

# Wetland, forest destruction

By Jacky Achan

**T**he first rainy season in Uganda covers the months of March, April and May. Direct rainfall is the major source of water for Uganda's lakes, rivers and wetlands, yet the recent uneven rainfall pattern is threatening this balance.

Forests and wetlands are key stores of water and they regulate its flow, Paul Mafabi, the director of environment affairs in the Ministry of Water and Environment, says.

"Forests and wetlands contribute to rainfall formation, which ensures we have water over a long period of time. If we destroy forests and wetlands, it breaks the water cycle," Mafabi explains.

According to *Water Resources of Uganda*, a research publication, 61% of the country's water is drawn from ground water sources, accessed from springs and boreholes.

"In many villages wells have dried up yet we used to have many," the National Forestry Authority executive director, Tom Okello Obong, says.

He adds: "Government would just connect a pipe and the locals would have water in plenty. However,



**A settlement in Kinawataka wetland in Kampala. Encroaching on such systems breaks the water cycle**

most of them have dried up because the forests which were holding the water and allowing them to sink are no longer there."

Obong says when it rains nowadays, most of the water just flows away. He says even the wetlands where the water would have gathered have also been destroyed.

"Water is now flowing on the surface looking for its path into Lake Victoria, in the process it is carrying soil because the area has been cleared of vegetation. We are silting the lake. In future, our lake will become so shallow and no economic activity will take place. Rivers have dried up too," he explains.

According to Water Aid, a non-governmental organisation, more than 23 million people in Uganda do not have clean water.

**Impact of degradation**  
By 2050, Africa's population is expected to double, with 80% of new residents living in urban areas, a recent

United Nations report indicates. To highlight key environment issues affecting water, Obong singled out an example of River Manafwa on Mt. Elgon.

"Thirty years ago, it had clean water. One would just scoop and drink it. You can't do that now because

the quantity has reduced tremendously since the catchment which are forests have been destroyed, there are some of the implications of degradation," he says. Obong says in 1990 the forest cover in Uganda stood at 24% today we are talking of just about 10%.

He says an increase in



## MINISTRY OF WATER AND ENVIRONMENT Water and Sanitation Development Facility – East

## World Water Day Celebrations 2019

Theme: "Leaving No One Behind"

Uganda joins the world to commemorate the World Water Day on 22<sup>nd</sup> March every year with an aim of focusing attention on the importance of Water. This year, the commemoration will be held at the Ministry of Water and Environment's (MWE) Water Resource Institute (WRI) in Entebbe, under the theme: "Leaving No One Behind". This year's theme explores the central promise of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goal 6 which focuses on ensuring sustainable management, availability and access to safe clean water and sanitation facilities for all by 2030.

The UN recognized access to safe clean water as an essential human right for the full enjoyment of life. However, increased environmental degradation and climate change, are driving water-related crises across the globe. Floods, drought and water pollution are all made worse by degraded environment ecosystems such as: wetlands, forests, vegetation, soil, rivers and lakes. Neglecting our ecosystems makes it hard to provide everyone with the water they need to survive and thrive.

Sustainable Development Goal 6 (SDG 6) aims at ensuring availability and sustainable management of water for all by 2030 which means "leaving no one behind" Leaving no one behind means improving water and environment natural resource management with focus on all the 6 targets of the Sustainable Development Goal on Water.

The Government of Uganda (GoU) is committed to the provision of safe clean water within easy reach and to improve sanitation for every Ugandan. The WSDF-E is a funding mechanism with the objective of improving the socio-economic situation and the opportunities of people living in the small towns (STs) and Rural Growth Centres (RGCS) in 44 Districts in Eastern and North-eastern Uganda namely: Amuria, Koto, Kaabong, Abim, Moroto, Katakwi, Soroti, Kaberamaido, Kumi, Bukedea, Bukwo, Kapchorwa, Nakapiripiti, Sironko, Manafwa, Bududa, Mbale, Tororo, Busia, Butaleja, Pallisa, Budaka, Namutumba, Bugiri, Kallio, Iganga, Mayuge, Kamuli, Jinja, Buvende, Namayingo, Amudat, Serere, Luuka, Bulambuli, Napak, Ngora, Kibuku, Kween, Butebo, Namisindwa, Nabilatuk, Bugweri and Kapelebyong.

A population of 575,574 persons has already benefited from the WSDF-E interventions in the region in the selected rural growth centres (RGCS) and small towns (STs) from development of piped water supply systems and improved sanitation services. Support from European Union (EU) and German Government through KfW among others enabled WSDF-E to supply the above population through grants but the funding has since ended. The need for continued funding from development partners is evident in order to achieve the theme, "Leaving No One Behind".

