

Song and dance as Japan funded project unites refugees and host community in northern Kenya



Kalobeiyei, Kenya 20 July 2017—Song and dance marked the ceremony where trainees of a Japanese technology were issued with certificates at Kalobeiyei Settlement in Kenya’s Turkana County.

Awarding the certificates to the graduates – which was a mixture of the host community and refugees- First Secretary at the Japan Embassy in Nairobi Mr. Ito Yo challenged them to put into practice what they had learnt to earn themselves a decent living.

“The Government of Japan is happy to be part of this noble project. We are also happy and wish to congratulate all those who collaborated to deliver this training. We will continue to support you people in your endeavours,” he said.

They were trained in Do-nou technology which is Japanese word which means wrapping soil in a gunny bag. It involves use of gunny bags filled with sand, farm soil or gravel. Because it uses basic tools as opposed to expensive machinery, it has been found to be a good alternative especially in rural areas.

The training which was sponsored by the Government of Japan was a joint effort between UN-Habitat, Peace Winds Japan and Community Road Empowerment (CORE). At the end of the 8 day training four of them- two from the host community and two refugees- were taken for further training at the Kenya Institute of Highways and Building Technology and Kisii Training Centre in western Kenya, thus giving them a rare opportunity to travel and learn.

The outcomes of the training for infrastructure works are:

- Training of 50 people on low cost and durable road construction technologies,
- training of 20 people on water pan construction using locally available materials,
- Construction of 530 meters of road using Do-Nou Technology (250 meters stretch in Kalobeyei town 280 meters in the Kalobeyei new site). The road construction was effected trainees as part of their practical training.
- Construction of a 10,000M3 capacity dam near Kalobeyei town to boost water security in the larger area. The dam was constructed as part of local community training and technology transfer activities

Earlier in the day, Mr. Ito officially opened a water pan in the same area. The pan that was also funded by the Government of Japan was hailed by area residents as a godsend. “We are very grateful for this gift because it will go a long way in addressing some of our problems,” Mr. Geoffrey Eweet who was the team leader for the group that constructed the pan said.

Apart from providing water for domestic and animal use, the pan will also be used for small holder agriculture by the benefitting community. The Kalobeyei Settlement was established in 2015 between the Turkana County government, UN-Habitat and the UN Refugee agency, UNHCR, with support from the Japanese government to provide integrated services to refugees and local host communities.

“I have often seen appeals by many agencies to address the problems of arid and semiarid areas. This water pan is our way of contributing to mitigating such problems and I am sure it will help the people of Kalobeiyei to move to a better future,” Mr. Ito added.

Addressing the graduation ceremony, the area chief Kevin Ekomwa said the water pan and the training were proof that the Government of Japan had the interest of his people at heart. “I am also happy that Peace Winds Japan and UN-Habitat are working hard to see that refugees and the local people work hand in hand. My only wish is that we will get more water pans to benefit more of the locals,” he said.

Two refugee beneficiaries, Chizungu Muchumbi from DR Congo and Daniel Ongejuk from South Sudan, speaking on behalf of their colleagues from a

total of 5 countries, expressed the wish to be helped to get work permits so they could put into practice what they had been taught.

“This will also help us to earn a decent living and stop relying on food rations,” said Muchumbi.

A former street boy who has trained in Do-nou technology and is now running a successful company Simon Njuguna challenged the graduates to form their own companies and look for tenders from the government.

Ms. Yuka Ikamura from CORE said she was satisfied with the quality of roads built by the new graduates adding that she was impressed by the enthusiasm they had shown. She promised to help explore ways of helping the refugees get work permits, working together with the relevant agencies and government departments.

Ms. Akemi from Peace Winds Japan said: I am impressed by the fact that you are putting into practice what you have learnt. Now it is up to you to work hard and make your lives better.”

On her part, Ms. Yuka Terada from UN-Habitat said: UN-Habitat promises to be around for some time and we will continue to work with the refugees and the host community.”