting 1.5-2 tones of honey compared to 500-800kgs they have been harvesting before.

"Honey collected this region that surrounds the Nyungwe forest is rated among the best," emphasizes Bikorimana.

"Therefore we are expecting to triple our incomes very soon," he exclaimed optimistically. KOVUKA cooperative is situated in Karambi Sector in Nyamasheke District; it has 30 members including 12 women.

Following the support, The New Forests Company helped fencing a new apiary within the concession with metal and barbed wires. KOVUKA is now in the process of moving all their hives to the fenced apiary which is more secure and will ensure more production.

The fenced land can accommodate up to 500 hives, more secure and is environmentally appropriate for pollination. "We will not be worried for the security of our hives anymore," emphasizes Bikorimana.



*One of the classrooms built for Groupe Scolaire Kitabi, Nyamagabe District.*

## Boosting **education, sanitation and access to water**

**I**n 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.



*Honey collection centre built by NFC for ASUKO cooperative.*

# Lighting the COMMUNITY

By Wakibi Geofrey

**U**wanyirigira 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





*Uwanyirigira Jeanine standing besides her shop in Ngolongali Village.*

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 have you 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.



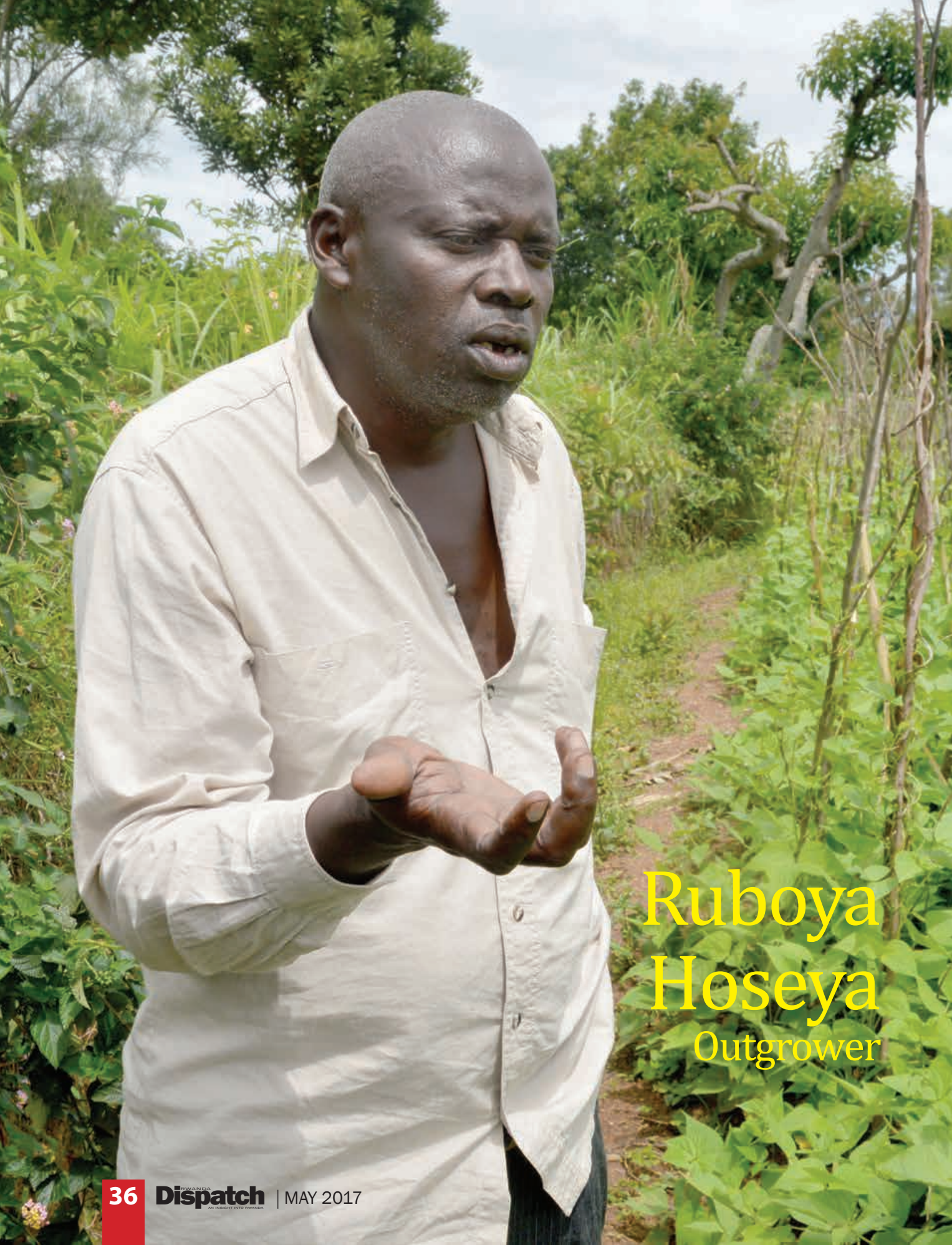
*Joseph Munyarukaza, the Corporate Social Responsibility Programme Manager at The New Forests Company Meeting with residents of Busasamana Sector.*

