



An aerial view of the National Water and Sewerage Corporation water treatment plant, located at Ggaba on Lake Victoria

Ensuring sanitation, safe water for all

By Owen Wagabaza

Adequate drinking water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) are all essential ingredients in ensuring human health and economic development of a country. Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) six comes out strongly on this, addressing the issues relating to drinking water, sanitation and hygiene, but also the quality and sustainability of water resources. Yet, despite the WASH sub-sector being considered the most developed in Sub-Saharan Africa, safe water and sanitation coverage in Uganda remains one of the challenges dodging the Ugandan government, with over 10 million Ugandans still living without safe water, 65% not practicing improved hygiene behaviour and about 8% of the population practicing open defecation.

Despite the Government's continuous effort to address the problem, the challenge of funding has proved to be a thorn in the provision of safe water and sanitation to the entire country, but with the intervention of the European Union, the hope of achieving SDG six, which is 'ensuring access to safe water and sanitation for all,' looks possible.

Over the years, the European Union (EU) has funded a number of water projects aimed at improving access to safe water and sanitation in Uganda. The EU has supported a range of major water and sanitation projects.

The Ggaba Treatment Complex

In January this year, President Yoweri Museveni, together with the EU head of delegation to Uganda, Kristian Schmidt, French Ambassador to Uganda, Stephanie Rivoal and German Ambassador



Museveni (wearing hat) and Schmidt (left) during the commissioning of the refurbished Ggaba water plant in January

to Uganda Peter Blomeyer, commissioned the new Ggaba water treatment complex that will increase water supply to Kampala, from 200 million litres to 250 million litres per day.

The plant, under the Lake Victoria Kampala Water and Sanitation Project is aimed at addressing water supply challenges in the greater Kampala metropolitan area. The project is funded by the EU, the French Development Agency and the Government of Germany as part of the National Water and Sewerage Corporation's (NWSC) plan to connect water to all urban centres by 2020.

"This project stands out as the major intervention in the water and sanitation sector in Uganda for the last 20 years. It also delivers on a basic human right – Access to safe drinking water. It would be a catastrophic failure of governance and planning, if the inhabitants of Uganda's capital city would suffer

water shortage, just on the shores of Africa's largest freshwater lake," said Schmidt during the launch of the plant.

The water project will see at least 500,000 people added to the water supply line in Kampala and Wakiso districts.

Mbulamuti water facility

The water crisis in Mbulamuti, a rural growth center in Kamuli district had reached its peak. The town was dotted with a number of unclean water sources from which the residents fetched water, worse still, the residents shared these water sources with animals.

The nearby clean water was in Bugonda village, where a lone borehole served over five villages. "The situation was bad. Because we shared the water sources with animals, diseases such as dysentery, diarrhea, trachoma, typhoid, cholera and many others became a problem to us," says Donozia Isabirye, a

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resident of Mbulamuti.

It was until 2013 that a water supply system was constructed by the Water and Sanitation Development Facility East in partnership with the NWSC.

The water supply and sanitation development in small towns and rural growth centers is a service delivery and funding mechanism aimed at development of water supply and sanitation infrastructure in rural growth centers and small towns. Rural growth centres are towns with populations of 500 to 5000 people while small towns are those with populations ranging from 5000 to 15000 people.

The project is funded by among others the EU and is implemented by the Government of Uganda with the Austrian Development Agency (ADA) assuming the monitoring and supporting roles.

It is designed to achieve a significant contribution to the achievement of SDG six in Uganda. To fully achieve its goals, the water and sanitation development facility has four branches; East, North, Central and Southwest.

Clean water in Karamoja

Access to safe drinking water remains a challenge in Karamoja. However, a project funded by the EU among others called "Livelihood Protection and Enhancement through the Development of Productive Asset in Nakapiripit

and Amudat Districts, Karamoja Region" is changing the tide.

The project ensures more water to Karamoja by using local labour and innovative methods such as rock catchments. In Lokirimo Village, Nakapiripit district, a rock was transformed into a rock catchment which leads water into an underground tank collecting up to 40,000 liters of clean rainwater to benefit the community.

"I used to fetch water far away. This is much better, more clean and helps us to ensure water for our animals," says Loumo Katarina, a girl using the rock catchment daily.

The rock catchments preserve water even in dry season which make them even more appropriate in Karamoja. Karamoja is full of these rocks and the rock catchments are an innovative method to catch water on the surface of the rock. They can be constructed everywhere and can guarantee the water collection in areas where other systems cannot work properly.

Other projects funded by the EU with the aim of improving water and sanitation in the country include the Euro 127m sewerage investment project. The project is aimed at constructing and rehabilitating three waste-water treatment plants. The first new treatment plant, Lubigi, became operational in 2014 which reduced the sewage and pollutant load that was being poured into Lake Victoria by two thirds.