

# NWSC BOSS CALLS FOR WATER SYSTEM OVERHAUL

By John Odyek

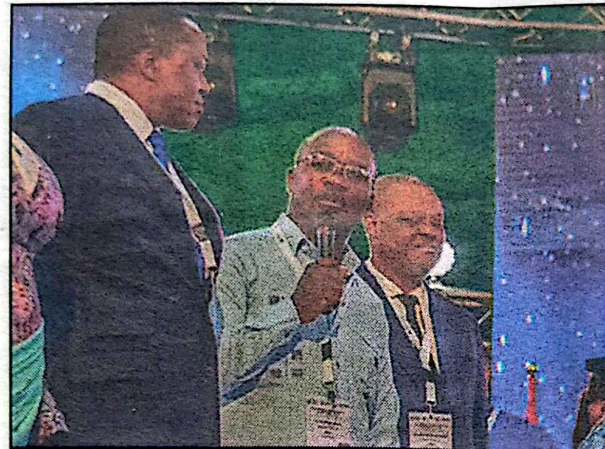
Effective management of water and sanitation in Africa is a critical leadership decision that requires a holistic approach, one that treats complex problems as interconnected systems rather than isolated parts, according to Dr Silver Mugisha, the managing director of the National Water and Sewerage Corporation (NWSC).

He said effective water governance now depends on viewing technical operations, finance, governance and environmental stewardship as interconnected parts of a single system.

## SYSTEMATIC APPROACH

Speaking yesterday at the 23rd African Water and Sanitation Association International Congress and Exhibition in Yaoundé, Mugisha said a holistic management model is essential to navigating the pressures of climate change, social equity and public finance.

"A systems approach is the backbone of high performance because it treats water and sanitation management as an interconnected web of financial,



Dr Mugisha (centre) at the African Water and Sanitation Association Congress in Yaoundé, Cameroon, yesterday

## BETWEEN THE LINES

Mugisha argued that utilities must shift from traditional engineering-driven structures to customer-focused service models that balance policy, regulation and social realities.

environmental and technical elements rather than isolated infrastructure projects," he said.

Mugisha added that aligning institutional governance with financial sustainability and environmental responsibility is key to long-term resilience.

He cited Uganda's experience as evidence of what co-ordinated reform can achieve. Since 2013, NWSC has expanded its operations from 23 towns to 282, increasing the population served from 4.5 million to more than 22.7 million people.

Over the same period, annual turnover rose from sh121b to

sh649b, with projections targeting service coverage in 350 towns and 26 million people by 2030.

Technical capacity has grown alongside service reach. Daily water production increased from about 294,600 cubic metres in 2013 to roughly 791,000 cubic metres in 2025, supported by an expansion of the pipe network from 3,523 miles to 14,778 miles.

## GOOD MANAGEMENT

Mugisha attributed the progress to performance-driven management, including incentive-based contracts tied to measurable indicators at corporate, regional and individual levels. Financial autonomy and revenue reforms, he said, have helped address infrastructure gaps while strengthening the utility's asset base, which is projected to reach 6.2 trillion shillings by 2030.

Digital innovation has also been central to the corporation's strategy. Mugisha highlighted locally developed systems for electronic payments, mobile banking and real-time reporting, supported by research-led decision-making. Ongoing studies, including meter

accuracy assessments aimed at reducing non-revenue water, are part of this evidence-based approach.

He emphasised that staff development remains critical, noting that practical, locally grounded expertise drives many of the utility's innovations. While infrastructure investment is essential, Mugisha said public trust ultimately depends on reliable service delivery.

Achieving universal access to water and sanitation in Africa, Mugisha added, requires deliberate investment choices that prioritise vulnerable communities and environmental protection.

The congress, hosted in partnership with Cameroon Water Utilities Corporation and supported by World Bank, brought together more than 2,500 policymakers, utilities, researchers and private sector actors. Discussions focused on water security, performance improvement and sanitation innovation, alongside a technology exhibition showcasing sector advances. The gathering aimed to strengthen collaboration and accelerate practical solutions towards universal access to safe water and sanitation across Africa.