

Let Justice Flow: Thirsting for Justice World Development Appeal 2011

UGANDA

Introduction

The Kabale District is in south west Uganda. It is one of the most mountainous regions of the country, with altitudes reaching 2.600 meters above sea level. It is also one of the most densely populated regions, averaging 337 people/km². Given the high population density, the people of the region tend to inhabit the hilltops, leaving the more fertile soil in the valleys available for cultivation.

The light volcanic soil of the region means that most of the water at higher altitudes is held below the surface, and is only readily available from springs which rise near the valley bottoms. Although the cyclical weather pattern has typically included two rainy seasons each year, lasting a total of nine months, this pattern has become increasingly erratic. Few people have access to a safe water supply, and water must often be hauled up steep hillsides and over long distances by women and children, who suffer a range of negative consequences as a result. The women develop back problems, and can miscarry, and the children often arrive late to school, or are expected to leave early, and may be too exhausted by the physical demands of water hauling to give full attention to their teachers.

The high population density of the region can also lead to over-cultivation, and the terrain is such that the land available for food production is necessarily divided up into fragmented, non-contiguous sections. Over-cultivation can also lead to more frequent landslides, which result in the loss of both human lives and property. Swamp reclamation, itself made partly necessary by climate change, provides a breeding ground for mosquitoes, and Kabale District has one of the highest rates of malaria in the country.

The region also has a very high prevalence of HIV/AIDS. It is estimated that 80% of all adults are infected.

Project Details

Almost all the people who live in the Kabale District belong to the Bakiga tribe, and are Christian, Catholic and Protestant in roughly equal numbers. The Diocese of Kigezi (Church of Uganda) has 94 parishes in the region, embracing 345 local churches. Our World Development partner in Kabale is the **Kigezi Diocese Water and Sanitation Programme (KDWSP)**. This is one of many development programmes runs by Kigezi Diocese, including programmes focusing on income generation, adult literacy, and the support of orphans. Parishes are encouraged to get involved in one or more aspects of development at local level, and church leaders meet regularly to discuss initiatives taking place across the Diocese.

The KDWSP was established in 1986, and it is still the most important group in the area committed to addressing water and sanitation issues. The specific project activities we are supporting in this year's World Development Appeal include the following:

1. The establishment of Water and Sanitation committees, in which members of the local community are trained in development issues and become involved in setting their own priorities and planning their own development projects.

2. The development of health and hygiene education, in which project staff members visit families in their homes.
3. The establishment of rainwater harvesting systems. This includes training local community officers in water harvesting for domestic use, and equipping them to train others; constructing rainwater tanks; providing community members with rainwater jars; and providing refresher courses for women's groups on rainwater harvesting for household use.
4. Training local communities in food security practices, so that they will be more resilient in the face of natural disasters; and educating families in good nutritional practices.

Last year, 8 community officers were trained in rainwater harvesting, 50 women received refresher training in water harvesting for domestic use, and a total of 60 rainwater tanks were constructed, 50 for families and 10 for institutional use.

Let Justice Flow!

Agnes is 25 years old, and is the mother of two children. She is also HIV positive. Her two children, however, have both tested negative, and she is committed to looking after their health as well as her own.

Agnes is on medication which helps her to manage her own health, and she is being tested in order to determine whether anti-retroviral drugs will also be given to her.

In the meantime, however, she and her children have been dependent on a water source located a mile from their home. This water source is in a swamp, and is both unprotected and contaminated. In addition to living with the constant worry caused by an unsafe water supply, Agnes has also been concerned about the physical toll being taken on her children, who are still small, and yet have had to help her to haul water.

Thanks to KDWSP, however, Agnes now has a cement water tank in her compound. She is delighted, and hopes that with access to clean water and careful attention to her own medication, she will be able to increase her life expectancy and see her children grow. *This is a blessing from God*, she says with excitement. *I am encouraged in my love for the church, and my love for God.*

Deep within our biblical tradition is the claim that God liberates those who are in bondage not only so that they themselves might flourish, but also so that they might come to embody a new way of life in community, in which the waters of justice flow freely and enable a sustainable and joyful life for all, and not least for the most vulnerable. It is our privilege this year to partner with the **Kigezi Diocese Water and Sanitation Programme**, and to let justice flow like water.