



WATER SCARCITY

Death trap

A girl draws water from a valley dam at Wabbale Village, Nakasongola District, recently. Such water sources have proved to be dangerous to children. PHOTO BY DAN WANICERA

46 per cent of Kalangala children malnourished, says new report

Situation. The report indicates that up to 21 per cent of the children live in families with absolute poverty.

BY HENRY LUBULWA
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KALANGALA. A new Information and Research Centre survey has discovered that 46 per cent of children aged between six and 19 years in the Island district of Kalangala are malnourished.

Among the diseases the report mentions, which are a result of lack of a balanced diet in the children's daily meals, include; Kwashiorkor, marasmus and several skin infections.

The report, which was launched at Information and Research Centre offices in Kalangala Town recently, indicates that up to 21 per cent of the said children live in families with absolute poverty, many of which cannot afford a meal a day.

These children visibly look emaciated, with pale and wrinkled skins, sunken eyes and scanty hair that bears a golden brown type, according to the report.

Kalangala is an island district with 84 islands and 92 gazetted landing sites. The major economic activity on the islands is fishing. Other sources of income include farming with a host of Kalangala's population engaged in palm oil production.

However, many of the islanders remain unemployed due to the depleted fish stocks in Lake Victoria. Majority have resorted to cutting down forests for rice growing.

The report indicates that some of the people who fail to get food have now resorted to eating palm oil fruits as daily meals.

"We, researchers, noticed that several young children have always been given palm oil fruits to take to school for feeding yet the fruits are not rich in all food values for a balanced diet.

KEY ISSUE

Kalangala is an island district with 84 islands. The major economic activity on the islands is fishing. Other sources of income include farming with a host of Kalangala's population engaged in palm oil production. But many of the islanders remain unemployed due to the depleted fish stocks in Lake Victoria.

This leaves the children malnourished and later infected with several diseases related to bad nutrition," the report reads in part.

While launching the report, Mr Richard Odur, the coordinator at Information and Research Centre, said the survey that covered 54 of the 92 major landing sites in Kalangala, focused on how children in the Island district are fed.

"Our focus was to mainly find solutions to the many island children who live in areas that are not easily accessible and rarely get food from the main land," Mr Odur said.

Kalangala's Geographical set up is mainly by rocks, this creates limited land for the people in the area to practice meaningful farming. However, the limited arable land has been mainly used for settlement.

This leaves the district with a shortage of food. Also, cases of mal-

briefly

Father arrested

LYANTONDE. Police in Lyantonde District are holding a man for allegedly failing to send his son to school. The suspect, who is a resident of Bitabo Village, was arrested on the orders of the district chairperson, Mr Fred Muhangi, after he found the minor grazing cattle during school time. During interrogation at police, the suspect told police that he had no money to take his child to school and asked for forgiveness. [Malik Fahd Jjingo]

Residents in panic

KALUNGU. Residents of Masaka sub-region are living in fear and panic after anonymous leaflets, warning of fresh attacks on people's houses on October 30, were dropped in the area. The leaflets were dropped in the villages of Lusango, Kalungi and Lukaya Town Council in Kalungu District. This comes less than two weeks after machete-wielding thugs attacked residents in the district and left four dead and 20 injured. Mr Lameck Kigozi, the southern regional police spokesperson, asked residents to remain calm. [Christopher Kisekka]

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'46 per cent of Kalangala children malnourished'

Voices

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"Our focus was to mainly find solutions to the many island children who live in areas that are not easily accessible and rarely get food from the main land."

RICHARD ODUR,
COORDINATOR AT
INFORMATION AND
RESEARCH CENTRE

"Yoghurt would help in improving diet. Our initiative is aimed at having a healthy society that would fight for transformation."

DANIEL MBAZIIRA,
THE PROGRAMME
OFFICER AT HEIFER
INTERNATIONAL

"When children are malnourished and at the same time living with HIV, it becomes very difficult for them to take their daily drugs,"

HENRY KIZITO,
COORDINATOR
KALANGALA FORUM
FOR PEOPLE LIVING
WITH HIV/AIDS
NETWORK

"Whereas we tried to help children get enough food that would help in the provision of enough nutrients, many parents area palm oil plantations continued to pack cooked palm oil fruits as meals for children at school,"

PETER SSENKANGA,
CHAIRPERSON OF
KALANGALA DISTRICT
EDUCATION FORUM

nutrition in the district have increased.

Kalangala District in collaboration with Heifer International and other partners, started distributing yogurt to different children to supplement children's diet.

According to Mr Daniel Mbazziira, the programme officer at Heifer International, the nationwide project is aimed at meeting the International goals on curbing the rate of malnutrition in low developing countries.

"Yoghurt would help in the improvement of diet, especially to the young children. Our initiative is aimed at having a healthy society that would fight for transformation," he said.

The Kalangala District health officer, Dr Hillary Bitakaramire, wondered why parents fail to provide their children with a balanced diet yet they can spend on alcohol.

Palm oil fruits

A report by the Kalangala District Education Forum in December 2016 indicated that several parents in the district had resorted to feeding children on palm oil fruits, which left many school-going pupils malnourished.

This prompted Action Aid Uganda, a local NGO, to fund a programme that helped different schools in the district get several gardens and cows that would provide enough food and milk for the children.

However, only a few schools adopted the project while many asked parents to pack food for their children.

According to Mr Henry Kizito, the coordinator of Kalangala Forum for People Living with HIV/AIDS Network, failure to provide a balanced diet has stifled their efforts to care for children in primary and secondary schools who are living with HIV/AIDS.

"Such children need special attention and this call for special meals, which we can't provide regularly. When children are malnourished and at the same time living with HIV, it becomes very difficult for them to take their daily drugs," Mr Kizito said.



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