

Unsafe water still a challenge

By Martin Kitubi

Jane Adikini, 28, is a resident of Mulamira Zone in Kamwokya, a city suburb. Despite the fact that her home is connected to piped water provided by the National Water and Sewerage Corporation (NWSC), she says diseases such as typhoid, attributed to consumption of contaminated water, still bother her family.

As you stroll through Kamwokya, the pipe to Adikini's home runs through a drainage channel and at some point near septic tanks and behind pit latrines.

This does not only pose danger to her family, but the entire community, whose water sources are distributed by the same water pipe, which could be contaminated because the pipe has a leakage.

"We are not sure whether the pipes have no leakages, but we continue to suffer from typhoid yet we boil our water for drinking," she said.

She added that contamination was worse during heavy downpours when homes flood with water filled with faeces and other wastes from septic tanks and pit latrines due to blocked channels.

Adikini is not alone. Hailat Abu Waiswa, a resident of Najjanankumbi, also in Kampala, faces similar changes, mainly citing scarcity during the dry seasons.

Waiswa is connected to piped water, but it often runs out during the maintenance of lines and the dry season.

"During such periods, water only runs at night when almost everyone is asleep," she said, adding that during such seasons, a 20 litre jerrycan of water can cost between sh2,000 to sh3,000.

Najjanankumbi is a few kilometres from Lake Victoria and water scarcity should not be a problem, Waiswa said, adding that the situation must be worse in rural areas.

Safe water coverage in Uganda

According to the 2017 Water and Environment Sector Performance Report, the Minister for Water and Environment, Sam Cheptoris, said as of June last year, the average access to safe water in rural areas was estimated at 70%, with a 3% increase from 67% in the same month in 2016.

However, Cheptoris stressed the need for communities to be sensitised on hygienic practices in order to maintain a safe water chain from the source up to storage at the household level.

He also said the functionality for rural water supplies had reduced from 86% to 85%, between 2016 and 2017. "Access to safe drinking water in urban areas has stagnated and stands at 71%. It is worth noting that the water and sanitation services managed by NWSC have now expanded to cover a total of 218 towns," Cheptoris said.

He added that the quality, reliability and number of connections in these towns has improved significantly.

According to the water ministry data in urban areas outside Kampala, 86% of the urban population has access to



Workers of NWSC installing water pipes along Jinja Road at Lugogo in Kampala. People still find difficulties getting safe water despite increased access to piped water

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basic sanitation. Access to basic rural sanitation has also improved to about 80% from 79% in 2016.

The ministry also highlighted that only 35% of pupils had access to washing facilities, which put their lives at risk of faecal-related diseases such as cholera and typhoid. According to Cheptoris, such diseases contribute to absenteeism in school.

Cheptoris said the main challenge to the sector is inadequate financing to the targets under the second National Development Plan (NDP-II).

"The sector continues to receive only 3% of the national budget resources yet its role in transforming Uganda into middle income status by 2020 is very strategic," he said.

The NDP-II, which will run between 2015-2020, identified provision of adequate water supply and improved sanitation as one of the key priority areas for promoting sustainable wealth creation and inclusive growth.

The objective of the Water Supply and Sanitation Programme II (WSSP II), aligned to the NDP-II, is to contribute to improved health and productivity of the population, through provision of safe water and sanitation services to a target population of 1.43 million people (51.4% women).

The Programme is to be implemented across the country over four years and will focus on rural gravity flow schemes and solar mini

schemes targeting rural beneficiaries in all regions.

According to a report, the Programme will also provide urban water systems in small towns under the Water and Sanitation Development Facilities in the central region.

Sector Financing

A total of sh530.809b was allocated to the water and environment sector for the 2017/2018 financial years and by September, sh182.337b had already been spent. The budget allocation for the sector is set to increase in the 2018/2019 financial year.

Appropriations in Aid show that it had the biggest share of 41% of the released funds, followed by 35% by

the Government and 17% by donor funding.

According to the Water and Environment Sector Budget Framework Paper for 2018/19, a total of sh602.454b budget has been proposed, with a move to address key gaps in the sector.

The vote is intended to increase provision of water for production through development of multi-purpose bulk water storage and supply systems, with the involvement of all stakeholders.

The funds will also increase water supply coverage in rural areas, while ensuring equity through providing at least each village with one safe and clean water source, and where technically feasible, piped water options (gravity flow systems, solar pumped boreholes and surface treated systems) will be considered.

They will also be used to promote improved sanitation services in rural and urban areas, including the promotion of hand-washing with soap and also increase water supplies and sewerage services in small towns, large towns, municipalities and cities, focusing on the areas earmarked for industrial parks.

The Government intends to increase the functionality and usage of meteorological information to combat the effects of climate change and disaster risks.

It also intends to increase the sustainable use of environment and natural resources to restore and maintain the hitherto degraded ecosystems and undertake massive nationwide tree planting.

The Government is promoting the wise use of wetlands through implementation of approved management plans developed in a participatory manner.

The 2017 sector performance report highlights that the functionality of rural water supply facilities was at 85%, while access to basic sanitation in rural areas stood at 80% in 2018 protected springs, 26 shallow wells, 70 piped water systems, rehabilitation

URBAN WATER SUPPLY

Access to drinking water in urban areas has stagnated at 71%.

During the 2016/17 financial year, 425,000 people had to be served just to maintain the access to safe water.

Of these, 290,000 resulted from population growth in the urban councils that existed in 2016. The approximately 135,000 arose as a result of the additional unserved population of the new town councils created over the years. New water supply schemes were constructed by the ministry's deconcentrated water supply development facilities.

The average per capita investment cost for the new water facilities increased to \$54m (sh96.738b) in the 2016/17 financial year, but it was below the targeted per capita investment cost of \$85m (sh309.680b).

The regular monitoring of performance contracts is carried out by Water Utility Regulation Department at the water ministry for currently 218 urban systems managed by NWSC and 127 gazetted piped water schemes in small towns and rural growth centres.

of 1,148 boreholes, construction of Nyarwodho to 100%, Bududa 100%, Bukwo at 100%, Butebo at 100%, Buwoya-Buboko at 100%.

Rural Water Supply

The main technology options used for water supply improvements in rural areas include deep boreholes (42%), shallow wells (25%) and protected springs (21%). Others include tap stands and kiosks of piped schemes and rainwater harvesting tanks.

A total of sh106.5b was used to serve 944,739 persons with new improved water supplies. The overall per capita cost for rural water supplies was sh114b, similar to the sh110,887 for the 2015/16 financial year.

A total of sh64.7b was expended on multi-year projects of Bukwo I, Nyarwodho I, Bududa I, Butebo, solar powered mini-piped water schemes and drilling under the framework contract.

Last year, the Government received a \$15.3m (sh55b) grant from the Japanese government for rural water supply in the Lake Kyoga basin, covering parts of five districts.

The water project termed, "The project for rural water supply in lake kyoga basin, Eastern Uganda" will cover parts of Serere, Pallisa, Kibuku, Iganga and Luuka districts and serve over 24,000 people in the region.

The grant will ensure construction of nine water intake and supply systems, water distribution equipment and over 88 water taps with about 115km water distribution pipes.

This followed bilateral agreements for the project between the ministries of finance, planning and economic development and the Japanese envoy to Uganda, Kazuaki Kameda, at the ministry headquarters in Kampala.

The project is part of the government initiative to increase safe water distribution in rural areas by 13,000 to 24,738 households by 2022.



Pupils of Kyazanga Primary School getting piped water in 2004. Many pupils still do not have access to such facilities