



A woman collecting water from a public standpipe at Biguli trading centre. Photos by George Bitu



A woman draws water from a shallow well. Locals used to depend entirely on such water sources before 2013

# Piped water goes to Kamwenge

## KAMWENGE

By George Bitu

Alice Tushemereirwe gets out of her shop with two 20-litre jerrycans to collect water at Biguli trading centre in Kamwenge district.

She moves to an adjacent public standpipe, pays up and the water taps are opened for her to fill her containers.

"I can get water at my convenience nowadays. There are no more long distances to shallow wells or boreholes and the water is also cleaner and safer, compared to what we used to share with frogs," Tushemereirwe says.

Barely five years ago, to fetch water meant dependency on shallow wells, located in the marshy stretches of Rwakasirabo swamp at the far end of the village.

### Genesis of the intervention

According to Wilson Magezi, the Biguli village LC1 chairman, before the intervention, local suppliers were selling water at almost sh1,000 per 20-litre jerrycan.

Simeon Komaho, the Biguli sub-county LC3 chairman, narrates that by then, waterborne diseases, such as cholera, were highly prevalent and children often drowned while fetching water.

George Mugenyi from Water For People explains that by 2013, water coverage in the sub-county stood at about 21%.

"The miserable state of affairs led us to do a baseline survey after liaising with the Kamwenge district authorities. It involved tests on underground water for indicators of potential to drill," Mugenyi discloses.

He narrates that the idea was to set up a piped water scheme in line with the Government's Vision 2040 that recommends the installation of such reliable water supplies.

"The people used to walk long distances to get water. Yet piped water could be brought to them,"

## VOX POPS

**Wilbrod Rushokana, teacher, Biguli SS**

We used to have many cases of indiscipline due to unregulated movements by students on the pretext of looking for water. Now that we have water on our premises, such incidents are a thing of the past.



**Daphrose Kamaqara, water seller**

Of late, I earn good money from locals on a daily basis. I am grateful to Water For People as it has enabled me to start minting money from the sale of water.



**Adam Rubelnamina, student**

I no longer have to fetch dirty water from the shallow well after classes. I only need to go to the water taps outside the school kitchen and get clean water for bathing and washing clothes.



**Judith Akanyusiza, resident**

Some of us still use the water from wells for certain domestic chores. We only go to taps to get water for drinking and cooking food.



he says. The piped water coverage is now estimated at 60%.

### Current status

"Once the system is up and running, we transfer management to the Directorate of Water Development. This subsequently gives authority to the district council that mandates the sub-county to run the system," Mugenyi explains.

Komaho says the piped water is a godsend for the 34,000 people occupying 40 villages in four parishes of Biguli sub-county.

"So far, four piped water schemes have been constructed, while another two are under construction. Those still being worked on are Bitojo-Nyabubaale and Kabale-Keishunga-Kabuye," he says.

He identifies those already established and providing water to residents as Biguli, Kirinda, Malere and Rwebisanji.

Mugenyi explains that each water scheme has a diesel generator that pumps water into a gravitational flow tank, supplying a limited range of beneficiaries.

Obed Mwesigwa, who runs the Bitojo-Nyabubaale scheme, says the system under construction has a potential of supplying 500 local connections. "During the system's set-up phase, consumers can apply under a promotional drive and get private connections for just sh100,000. After the grace period, the amount is much higher," Mwesigwa adds.

Justus Bahati, the chairman of

Biguli Traders Association, who is contracted to run the local schemes, says big consumers, such as schools, have been linked via pre-paid water meters to curb the chronic non-payment of water bills.

"We took the decision eight months ago, to put up such metres at Biguli Secondary School and at the washing bay. The collections have since risen from 12% to 100%," Bahati declares.

Annet Kobusinge, the Kamwenge district water officer, expresses satisfaction with work done by development partners in lessening the water stress in Biguli.

"Water For People did a commendable job. What makes it a tremendous achievement is that the piped water system will last forever," Kobusinge says.

She also says the number of people suffering from waterborne diseases has significantly reduced in the area.

### Challenges

Kobusinge says even if the water office prefers to go for piped water schemes, the costs involved are not affordable; the reason why most people in villages opt for point water sources.

"Unfortunately, the surrounding areas, such as Bihanga, with a high population, are yearning for similar interventions. However, because of limitations on the distance that can be supplied, they cannot benefit from Biguli unit," Kobusinge laments.

### Future prospects

Mugenyi decries the use of diesel-powered generators that are expensive to run, due to relatively high fuel costs.

"If there was an option of changing the power supply to either hydro-electric or solar, then the pumping expenditure would go down. In that case, even the cost per 20-litre jerrycan could go down to sh50," he reasons.