

THE BOREHOLES ARE VANDALISED BY UNSCRUPULOUS PEOPLE, WHO SELL THEIR PARTS TO SCRAP DEALERS

Hoima grapples with keeping old water sources intact

HOIMA

By Robert Atuhairwe

James Kiiza, a resident of Rukooge-Kasaasa, Busisi division in Hoima municipality, planted tomatoes a few yards from the only village borehole so that he could use its water to irrigate his garden.

He got a good harvest during the dry spell of 2016. However, the borehole broke down in October and had by Monday not been repaired.

The entire village now fetches water from a spring, which is 5km away. Kiiza and other residents have failed to agree on how to constitute a village water-user committee to collect money to repair the borehole.

The disagreement stems from his colleagues' refusal to elect individuals on the previous water-user committee. The old committee members are being accused of misusing the money collected to repair the borehole whenever it developed a mechanical problem.

This stalemate could delay the repair of the borehole, meaning over 6,000 residents could go without safe water for drinking and domestic use for a long time.

Jane Banage, a resident, says if they find long queues at their water source, they fetch it from a stream, which is also used by animals.

The spring is bushy and was abandoned after the village acquired a borehole in 2006.

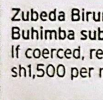
Banage says it used to be a

VOX POP WHAT RESIDENTS SAY

Godfrey Isingoma, Bugembe sub-county, The borehole at Muhwiji Primary School broke down yet there were no spare parts. The district should ensure that spares parts are accessible to all.



Rose Birungi, Buhimba sub-county, The water-user committees should be left to handle the boreholes. However, the councils should pass laws that will compel people to contribute towards their repair.



Zubeda Birungi, Buhimba sub-county, If coerced, residents cannot fail to pay sh1,500 per month.



Francis Kaija, Buhanka sub-county, Boreholes should be tendered out to private personnel, with the aim of keeping them functional all year round.

tug of war to de-silt the spring's drainage, clean the well and slash the bushes around it, as residents refused to adhere to the LCI chairperson's call.

"Children were stopped from going there for fear of being bitten by snakes that had been sighted in the nearby bush," another resident added.

The resident said most of the boreholes that had been repaired during the February 2016 election campaigns by politicians in order to woo voters have broken down.

Robert Kirongo, a borehole mechanic in Hoima town, says overhauling a borehole with new spare parts costs sh4.8m. This involves replacing all its inner spare parts, while repairing costs between sh200,000 and 400,000.

Keeping boreholes up and running is a problem that has mostly hit the rural sub-counties of Kyangwali, Kigorobya, Buseruka, Buhanka, Kabwoya and Kyabigambire, which do not have piped water.

Ibrahim Luswata, the



Children fetching water at Biqajuka stream. A number of water sources are non-functional, including boreholes and spring wells. Photos by Robert Atuhairwe

district water engineer, on Monday said most water-user committees are inactive. As a result, most water sources, especially boreholes, are not repaired.

Every village is mandated to elect a nine-member committee to work out modalities regarding the use of water sources.

The committees, headed by the village chairpersons, are also authorised to collect sh1,000 monthly from every household.

The money, which is kept by the committee's treasury, is supposed to be used to buy spare parts and fix the borehole once it breaks down. The idea is to involve communities in the management of the water infrastructure.

"The water-user committees' work is voluntary and people doing voluntary work sometime lose morale," Luswata added.

He said the district budget is small compared to the number of user committees they want to actively mobilise people to contribute money towards the repair of water sources.

BETWEEN THE LINES:

Hoima district water coverage stands at 75%, compared to the national average, which stands at 65%.

Luswata says the district has 556 boreholes, implying that if the water department is to activate them every financial year, it has to form 30 water-user committees.

Luswata says this involves training the committee members, which costs a lot of money that they do not have.

Nicholas Kasooha, a resident of Kapapi parish in Kigorobya sub-county, says most boreholes in the area have broken down due to mishandling by the residents, as a result of the increasing population.

He said this is worsened by the lack of spare parts.

"A rod on an open market costs about sh25,000, but assuming a borehole develops a

mechanical problem, we would spend an extra sh40,000 to transport from Kyangwali sub-county to Hoima town, which is 100km away," he added.

Kasooha also highlighted vandalism by unscrupulous people, who sell borehole parts to scrap dealers.

In town, it was hard to find an established retailer dealing in spare parts. A retailer said they bring them on order.

Luswata says there is need to take spare parts closer to the affected communities. He said every sub-county should have a spare parts shop.

However, he said boreholes will always break down due to poor handling.

Luswata said in the next financial year, the Government wants spare part shops to be established in Kigorobya, Buseruka and Kyangwali sub-counties, under a public-private partnership arrangement.

He said they also want to empower pump mechanics by giving them tool boxes. The mechanics will be given a tender to overhaul the boreholes.