



QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

FIRST QUARTER 2025-2026



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FOREWORD

Dear readers,

It is my pleasure to present to you the first edition of the Rwanda Water Resources Board (RWB) Quarterly Newsletter for the 2025–2026 fiscal year. This issue captures significant milestones achieved in advancing Rwanda’s sustainable water management agenda and building resilience across our landscapes and communities.

During this quarter, we marked remarkable progress in the construction of the Muvumba Multipurpose Dam, following the successful diversion of the Muvumba River. This critical milestone sets the stage for delivering water security, irrigation, and clean energy benefits to thousands of Rwandans.

Under the Volcanoes Community Resilience Project (VCRP), we continued to empower communities in the Volcanoes Region through initiatives that link livelihood improvement with ecosystem protection.

The quarter also saw Rwanda’s leadership in water governance recognized globally. The UN-Water 2025 SDG 6 Case Study highlighted Rwanda’s significant progress in Integrated Water Resources Management, transboundary cooperation, and innovation in data-driven decision-making.

The application of isotope hydrology in the Volcanoes Region continues to unveil vital insights into underground water dynamics, strengthening our understanding of groundwater systems and informing national planning.

These milestones reflect not only RWB’s technical excellence but also our collective drive toward sustainability, resilience, and community well-being.

Thank you for your continued partnership and support in safeguarding Rwanda’s most precious resource — water.

RICHARD NYIRISHEMA
EXECUTIVE CHAIRPERSON



MUVUMBA RIVER DIVERSION MARKS MAJOR STEP IN DAM CONSTRUCTION

On 6th July 2025, the course of the Muvumba River was successfully diverted. A moment that signaled the true beginning of the multipurpose dam construction.

This milestone is often described as the “heartbeat” of any dam project, because it creates the dry foundation needed to build the structure safely and efficiently. For Rwanda Water Resources Board, it marked the turning of a page in the journey to complete one of the most ambitious water infrastructure projects in the country’s history.

Once completed, the dam will store 55 million cubic meters of water, unlocking benefits across multiple sectors. It will irrigate 10,000 hectares of farmland, securing food production and supporting farmers’ incomes.

It will provide up to 50,000 cubic meters of water per day for treatment and distribution as clean water for domestic use, thereby enhancing health and wellbeing in nearby communities. Livestock keepers will also rely on its water to sustain herds, while the dam will generate 1 megawatt of electricity, adding to Rwanda’s clean energy mix.

Just as importantly, it will protect communities along the Muvumba catchment from destructive floods that have long threatened lives and property.

For farmers, it means a future where crops no longer depend entirely on erratic rains; for families, it promises safe water flowing daily into their homes; and for the wider nation, it stands as an investment in resilience, food security, and economic growth.

As of the end of the first trimester of the 2025–2026 fiscal year, overall construction had already reached 37 percent, a strong indication that the project is firmly on track. Each step forward not only reflects engineering progress but also strengthens the collective confidence that the Muvumba Multipurpose Dam will soon deliver on its promise.

The successful diversion of the river marks a critical milestone in the ongoing construction of the dam, a significant step toward realizing the broader vision of securing water for sustainable development.



The aerial view concept of the Muvumba Multipurpose Dam



VCRP: 40 FAMILIES IN RUBAVU RECEIVE COWS TO BOOST LIVELIHOODS & PROTECT SOIL

The Rwanda Water Resources Board (RWB), through the Volcano Community Resilience Project (VCRP), has donated 40 cows to residents of Cyanzarwe, Mudende, and Nyakiriba Sectors in Rubavu District.

The initiative aims to enhance household wellbeing while strengthening community capacity to preserve protected land in the Volcanoes region.

The VCRP aims to enhance climate resilience, mitigate flood risks, strengthen watershed management, and improve the livelihoods of communities within the districts of Burera, Nyabihu, Rubavu, Gakenke, Muhanga, Ngororero, Musanze and Rutsiro

In Rubavu, 14 cows were distributed in Cyanzarwe Sector, 13 in Nyakiriba, and 13 in Mudende. Beneficiaries expressed gratitude for the initiative, noting the immediate impact it will have on their families and agricultural productivity.

Speciose Mukasine, a resident of Nyakiriba Sector, said the cow she received will transform her farming practices.

“I used to harvest almost nothing due to poor soil fertility. With terraces and the manure from this cow, I will be able to fertilize my land, plant grasses, and stop soil erosion. My harvests will finally increase,” she said.

Sylvie Murekatete, also shared her excitement after her cow gave birth to a female calf on the same day of distribution.

