

Kabarole targets water for all

The name Kabarole means “let them see.” This was probably coined centuries ago, but it has become more relevant in recent times. The district has been catapulted into the limelight as a model of how to achieve access to safe water and sanitation services for all, writes **Gerald Tenywa**

WEST

Imelda Bamwogeza, a resident of Karambi in Kabarole, is a contented mother.

She does not have to walk out of her residence to collect water. A hand-dug well has been constructed at her doorstep.

“I get water any time I need it,” Bamwogeza said.

She adds that fetching water is no longer a back-breaking activity.

The time saved by Bamwogeza has been put to making handicrafts.

“I earn an extra income, which was not the case previously,” she said.

Standing in pride and dignity at Kitarasa ward in Karago town council, Fort Portal is Moses Kwikiriza, the area LC1 chairperson. He is leading by example after constructing a modern pit-latrine at his home.

“I constructed this pit-latrine and three other people have followed in my footsteps,” he said, adding that the pit-latrine has cut the risks of spreading water-borne diseases in his village.

“This is what all the over 325,000 people living in Kabarole deserve – total access to water and sanitation,” Olive Tumuhairwe, a health inspector working with Kabarole district, said.

Tumuhairwe said access to safe water is critical because water is life and health is wealth.

“Provision of safe water, sanitation, as well as hygiene for everyone will reduce the disease burden,” Tumuhairwe said.

In February last year, Kabarole district launched its WASH (water, sanitation and hygiene) master plan 2018-2030. The plan provides a framework for implementation and delivery of the vision of safe water, sanitation and

Children fetching water at a borehole in Kabarole district



PHOTOS BY GERALD TENYWA

hygiene for all by 2030.

Kabarole is the first district in Uganda with such a masterplan. The district is also setting the pace in costing the planning and investment required to achieve the targets of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 6. The goal is one of 17 Sustainable Development Goals established by the United Nations General Assembly in 2015. It calls for clean water and sanitation for all people.

The International Centre for Water and Sanitation (IRC) describes Kabarole’s step to draw a roadmap as a milestone towards achieving SDG6 in the district.

“We have documents that state the existing situation and the financing gap in the district. We also know how much we need to deliver SDG6 in Kabarole,” country director IRC Uganda Jane Nabunnya Mulumba said.

The masterplan has estimated \$24m (sh88.5b) as the financing required for quality water services and \$48m (about sh177b) for sanitation for everyone in Kabarole to be reached.

Kabarole district chairperson Richard Rwabuhinga said collaborating with IRC gave the district the push to visualise what was needed to achieve their vision.

“The challenge in as far as the WASH sector is concerned, is the lack of co-ordination and collaboration. If we got the resources now, we are sure of where we are going,” he said.

With only 10 years remaining to achieve the target, access to water services in Kabarole



Kwikiriza opening the ventilated improved pit-latrine he constructed

BETTER CO-ORDINATION

There is need for better co-ordination between civil society organisations, the Government and the communities to improve access to safe water.

“Rather than rush to construct water points without consulting the district WASH (water, sanitation and hygiene) governance structures, IRC works together with the district and other partners to localise the vision of Sustainable Development Goal 6,” Martin Watsisi, the regional WASH advisor at the International Centre for Water and Sanitation Uganda, said.

“We involve the community because they need to manage the water sources themselves. This ensures sustainability,” Watsisi adds.

remains low. It stands at 58% and less than the national average of 70%.

In addition, reliability of existing water supply facilities is low (45%). This

is due to poor operation and maintenance, which leads to frequent breakdown. There is also high contamination of drinking water sources (64%), especially in the rural areas.

allocated sh400m for four water sources as a conditional grant. If all this is going to construct a water scheme for a parish, you need five years to construct a scheme of sh1.3b,” Watsisi said.

He added that the Government is not making adequate contribution for operation and maintenance of water sources. This leaves the burden entirely on the users.

The Government has set a critical threshold of sh400,000 for the district to repair a water source, according to Watsisi.

However, if a water point breaks down (at the beginning of the financial year), the repair of the water source has to wait for the next financial year.

Watsisi says there are water sources that have not been functional for three years. He adds that there is a bureaucratic chain that starts with the LC1 through the parish, sub-county and then district offices.

“The process of procurement takes as long as long two months,” Watsisi said.

“That is why water sources take long to be repaired. When they take that long, the community will resort to the alternative unprotected water sources,” Watsisi added.

The water quantity and quality is declining as a result of pollution from commercial tea growing and faecal contamination.

This has come as a result of weak institutional capacity for water resources management. Lack of sound governance for water resources management, especially at the local level, also contributes to the problem.

Brian Guma, the team leader of the Albert Water Management Zone, says the water in the river had thinned out during the dry spells. Today, the river is recovering after re-forestation and restoration of the wetlands.

“Provision of WASH services takes more than just effective management of natural resources.

“We need the right infrastructure, robust institutions and implementable laws,” Rwabuhinga said.

He added that effective planning, learning, financing and monitoring are also critical.

Kabarole is not yet there, but has tremendous experiences to share with other districts that are still grappling with how to make progress to achieve access to water and sanitation by 2030.

SANITATION

Over 60% of the latrines in rural areas are poorly constructed, do not meet the standards for basic sanitation services and cannot be emptied. Moreover, the district has only one emptier.

In addition, the adoption of hand-washing at household level is also low. Less than 10% of the households had improved sanitation facilities with water and soap.

EXPENSIVE INFRASTRUCTURE

Water services require expensive construction. A water scheme to serve one parish, for example, is estimated to cost sh1.3b, according to Martin Watsisi, the regional WASH advisor at IRC Uganda.

“On average, a district is