

Water crisis hits Mbale

MBALE

By Paul Watala

A water crisis has hit Mbale municipality due to a reduction in water levels of River Manafwa.

David Opoka, the Mbale station manager for National Water and Sewerage Corporation (NWSC), said they are facing a challenge of pumping enough water at the largest plant at River Manafwa in Busuu.

Opoka made the revelation on Friday during the stakeholders meeting and accountability baraza at Resort Hotel in Mbale.

He said the alternative water plant in Moni is also facing the same challenge, adding that its capacity is too small to serve the increased population in Mbale.

Opoka added that residents can only get water for about seven hours in the morning as the corporation gets busy with pumping and treating the water in the afternoon.

The crisis has hit hard most businesses such as learning institutions, hospitals, prisons, Police and barracks.

Children and women are forced to spend nights at the few unprotected sources, while others hire bodabodas to fetch for them water from River Nabuyonga.

Joan Nabwire, a businesswoman, said the cost of doing business has gone up because they are currently buying a jerrycan of water at sh1,000, up from sh100.

Residents of Indian Quarters told *New Vision* that water shortage in the municipality has complicated life as most residents use flush toilets.

They have also expressed concern that the water crisis might have far reaching implications on residents as most will be exposed to water-borne diseases like cholera.

John Muduku, a resident of Namatala, said they currently draw water from protected spring-wells in the neighbouring Budaka and Pallisa districts, in the areas of Kamonkoli and Kabwangasi about 10km away.

James Shiraku, the Mbale resident

A woman fetching water. The cost of doing business in Mbale has shot up as the price of a jerrycan of water has increased to sh1,000 from sh100



Children and women are forced to spend sleepless nights at the few unprotected sources with containers to fight for water, while others hire bodabodas to fetch for them water from River Nabuyonga

district commissioner, hailed the NWSC staff for their work of serving the residents.

He also tasked NWSC with rehabilitating the broken down water tanks in slum areas, which he said can be used as water reserves, adding that if maintained, they will solve the challenge of limited water supply.

Shiraku also appealed to residents

living along rivers to stop cultivating the river banks, saying such activities have caused the drying up of rivers since they are directly exposed to the sun.

Opoka appealed to residents to use water sparingly and urged them to always use the NWSC toll-free line to report any bursts and theft of pipes that has increased in the region.

He said NWSC is determined to increase water coverage to all the surrounding town including Mbale, Manafwa, Budaka, Pallisa, Kibuku, Sironko and Bulambuli.

According to a 2010 report from the Directorate of Water Development in the Ministry of Water and Environment, Mbale water area is the second-largest in the Eastern Region after Jinja. The area has a population of over 89,000 people and serves over 63,011 people, meaning that 71% of the population has access to the NWSC water supply services.

Currently, the Mbale water area serves Mbale municipality, parts of Kamonkoli in Budaka district and parts Kachonga and Nampologoma in Butaleja district.

The length of the piped network is approximately 269km. The area has two treatment plants and obtains its water from rivers Nabijjo, Manafwa and Nabuyonga, with a total capacity of 14,408 m³ per day and an average production capacity of 3,805 m³ per day.

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