“This cow is going to change my family’s life. It will provide milk for my children and manure for my farm. I am very thankful and will support others to benefit from mine in the future,” she explained.

Local leaders also highlighted how the initiative combines land preservation with improved livelihoods. Prosper Mulindwa, Mayor of Rubavu District, explained:

“When a household has a cow, it encourages them to plant grasses on terraces to prevent soil erosion. The grasses feed the cow, and the manure returns to the farm as fertilizer. It’s a cycle that benefits both people and the land.”

Pamela Ruzigana, the Division Manager for Catchment Restoration and Erosion Control at RWB, emphasized that cows are given where soil conservation measures, such as terraces, have already been developed.

“In areas where terraces have been established to control soil erosion, households under the Girinka program are supported with a cow to improve wellbeing, nutrition, and farming productivity,” she said.

These 40 cows distributed in Rubavu District add to the 21 previously provided in Nyabihu District, underscoring the project’s ongoing commitment to improving livelihoods while promoting soil conservation. In total, the project targets to provide 10,000 cows to beneficiary households.



UN-WATER HIGHLIGHTS RWANDA'S WATER RESOURCES MANAGEMENT PROGRESS

The 2025 SDG 6 Country Acceleration Case Study released by UN-Water has recognized Rwanda for its significant achievements in water resources management. According to the report, Rwanda has made remarkable progress in Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM), governance, and regional water cooperation over the last decade.

The case study shows that Rwanda's IWRM implementation score increased from 35% in 2017 to 68% in 2023, placing the country above the Sub-Saharan Africa regional average. This progress is attributed to strong intersectoral coordination and the integration of IWRM with water supply and sanitation policies through the 2023 National Water and Sanitation Policy.

The report further emphasizes Rwanda's outstanding performance in transboundary cooperation, where the country achieved 100% operational arrangements covering rivers, lakes, and aquifers. This makes Rwanda the only country in the Nile and Congo basins to reach such a milestone.

UN-Water also highlights the digitization of Rwanda's water permit system, which is

now embedded in law. The online platform, www.waterpermit.rwb.rw, facilitates equitable allocation of water resources, strengthens planning, and provides an additional revenue source for the sector.

In terms of financing, Rwanda has increased its water sector budget by 64% between 2021 and 2023, rising from USD 45 million to USD 74 million. This reflects strong national commitment to sustainable water development.

On data and innovation, the report notes Rwanda's investment in advanced catchment models, over 45 monitoring stations, and a national online water portal to improve forecasting, planning, and transparency.

UN-Water concludes that Rwanda's experience offers valuable lessons for other countries seeking to accelerate progress on SDG 6, particularly in integrated water governance, financing, and regional cooperation.

[Explore more here](#)



HOW RWB USES ISOTOPE SCIENCE TO UNDERSTAND HIDDEN WATER FLOWS IN THE VOLCANOES REGION

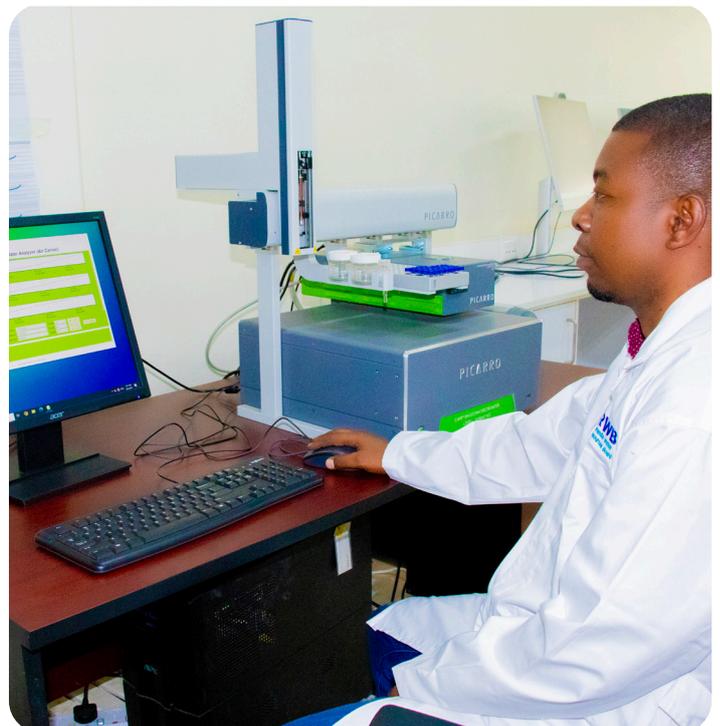
In the Volcanoes Region, underground water systems are complex. Rainwater seeps into volcanic rocks, sinkholes, and caves, sometimes reappearing as springs far away. For many years, little was known about how this water moves, is replenished, or connects with rivers and lakes, limiting planning and disaster preparedness.

