

Nature turning on the taps: New water scheme brings safe drinking water to 18,000 Malawians

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/EINPresswire.com/ -- The President of Malawi, His Excellency Dr. Lazarus Chakwera, today switched on the taps of a transformative community development project, the [Nyika-Vwaza Gravity-fed Piped Water Scheme](#). This brings safe drinking water for the first time to 18,000 people living in the vicinity of Nyika National Park and Vwaza Marsh Wildlife Reserve. Over the next ten years, up to 33,000 Malawians will gain access to the piped water through the scheme.



School children in Vwaza collecting water

At the official inauguration, President Chakwera commended all partners involved in the project's development, particularly the Government of Germany, the German Federal Ministry for Economic Co-operation and Development through the German Development Bank KfW, the District Councils, Peace Parks Foundation and communities. This project will sustain life in the areas of Paramount Chief Chikulamayembe, Katumbi and Mpherembe, he said and urged people to take good care of the initiative so they would continue to benefit.

When the Government and Peace Parks Foundation signed a co-management agreement for the Nyika and Vwaza protected areas two years ago, the goal was to run the parks as a business that communities in the surrounding areas would benefit from, said the Minister of Tourism, Hon. Dr Vera Kamtukule. "The project has been made possible with the co-operation of private sector entities, the government and communities. We are going to have a lot of private sector entities coming into Nyika-Vwaza, constructing their lodges and hotels, because they know that there is water here," she said.

"When it was launched, we were not sure if the project was going to come to its completion but

here we are today – the project [has been] launched and our people have potable water,” said Paramount Chief Chikulamayembe. “This is an important milestone, with people receiving tap water that is safe. Additionally, it is heartwarming that the scheme will grow from 18,000 to 33,000 beneficiaries.”

The project will not only provide safe drinking water but also foster a direct connection between people and nature, as the only way to ensure water flow is by protecting the Nyika Plateau’s environment.

Key highlights:

- The water is transported from the Runyina River in Nyika National Park along a 74-kilometre transmission line.
- Communities have access to 123 taps placed within 200 metres of villages along the new pipeline.
- Communities will manage the supply themselves, ensuring longevity and sustainability.
- Communities have vowed to safeguard the natural areas and the wildlife living there, as they value receiving water from the park.

This new water scheme is a game changer for people’s health, safety and well-being. Ute König, Germany’s Ambassador to Malawi, described the significant challenges local people faced in accessing clean water: “Many residents were previously forced to walk long distances into protected areas to fetch water, exposing them to risks such as encounters with wild animals and waterborne diseases. In Mzimba district, particularly near Vwaza, many boreholes are too salty for consumption.” The project has addressed the urgent needs of these communities, she said.

The development was announced in April 2023 by the Government of Malawi’s Ministry of Tourism and Department of National Parks and Wildlife in partnership with Peace Parks Foundation. The project received EUR 4.7 million in funding from the German Federal Ministry for Economic Co-operation and Development through KfW. The funding falls under the German co-operation with SADC and is part of broader support to promote an integrated approach to biodiversity conservation and local development in and around the two conservation areas.

Mr. Edward Twea SC, retired Justice of Appeal and Board Chairperson of the Nyika-Vwaza Co-Management Trust, said the Trust’s mandate was to steward Nyika and Vwaza through structures that reflect the aspirations of both government and local communities. “The success of this scheme must be measured not only by litres of water delivered, but by the strength of the institutions that will sustain it. We must now turn our attention to capacity building, robust maintenance systems, and ensuring that community water user associations are equipped to lead with integrity and foresight,” he said.

This potable water supply scheme exemplifies the co-existence approach firmly embraced by the Government of Malawi and the communities adjacent to Nyika and Vwaza. The co-management agreement signed between the Government of Malawi and Peace Parks Foundation for the sustainable development of the two protected areas will strengthen this approach by promoting

a long-term, integrated development that balances conservation and livelihoods.

[Media pack available here.](#)

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