

BY DAN WANDERA

NAKASONGOLA. At Nakayonza Village in Nakasongola District's cattle corridor, memories of teenage pregnancies, domestic violence, and expectant mothers arriving at the maternity ward with 20-litre jerrycans of water help explain the community's joy following the commissioning of a clean water system nearby.

Ms Keturah Nankabirwa, now a grandmother and one of the residents living near the recently constructed solar-powered water point in Nakayonza, recalls the nearly 16km journey villagers used to make to the nearest water source at Kikooge Landing Site on the shores of Lake Kyoga.

"Because most women had to balance garden work with collecting water for domestic use, many woke up in the wee hours of the night to trek the 16km journey between Nakayonza Village and Kikooge Landing Site to fetch water," she told *Daily Monitor* at the weekend.

However, for Ms Grace Nakubulwa, a grandmother in her early 60s and a resident of Nakayonza, water scarcity once brought devastating tragedy. Her father, Ekisoferi Musoke, was killed by

Shs570m water scheme gives hope to mothers

unknown attackers while riding his bicycle to Lake Kyoga in the early 1990s to fetch water.

"Our father used to wake up in the wee hours of the night with his bicycle to fetch water from the lakeshore in Kikooge. But one night in 1991, he never returned home. Early the next morning, as we searched with concerned residents, we found his lifeless body lying in a pool of blood. He had been killed by unknown people," she recounts.

Ms Nakubulwa also remembers another painful episode involving her teenage daughter, who left home to fetch water on a bicycle but never returned. Friends later brought back the jerrycan she had carried to the lakeshore with a troubling message.

"She had told them she had gone for marriage because she was tired of the long journeys in search of water," Nakubulwa says.

Despite the painful memories, Nakubulwa is among the residents now celebrating after a solar-powered water pump was installed within her compound.

At Nakayonza Health Centre III, the sit-

uation has also improved significantly. The facility previously had no water supply, forcing expectant mothers to bring 20-litre jerrycans when admitted to the maternity ward. Some women opted for traditional birth attendants due to the challenges.

Following renovations at the facility and the installation of a solar-powered water system and rainwater harvesting equipment, mothers are now returning

SAFE WATER COVERAGE

In Nakasongola District, water office data from 2025 shows that safe water coverage stands at 60 percent in urban areas and 38 percent in rural communities. Despite this, district leaders remain hopeful. Mr Sam Kigula, the Nakasongola District chairperson, says a planned upgraded bulk water system drawing from Lake Kyoga could significantly improve water supply in the district.

to seek services there.

Ms Margaret Wanyana, a member of the Nakayonza Village Health Team attached to the health centre, says the transformation has been remarkable.

"I witnessed the water challenges at Nakayonza Health Centre III in the early 1990s because it was the only health unit within reach. The next facility was about 48km away in Nakasongola Town Council. You could not bring a patient to the facility without a 20-litre jerrycan of water. Water is essential in the labour suite and maternity ward," she says.

Due to her role in the Village Health Team, Wanyana maintains records and closely monitors health trends within the community.

"More mothers now attend antenatal care at Nakayonza Health Centre III without worrying about water shortages at home or at the facility. We are also recording fewer water-related illnesses because many families now access clean water," she explains.

The impact has also extended to education.

Mr Nicholas Mpumbi, the deputy head teacher at Nakayonza Church of Uganda

Primary School, partly attributes the rise in school enrolment from 156 pupils in 2024 to 308 in 2026 to improved access to clean water.

"Children used to miss school because they had to help fetch water at home. Many also fell sick due to water-borne diseases," he says.

Intervention

For many years, local authorities sought solutions to the water crisis without success. Relief eventually came through the Rotary Club of Lugogo Mango Tree, which organised medical camps in the area between 2017 and 2020.

According to the club's past president, Mr Francis Iwa, the large turnout at the camps and medical reports highlighting the lack of clean water as a major cause of illness prompted action.

Rotary Lugogo Mango Tree, in partnership with the Water ministry, later commissioned a Shs573 million solar-powered water project in Nakayonza Village.

According to the Lwabiya Sub-county chairperson, who commissioned the project in May 2025, the scheme now helps more than 3,500 homesteads.