

Govt calls for private partnerships to boost water access in cattle corridor

BY MICHEAL AGABA

KAMPALA. The government is seeking stronger partnerships with private sector players to ensure sustainable water financing, particularly in Uganda's cattle corridor districts, where access to reliable water remains a challenge.

Mr Joseph Wasswa, a principal engineer at the Ministry of Water and Environment, said many communities continue to struggle with sustainable water access due to the limited capital.

He added that private sector-led initiatives which enable cattle farmers to procure and manage their own water systems offer a more sustainable alternative to government-only interventions.

"As the ministry, one of our biggest challenges is the sustainability of our systems. However, this initiative empowers cooperatives to not only access

these funds, but we also see that they will be able to sustainably manage their systems," Mr Wasswa said.

He explained that although the ministry has several programmes aimed at expanding water access, funding limitations make it impossible to cover the entire country.

"In addition to that, we have an overwhelming demand for water for production, whereby the resources that the government gives us as the Water for Production Department may not be able to meet the demands across the entire country," he said.

Mr Wasswa revealed that over the past five years, the ministry's budget for water for production has reduced by more than threefold, further constraining its reach.

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gets in line with Vision 2040 and NDP IV, where our focus is to increase access to water for agricultural production and productivity," he added.

He was speaking at a workshop to disseminate findings from a study conducted by Heifer International on wa-

ter financing models designed to scale up the Water for Dairy Businesses (W4DB) Project, a market-based initiative implemented primarily in Uganda with support from Aqua for All on Monday.

Under the W4DB Project, community water systems are installed and managed by dairy cooperatives to provide safe water for dairy farmers and neighbouring communities. A pilot phase of the project led to a significant reduction in milk rejection rates and time spent fetching water, resulting in increased incomes for cooperatives.

However, the study found that while water financing in cattle corridor districts such as Kiboga and Nakaseke has improved access and boosted farmers' incomes, many cooperatives are struggling to repay water loans. High interest rates and strict collateral requirements were identified as major barriers.

"I call upon banks to come and collab-

orate with the Ministry, with Heifer International as well as other key drivers and providers of water supply systems," Mr Wasswa said.

"Banks will play a key role in ensuring they offer affordable interest rates to farmers. And we call upon banks to try and find a middle-ground solution, especially when it comes to interest rates, so that our farmers can be attracted to borrow funds," he added.

Ms Edna Nyamwaka, a project manager at Heifer International, said the study was commissioned to identify financing mechanisms that could support the expansion of the W4DB Project beyond the pilot phase. "So we came up with this project to improve the quality of water at the cooperative."

She explained that the project involved installing solar-powered boreholes to improve water access at both cooperative and farm levels.