The Mugogo lowland illustrates this complexity. It receives water from the Kinoni River and nearby catchments. Some water from the volcano disappears into underground caves before reappearing downstream.

To better understand this intricate system, the Rwanda Water Resources Board, with support from the International Atomic Energy Agency, is employing isotope hydrology. Isotopes act as natural “fingerprints” in water molecules, revealing where water originates, how long it has been underground, and how surface and groundwater are interconnected.

In complex areas like the Mugogo lowland, this approach provides essential insights for sustainable water management.

The benefits of this activity extend beyond science. Understanding groundwater dynamics helps protect communities from floods and water shortages, supports farmers with reliable irrigation, safeguards ecosystems and tourism in the Volcanoes National Park, and informs national policies for climate resilience and sustainable water use.



RWB staff decoding hidden water pathways using isotope science.



MUSANZE AND NYABIHU LEAD THE WAY IN WATER RESILIENCE

Households in Musanze and Nyabihu Districts are beginning to experience the benefits of improved water access and land protection through the Volcanoes Community Resilience Project.

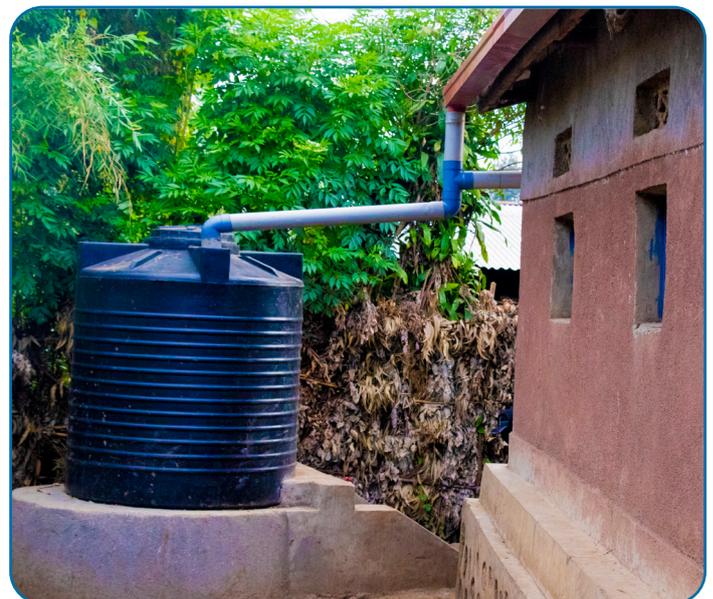
As part of the initiative, 260 rainwater harvesting tanks have been installed across Musanze and Nyabihu Districts, providing families with a practical solution to recurring water challenges.

For many, the tanks are already proving useful in meeting daily domestic needs. “Before, we struggled to fetch water every day, sometimes walking long distances,” says Musanabera Jacqueline, a resident of Nyange Sector, Musanze District. “Now, when the rains come, we collect and use the water for cooking, and cleaning. It has made our lives much easier.”

Birikunzira Jean Pierre highlights another important change. “The tanks are not only giving us water for domestic use,” he explains, “they are also helping reduce soil erosion around our homes. When rainwater is captured and stored, it no longer runs wildly down the slopes, washing away soil and damaging our fields.”

Beyond individual households, the tanks are contributing to wider community resilience. By capturing and storing rainwater, they help protect farmland from erosion while also ensuring families have a reliable source of water during short dry spells.

The experience in Musanze and Nyabihu shows how localized interventions, such as rainwater harvesting, can strengthen resilience by improving water supply and safeguarding natural resources at the same time.



Water tanks bringing security and resilience closer to every household.



RADICAL TERRACES BOOST YIELDS AND RESTORE HOPE FOR FARMERS IN NYABIHU.

Farmers of the COMSEPOPY cooperative in Nyabihu District are celebrating a remarkable harvest after cultivating potatoes on radical terraces established through the Volcanoes Community Resilience Project (VCRP).

On just one hectare of terraced land, the cooperative harvested 22 tons of potatoes, a result that underscores the dual benefit of radical terraces: preventing soil erosion on steep slopes while at the same time increasing agricultural productivity.

Byiringiro Innocent, a member of the cooperative, described the change he has witnessed:

“In the past, erosion would wash away much of our soil, and our yields were low. Now, with the radical terraces, the land is stable, and we can harvest more than we ever did before. This gives us hope for better livelihoods.”

