

Regional News

Leaders move to tackle pollution on River Nile

Residents have long raised concerns over untreated chemical effluents contaminating water.

BY DENIS EDEMA

Authorities in Njeru Municipality, Buikwe District, have launched an intensive campaign to curb industrial pollution that has plagued local waterways, particularly Naava Stream, which flows into the River Nile.

Residents have long raised concerns over untreated chemical effluents, textile waste, and medical refuse contaminating water, destroying aquatic life, and threatening public health and livelihoods.

Deputy Resident District Commissioner (RDC) Andrew Ntange has vowed to hold both factories and municipal officials accountable, promising stricter oversight, regular inspections, and greater engagement with communities.

"We cannot allow a few negligent actors to compromise public health and the environment," Mr Ntange said, noting that some factories deliberately release untreated waste at night and during weekends to evade detection.

The RDC revealed that complaints from residents have ranged from industrial and medical waste pollution to land grabbing and rising insecurity in the municipality. "I have received numerous complaints, and it is clear that decisive action is needed to protect our water sources and residents' livelihoods," he added.

Mr Ntange has criticised municipal department heads for lax supervision, accusing some civil servants of taking advantage of the election period to neglect their responsibilities.



A section in Njeru where Naava stream empties industrial waste into River Nile. PHOTO/DENIS EDEMA

"I have visited offices as early as 8am and found them empty. Some officers are frequently absent and at times unreachable by phone," he said, warning that any official failing to act on reported complaints will face disciplinary action for abuse of office.

Plan

As a first step, the RDC plans to convene a public baraza bringing together department heads, including health, environment, and education, political leaders, and community representatives to review complaints, identify gaps in service delivery, and enforce compliance.

Mr Godfrey Mulekwa, a resident of Naminya South in Njeru Central Division, described the situation as particularly severe on Fridays and Saturdays when factories are most active. "You would not last here

for a minute when they release it," he said, referring to foul-smelling, multicoloured chemical effluents that kill fish and frogs, destroy crops, and contaminate local water sources.

BACKGROUND

A UN Environment Programme (UNEP) report highlights that water quality in major sections of the Nile Basin has deteriorated due to contaminants such as heavy metals, organic waste, and toxic effluents, leading to reduced biodiversity and health risks for communities relying on the river for domestic use and irrigation.

The Senior Health Inspector at Njeru Municipal Council, Mr Andrew Kaita, confirmed that many factories are failing to meet minimum waste disposal standards.

"The continued discharge of untreated waste poses a serious threat to public health, crops, and aquatic life," he warned.

Mr Michael Ofwono, the president of the Rotary Club of Jinja, emphasised that protecting Lake Victoria and the River Nile is a shared responsibility.

He revealed that the club, in partnership with other Rotary Clubs, is organising the 4th edition of Run for the Nile under the theme "Nature is Calling Us," scheduled for March 28.

The event will raise funds to install trap gates on drainage channels, intercepting plastics and industrial waste before they reach the major water bodies.