Expanding access to safe, clean water

Therefore, NRM is committed to extending clean and safe water to every LC1/village, ultimately providing water to every household. NRM's priority is to increase safe water supply coverage and equity in the entire country.

BY TREVOR LUTALO

Government's continued investment in water infrastructure is transforming access to safe water across Uganda, improving public health, supporting agriculture, and strengthening resilience against climate change.

According to findings from the 2024 National Population and Housing Census, at least eight in every ten Ugandan households now have access to improved water sources, including piped water and protected springs.

The report further indicates that 81.1 percent of households are within a one-kilometre radius of a safe water source.

These gains have largely been driven by sustained investment in piped water systems in both rural and urban areas, as the government seeks to expand reliable access to clean water nationwide. Over the years, government has prioritised water infrastructure as a critical component of public health, sanitation, industrialisation, and agricultural productivity.

Through the Ministry of Water and Environment, government has rolled out large gravity flow schemes, solar-powered piped systems, boreholes, valley dams, and rural water projects aimed at serving fast-growing populations.

These projects are particularly important in regions previously affected by chronic water shortages and long walking distances to water collection points.

Speaking about the sector's progress, Sam Cheptoris said access to clean water remains critical for improving livelihoods and supporting socio-economic transformation.

"Water is central to public health, agriculture, industrialisation, and environmental sustainability. Government will continue investing in safe water systems and sanitation infrastructure to ensure no Ugandan is left behind," he said.

The expansion of piped water systems is particularly significant in rural communities, where access to clean water has historically remained a challenge. Government aims to further increase piped water coverage as part of its long-term development targets, especially in rapidly growing trading centres and peri-urban areas.

Urban centres are also benefiting from upgraded sanitation systems and expanded water distribution networks to match rapid population growth.

The National Water and Sewerage Corporation continues to expand treatment plants, pipelines, and sewer systems in major towns and cities to improve efficiency and reliability of service delivery.

Officials say improved water access has had a direct impact on reducing waterborne diseases, improving sanitation, and easing the burden on women and children who traditionally travel long distances to collect water.

In many rural communities, access to nearby water sources has helped save time, improve school attendance for children, and support household productivity.

At the same time, investments in water for production, including irrigation schemes and valley dams, are supporting agricultural productivity and climate adaptation efforts. Government has increasingly prioritised irrigation to reduce dependence on rain-fed agriculture, especially as climate variability continues to affect farming communities.

Crucial roles

The water sector also plays a central role in Uganda's industrialisation agenda. Reliable water supply is critical for manufacturing, tourism, construction, and energy production.

Expanding infrastructure is therefore expected to support economic growth while improving environmental sustainability.

Government officials say environmental conservation remains an important component of the water agenda, with ongoing efforts to restore wetlands, protect water catchment areas, and promote sustainable use of natural resources. Climate change adaptation strategies are also being integrated into water management planning.

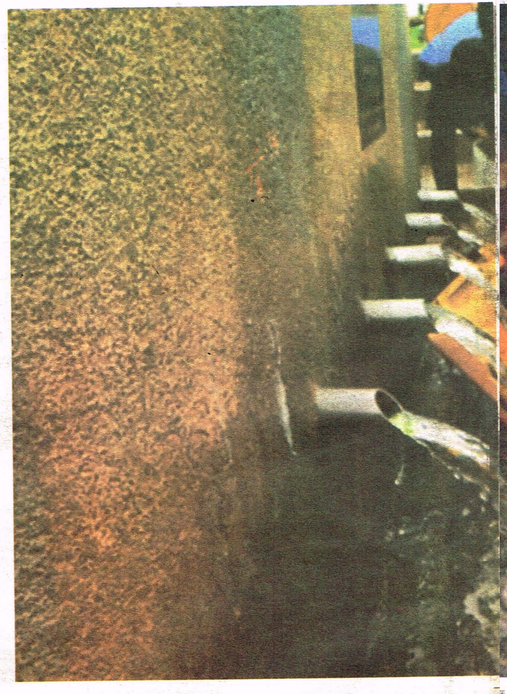
As Uganda's population continues to grow, demand for clean water is expected to increase significantly.

Government maintains that continued investment in water infrastructure will remain essential in supporting public health, economic transformation, food security, and climate resilience across the country.

PROGRESS

The access rates in Uganda vary from 25 percent in Rakai District to 95 percent in Rukiga District. Uganda has 146,333 domestic water points which serve a total of 31,011,286 people - 24,505,180 in rural areas. An additional 5,312 sources have been non-functional for more than 5 years and are considered abandoned. Uganda has 1,211 piped schemes.

http://wsdb.mwe.go.ug/



As Uganda's population continues to grow, demand for clean water is expected to increase significantly. PHOTO/COURTSEY

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