The experience of COMSEPOPY farmers highlights the broader impact of investing in sustainable land management. Terraces not only protect Rwanda’s fragile landscapes from erosion but also strengthen food security and improve

income for farming families, demonstrating how environmental restoration can directly uplift communities.

So far, In Nyabihu District, 160 hectares of land have been rehabilitated with radical terraces under the Volcanoes Community Resilience Project, with an additional 150 hectares planned at the end of fiscal year 2025-2026.



Terraces shaping a greener, more resilient Nyabihu



448,000 AGROFORESTRY SEEDLINGS TO RESTORE

VOLCANOES LANDSCAPES

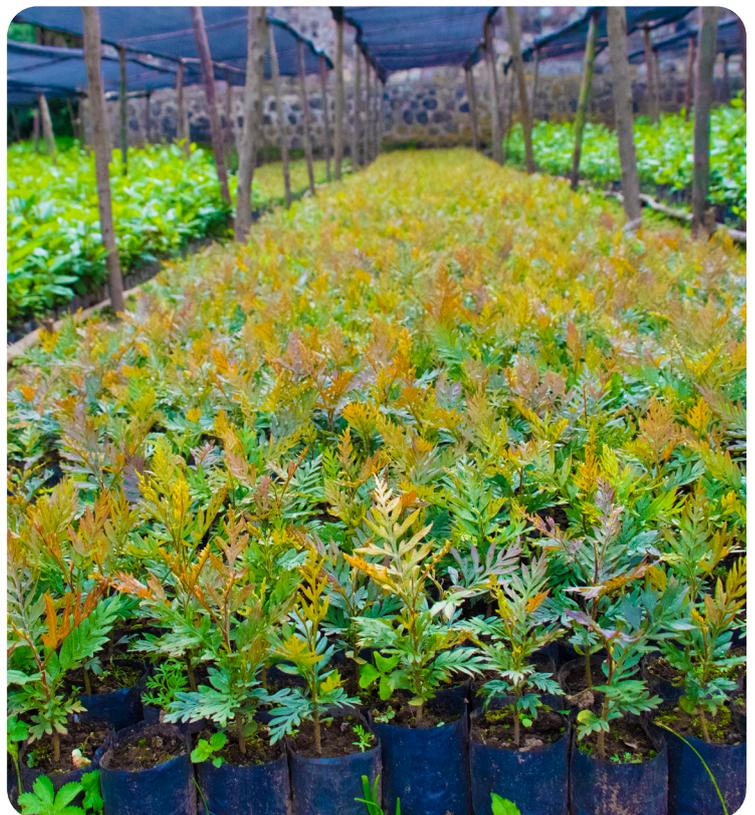
448,188 agroforestry seedlings will be planted over 1.361 hectares throughout the 2025–2026 fiscal year as part of the Volcanoes Community Resilience Project (VCRP).

The planting will take place in Musanze, Nyabihu, and Rubavu Districts, with activities starting in October 2025. Nurseries are currently being prepared to ensure that all seedlings are healthy and ready for transplantation.

The seedlings will include *Alnus*, *Grevillea*, *Calliandra* and *Leucaena* species selected for their ability to improve soil fertility, reduce erosion, and support sustainable agricultural practices. Well-adapted to local conditions, these plants are expected to thrive on the hillsides, contributing to long-term landscape restoration.

The initiative forms part of VCRP's broader efforts to restore degraded lands, increase green cover, and strengthen community resilience. Beyond controlling erosion, the project aims to enhance soil stability, improve water retention, support biodiversity, and provide sustainable livelihood opportunities for local communities.

By implementing this year-long agroforestry program, VCRP demonstrates how targeted planting interventions can deliver lasting environmental benefits and contribute to resilient landscapes across multiple districts.



Grevillea seedlings ready for planting



RWB LEADS DIALOGUE TO SUSTAIN SEBEYA RESTORATION

ACHIEVEMENTS

Rubavu, July 18, 2025, The Executive Chairperson of the Rwanda Water Resources Board (RWB), Eng. Richard Nyirishema, and the Governor of the Western Province, Mr. Jean Bosco Ntibitura, jointly presided over a high-level stakeholder meeting aimed at sustaining the achievements of the Sebeya Landscape Restoration Pilot Project (SLRPP).

Held at Rubavu District Headquarters, the meeting convened key stakeholders to reflect on the impact of the five-year SLRPP and to define a strategic direction for its long-term sustainability.

Implemented between 2018 and 2023, the SLRPP was carried out in four districts; Rubavu, Rutsiro, Nyabihu, and Ngororero, under the broader framework of Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM), with support from the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

The project aimed to strengthen landscape management for climate-resilient and sustainable socio-economic development. Its key interventions included the restoration of degraded landscapes, implementation of environmental protection measures, and the development of flood control infrastructure across the Sebeya catchment.