WSDF-E joined the entire world to commemorate World Water Day on 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2019, by holding the first, Eastern Regional Water and Environment Week in the Mbale from 11<sup>th</sup> – 14<sup>th</sup> March 2019 and participating in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Uganda Water

and Environment Week (UWEWK) from 18<sup>th</sup> – 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2019 under the theme: Water and Environment a strategic driver in attainment of Sustainable Development Goals 2030. Five sub-themes were elaborated, including: water-food-energy nexus, water, environment and society, green growth, blue economy and SDGs and financing SDGs.

The UWEWK events preceded the commemoration of three important International Days: World Forest Day, World Water Day and World Meteorological Day annually slated for 21<sup>st</sup>, 22<sup>nd</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> March with an overall goal of contributing to the national development goals through effective management of Water and Environment resources for sustainable socio-economic development of Uganda.

### WSDF-E progress to-date (Leaving No One Behind)

An integrated approach to management and utilisation of water and environment resources has the potential to solve many of our water challenges and ensure that both the current and future generations have access to these critical resources. We need to do so much more with 'green' infrastructure and harmonize it with 'grey' infrastructure wherever possible. Planting new forests, reconnecting rivers to floodplains, and restoring wetlands to rebalance the water cycle and improve human health and livelihoods. WSDF-E has contributed by reducing the pressure on fresh, surface and ground water systems by developing mechanisms to bring water closer to the people through access to piped water systems, protection of water catchment areas, and sanitation improvement among others.

### To date, the WSDF-E has:

- Served a total population of 575,574 (Design) in 35 RGCS/STs that have been implemented to completion since 2009.
- Completed Rehabilitation works 1 RGC/ST in Namuwenda
- 4 RGCs/STs with ongoing Construction works. They include: Namiwiva(75%), Bulegeni(85%), Bulopa(50%) and Binjinyi(35%)
- Ongoing Construction works for 1 Faecal sludge treatment plant in Kamuli(98%)
- Completed designs for 20 RGCS/STs.
- Constructed 146 Household Ecological Sanitation toilets to completion.
- Completed construction of 21 Public Sanitation toilets (Water borne toilets)
- Completed construction of 14 Institutional Sanitation toilets (urine diversion dry toilets and lined pit latrines)
- In Uganda today, leaving no one behind in the strive to ensure access to safe clean water supply and sanitation for all is not just a challenge of service provision, but it is intrinsically linked with climate change and environment natural resources management.

- Access to safe clean water and adequate sanitation is a basic human right and underpins success in development areas such as agriculture, energy, disaster resilience, human health, the environment, and ultimately economic growth. In many countries, economic and population growth, as well as urbanization, have increased water demand while supply has remained unchanged or even decreased due to climate change. To sustain economic growth and access to clean safe water and sanitation facilities for all Ugandans we must adopt an integrated approach by protecting and restoring water-related ecosystems, while leaving no one behind.

### Challenges

- The demand for safe, adequate and equitable piped water and improved sanitation services rises each day due rural-urban migration and increased population. Moreover, the demand is higher than the resource envelop available to serve every individual.
- Massive environmental degradation including rampant deforestation, reclamation of wetlands, uncontrolled waste water disposal and bush burning pose a big threat to sustainability of both ground water and fresh water resources for the current and future generation
- Dwindling financial support to the water and environment sector both locally and internationally

### Conclusion

Progress towards target SDG6 will help achieve the SDGs on health and well-being (SDG 3), safe water and sanitation (SDG 6), affordable and clean energy (SDG 7), sustainable cities and communities (SDG 11), life below water (SDG 14), and life on land (SDG 15), among others. For sustainability water has to be carefully managed during every part of the water cycle: from fresh water abstraction, pre-treatment, distribution, use, collection and post-treatment, to the use of treated wastewater and its ultimate return to the environment, ready to be abstracted to start the cycle again.

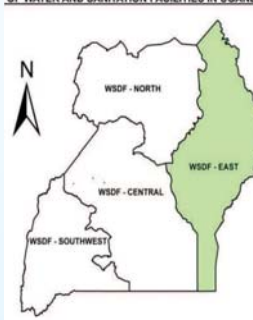
Therefore, with increased and continued funding from the Government of Uganda and development partners, larger populations can benefit from sustainable utilisation and management of water schemes and piped water services implemented by WSDF-E. As it is globally, leaving no one behind in the access of clean safe water and sanitation services is essential for Uganda to achieve a middle income status. Vision 2030 and NDP2.

As we celebrate World Water Day, the WSDF-E re-commits to improving water supply and sanitation to realise the theme: Leaving no one behind. The Government of Uganda through MWE is committed to providing all Ugandans with access to safe clean water and sanitation facilities.

