

# River abuse shocks committee

KABAROLE

By Agnes Nantambi

Members of the catchment management committee (CMC) of River Mpanga were on Friday shocked at the rate of abuse of the river, which is at great risk of drying up. They cited Prisons as the major abuser of the river.

The river, which serves five districts of Kiruhura, Kabarole, Ibanda, Kamwenge and Kyenjojo, has been degraded up to the banks, causing lots of silting and flooding in the districts through which it passes before draining into Lake George.

Charles Mugisha, the manager of Mpanga hydropower project, said the degradation of the river had lowered the amount of power generated on the river from 18 megawatts to half.

"There has been a lot of degradation in terms of cutting down trees along the river and cultivation up to the river banks. When it rains, because there is nothing to stop soil erosion, all the water goes into the river, which leads to siltation, resulting in shrinking of the river.

Mugisha said once the size continues to shrink and the vegetation begins to grow on it, the river will eventually turn into a stream.



River Mpanga committee members looking at the level of degradation of River Mpanga. Photo by Agnes Nantambi

He said the amount of water required for hydropower generation would not be sufficient.

Mugisha said the hydropower project was at the risk of collapsing due to lack of adequate water to generate the required 18 megawatts, especially during the dry season.

Mugisha appealed to the Albert Water Management Zone to consider demarcation of the river to stop cultivation on its banks.

Richard Rwabuhinga, the

## BETWEEN THE LINES

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Kabarole district chairperson, also the chairman of CMC, said the river which flows from Mt Rwenzori to Lake George

moves a distance 400km, but its degradation by Prisons has reached 60%.

He said degradation ranges from pollution, encroachment, to mismanagement of river banks. He said the Albert Water Management Zone had come up with many interventions ranging from upstream, midstream and downstream conservation to conserve the river banks.

"Ideally, the water has to be colourless and tasteless, but when you move along it now, you will see a river with

a deposition colour and water with a bad taste," he said.

John Paul Onen, the quality controller of National Water and Sewerage Corporation Fort Portal branch, said the level of degradation was so high that during the rainy season, they even shut down production in order to produce clean water or at times reduce the production capacity to a half.

When *New Vision* tried to contact the Prisons public relations officer, Frank Baine, for a comment, his telephone number could not go through.