

IFAPA, LWF and Nestlé join hands in Rwanda to provide access to clean drinking water for thousands

- ***Public/private partnership brings hope to Rwandan communities***
- ***Safe drinking water to change life for over 20,000 people every day***
- ***School attendance to rise through the provision of piped water to schools***

KIREHE, Rwanda, 19 March 2008 - A community water project inaugurated today in Kirehe, in Rwanda's Eastern Province, offers a new model of cooperation between religious communities and public and private sectors in pursuit of human development and peace.

"This is a historic milestone for interfaith cooperation and public and private partnerships in Africa," remarked Rev. Dr Ishmael Noko, General Secretary of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) and president of the Inter-Faith Action for Peace in Africa (IFAPA) at the project's inauguration.

The IFAPA project will bring safe water to up to 21,600 people in the sector of Gatore in Kirehe district, Eastern Province, Rwanda. Nestlé SA, the world's leading nutrition, health and wellness company, provided financial and technical support for the project, which is implemented through the LWF Department for World Service (DWS) program in Rwanda.

Honorable Bikoro Munyanganizi, Minister for Water, Environment and Natural Resources, highlighted the need for commitment, partnership and good management of resources, as he officially inaugurated the project together with Dr Noko and Mr. Niels Christiansen, Global Vice President of Public Affairs for the Nestlé Group.

Mr. Christiansen emphasised Nestlé's long standing commitment to promoting access to clean water and water stewardship in the face of a growing global water crisis. "The provision of clean drinking water to such a large number of people fits clearly within Nestlé's fundamental aim of making investments that have lasting benefits to society. With a manufacturing presence in Africa since 1927 and products in 53 African countries, Nestlé has been involved in helping to tackle some of the continent's key challenges for decades. We are delighted to partner IFAPA and the LWF in this critical venture to create sustainable water solutions for communities in Africa," he said.

For Dr Noko, the Gatore community water project "is a tangible result of IFAPA's work to encourage practical cooperation among African religious leaders and communities across the continent to promote peace and prevent conflict in Africa." It also addresses one of the key human development needs in Africa, universal access to safe water, and the particular burden that the lack of access to safe water places on women and children.

"Poverty and under-development in Africa provide fertile ground for conflict, but religious leaders working together can play a crucial role in promoting both development and peace in this continent," Dr Noko added.

The provision of the piped water services in Gatore supplements existing water infrastructure and contributes to ensure access to water and sanitation facilities in the region. This will have a significant positive impact on health, hygiene and economic output in Kirehe. Supplying water directly to schools will greatly reduce the burden on children and mothers, who spend up to 12 hours collecting the minimum of 60 liters a family needs for domestic use every day.

Under the oversight of the Inter-Religious Council of Rwanda, the IFAPA Water Project is managed by a local water users' committee. The water users' committee includes representatives from all major religious communities present in the area. Women are well represented on the water users' committee and will play a key role in ensuring community ownership and good management of the project.

"We are committed to manage the water system, we know we have to ensure that when the system has a problem we are responsible to make sure it is maintained", said Marie Jeanne Uwanyirigira, as she received a certificate recognising her role on the water users' committee.

"This project not only brings water to those who lacked it before," stressed Sheikh Saleh Habimana, Mufti of Rwanda. "It also offers to the rest of Africa and the world a model of harmonious interfaith cooperation for development and peace."

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For press enquiries, contact:

Natalie Maule
africappractice
+254 736 228 844

| nmaule@africappractice.com