



Health hazard: Children draw water from Kyabazo Swamp in Kabukwiri Village, Ryeru Sub-county in Rubirizi District recently. PHOTO BY FELIX ABIBYOONA

Dirty water puts 7,800 lives at risk

Way forward. District officials say they have earmarked Shs1 billion towards construction of a rain tank.

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Voices

"Our biggest challenge in this area is lack of clean water. People are spending their little money on treatment, 95 per cent of our locals are diagnosed with typhoid whenever they go to health facilities..."

SNORE BIKORWOMUHANGI
LC1 COUNCILLOR
FYERU SUB-COUNTY

"Four villages in the two sub-counties draw water from this swamp which is shared by livestock. The danger is there are many pit latrines near the swamp..."

PATRICK TUMUHIMBISE
RESIDENT OF
KABUKWIRI VILLAGE

"I was first elected chairman in 2011, I found people crying about dirty water. More than 1,200 households fetch water from Kyabazo, these are about 7,800 people. You can clearly see that water is not clean; the colour is like that of dry tea," he says.

The residents have instructed local leaders and crime preventers to identify those who constructed pit latrines near the swamp and force them to close them.

But the councillor for Ryeru Sub-county, Mr John Mubangizi, says Ndagara and Rumuri parishes are on a high altitude and water pumped from Lake Nkugutte cannot reach the area.

"Ndagara and Rumuri parishes are at a higher altitude of about 1,700m above sea level and Bunyaru-guru water gravity scheme which is run by national water is at 1,300m above the sea level which makes it

difficult for people to have clean water," he says.

"These places are highly water stressed and the only available source is Kyabazo which is stagnant, smelly and has algae. It is extremely unsafe for human consumption," Mr Mubangizi adds.

According to Mr Mubangizi, the soils in Rubirizi do not favour construction of boreholes.

He says the rocks underneath are permeable and cannot hold water.

However, the district chairperson, Mr Sylvester Agubashongorera, says there is an intervention in the offing.

"Kabukwiri is a very big hilly area without nearby sources of water. But in this financial year (2017/2018), Shs1 billion has been allocated to building a rain tank. We have applied for funding in the Ministry of Water and the Japanese embassy so that we can be able to use solar energy to pump water from Lake Kaka," Mr Agubashongorera reveals.

Safe water coverage in Rubirizi stands at 65 per cent, according to the district chairman.

The Bunyaru-guru County MP, Mr John Twesigye Ntamuhira, says the government is aiming at providing clean water to the people.

"It is our plan as NRM government and as a representative of the people to ensure that water reaches every corner of Rubirizi and Bunyaru-guru in particular. The mandate of water expansion is already with government and we are following it up," says Mr Ntamuhira.

The Rubirizi District water officer, Mr George Musunguzi, was not available for comment as he didn't answer our repeated calls and text messages.

DANGER

Most residents use dirty water for domestic purposes, exposing them to waterborne diseases such as dysentery, diarrhoea, typhoid and bilharzia among others. Health reports indicate that 75 per cent of all diseases in Uganda are a direct result of lack of clean water and proper sanitation. According to Water Aid, an international organisation, eight million people in Uganda do not have access to safe water.

dents blame their leaders for failing to lobby for them to get piped clean water.

The LC1 councillor for Ndagara Sub-county, Mr Snore Bikorwomuhangi, says whenever it rains, all the dirt is swept down to Kyabazo swamp.

Mr Bikorwomuhangi adds that the district officials claim that government does not have money to give the residents to improve the water source.

"Our biggest challenge in this area is lack of clean water. People are spending their little money on treatment; 95 per cent of our locals are diagnosed with typhoid whenever they go to health facilities. We have been neglected by government because some areas have piped water," says Mr Bikorwomuhangi.

The Ryeru Sub-county chairperson, Mr Richard Kimunyu, says despite the numerous protests by people over lack of clean water for many years there has been no progress.

RUBIRIZI. About 7,800 residents of Ndagara and Rumuri parishes in Ryeru and Kirwamba sub-counties in Bunyaru-guru, Rubirizi District are consuming dirty water which has exposed them to diseases.

The residents draw water from Kyabazo Swamp in Ndagara parish, Ryeru Sub-county.

They say their appeal to government to improve the water source has fallen on deaf ears.

"Four villages in the two sub-counties draw water from this swamp which is shared by livestock. The danger is there are many pit latrines near the swamp," Mr John Patrick Tumuhimbise, a resident of Kabukwiri village in Ndagara parish, reveals.

He adds: "Typhoid has become common because residents drink dirty water. We are likely to suffer from cholera and dysentery."

Ms Agnes Nayebara, a resident of Kabukwiri village in Ndagara parish, says residents no longer buy light coloured clothes because of lack of clean water.

"The water stains white clothes; it changes colour of maize porridge," she says.

Just like many of the residents, Ms Nayebara treks about five kilometers from her home to the water source.

Speaking to *Daily Monitor* in an interview recently, many of the resi-