

**Schedule.** Construction of the water testing laboratory will commence in October and it is expected to be completed in two years' time, according to Mr Steven Ogwete, the national project coordinator.

# New laboratory to ensure clean water supply, boost fisheries

**Voices**

"That will be an opportunity for the region because we were taking samples to Entebbe as we research on quality of water here."
**EDGAR MUGANZI, THE COORDINATOR OF NATURAL RESOURCES DEFENCE INITIATIVES**

"Water testing helps in quality assurance on surface and ground water for human beings, it measures the safety and pollution in water bodies. So water testing helps so much in the fisheries industry, water quality is a key component in the fisheries production, so the water testing lab will help the region."
**JECONIOUS MUSINGWIIRE, NEMA WESTERN REGION PUBLIC AWARENESS OFFICER**

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**KABAROLE/KASESE.** Residents of Fort Portal Municipality in Kabarole District have long complained about the quality of tap water supplied to them.

Ms Nyakato Rusoke, a resident of Kitumba, East Division in Fort Portal Municipality, says: "I collected water, not from River Mpanga, but from a tap in the morning and I thought I would use it to prepare breakfast. What I saw defeated my understanding! Why should consumers part with our hard-earned money to pay for such dirty water".

She continues: "In my layman's view, this water is not fit to even be used in a toilet, because it will leave it stained! I have observed this for some time."

However, with the establishment of a multi-billion laboratory for testing water quality in the Albertine region in the offing, things are set to improve.

The $7.321 million (Shs26. 2b) laboratory will be based in Fort Portal, Kabarole District.

The scheme which will commence in October, will be implemented under the lakes Edward and Albert Integrated Fisheries and Water Resources Management Project ( LEAF II), and is expected to be completed in two years' time, according to Mr Steven Ogwete, the national project coordinator.

Mr Denis Muramuzi, the National Water and Sewerage Corporation (NWSC) Fort Portal branch manager, says it is expensive to filter polluted water from Mpanga River because it needs a lot of chemicals to purify it.

Because of the contamination in the last six years, water treatment cost at NWSC plant in Fort Portal has tripled as they use more chemicals than before to purify the water.

NWSC supplies water to 7, 017 households in Fort Portal Town alone and of late consumers have complained of the quality of the tap water pumped to their homes.

"Therefore, the water testing lab by LEAF II will come with advanced data equipment that we shall all use to have better quality water. Currently, we do some quality tests at our plant in Fort Portal, but at times we take samples to NWSC lab in Mbarara," Mr Muramuzi adds.

The Fort Portal laboratory is part of the bigger $24.54 million (Shs88. 3b) five-year project that covers Uganda and the Democratic Republic of Congo that will be complete in June 2021. The project is funded by Africa Development Bank and Global Environmental Fund (GEF).

**Shs26.2b**

**THE AMOUNT OF MONEY THE LABORATORY IS EXPECTED TO COST.**

The LEAF project will set up water resource monitoring and assessment centre for lakes George and Albert and their catchment areas.

The project is aimed at boosting fishing industries of countries that share the lakes.

Rivers Nyamwamba, Mpanga and Semliki empty into lakes George and Albert, respectively. Human activities along these rivers affect the water quality upstream to downstream and also affect fishing in the lakes through siltation and pollution.

"LEAF is to sustainably increase the lakes' fish productivity by promoting good fish capture and management practice, restoration of the lakes catchments and improvement of water quality on the shared lakes' water resources" said Mr Ogwete.

According to Mr Ogwete, the project will also provide a platform for local governments to share and exchange knowledge, information, experiences, lessons and challenges that may be faced in managing and conserving water bodies.

In the Albert region, LEAF II Project covers Bushenyi, Rubirizi, Mitooma, Kanungu, Kasese Rukungiri, Bundibugyo, Ntoroko, Hoima, Kagadi, Buliisa, Kibaale, Masindi, Nebbi and Kabarole districts.

Mr Ogwete says the project will create an enabling environment and strengthen the legal, policy, institutional and regulatory framework for sustainable management of natural resources and protection of the environment.

The project has three components: fisheries development and management, integrated water resources management and project management and coordination.

Under the fisheries development and management, landing sites with fish processing facilities, feeder roads, and safe water supply and sanitation facilities will be constructed.

Five landing sites will be constructed at Rwenshama on Lake Edward, Mahyoro on Lake George, and Kitebere, Mbegu and Bei on Lake Albert.

**Goals**

LEAF phase II is expected to tackle poverty reduction, ensure food security through development of fishery sector where nearly 45, 000 jobs are expected to be directly and indirectly created.

About 50 per cent of those expected to benefit from the fisheries sector are women.

"Due to the weakened river banks arising from human and cattle paths, erosion along the banks has contributed to the release of soils into the rivers leading to the silting effect of the river on the DRC side," Ogwete says

"There is a need to dredge and deepen the River Semliki and remove the silt that has blocked the passage of water along the channel causing its continuous shift," he adds.

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