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**I used to see electricity wires passing through my village and all I could dream about is tapping onto them.**

**Uwanyirigira Jeanine**



A man with a shaved head and a white button-down shirt stands in a lush green field. He is gesturing with his hands, palms up, as if explaining something. The background is filled with various green plants and trees under a bright sky.

# Ruboya Hoseya Outgrower



# Conserving forests with outgrowers

Since 2010, Rwanda vowed to increase forest cover to 30 per cent of the total national area equivalent to 790,140 ha of forests by year 2020. Beside this, the forest policy intends to create a favorable environment for flourishing forestry business based on the wood industry.

Consequently these targets are also expressed in terms of forest generated incomes. One of the farmers who target to garner on forest income is Ruboya Hoseya from Mukingo, Gatagara Sector in Nyanza District.

Following years of low earnings from his farms Ruboya decided to change the tide of his farming methods while ensuring conservation through forestry farming.

When The New Forests Company approached local authorities in its outgrower program that support local farmers with free seedlings, Ruboya was among the first on the list and he received training from NFC forester on how to implement the requirements to plant trees on his farm.

"There are many benefits to farm trees which I did not consider before but since I was sensitized by The New Forests Company, what I will harvest in the future is a sure deal," Ruboya says.

Besides, the seedlings given to us were not entirely trees for timber but we were given fruit trees as well, which will also help raise our incomes, Ruboya narrates.

Paul Hanganimana, the NFC Extension Forester says that his company gives free seedlings to local farmers to grow wood-lots and fruit trees, makes follow ups to check on performance of the trees and advise farmers when to thin and prune. "Before distributing the seedlings to farmers we draw lists of everyone interested which is conducted at cell level and this is intended for planning purposes and later we sign non-binding contracts," notes Hanganimana.

NFC's Extension Forester says that even though they keep a close relationship with the farmers they have distributed free seedlings with technical training, farmers keep right to sale their trees to anyone of their choice because of the non-binding agreement. Though in such scenario, the outgrower should abide with giving first refusal to NFC.

Since launching the out-grower programme in 2015, NFC has distributed 714,779 seedlings to date planted on 541.7Ha and has already benefited 1,417 farmers.

"Our philosophy as a forestry company is economic, social and environment oriented," says the NFC extension forester.

We equally consider sustainability of all the three aspects," said Hanganimana.

Mudenge Edison, another farmer in Mukingo cell says that the support by The New Forests Company is exceptional with the fact that they provide free seedlings, offer knowledge on how to plant trees and make follow-up on what we planted and this is done at no cost and we are not obliged to sell these trees to them.

"This is exemplary," according to Mudenge, this company support us to grow trees that will bring us incomes at the same time we are conserving our region. For Ruboya Hoseya, he has planted trees on three hectares which is half his land with all seedlings provided by The New Forests Company.

Planting trees has not taken any of my land because I carry out intercropping as was advised by the experts from the company, notes Ruboya.

He says that, the planted crops together with the trees are looking very well and is not worried with what people have always said that trees simphony water from other crops. However, he planted his crops following the correct spacing as advised upon and was given improved seedlings.



*Munyarukaza, talks to the out-growers.*



*Ruboya Hoseya in one of his gardens where he has done inter-cropping.*



*Newly planted trees doing well after inter-cropping.*



*Paul Hanganimana, NFC Forrester engaging out growers.*