Masaka gets solar irrigation scheme to boost farm yields

BY AMBROSE MUSASIZI

MASAKA. Hundreds of residents and farmers in Kirimya Ward, Kimaanya/Kabonera Municipality in Masaka City, are set to benefit from a newly commissioned solar-powered water supply and irrigation system aimed at addressing water scarcity and improving agricultural production.

The system, implemented by the Ministry of Water and Environment, was commissioned last weekend in Masaka City.

Speaking during the commissioning of the project, Ms Rossette Nansubuga, the city youth councillor, who represented the city mayor, said the project aligns with the broader government push for renewable energy and climate-resilient agriculture.

"Masaka City has expanded significantly following its elevation from municipality to city status. Many of the newly annexed areas are rural and depend on agriculture," she said.

"This investment will improve access to safe water and enhance productivity among our farmers," she added.

City authorities say Masaka expanded from 46 square kilometres to 362.4 square kilometres after attaining city status in July 2020, bringing in largely rural communities where access to piped water and irrigation infrastructure remains limited.

Ms Nansubuga appealed to the ministry to review the beneficiary criteria to allow more smallholder farmers to access the scheme. She also asked the government to support the rehabilitation of a non-functional irrigation system in Kitanga Ward.

One of the beneficiaries, Mr Godfrey Bwanika, who grows coffee, maize and bananas, welcomed the project, saying it would enable year-round farming.

20,000

Capacity. Officials said the facility can supply up to 20,000 litres of water daily, irrigate more than 50 acres of farmland, and serve more than 300 households.

"This investment will change lives. With reliable water, we can increase yields and incomes," he said.

The off-grid system uses solar panels to power high-efficiency pumps that draw groundwater into elevated storage tanks. The water is distributed through drip irrigation lines to farms and through communal taps for domestic use.

Masaka City Clerk Daniel Christopher Kawesi called for similar projects in other wards to widen access to irrigation and clean water.

The Resident City Commissioner, Mr Ahmed Washaki, described the project as a milestone in the city's development.

"This is more than infrastructure. It is a lifeline for farmers who have struggled with unreliable rains and long distances in search of water," he said.

He urged beneficiaries to ensure community access and protect the installation from vandalism.

Mr Abert Ssenyonga, a member of the Kirimya Youth Farmers Group, said the project would enable farmers to expand production.

"We used to rely on rain and manual watering. Now I plan to expand my vegetable garden and grow crops even during the dry season," he said.

The project was funded by the United Kingdom Export Finance and constructed by NEXUS GREEN (UK) Limited at a cost of about Shs1.2 billion.

The initiative is part of ongoing efforts to scale up solar-powered water systems across Uganda to strengthen food security and climate resilience.

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