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PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release

GoR launches Water for Growth programme

Kigali, March 23: The launch for the Water for Growth Rwanda programme will take place alongside official World Water Day in Rwanda celebrations in Muhanga on March 24, as over 1,000 residents join national and international dignitaries to mark the occasion by planting bamboo to combat river bank erosion.

Water for Growth Rwanda is a four-year joint Rwanda-Netherlands initiative aiming to improve the management of water resources in Rwanda to contribute to socio-economic development and equitably improved livelihoods.

Management of Rwanda's water resources is one of the biggest challenges facing the nation today. With a population of over 12.6 million people spread across just 26,338 km², Rwanda is Africa's most densely populated country. While the nation receives heavy rainfall, less than 2% of river flow is captured and used, with water availability per capita reported at just 670 m³ per annum.

Population growth and increasing urbanisation are expected to push water demand to over 50% of renewable water resources by 2040, and over 80% in some areas, putting the country at risk of severe water stress and decreased water quality. Meanwhile, trends show shorter and more intense rainy seasons, bringing with them increased erosion, flooding and longer periods of drought.

With rain-fed agriculture at the core of the Rwandan economy, making up 34% of GDP (2014) and employing 90% of the population directly or indirectly, poor water management has the potential to take a severe socio-economic and environmental toll on the country.

To ensure Rwanda's water future, the Government of Rwanda has adopted Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) as its overall approach to water management. IWRM is an internationally recognised approach to land and water management that promotes the coordinated development and management of natural resources to maximise socio-economic gains equitably and without compromising environmental sustainability.

To support the Government of Rwanda to meet its development goals, the Water for Growth programme is working to build the national ability to implement IWRM – strengthening relevant institutions and policy, building staff capacity within responsible agencies, building the knowledge base around Rwanda's water resources and coordinating investment in IWRM-related projects. Funded by the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in Rwanda, Water for Growth is embedded in the Ministry of Natural Resources (MINIRENA), where it works in close collaboration with the Integrated Water Resources Department under the Rwanda Natural Resources Authority (RNRA).

For more information on Water for Growth Rwanda, visit the programme website at www.water.rw.

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