

Residents say poor access exposes families to disease and economic hardship.

BY SEGUJJA BYOMUGABI
& ALEX ASHABA

Residents across the Greater Kibaale districts in Bunyoro Sub-region have raised concern over limited access to safe and clean water, saying the shortage continues to expose communities to disease and economic hardship.

The districts of Kagadi, Kibaale and Kakumiro still record uneven access to safe water, with some sub-counties posting alarmingly low coverage. Many residents say they are forced to rely on unsafe water sources shared with animals.

According to the Water Supply Atlas published by the Ministry of Water and Environment, safe water coverage stands at 31 percent in Kakumiro District, 57 percent in Kagadi and 65 percent in Kibaale. The figures place Kakumiro among the worst-affected districts in the country.

In Kagadi District, water access varies widely across sub-counties. Coverage ranges from as low as three percent in Ndaiga Sub-county to 95 percent in Kagadi Sub-county. Areas such as Kabamba, Paacwa, Kiryanga, Mpeefu and Rugashali all register less than 50 percent coverage.

Ndaiga Sub-county remains the most water-stressed area. The sub-county has a population of more than 9,400 people living in more than 2,600 households spread across eight villages and four parishes.

"We use water from Ndaiga Landing Site, though it is unhealthy, but we have no option. It has been about five years since we last heard promises of water installation systems, but nothing has happened. Many families drink the water without boiling it because firewood is expensive," Ms Scollah Kajoina, a resident of Kabukanga Village, said.

Residents say the water problem has also worsened the health situation in the area.

"Health workers rarely report to the facility, and services are limited. Many people cross over by boat to Ntoroko District to access better health care. Most of the sicknesses here are caused

Water crisis hits Kagadi, Kakumiro and Kibaale



Residents fetch water from Ndaiga Landing Site in Kagadi District. PHOTO/ SEGUJJA BYOMUGABI

by unsafe water," Mr Leonard Masereka, a resident, said.

Sources with animals

Local leaders say residents in several villages share water sources with animals, while sanitation and waste management remain poor.

"We feel neglected by our local government. People have lost trust in the system because basic services like water, health and education are not accessible," Mr Muhammad Kiseembo, the chairperson of Kabukanga Village, said.

The situation is not very different in parts of Kakumiro District, where safe water coverage ranges from 13 percent in Kakindoo Sub-county to 95 percent in Bwanswa Sub-county. Several sub-counties, including Birembo, Kisita, Nkooko, Nalweyo, Mpsaana and Kakumiro Town Council, register below 40 percent access.

Shs3,000

Cost of a jerrycan of safe water in Ndaiga Sub-county in Kagadi District

Kakumiro District is represented by Woman MP Robinah Nabbanja, who also serves as the Prime Minister.

Residents in Kakindoo Sub-county say they often walk long distances to fetch safe water and sometimes resort to using unsafe open wells.

"Waste management is poor, and children have even drowned while fetching water from open water sources. If we had piped water systems, these problems would be reduced," Ms Ritah Birungi, a resident, said.

In neighbouring Kibaale District, which is home to Finance minister Matia Kasajja, residents say universal access to safe water is still far from being achieved.

Water coverage in the district ranges from 43 percent in Nyamarwa Sub-county to 95 percent in Kibaale Town Council. Officials say the district currently has only one piped water system, while Kagadi has two.

Water points

Across the three districts, there are 1,428 domestic water points in Kagadi, 760 in Kibaale and 676 in Kakumiro, serving hundreds of thousands of rural residents. Records indicate that 372 water points in Kagadi, 31 in Kibaale and 194 in Kakumiro have not been working for more than five years and are now considered abandoned.

Kagadi District Water Engineer Robert

WATER COVERAGE

• Kakumiro District - 31%

• Kagadi District - 57%

• Kibaale District - 65%

Lowest access areas

• Ndaiga Sub-county (Kagadi) - 3%

• Kakindoo Sub-county (Kakumiro) - 13%

Source: Ministry of Water and Environment Water Supply Atlas

Bukenya acknowledged the challenges, especially in Ndaiga Sub-county, saying conventional water sources such as boreholes and shallow wells have not worked in the area.

"As a district, our mandate is to provide boreholes, shallow wells and protected springs. But Ndaiga is a water-stressed area where those options do not work. We need a full water supply system, which requires more than Shs2.5 billion," he said.

He added that attempts to drill underground water had failed despite using equipment from neighbouring districts.

"Ndaiga is near water bodies, but drilling did not yield results. We designed a bulk water transfer system from Kyaterekeru Sub-county, and the Ministry of Water and Environment approved the plan. However, we are still searching for funding," he said.

Local leaders say the lack of safe water has also created a financial burden for households.

"A jerrycan costs Shs3,000 from neighbouring areas for someone who needs safe water in his home. In my family, we spend about Shs10,000 daily on mineral water for drinking. Those who cannot afford it fetch water from the lake or River Muzizi," Mr Gilbert Okumu, the Ndaiga LCI chairperson, said.