

Buyende's battle for clean water finally ends

BUYENDE

By Tom Gwebayanga

Engineers without Borders, under the New Hampshire Professional Chapter USA, in conjunction with Busoga Volunteers for Community Development have sunk a sh20m borehole in the area, ending over 35 years of suffering.

The development that was lobbied for by the Buyende district Woman MP, Veronica Babirye Kadogo, sent residents into excitement and dancing during the commissioning that was presided over by the entourage from the US, led by Eng. Jodie.

The LC1 chairperson, Besi Mookye, said with the new borehole, frequent visits to health facilities and deaths as a result of taking unsafe water shall be minimised.

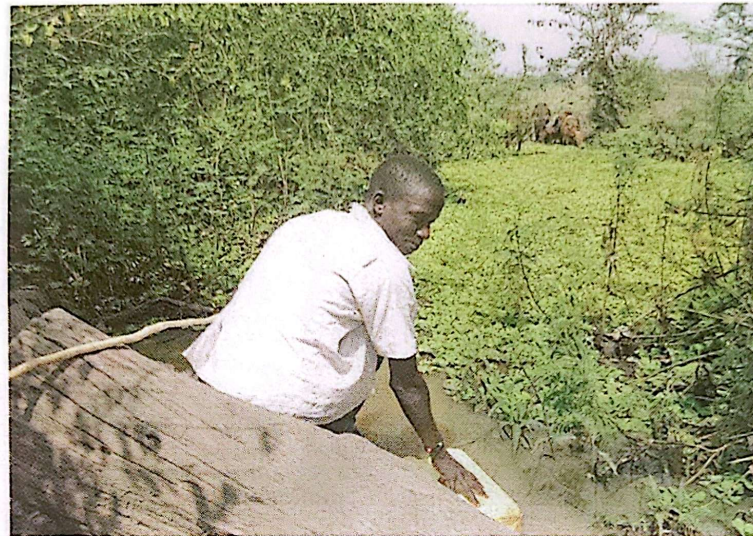
Mookye thanked the leaders for being sympathetic to the people they lead.

For the residents of Nabigwo, Bugweri, Bukukobba and Nabitula villages in Bugaya sub-county, Buyende district, drinking unsafe, contaminated well water has been the case for the last 35 years.

With a population of 1,700, the villages, have been an island, as residents trekked to neighbouring villages, between four to six kilometers away in search for borehole water.

The biggest percentage who could not manage trekking ended up drinking the water from Nabigwo well, located in the swamp that borders Nabitula village, which they shared with livestock, including pigs.

The *New Vision* witnessed an awesome man-livestock scramble for water, before a 10-year-old boy filled his jerrycan and



A man drawing water from Nabigwo well as cattle in the background drink the same water. Photo by Tom Gwebayanga

gulped some of the contaminated contents. Nabigwo is where the Gombolola Internal Security Officer (GISO) for Bugaya sub-county, Herbert Kamanyire, resides, but asked why the people were suffering, he said: "Prominent residents scramble for power at the cost of the innocent locals. They are divided and that is why they have missed out on a lot of privileges."

Samuel Ngobi, the head of the water users' committee said: "Domestic violence has been rampant, resulting from the distant water sources. Women would trek for water and come back late which is why

their husbands often beat them up."

Kadogo hailed the engineers for lessening the challenge of finding water in the rural area, adding that more shall be drilled.

The LC5 chairman, Robert Ziribasanga, hailed the volunteers for adding value to Buyende, saying: "Because water is life, you have added life to these people."

Geoffrey Kitumbo, the engineer with Busoga Volunteers, said the safe water development has not only solved the decades' challenge, but also changed the face of homesteads in terms of hygiene and sanitation.

WHAT RESIDENTS SAY

Betty Mwokye, LC1 chairperson

We, the women, have been the worst hit, because we need a lot of water to wash our bodies and it is worse during our monthly periods. I am happy that the challenge has been dealt with.



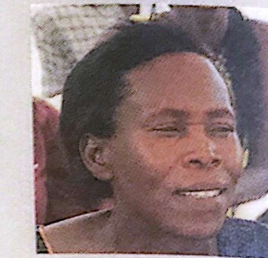
Herbert Kamanyire, resident of Nabigwo
Besides poverty, water has been one of the major security concerns in the area.

As beneficiaries, we need to team up and maintain the source for even generations to come.



Juliet Tibakuno, district councillor, Bugaya sub-county

At least we have shared the cake of getting a district status. Otherwise, we would have suffered another decade. Thanks to our MPs who lobbied the donors.



Waibi Kika, Nabitula

I have a permanent stomach illness which I suspect is a result of drinking water from the well. It is the reason I offered my only chicken to the engineers who came to our rescue.

That bad water has affected my life so much that I look like a 79-year-old, yet I am just 49.

