

Building healthier communities

Feston is a Community Liaison Officer working with communities living close to the 20MWac Golomoti Solar plant in Malawi.

Feston holds a Community Development diploma and, with sponsorship from JCM Power, is studying for a degree in the subject. He draws on fourteen years of working in communities to foster engagement and realise development impact.

The plant's co-developers, InfraCo Africa and JCM Power, recognised water as a key area of concern. Feston says, **"The communities had inadequate sources of water – they used rivers and unprotected wells. People had to travel long distances – walking between two and four kilometres each way - and I am even aware of assaults taking place when people were fetching water."** In his experience, women and girls hold primary responsibility for collecting water, **"spending 2-3 hours at the water point instead of investing their time in production."**

Feston's role involves consulting with different stakeholders to seek their views. **"For instance, before JCM drilled boreholes in the communities, a lot of consultation meetings were conducted, including a needs assessment with the leadership of the communities. We then engaged a Geologist to conduct geophysical surveys, assessing if the water would be free from contamination."**

Having built a strong case with the community leadership, JCM Power secured match-funding from PIDG Technical Assistance to drill ten boreholes to address the water challenges faced by 7,023 community members.

Reflecting on the programme, Feston says, **"I have been told that there is a great improvement since people started using the new boreholes. They are not taking so much time to fetch water and the number of cholera cases has reportedly fallen. The Water Point Committee has been trained by JCM to do minor maintenance themselves."**

With support from PIDG Technical Assistance, JCM Power is also drilling boreholes close to its 60MWac Salima Solar plant.

