

UGANDA W&E WEEK

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By Vision Reporters

Residents of greater Kampala will have to wait longer to be connected to a sewer network.

According to Dr Silver Mugisha, the managing director of the National Water and Sewerage Corporation (NWSC), the population with access to sewer services is expected to increase to 30% after the construction of the sewerage services at Nalukolongo and Kinawataka in the years to come.

Previously, the area covered by the sewer services in Kampala was estimated at 6%. This improved after the construction of the sewerage treatment plant at Lubigi.

"One of the biggest concerns is the issue of waste management. It will take us time to achieve 100% sewerage system because it is expensive," Mugisha said while speaking at the Uganda Water Resources Institute in Entebbe during a panel discussion to mark Uganda Water and Environment Week (UWEWK), organised by the water ministry and its partners.

He added: "The septic tanks will continue to be a stop-gap measure."

City dwellers to continue relying on septic tanks



Cheptoris (in grey suit) and other officials inspecting a solar pumping machine from Davis and Shirtliff company during the launch of the Water Week at Water Resource Institute in Entebbe on Monday. Photo by Julius Luwemba

However, Mugisha pointed out that there is a possibility of environmental pollution from the septic tanks.

"It is expensive to reach everybody with a sewerage system. We are giving people water first," Mugisha said.

The discussion was held under the theme, *Water and Environment a Strategic Driver in the Attainment of Sustainable Development Goals* (SDGs).

The week-long event started on

Monday and is expected to end on Friday.

The sub-themes of the conference are water, food, energy-ecosystem nexus, environment and society, green growth, blue economy, as well as SDGs and financing sustainable development.

Friday will be set aside for the celebration of the World Water Day, Forestry Day (March 21) and World Metrological Day (March 23).

Sam Cheptoris, the water minister, was the guest of honour.

Cheptoris said it was the second time the event was being organised. The first one was last year.

He said the event has been supported by Water Aid, IRC International, UNDP and Rotary International, among others.

Filed by Gerald Tenywa, Agnes Nantambi and Juliet Waiswa

LAKE VICTORIA POLLUTED

The director of UNEP/DH and Water and Environment Centre Denmark, Peter Koefoed, has said Uganda has devoted significant effort to providing its population with safe water and sanitation services.

However, he pointed out that Lake Victoria is continuously being polluted from various sources, which has changed the lake from its natural state towards a hypertrophic (full of green matter or algae) state, which has affected the fisheries sector.

"Billions of people worldwide lack access to safe water and sanitation. Water pollution is increasing, yet agriculture puts more stress on water resources as well," he said.

Last week, NWSC noted that up to 300,000 city residents will be supplied with water when four out of the six water supply improvement projects are completed in April. The other two will be ready in May.

The areas to get piped water include Nansana, Wakiso, Kakiri, Kyaliwajala, Kira, Bulindo, Nsasa, Mulaawa, Kitikifumba, parts of Kasangati, Kiti, Mayirikiti, Kata, Kungu and greater Mattunga.

Residents of Kyanja, Masooli and parts of Gayaza will also benefit.

Piped water shall also be extended to residents of Bandwe, Kinawa, Nakawuka, Seguku, Katale, Nalumunye and parts of Bunamwaya in May.

Uganda loses 34% of surface water

By Vision Reporter

Uganda has lost 34% of its surface water in about 20 years, according to Florence Adongo, a director of water resources management at the water ministry.

Quoting from a report on the assessment of water resources in the country, Adongo said the water resources were declining due to the rise in the population. She also said most people sink deep wells to tap ground water, which takes a long time to replenish.

The rampant destruction of forests and wetlands has also contributed to the worrisome situation.

"Water is becoming scarce because the population is increasing, but the water resources are reducing," said Adongo.

"Underground water takes a long time to replenish. There is a lot of environmental destruction and water wastage," she said.

Adongo was yesterday speaking during a panel discussion at the Water Resources Institute in Entebbe. The panel discussion was part of the Uganda Water and Environment Week (UWEWK) 2019.

Matia Lwanga Bwanika, the chairperson of Wakiso district, said behavioural change is needed among the big shots because they are the ones with



Children collecting water at a dried-up water source. The population may be increasing, but the water resources are reducing

the capacity to destroy the environment.

"The people who destroy the environment can access Environment Impact Assessment studies (EIA). behavioral change will stop them from destroying the environment," he added.

Bwanika said NEMA was threatened by the rich people who destroy the environment, which is why they do not confront them.

"NEMA officials do not intervene when they see somebody destroying the environment because they risk losing their jobs," he said.

Gideon Badagawa, the head of Private sector Foundation, said while the population is expanding, the ecosystem is not.

"We have a huge population that does not understand its

impact on the environment," he said, adding that although some of the industrialists have built effluent treatment plants, most of the small-scale industrialists do not care about the environment.

Badagawa recommended that the National Environment Management Authority teams up with the local government to sensitise the population about the benefits of protecting the environment.

Richard Sewakiryanga, who heads the NGO Forum, said commercialisation of water was partly to blame for the poor sanitation among the urban poor.

"Why is sanitation a problem? Because water has become a commodity. The poor community accesses it in small quantities and expensively," he said.

'Lack of political will sinking environment'

By Vision Reporter

The Wakiso district chairperson, Matia Lwanga Bwanika, has called for political will from Government to fight environmental degradation in the country.

Bwanika believes that lack of political will has led to the increasing rate of degradation in the country.

Speaking during the Water and Environment Week at the Water Resources Institute in Entebbe, Bwanika stressed that environmental degradation has continued in the country due to lack of proper law enforcement by the Government.

"When you look at the current scenario, there is no political will to save the environment because there is no law enforcement mechanism. We used to have local administration Police, but it was merged with the mainstream Police, with all the powers being controlled by the Inspector General of Police. This has not yielded results," he said.

Bwanika called for new strategies geared towards sensitising people about the impact of their actions such that change can be realised.

He said in the next 10 years, Uganda will face a natural disaster if no law is put in place to combat environmental degradation.

"River Mayanja breaking its banks was just a natural



"There is no political will to save the environment because there is no law enforcement mechanism," Bwanika

indicator that if people continue to refill the wetlands and destroy all other surrounding catchments, there will be other natural disasters," he warned.

Bwanika suggested that educative exhibitions be set up in areas with the targeted audience in order to achieve the intended goals.

"The essence of the exhibition

is to educate society about a national concern which directly affects them. However, the mistake that is always made is organising exhibitions in areas where people already know what is being talked about.

"Most exhibitions target people who already know the impact of their actions – the very people degrading the environment. Back then, the people who degraded the environment were ignorant, but these days, knowledgeable people are the perpetrators, yet they are even more powerful and politically connected," he said.

Bwanika said such people know the adverse effects of environmental degradation, but only care about their selfish interests.

"They dump soil in wetlands in order to take free land and release industrial wastes directly into the lake. Some are involved in sand mining. Such people occupy important positions in the country, but do not even bother to show up for the exhibitions," he said.

Eng. Richard Matua, the commissioner of urban water and sewerage services, observed that both water and the environment are the basic drivers of economic transformation in the country and must be guarded jealously.

"We must be tough on these people because we need water to survive," he said.