Part of the sh25.7b river Nyarwodho gravity flow water scheme

Nebbi gets safe, clean water

By Hudson Apunyo

More than a year ago, Doreen Aciro would spend hours to and from the nearest borehole, which was her only access to safe water, but thanks to a government intervention that has since brought water at her doorstep.

Much of the time she used to spend looking for water will now be spent on other productive activities.

The resident of Jupakeno village in Mbaro East Parish, Nyaravur Sub County is happy after getting tap water.

"I used to spend an hour at the borehole waiting for my turn to fetch water," Aciro says. But with water at her doorstep, she has no such worries. She is one of several beneficiaries of a recently commissioned gravity flow water scheme.

The sh25.7b gravity flow water scheme from Nyarwodho River has been handed over to the northern umbrella of water and sanitation authority for operation and maintenance. Phase I of the project funded by the Government of Uganda is set to benefit over 45,000 people in Nebbi and part of Pakwach districts.

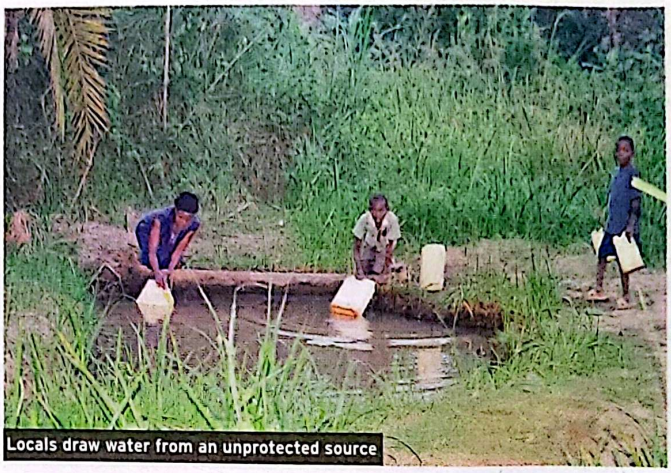
The project work which commenced in February 2014 is part of a sh56b Alwi dry corridor project to be implemented in three phases.

Nebbi district local government initiated the project in 2011 to improve access to clean and safe water but because of its magnitude, the Ministry of Water and Environment intervened and started construction works in Feb 2014.

The whole system is designed to serve 85,750 beneficiaries in 9 sub counties including Alwi, Pakwach, Panyango, Nebbi, part of Kuchwiny, Nyaravur and Parombo.

Phase II will cover the sub counters of Pakwach and Panyago, and parts of Nyaravur sub county that is not covered in the first phase. Phase III will cover Parombo and deeper Kuchwing sub counties.

Festo Thugitho, the senior assistant secretary in charge of Nyaravur sub-county said before the intervention, there was acute shortage of clean safe water in the sub-county. He said some people have already been connected to the system and those remaining will be



Locals draw water from an unprotected source

operator.

"As more people get connected to this water system, it will give more time to economic activities, sanitation will be improved and water borne diseases will reduce" he said.

Ponsiano Owachgiu, the vice chairperson LCIII Nyaravur sub county expressed gratitude to the government for the intervention. "Our people can now go and fetch water at their own time and cannot take much time on the line as it used to be.' He said.

Engineer Godfrey Hashakimana, the coordinator of Umbrella of Water for Sanitation Authorities said they were created 2002 to handle operation and maintenance and direct management of pipe water system in small towns and rural growth centres.

Engineer Jeff Seguya said phase I covers Oweko, Nyaravur, Alwi and Kucwing, serving an estimate of 45,000 people. Phase II which is funded by African Development Bank covers Pakwach, Panyango and some areas in Nyaravur Sub County. Phase III will cover Parombo and part of Kucwiny sub county.

System component

Eng. Seguya said they identified a strategic position on River Nyarwodho at the border

water. The water goes through conventional treatment at the plant before its transported through pipes to reservoir tanks where its supplied to target project sites.

The entire system, Seguya said, is supposed to serve a population of 85, 000 people with pipe work of 70km. The water flows by gravity making it less expensive to operate.

Those who were interested applied and assessment was made. The criteria was that they should meet the minimum standard of sanitation and hygiene within the households. At least 780 connections were then made in phase one.

Hand over

The Commissioner Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Department Eng. Christopher Tumisiime said the main purpose of the water supply system is to address the poor water situation in the Alwi dry corridor. He said during the test running phase, they were giving water to the people free but now that the system is handed over to an operator they will start paying.

Eng. Rwaka P.Muchuguzi the Manager Northern Umbrella of Water and Sanitation expressed gratitude for being given the opportunity to manage the project.

Contention over tariff

According to engineer Muchuguzi said locals will not buy water but make a contribution to the cost of production and operation. He said consumers will pay sh2,500 per 1,000 litres. "The price of water is fair and affordable for everybody." This remark left the audience grumbling

Pakwach district chairperson Robert Steen Omito appealed for fair tariff in order to serve the people.

He said if the project is to serve the purpose for which its meant to ensure people enjoy access to clean water, the connection fee must not be so high. "The role of the ministry should be put out clearly so that people do not see Northern Umbrella as a kind of profit making entity."

The RDC Nebbi district Bessie Ajilong was concerned that the tariff should not be so high considering the economic status of the people in the area.

She stressed that it took years for the people to get the clean safe water and they should benefit and encourage others to connect to the scheme water.

The RDC said the situation at the trading centres is different from places like Alwi where people were not bathing and marriages failed because of lack of water.

"For us we have been living with these people and we know them, for you are just from Kampala and going back, let's give them fair rate." Ajilong pleaded.

Pakwach vice chairperson Jesta Akello Okori added her voice to that of the RDC saying if the tariff is made low, many people will be connected. She said in Pakwach where National Water and Sewerage Corporation is the operator, many people have been disconnected because of unfair tariff.

Eng Muchuguzi relented and said he will organise a meeting with the stakeholders so that they work out agreeable tariff.

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