

River Mpologoma districts get sh1.6b water project

BUTALEJA

By George Bita

For the estimated 10,000 people living on the banks of River Mpologoma in Namutumba and Butaleja districts, dirty marshy water has been their only option.

According to Boaz Munyole, the LCI chairman of Buhehe village in Butaleja, pupils would often skip school to assist their parents in fetching water from the swampy river banks.

"Whenever the dry season set in, most water sources would dry up, leaving us with no other option but River Mpologoma. This resulted in cases of children drowning in the river," he said.

However, that now seems to be history as the Government in partnership with a local non-governmental organisation (NGO) have sunk 64 boreholes on either side of the water body.

Genesis of the water boost

According to Saleh Kumbuga, the Namutumba district chairperson, Fields of Life, an NGO, embarked on the water project almost a year ago.

Ednar Nyakaisiki, the executive director of Fields of Life, said the intervention was based on the annual sector water review report of 2015/2016.

"When we looked at that report, it was clear that both



Butaleja LC5 chairperson Richard Wasiye washing hands at one of the boreholes on Tuesday. Photo by George Bita

Namutumba and Butaleja did not meet the average access-to-water mark. They were far below the recommended 67% coverage," Nyakaisiki

observed.

She revealed that they also wanted to save women and children from moving long distances in search of water.

Richard Wasiye, the Butaleja district chairperson, asked more donors to partner with the Government to boost water supply to more communities.

APPEAL TO DONORS

Current status

Amina Batega, the Namutumba district vice-chairperson, said under the project, 64 boreholes have been sunk on both sides of River Mpologoma.

She said 33 of the new boreholes are in Magada sub-county of Namutumba district while Butaleja got 31.

"Unlike in the past, each borehole has a tool-kit for maintenance purposes. Trained personnel are also based at the respective water offices to assist repair damaged boreholes," Batega said.

Richard Wasiye, the Butaleja district water officer, the water sources are protected with wooden fencing to keep animals that compromise hygiene at bay.

Health status improves

Dr James Kirya, the Namutumba district health officer, said the health conditions of locals have improved after the intervention.

"We used to have cases of waterborne diseases quite

RESIDENTS SPEAK OUT ON WATER



Christine Kanyago, resident of Buhehe village, Butaleja district

The water from the borehole is clean. It cannot be compared with what we used to get from River Mpologoma.

Edinansi Logose, resident of Buhehe village, Butaleja district

I am grateful to Fields of Life for the water they brought to my village. My children no longer miss school in the afternoon. They used to walk 5km to fetch water from River Mpologoma.



Abbey Kaggwa, Namutumba district water officer

The full kit offered to the hand pump mechanics is a godsend. In the past, we used to suffer looking for simple tools.

Francis Kyakulaga, Namutumba district health inspector

I am happy with the new water sources. They have helped the locals to clearly understand the concept of being clean.



often. However, dysentery, diarrhoea and cholera are rare, with barely two patients registered in a period of three months," Kirya said.

He said with the district water coverage up from 64% to 75%, bilharzia, which was rampant in the area, has been eliminated.

Gulume believes the large stock of medicines left to expire at local health centres indicates an improvement in general sanitation and hygiene.

Way forward

Butaleja resident district commissioner Richard Gulume advised locals to manage the boreholes well through their water user committees.

"Let us use clean containers to carry water to avoid germs. This improvement in hygiene would save us some money that would otherwise be used on medication," he suggested.