

**Threat.** The residents say they fetch water from contaminated wells and in wetlands, hence being exposed to water-borne diseases which are costly to cure.

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# Scare as elephants, locals compete for water source

**KABAROLE.** For the past 30 years, 65-year-old Fred Ndabahwenje has lived at Nyabubale Village in Kiko Town Council, Kabarole District. But he treks more than 3kms in search of safe water.

Even when the World Health Organisation stresses the right to safe water for both domestic use and recreational purposes, this is not the case in Kabarole District.

Mr Ndabahwenje says the only available wells were dug up by the residents from water stressed villages and that the water is shared with elephants that stray from the nearby Kibaale National Park.

“For many years, government has been promising to avail us with water. They have been telling us that they will extend gravity flow water or piped water from National Water and Sewerage Cooperation but in vain,” he notes.

He says they fetch dirty water from wells and in wetlands, exposing residents to water-borne diseases which he says are costly to cure, especially in private hospitals.

However, Mr Andrew Kusemererwa, from Kyalegi Village in the same district, says residents are helped by Kiko Tea Estate that at times avails safe water but not daily.

Mr Kusemererwa says the three neighbouring villages and Kiko trading centre all use one shallow well that is also overwhelmed by the community as it sometimes dries up.

“We use boda bodas to move 2kms to get clean water. Each jerrycan costs Shs1,000 during dry season,” he says, adding: “Since I was born, I have seen my parents getting water from the same well. We are tired of dirty water.”

**500**

AVERAGE NUMBER OF RESIDENTS SHARING A WATER SOURCE IN ONE VILLAGE

Ms Grace Banura from Kiko Village, says more than 500 people from her village share one shallow well that was built in 1996 by the community.

She says the well is seasonal and water is rationed by the area water committee.

“They ration the water supply because the committee doesn’t want to run out of water. When they open it in the evening, each person is allowed to fetch only one jerrycan,” Banura says.

In Harugongo Sub-county, the story is not so different.

The LC I chairman of Mpinga Village, Mr Moses Irumba, says many



**Contaminated.** A man fetches water from a well at Nyabubale Village in Kabarole District recently. PHOTO BY ALEX ASHABA

people trek long distances to fetch water from swamps which in most cases contract diseases.

Mr Irumba says the only three shallow wells in the five neighbouring villages were set up in 2002 by Hewasa, a non-governmental organisation in Fort Portal Diocese, to enable people get clean water.

“The five villages of Kyabuhara, Mudama, Kyeheembe, Mpinga and Mirongo use three shallow wells which are overwhelmed and at times dry up hence affecting everyone,” Irumba says.

He says the shallow wells were constructed to serve a small population that has since increased without matching water resources in the area.

Ms Florence Apecho, the head teacher at Mpinga Primary School in Harugongo Sub-county, says though the school has a tank for harvesting rain water, it is also shared by all members of the community hence dries up quickly.

“When our tank dries up, we face a big challenge. We are forced to send pupils to fetch water far away from the school as early as 7am. This puts the lives of these pupils at risk,” Ms Apecho says.

Kahugi Parish has only two shallow wells that serve a population of more than 500 people, according to Mr Aston Mabiho who is a resident in the area. He says the area has schools and a health centre that require constant

## Voices

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water supply.

“The water we use in our homes is not good. People move between two and three kilometres to access clean water,” Mr Mabiho says.

Despite Uganda being signatory to Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) where number six is to ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all, several villages in Uganda are still behind on this.

The villages in Kiko town council are: Ruteete, Mugusu, Harugongo, Busoro, Hakibale, Kasenda and Kichwamba that do not have improved water source.

Despite Kabarole and Bunyangabu districts being endowed with several rivers and about 56 crater lakes, their people are part of the 35 per cent of

the whole population in Uganda living without clean water.

The current national coverage is 65 per cent.

## Research

According to a report of the UN Secretary-General, “Progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals”, access to safe water and sanitation and sound management of freshwater ecosystems are essential to human health, environmental sustainability and economic prosperity.

In 2015, 6.6 billion people (more than 90 per cent of the world’s population) used improved drinking water sources. In this case, people without access live predominantly in rural areas.

According to the National Service Delivery Survey 2015 report, inadequate safe water sources (47 per cent) was the major constraint faced by households in accessing safe water, followed by long distance (34 per cent).

The Water and Environment Sector Performance Report (2015) indicates that the sector target for access to improved water is to have 77 per cent of people in rural areas within 1km and 100 per cent of people in urban areas within 0.2km of improved water source but this hasn’t been achieved.

Across the survey periods, the majority of households moved a distance of up to half a kilometer

with percentages ranging from 63 per cent to 69 per cent in the wet season compared to 57 per cent to 60 per cent in dry season.

The proportion of households who travel up to half a kilometre to a safe water source constituted the majority in the two survey periods for both rural and urban areas.

A higher proportion of the households in the urban (76 per cent) compared to rural areas (55 per cent) travelled a distance of up to 0.5km distance to a safe water source.

The same survey indicates that inadequate safe water sources were the major constraint faced by households followed by long distance.

The two constraints were more pronounced in rural compared to urban areas.

According to a July report on water and sanitation status and plans for Kabarole District Local Government authored Mr Pius Mugabi Katuramu, the senior water officer, water coverage in the district is at 72 per cent.

But an independent survey carried out in June by Mr Martin Watsisi of International Water and Sanitation Centre on Kabarole District found that 45.2 per cent of the water sources were constructed over 15 years ago, 38 per cent are between six and 15 years old and only 16 per cent were constructed in last five years. The rest were not known.