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Features

# In search of water problems solutions

Watipaso Mzungu • April 7, 2020 🔥 643 📖 3 minutes read



📷 CONVENIENT—A resident of Kasungu uses a rope pump



*SOLVING WATER PROBLEMS —Kaniki*

Mercy Phiri, a 50-year-old mother from Matola-Kampaliro Village in Traditional Authority (T/A) Kaluluma in Kasungu, has serious reservations

with government's pace to achieve sixth United Nations Sustainable Development Goal (SDG).

SDG 6 seeks governments' commitment to provide universal access to safe and affordable drinking water as well as universal access to improved sanitation by 2030.

To demonstrate its commitment, Malawi has signed a number of international agreements relating to water, sanitation and hygiene (Wash) issues, most prominently being the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Furthermore, Malawi is a signatory to the 2008 eThekweni Declaration and the Ngor Declaration, which was adopted in 2014.

However, the snail's pace and lukewarm approach on Wash issues that the Malawi Government has taken demonstrates lack of seriousness on the part of authorities to achieve the goals by the set deadlines as the majority of Malawians continue to rely on rivers and streams as their source of water for domestic use.

Unicef estimates that lack of access to clean and safe drinking water causes waterborne illnesses that claim lives of more than 1.6 million young children each year.

The situation is even worse in cities and towns where because the sewer system is completely overburdened, ground water is contaminated – and so are the wells that many more people depend on.

And this is the main reason why water-borne diseases are common. The plain truth is that universal access to safe water is impossible without universal access to sanitation.

African leaders, including President Peter Mutharika, acknowledge that sanitation is not getting the attention it deserves.

Environmental journalist Raphael Mweninguwe says Malawi, a landlocked country with a population of over 17 million people, still has a long way to go – and depends on money that donors are channeling through civil society organisations because they worry about government corruption.

But in the midst of this uncertainty and hopelessness, Brighton Kaniki, a 42-year-old entrepreneur behind Zaluso Plumbing and Engineering Works in Kasungu, is assisting government to achieve universal access to water and improved sanitation by providing low-cost water technology.

Kaniki has fashioned a rope pump, which is fast becoming an effective weapon for empowering resource-constrained rural and urban households to access safe and clean drinking water at an affordable price.

He describes rope pumps as modern low-cost technology, which can be used to pump water from shallow and deep wells.

He says its low-cost makes it also fit as a family pump where it proves to be a money-maker where the family wants to earn an income from the sale of water to neighbours.

“For small communal systems, they can use rope pumps for self-supply, domestic use, cattle watering and irrigation. You can use this technology to pump from one to 40 meters deep,” he explains.

Kaniki says the technology is cost-effective as it can be produced with materials that are available in local hardware stores and so simple that the users can easily maintain and repair it.

In partnership with Pump Aid Malawi, Zapew has installed 199 rope pumps in selected districts in the country. Some of the districts include Kasungu, Dedza, Ntcheu, Mchinji and Mangochi.

Matola Kampaliro, where Phiri lives with her six children, is one of the villages in Kasungu that have benefitted from the project Zapew has been implementing in partnership with Pump Aid Malawi.

She says the introduction of rope pumps has alleviated the challenges that women and girls face to fetch water from rivers and streams to the home.

“We used to travel long distances to draw water for domestic use. It was never easy at all. My daughters could not concentrate on their education because they spent most of their time hauling water from the streams,” she explains.

“But this is no longer a problem. We have running water right in front of our house. We no longer travel long distances to draw water for domestic use.”

And with support from Development Investment and Foundation, an Islamic social relief organisation, Zapew is currently installing rope pumps in Dedza, Mangochi and Ntcheu.

Kaniki says the project will enable thousands of households have access to clean and safe drinking water in the three districts.

“We wish to appeal to government and other organisations to partner with Zapew. We have the capacity to install rope pumps across the country,” he challenges.

In its latest report, Pump Aid Malawi stated that if well produced and installed, over 90 percent of these pumps stay working after many years of operation.

Another report says in Zimbabwe and Malawi, the model rope pump supplies water to over a million people.

“The pump is an attractive product for local entrepreneurs. And due to the shift from piston pumps to rope pumps (on wells to 60 meters deep), the rural water supply in Nicaragua increased 23 percent in ten years, three times faster than other countries,” reads part of the report.

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