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Solar-powered water supply to protect against crocodiles

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Dwellers at the site at Nyabarongo river where they fetch water. / Michel Nkurunziza

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The national water utility agency has embarked on a Rwf80-million solar-powered borehole project that will serve as a quick and temporary intervention to save people living along the Nyabarongo River in Mageragere Sector, Nyarugenge District, from deadly crocodiles.

This comes as reports indicate that the reptiles had killed at least five people who went to fetch water from the river due to lack of alternative water sources in the area.

According to Gisele Umuhumuza, the deputy chief executive of Water and Sanitation Corporation (WASAC) in charge of water supply and sanitation in rural areas, by end September, all areas exposed to crocodile attacks will have access to water from boreholes since tests have been conducted to ensure the solar-powered technology works well.

Umuhumuza said: “Rapid intervention technology of using solar energy to pump water comes after realising that crocodiles could kill more people seeking water from the river in Mageragere Sector.”

Umuhumuza noted that people living in the cells of Kavumu and Nyarufunzo will use the borehole while awaiting long-term and sustainable water supply systems.

She explained that a project to construct two water supply systems is going to be revived after stalling for some time.

This will supply water to residents in the areas where settlement is allowed as per the city master plan, she added.

WASAC, in conjunction with the district, she said, contracted the Reserve Forces to construct the systems.

“It had stalled because we first put more efforts in supplying water to Mageragere prison. We are going to revive the project with Rwf355 million budget to construct two 8.8 kilometre supply systems from Mageragere Prison to different cells, including Kankuba, Ntungamo, Kavumu, and Runzenze.

“We signed a contract with the Reserve Forces who will start soon and the construction will take not more than six months from this month,” Umuhumuza added.

The Mayor of Nyarugenge District, Kayisiime Nzaramba, commiserated with families that lost loved ones to the reptiles and reassured residents that more efforts are being put in making safe and clean water easily accessible to them.

Reacting to the concern of crocodiles last week while launching a project to increase transparency on environment protection and climate change mitigation projects, Marie Immaculee Ingabire, the chairperson of Transparency International-Rwanda, said Government should establish sustainable measures to protect the environment as well as human beings.

Ingabire said: “Rivers and crocodiles need to be protected, but most importantly, human beings too must be protected. This requires sustainable measures to ensure both are secured from any threats and dangers.”

“Government should establish projects that help people not to threaten the environment, and vice versa. If people had water, they would not be attacked by Nyabarongo crocodiles,” she added.

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