**Table showing O&M arrangements for completed systems under WSDF-E**

Completed Piped Water and Sanitation Schemes	No.	Management and Sustainability
Amuria, Bukedea, Busii, Kachumbala, Kapchorwa, Matany, Mbulamuti, Bunwiri, Luuka, Kallio, Kagoma, Kyando	12	Transferred to National Water and Sewerage Cooperation (NWSC) for O&M
Tirinyi, Kibuku, Katakwi, Ochero, Suam, Kapelebyong, Ocapa, Kyere, Iziru, Busedde-Bugoby, Buvende, Bubwaya, Kasilo-Kamod, Bukwo, Irundu, Namagora, Namutumba, Kasambira	18	Gazetted to Eastern Umbrella of Water and Sanitation (eUWS) for O&M
Kaabong, Abim, Karenga, Namalu, Nakapiripiti	5	Gazetted to Karamoja Umbrella of Water and Sanitation (kUWS) for O&M
<b>Total</b>	<b>35</b>	

**MAP SHOWING REGIONAL BRANCHES OF WATER AND SANITATION FACILITIES IN UGANDA**



WSDF-E Manager Eng. George Alito briefs Hon. Ronald Kibule during the inspection of Iziru Water Supply System



Hon. Ronald Kibule hands over a bucket of safe clean water to one of the women councillors in Iziru as a sign of government's commitment to provide clean and safe water to all Ugandans



The joy of "Leaving no one behind"

**ADDRESS**  
Water and Sanitation Development Facility-East  
Plot 1224 Works Road23,  
P.O. Box 1324, Mbale  
+256-393-280-027



# disrupts our water cycle



A house damaged by a landslide in Bududa district last year. Such disasters are a result of forest encroachment

population has brought destruction of forests, because people need more resources including food and shelter.

"We are going to see more flooding catastrophes because the forests that are supposed to hold water and discharge it slowly are not

there. The people around Mt. Elgon by now have realised why Mount Elgon forest was gazetted," he says.

Obong adds that it was to hold the soil together, hold the slope of this mountain, catch water and send it down to people. However people tampered with it and the

soil started moving. That's why we are seeing landslides and other disasters. All these forests were gazetted for different reasons.

Mafabi says hydro power production is also a critical area. "Electricity production will be affected if we do not protect our water catchments

(the forests and wetlands) to ensure a steady supply of water for production of power.

The level and quality of water too will deteriorate and the result will be disease and droughts," he says.

**Leaving no one behind**



Ronald Kibuule, the state minister for water

Today March 22, 2019 is the World Water Day. The day is being marked under the theme, *Leaving no one behind*.

It adapts the global 2030 agenda for sustainable development. Sustainable Development Goal 6 aims at water for all by 2030, leaving no one behind.

UN says billions of people are still living without safe water. Also marginalized groups including women, children, refugees, indigenous peoples and disabled people are often overlooked and sometimes face discrimination, as they try to

access clean water.

Obong says when forests and other natural resources are destroyed; water sources dry up, then women and children in rural areas trek for long miles to access clean water and fuel.

## Shall we achieve this goal?

Water is life our target is have safe water for everyone so that we reduce on the disease burden, the State Minister for Water Ronald Kibuule says.

He says to have sufficient water means protecting our natural resources and environment from destruction.

"If water sources dry out, we will not be able to irrigate, farm or industrialise," Kibuule says.

He says Uganda's score on Sustainable Development Goal 6 which aims at having water for all by 2030 is above average.

"In rural Uganda, access to water is at 75% and in the urban areas it is at 90%. We may achieve SDG 6 before 2030 with sufficient funding from the Government and development partners, and protection of the environment," he says.



## NATIONAL FORESTRY AUTHORITY (NFA)

International day of forests

**2019 theme: "Forests & Education"**

NFA was established under section 52 of The National Forestry and Tree Planting Act and was launched on the 26th April 2004. NFA manages 506 Central Forest Reserves which make up of 15% of Uganda's forest cover.

### NFA regional nurseries (Total of 32 spread all over the country)

1. National Tree Seedling Centre
2. Jinja
3. Mbale

4. Soroti
5. Gulu- Achwa
6. Moroto

7. Mbarara
8. Matuga
9. Masaka

### OUR VISION:

A sufficiently forested, ecologically stable and economically prosperous Uganda

### OUR MISSION:

To manage the central forest reserves on a sustainable basis and to supply high quality forestry products and services to government, local communities and the private sector

### STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES:

1. To improve management of forestry reserves
2. To expand partnership arrangements
3. To supply quality forestry and non-forestry products and services
4. Organizational sustainability



Head Office: Plot 10/20 Spring Road, P.O.Box 70863, Kampala - (U)

Tel: +256-0312-264035/6, +256-0414-230365/6, Fax :256-0414-230369, Email:info@nfa.org.ug, Website: www.nfa.org.ug