In his remarks, Eng. Richard Nyirishema emphasized the importance of collaborative efforts and sustained partnerships in advancing effective environmental restoration. “The restoration of the Sebeya catchment demonstrates the transformative power of collaboration. To sustain and scale these efforts, we must prioritize joint planning, consistent investment, and active engagement from all sectors,” he noted, highlighting the need for a community-centered and integrated approach to conservation.

Governor Jean Bosco Ntibitura commended the progress achieved through the project and underscored the critical role of local leadership in preserving its outcomes. “The Sebeya Landscape Restoration Pilot Project has delivered remarkable results, but sustaining these achievements requires strong participation from citizens, local leaders, and all stakeholders. Environmental protection is a shared responsibility,” he said.

Discussions focused on practical approaches to ensure that the established infrastructure and community-based interventions continue to generate long-term benefits through coordinated local ownership and active engagement.



RWB CONDUCTS WATER QUALITY MONITORING CAMPAIGN

The Rwanda Water Resources Board (RWB) conducted its biannual Water Quality Monitoring (WQM) campaign, taking place from August to September 2025 across the country, starting with the major water bodies in the Western Province, including Lake Kivu, Rusizi River, Rubiyo River, Kamiranzu River, Ruhwa River, Secoko River, and Nyabarongo River.

The campaign is part of RWB's mandate to preserve the quality and quantity of Rwanda's water resources and contributes directly to Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 6.3, which aims to improve water quality by reducing pollution and limiting the release of harmful substances into the environment.

These monitoring campaigns are conducted twice a year across Rwanda to provide a comprehensive overview of the status of surface water and groundwater. The data gathered helps guide water management strategies, policy decisions, and pollution control measures, while ensuring that Rwanda's water resources meet both national and international quality standards.

During the campaign, RWB carries out on-site measurements of key physical and chemical indicators such as pH, temperature, turbidity, dissolved oxygen

(DO), electrical conductivity (EC), total dissolved solids (TDS), total suspended solids (TSS), and salinity.

Samples are also preserved and analyzed at the RWB Water Quality Laboratory, which is equipped with advanced instruments, including an Atomic Absorption Spectrophotometer (AAS 6000) for trace metals, a Picarro L2130-i Isotope Analyzer for stable isotopes, UV-Visible spectrophotometers, a turbidimeter, field heavy metals analyzers, digital titrators, and other specialized equipment. These tools enable accurate testing of nutrients and chemical parameters critical for water quality assessment.

The results are compared against Rwanda's Ambient Water Quality Standard (RS 564:2023) to assess pollution levels, monitor long-term trends, and identify areas requiring targeted interventions.

Water quality monitoring plays a vital role in building the knowledge base needed for sustainable water resource management. By systematically tracking changes, the institution aims to protect public health, support agriculture and industry, and preserve ecosystems that depend on clean water.



AKAGERA UPPER CATCHMENT COMMITTEE TACKLES URGENT WATER RESOURCE CHALLENGES

The Akagera Upper Catchment Committee has conducted a multi-district field visit to assess pressing challenges such as erosion, flooding, and land degradation, while reviewing ongoing restoration efforts and proposing solutions to safeguard communities and ecosystems.

The visit forms part of the implementation of the Akagera Upper Catchment Action Plan, which promotes sustainable land and water management across the catchment.

The catchment covers seven districts; Bugesera, Ngoma, Kirehe, Rwamagana, Kicukiro, Kayonza, and Gasabo with a smaller portion extending into Nyarugenge.

Committee members observed erosion hotspots, flood-prone wetlands, and the impacts of sedimentation affecting rivers and transboundary ecosystems. They also visited restoration projects in place and engaged with local leaders on how to strengthen community-based solutions.

To address the challenges, the Committee called for stronger erosion control in upstream areas of dams and wetlands, through interventions such as agroforestry, terracing, and afforestation, supported by development programs. They also recommended protecting gullies and riverbanks with bamboo and suitable species to slow down water flow, stabilize soils, and filter sediments before they reach downstream water bodies.

Both short- and long-term actions were emphasized. In the near term, communities will be encouraged to build trenches, maintain drainage channels, and adopt agroforestry practices to reduce runoff. Long-term priorities include expanding radical terracing, afforestation, and sustainable land use planning to restore degraded areas and strengthen resilience.

The Committee underscored that progress will rely on strong collaboration among districts, RWB, and local communities, ensuring that interventions are effective and lasting.



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