WaterFund
Financing the Water Sector

Water Sector Trust Fund

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SITUATION REPORT (SITREP) # 345

3RD – 7TH JANUARY 2022

TATU KENGA REPORTS BACK TO SCHOOL IN 2022

Tatu Kenga came to the limelight in the year 2008 when the then Minister for Water and Irrigation, Hon. Charity Ngilu, was on an official visit to Mombasa to assess water projects and challenges facing various communities. It was dusk when the Minister's entourage met with a small 6-year-old girl carrying a 10-litre jerry can of water on her head, walking all alone in the dark. The Minister was moved by the plight of the young girl.

Given the mandate of WaterFund, and after consultation with the Ministry, WaterFund agreed to adopt the Tatu as the face of WaterFund. As part of the WaterFund's Corporate Social Responsibility, WaterFund took up Tatu's education, signifying giving back to the community through this little girl who had rightly depicted the plight of women, girls and water-underserved areas in Kenya.

As part of the WaterFund's Corporate Social Responsibility, it has been a key responsibility of occasionally checking up on Tatu and her family, by purchasing family home food supplies and school necessities for Tatu as she reports back to school every term. On 3rd January 2022, WaterFund staff paid a visit to Tatu and her family, in order monitor her progress in school and the welfare of her family. After interacting with the family and giving advice to Tatu, the team accompanied her to school, Mazeras Girls Memorial Secondary School, to commence Form 3, Term 3. WaterFund is keen to ensure Tatu undertakes her education up to university.



WaterFund team presenting supplies given for the family sustenance including food and other home items





Left: Tatu Kenga (right) and Kasiwa Kenga (left), Tatus's mother

Right: Tatu reports back to school.



OF PINS, FANTASIES AND WATER: A DAY IN THE FIELD

By Bernard Njenga

During my personal or business travels, whether in the savannah, bush or a concrete jungle somewhere, I have made it a habit to drop a pin on the map so that I can visualise where I have visited in the wider context of the area or of the country.

The pinned location instantly gets added to my saved Google Maps places, from where I can zoom out and see other pins dotting my private map, denoting places I have been, and most importantly, to see these locations relative to home.

In a faraway place, even in the midst of business, your thoughts quickly wander off to family. You count days waiting for the return date when you will be back home. You miss family so much, the kids especially!

In a recent field activity away from home, I was told that my youngest child, who is 18 months old, while welcoming her mama home from work, would look beyond her to see if "*Dadda*" has also come home. How very sweet. "No honey, but he is coming back on Saturday," her mama consoled her. That, of course, did not make sense to her. The following evening, she still sought to confirm whether he is back. For her, seeing is believing.

A wild rush of water interrupts these fantasies, jarring me back to ground. We are crossing the River Tana. From Hola town, the capital of Tana River County, where we are spending, the day's project monitoring activity takes us through Garsen town and on to Kipao village where we have recently implemented and commissioned a community water project.

Being on the opposite side of the river, the mode of crossing depends on the season. If the river is swelling full, you leave your vehicles on one side and use a canoe to cross over the 50-meter-wide section. Never mind the crocodiles and the hippos. Right now, however, it is the dry season and the off-road vehicles can actually drive across. The tyres cut through the shallow water that barely reaches the rim.

As we near the village, our 2-vehicle convoy comes to a grinding halt. Some villagers are protesting something, holding up signs and blocking the road ahead. We roll down the windows to read the signs. The water project has been handed over to some individuals and does not belong to whole community, they say.

We quickly find out that a section of the community is against the women group that applied for the project funding, and they further allege that the money received from the sale of water at the kiosks is going to someone's pocket.

And if we do not listen to them, they bluntly put it, we can as well uproot the water kiosks, the underground pipes and the pumping station and take them elsewhere.

No, we will listen, we assure them, and advise them to assemble at the local school so that we can hear them out.

In this new column, the editors welcome article submissions from staff and other stakeholders on work-related or relevant topical issues

The meeting starts intensely, the tension tangible. The chosen community representatives lay out their grievances, and amid the loud and at times chaotic cheers from the assembly, trace the genesis of the dispute. We nod in agreement and take notes.

When it is our time to speak, we assure them that we have heard them and that the bottom-line is that the water project belongs to the whole community. We propose, however, that since the issue sounds long-running and seems to have undercurrents, there will be a need to call for all stakeholders to a meeting to agree on the way forward.

We assure them that everyone, the community members, their various community groups, local administration, ward and county leadership, funding partners and implementing partners including the local water company will be invited to this meeting. The meeting ends in an uneasy truce, with the expectation from all sides that the future meeting will resolve the thorny issue.

As we drive back, the rush of water while crossing the river again takes a new meaning. Water is the source and sustenance of life, but also the genesis of so much strife. Its scarcity, and in equal measure its abundance, means that every drop actually counts.

As we make our reports to ensure that the community issue will get the prominence and the resolution it deserves, it humbles to recognise the privilege of having household piped water in the urban centres.

The following day, having concluded the project monitoring activities, we start the 500-km journey back to Nairobi. I frequently check on my phone to see how long it is to home. Though it is a long and back-breaking journey, it is made worthwhile by what awaits.

The little girl does not need invitation to recount how her week went, and who did what. I furiously nod in agreement though only one word comes across clear in the midst of the baby-talk: *Dadda*. ■

Mr. Bernard Njenga is the Manager, ICT & Corporate Affairs at WaterFund. He enjoys reading and writing on topics that explore the nexus of information technology and business.