

Ambassador visits Nyakomba Irrigation Scheme with Ministers

On Friday, 2 February, Ambassador Iwado visited the Nyakomba Irrigation Scheme, funded by Japan, in Nyanga District. He accompanied the Honourable Air Chief Marshal (Ret.) Perrance Shiri, Minister of Lands, Agriculture and Rural Resettlement as well as the Honourable Monica Mutsvangwa, Minister of State for Manicaland Province.

The Nyakomba Irrigation Scheme, funded by Japan and implemented by JICA, was initially constructed between 1996 and 2000, irrigating 471 hectares and benefitting 532 smallholder farmers. It was highly successful, but some of the pumphouses and facilities had fallen into disrepair, especially after the cyclone in 2006. Japan therefore decided to implement a new project to extend and improve the scheme. When this new project is completed next year, the entire scheme will irrigate a total of 617 hectares and benefit 861 smallholder farmers.

The farmers currently grow maize, sugar beans, onions and chillis, as well as other crops. Through the irrigation scheme, they will be able to double their yields and grow crops all year, in spite of climate change.

Speaking at a ceremony at the site, Ambassador Iwado said he was glad to see the new project progressing well, and looked forward to it benefitting and improving the lives of all the farmers. Minister Shiri and Minister Mutsvangwa were deeply grateful for the assistance provided by the Government of Japan and JICA for the farmers of Nyakomba.



Local farmers perform a dance



The Honourable Air Chief Marshal (Ret.) Perrance Shiri, Minister of Lands, Agriculture and Rural Resettlement, thanked the Government of Japan and JICA for their assistance to the farmers of Nyakomba



The Honourable Monica Mutsvangwa, Minister of State for Manicaland Province, also thanked Japan and JICA for implementing the scheme



Ambassador Iwado expressed his delight to see the project progressing so well



Some of the farmers gathered at the ceremony



Control room of the pumphouse



One of the new irrigation canals



New pumphouse under construction



Flood prevention walls being constructed around existing pumphouse

Speech by H.E. Mr. Toshiyuki Iwadou, Ambassador of Japan to the Republic of Zimbabwe, at the Nyakomba Irrigation Scheme, Nyanga District, on 2 February 2018

I am delighted to be here at the Nyakomba Irrigation Scheme today together with the Honourable Air Chief Marshal (Ret.) Perence Shiri, Minister of Lands, Agriculture and Rural Resettlement. Honourable Minister, I appreciate your decision to come here on one of your first official trips since becoming Minister. It demonstrates the importance you attach to Nyakomba and your visit will foster our bilateral relationship between Japan and Zimbabwe.

Since I arrived in Zimbabwe last May, I have been very eager to visit the Nyakomba Irrigation Scheme for several reasons. Firstly, it is specifically mentioned in the Joint Statement signed between Japanese Prime Minister Abe and former President Mugabe in March, 2016. This is still an absolutely valid document under the new dispensation. My top priority as Ambassador of Japan in Zimbabwe is to follow up on this Joint Statement and to strengthen our bilateral relationship even more. So, I am very glad to finally get to visit here, meet everyone working hard on this important project, and see the progress to date.

The history of Japan's involvement in Nyakomba dates back almost three decades to 1989, when the Japanese government sent a group to do a feasibility study of this area for an irrigation scheme. Following the outcome of their study, between 1996 and 2000 the Nyakomba Irrigation Scheme was constructed, irrigating 471 hectares and benefitting 532 smallholder farmers.

And from 2016, Japan started this latest project to rehabilitate, improve and further expand the existing irrigation scheme. It is expected to be completed in March 2019. After completion of this project, the Nyakomba Irrigation Scheme will irrigate a total of 617 hectares and benefit 861 smallholder farmers. Today, I am very glad to see the project making steady progress.

Another reason I am delighted to finally come here is because this latest project of the Nyakomba Irrigation Scheme is the first large-scale project that Japan has funded since we decided to resume our Grant Aid Programme to Zimbabwe in 2015. So, the Nyakomba Irrigation Scheme is a pillar of Zimbabwe and Japan's shared history of bilateral relationship. Its progress shows that our relationship is becoming even stronger.

Needless to say, as in the saying "mvura hupenyu" (water is life), water is as precious as life itself. This is just as true here in Nyakomba. But due to climate change, the rains in Zimbabwe have been erratic over many years and water is becoming even more precious. This season too, the rainfall has been very low so far, although I sincerely hope that favourable rains will return. Therefore, it is most important for all communities to build up their resilience to withstand the effects of climate change. I am delighted that the Nyakomba Irrigation Scheme will play a role in strengthening the resilience of the farmers of Nyakomba.

Once the project is completed, the farmers will have a year-round dependable source of water with which to irrigate their crops. In fact, the irrigated area and the yields of the most popular crops, namely maize, sugar beans and onions, are expected to more than double. This will allow the farmers to support themselves and their families in spite of difficult climate change.

Please also allow me to share a personal reason why I am delighted to be here today. I received my Shona name “Chidziva”, meaning small pool. This was given to me by people in Chiredzi District, because Japan assisted them with food aid and the building of a small dam. Actually, I have been interested in rivers and fish throughout my life and my main hobby is trout fishing. So I am delighted to come to Nyanga District, which is famous for trout, to witness our irrigation project. I would like to try trout fishing here sometime soon.

Finally, I would again like to thank everyone involved in this project for all your hard work. The Nkayomba Irrigation Scheme shows that, by joining hands and working together, we can improve the lives and build up the resilience of the people of Zimbabwe. And to the construction workers who are doing the hard work on the ground, please take utmost care of your safety.

I look forward to seeing the outcome of this project next year, and the smiles of all the farmers and people of Nyakomba.

Thank you! Maita basa! Arigatou!

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