



Improving water governance in Uganda

QUARTERLY BULLETIN ON WATER DIALOGUES IN UGANDA

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Introduction

The United Nations affirmed the Right to Water on 26 November 2002, noting that such a right is indispensable for leading a life in human dignity and a prerequisite for the realization of other human rights

The National Association of Professional Environmentalists (NAPE) together with African Network on Water and Sanitation (ANEW) and Water Aid UK have the pleasure to present to you this bulletin on the status quo of water and sanitation governance in Uganda, particularly in Kampala and Mukono Districts

The water and sanitation crisis in Uganda is a largely silent crisis. Every year, some people, mostly children, die from diseases associated with inadequate water supply, sanitation and hygiene.

The water crisis is a problem that is getting worse even as we strive towards meeting the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which include the targets of halving, by 2015, the proportion of people without access to safe drinking water and proper sanitation

It is a crisis with many dimensions, but one of the most important – and neglected – is the governance aspect: meeting the MDGs will depend in large part on whether we can all value and manage scarce water resources better at both the individual and collective level. We need to support national policy and the development of improved water service delivery mechanisms, through a participatory approach, at all levels of society.

This bulletin comes in the wake of a five year programme



on promoting water users Multistakeholders dialogues in Uganda supported by Water AID and ANEW. This programme focuses on improving governance, transparency and accountability within the water and sanitation service delivery by engaging the local communities to work in partnership with the local leaders/service providers to improve the quality of water service delivery through various water users Multistakeholders dialogues. This initiative brings grassroot communities, and service providers together in an active and participatory decision – making process regarding water and sanitation service provision.

Objectives of the programme

- To empower local communities to demand accountability and responsiveness from local leaders and service providers in the Water and Sanitation sector
 - To influence the government policies and action plans on water and sanitation with a view of obtaining better water and sanitation services
- To enhance the capacities of the local communities in setting water and sanitation priorities and planning to achieve better and affordable services.

Achievements since inception

- The project mapping was done and successfully introduced to the local leaders and technocrats of Mukono town council and Nakawa division
- A baseline survey was conducted in June,2009 to establish the status of water and sanitation governance in Mukono Town council and Nakawa Division
- A Multistakeholders workshop was conducted where a cross section of stakeholders had a shared understanding of the water and sanitation situation of the project areas
- A data base has been created to document the survey findings and for ease of reference
- Ten Village Action Water and Sanitation Committees (VAWSCs) have been formed and trained on their roles and responsibilities, water rights and water and sanitation policies in Uganda.
- Strategic planning meetings have been conducted with the VAWSCs, where priority areas for dialogue and engagement with service providers and local leaders have been set.
- The VAWSCs together with selected local leaders had a learning cross visit to Kawempe division to share experiences from a water governance project implemented by our partners.



Waste contaminated water is dangerous to human life.

Key findings of the baseline survey on water and sanitation in Kampala and Mukono districts

- There is inadequate water supply and poor sanitation in both areas of study. Piped water is not afforded by all, but some people resort to streams, springs and boreholes.
- Garbage disposal and collection was found to be a problem to all areas of the study.
- The communities do not participate in planning, budgeting and decision-making processes in regard to water and sanitation services due to lack of awareness and proper understanding of roles and responsibilities at various levels.
- The local people have little knowledge on water and sanitation governance including the basic components of good governance
- Information and accountability mechanisms are in place but not very effective. There are no community meetings to discuss issues of water and sanitation.
- The local communities are not aware of key policy issues that govern water and sanitation. There is no provision for the communities to access the policy documents from the service providers.
- There are clear structures in respect to technical and advisory support but they do not scale down to the community level. There is little effort on the part of service providers to respond to community needs. This is because there is no clear provision for feedback.
- There is little capacity for the community members to engage their local leaders to demand for proper services delivery and hold them accountable.

The role of women in water and sanitation governance

Women are primary users of water in cooking, washing and tending livestock among others. They play a key role in organizing village-level structures to ensure the sustainability of the water sources and facilities provided in their localities as well as managing and monitoring water and sanitation development.

It's at this point that emphasis should be put on supporting women's community groups and Organizations to participate in providing water and sanitation Services because often they subsidize and manage services and play an important role in bridging the supply gap of water and sanitation services. More to this, women's groups, Committees and women's organizations are crucial to holding local governments and the Private sector accountable. More often their participation reduces corruption, Lowers costs, and

improves access among low-income communities.

Like many professionals say; provision of safe water and sanitation is the foundation of human and economic development in poor communities. Over and over again it has been demonstrated that success in water and sanitation programmes depends on creating a sense of local ownership. In the recent years the National Association of Professional Environmentalists (NAPE) has engaged in promoting the water and sanitation conditions of rural communities living around L.Victoria.

The communities of Kiziru fish landing site, Naminya resettlement and Luwero water stressed communities are some of the beneficiaries of NAPEs interventions. NAPE has facilitated the formation of Village environment committees (VECs) and Water and sanitation committees who have been trained on water and sanitation issues. The committee members play the role of sharing knowledge and skills acquired in the trainings to promote water and sanitation/ environmental protection in their communities



Participation is key in water governance

To date, community members of Kiziru, Naminya and Luwero can access safe and clean water through rain water harvesting and tapped water. This has greatly reduced occurrence of diseases caused by poor water management amongst many families.

The practice of Ecosan construction introduced by NAPE in these communities has tremendously improved the livelihood of the people. The human wastes from this kind of toilets (separates urine from faeces) is used as manure in their farms and also the urine is used

as a pesticide.

Climate change and water insecurity:

Uganda receives ample rainfall which is not evenly distributed. Most areas are dry with water and food shortage leading to unsustainable livelihoods. The ultimate cause of this pathetic situation is the change in the climate that has hit the region leaving water stressed communities vulnerable to diseases and poverty.

Uganda is likely to face worse water-stressed conditions. The water flows will become less predictable and more subject to extreme events. Among the projected outcomes are :

- Marked reductions in water availability in Uganda, as rainfall declines and temperature rises, with large productivity losses in basic food staples. Projections for rain fed areas point to potential productivity losses of 25% of most crops.
- In some areas, excessive rains will lead to severe floods that go with the consequences. The Teso region has had the predicament in the recent past

- Not long ago during the period of drought the lake waters declined. There was water rationing where many people could not access water during day. This was translated into loss of productivity and unnecessary inconveniences. Water was only available during night when usage was very low. The cost of water was also high because of the scarcity

- Some communities like in Luwero District where piped water is not available, residents end up moving long distances in search of water. In so doing. Other erstwhile worthy activities are foregone. This is a potential precursor to family breakages. Of course the main impact bearers are women and children. This has led to gender imbalance in terms of domestic chores

- The climate change impact is already taking its toll in Uganda . There are cases of disruption of food production systems exposing people to the threat of hunger. We have heard of animals dying, reduced milk supply, high costs of milk and not forgetting the looming famine in the entire nation.



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