

Work in progress. Workers connect pipes for the Bududa-Nabweya Gravity Water Flow Scheme recently.

Works on Bududa water project resumes

Funding. The water project jointly funded by the government and African Development Bank started in July 2013 and was meant to be completed by 2015.

BY LEONARD MUKOOLI & FRED WAMBEDE
editorial@ug.nationmedia.com

KEY ISSUES

Interference. The commissioner in charge of rural water and development, Mr Christopher Tumusiime, during a recent political leaders meeting held at Mt Elgon Hotel, said political leaders and residents who opposed the implementation of the project have since accepted to have its works resume.

Opposed. Ms Grace Namada, a resident of Buluwande village in Nabweya Sub-county, says it's their male counterparts who had opposed the water project without giving genuine reasons.

BUDUDA. The construction of the Shs20b Bududa-Nabweya Gravity Water Flow Scheme that had stalled in 2013 due to political interference and community resistance, has finally resumed.

The water project jointly funded by the government and African Development Bank started in July 2013 and was meant to be completed by 2015.

However, it stalled after only 10 households had been connected to the water system as opposed to the designated 2, 000 homes.

The commissioner in charge of rural water and development, Mr Christopher Tumusiime, during a recent political leaders meeting held at Mt Elgon Hotel, said political leaders and residents who opposed the implementation of the project have since accepted to have its works resume.

He says this was after a thorough sensitisation about the benefits of the project and work is expected to be completed in two months' time.

Gravity water scheme is supplied from a small upland river, stream or spring, blocked within a protected catchment to various consumers who are at low surface areas.

"We had many challenges, especially opposition from local leaders and residents who never wanted the project to go on, but now we are happy that the situation has been harmonised," Mr Tumusiime said.

Ms Grace Namada, a resident of Buluwande village in Nabweya Sub-county, says it's their male counterparts who had opposed the water project without giving genuine reasons.

She adds that their defiance affected them as women since it's them who trek long distances to fetch water from unprotected streams.

"The situation of moving down the hill in search for water is a burden to us, especially when we are pregnant. We go through a lot of pain but when we heard our husbands opposing the project, we were disappointed only that we are not allowed to talk," Ms Namada says.

She adds that they have one spring where they fetch water from and it is more than 3km away.

"The spring serves more than eight villages. We lineup for hours and sometimes we fight in the process of getting water," she said.

Michael Kutosi, a student at Buluchecke Secondary School, says he resorted to taking bath in a nearby Manafwa River so as to catch up with schooltime.

"If I'm to fetch water in the morning, it means I will reach school late and tired," he says.

Explaining why they opposed the Gravity Water Project, Mr Ben Makomu, the LC5 councillor of Nabweya Sub-county, says the project was not reaching his sub-county yet they were more vulnerable to water shortages.

"We wanted the ministry to ensure that our sub-county is included on the list of the beneficiaries before they proceed," he says.

He says it was disappointing to have the project named Nabweya- Bududa Gravity Water Scheme yet they were not part of the beneficiaries.

According to Mr Makomu, the most affected communities in Bududa include Nabweya, Bukigai and Bushiro sub-counties situated on Nabweya hill and should be the priority because they trek for 10km down slope in search for water.

Voices

"We had many challenges, especially opposition from local leaders and residents who never wanted the project to go on, but now we are happy that the situation has been harmonised," CHRISTOPHER TUMUSIIME, COMMISSIONER IN CHARGE OF RURAL WATER AND DEVELOPMENT.

"At first, we didn't want to hear about the project because they told us that we will have to pay for water yet we are used to free water from wells," JAMES WATILA, RESIDENT

"The scheme has the capacity of 4,488,000 litres of water produced in a day that can serve the two districts," STANLEY WATENGA, PRINCIPAL ENGINEER FROM THE MINISTRY OF WATER

Changing of minds

Mr James Watila, one of the residents, says the need to have clean and safe water for domestic use has forced them to reconsider their earlier position and change their minds.

"At first, we didn't want to hear about the project because they told us that we will have to pay for water yet we are used to free water from wells," he says, adding that through sensitisation, they realised that the available water from the local wells is unsafe.

"We have accepted to buy water at affordable amount once the project is finished after realising that the current water we use is unsafe," Mr Watila says.

Due to use of unsafe water, Mr Watila says residents are exposed to diseases such as typhoid, dysentery and bilharzia.

Mr Stanley Watenga, the principal engineer from the Ministry of Water, says the ministry accepted to extend water to the hard-hit areas of Bududa and Manafwa districts.

"The scheme has the capacity of 4,488,000 litres of water produced in a day that can serve the two districts," Mr Watenga says.

He adds that the Shs5.5b which was not used in phase one after the ferred to phase two contractor (Gets Service Ltd) to complete some of the delayed works. "This includes the establishment of the 800 taps meant for phase one, which were supposed to be implemented in that same phase," Mr Watenga adds.

Mr Wilson Watila, the Bududa District chairperson, says the political and community resistance has since been neutralised, adding that there is now political will to see that the project is successfully implemented.

Shs20b

THE AMOUNT OF MONEY THAT WAS BUDGETED FOR BUDUDA-NABWEYA GRAVITY WATER FLOW SCHEME

He, however, blames the technical staff for failing to do their job but instead concentrated on blaming the politicians.

He also blames the contractor (KOL Contractors Ltd) over failure to pay casual workers, who later abandoned the site.

Mr Watila says as the district, they have duly sensitised the public about the importance of the water project and called for their cooperation to see that the project progresses without any obstruction.

The Bududa-Nabweya Gravity Water Flow Scheme was pledged by President Museveni during his visit to the area in 1989 when it was still part

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