

Drilling of boreholes stopped three times during last fiscal year

PHOTO BY ROBERT ATUHAIRWE

Low water table irks Hoima residents

HOIMA

By Robert Atuhairwe

The Afram Plains of Ghana experience acute water shortages during the four to five month-long dry season.

The long-term development of the limited groundwater resources of the region has proved to be difficult as the hydro-geology is poorly understood.

Failure of boreholes is common, and there is little or no monitoring of groundwater levels.

A two-year study led by the British Geological Survey, including the monitoring of borehole-drilling programmes, has led to a better understanding of the groundwater resources in the area and has provided guidelines for data collection.

Such a study would be ideal for Hoima district which has low groundwater levels.

Residents of Lake Albert's plains in Buseruka and Kigoroby sub-counties in Hoima district have expressed concern over the prolonged water shortage, a problem officials attribute to the low water table that has conspired to fail their efforts to construct boreholes.

"To sink a borehole, one needs to go deeper to reach the

water. Sometimes we earmark areas where boreholes need to be drilled but the search for water is fruitless. We have in most times relocated our search efforts to other places that are far from the people," Ibrahim Luswata, the Hoima district water officer, said.

Luswata said this also pushes up the cost. He cited the case of Ndaragi village, Kigoroby sub-county, where a borehole was meant to be sunk in the last fiscal year but the drilling stopped after they failed to reach water. He said they relocated to Kigomba Primary School in Songagagi and later Waki, to no avail.

This is forcing many residents, especially women and children, to trek long distances in search of clean water.

EXPENSIVE ALTERNATIVE

Luswata said ideally they would have been pumping water from the lake but except that a lot of money would be spent on treating the water.

"Pumping water from the lake is expensive. It requires treating before it can be consumed. This means we need a treatment plant, which costs about sh4b, yet we only get sh500m per financial year for water and sanitation," Luswata said.

He said their studies show that if they are to pump water,



Residents queuing for water at the only borehole for the two villages of Rutoha and Kaseta in Buseruka sub-county

WHAT RESIDENTS SAY

NELSON JUNJURA, POLITICIAN

More budgetary allocations are needed to the water sector to cater for the increasing population due to immigrants seeking opportunities in the oil industry.



NELSON EDEMA, TEACHER AT KABAALÉ PUBLIC PRIMARY

The old water tank was vandalised before schools closed. Children used to walk long distances in search for water.



ZULIA MBALIRWA, FEMALE COUNCILLOR FOR KIZIRANFUMBI SUB-COUNTY

Schools have been the most affected and girls suffer a lot when they go into their monthly periods.



the easiest way is to pump it from River Wambabya, which is about 10km from Kabaale and Buseruka trading centres.

Ali Tinkamanyire, the Buseruka LC3 chairperson, said the scarcity of water is always a thorn in his flesh when canvassing for votes in the area seeking re-election.

He said although SBC, a firm contracted by the Government to construct Hoima International Airport, is willing to help, they are also facing similar challenges.

Amos Muriisa, the SBC spokesperson, said their preliminary study shows that

We tried several sites. Sometimes we drilled 90 metres underground and found no water at all.

the area, especially Buseruka, is rocky.

"We tried several sites. Sometimes we drilled 90 metres underground and found no water at all," he said.

Alfred Opariyo, a resident of Kabaale in Buseruka sub-

county, said persons with disabilities are facing it hard to search for water.

He said two villages in the area are using one borehole, which results in their breaking down often.

Muriisa said as part of the

solution, they distribute water to the community and have also constructed eight boreholes in the sub-county.

He said they have three trucks which distribute an average of 60,000 litres of water daily.

The SBC spokesperson said they had also placed a 10,000-litre water tank at Kabaale Public Primary School to help the school meet its water and sanitation requirements.

MORE STUDIES NEEDED

Kadiri Kirungi, the Hoima district chairperson, said they have written to the finance ministry regarding the water-related challenges, adding that there is need to carry out a comprehensive study in order to find a solution.

However, Dotan Hameiri, the SBI International operations manager, said they will do what it takes to ensure that Buseruka residents get water.

"Despite the challenges, we are still committed to ensuring that people get water. There is no alternative to water and we are willing to pay any amount to ensure that people have it," Hameiri said.

Masindi health officer warns against vendors flouting COVID-19 guidelines

WEST

By Yosam Gucwaki

Masindi district COVID-19 task force has asked Masindi Central Market vendors not to disregard the guidelines put in place to help fight COVID-19.

Last Thursday, Patrick Baguma, the district health officer, made an impromptu visit to the market to ascertain the vendors' compliance with the COVID-19 standard operating procedures (SOPs).

However, Baguma said he was surprised to find that the vendors were not observing the guidelines.

The SOPs are supposed to be

observed by the vendors and buyers in the markets to curb the spread of the coronavirus. They include handwashing, wearing of face masks and observing social distance, among others.

Baguma said this was not being done, thus increasing the risk of transmission of the virus.

"You are hereby warned against

flouting the SOPs. The market will be closed if you continue disregarding the guidelines," Baguma warned.

However, the chairperson of the Masindi Central Market Vendors Association, David Asimwe, blamed the failure by the vendors to observe the SOPs on the district leadership and task force that has not provided them with the required items.

"Vendors used to contribute money to buy items like soap and water, but they could not sustain the initiative," Asimwe explained.

Most business points in the district have relaxed on the observing the COVID-19 guidelines. Most businesses have water containers outside their premises but no water in them.