

Report of Regional Water and Environment Week held in Kabarole District and led by Albert Water Management zone 16 - 18 March 2020



Members of the District WASH Task Team together with representatives from MWE, CSOs, Kabarole Local Government, Municipality Mayor His Worship Rev. Musana Ateenyi and Chief Cleaner Lord Bishop of the Rwenzori Diocese setting off to clean up Fort Portal Municipality during Regional UWEWK 2020.

1.0 Background

Uganda Water and Environment Week (UWEWK) is a weeklong event that is organised annually by the Ministry of Water and Environment (MWE) through the Water Resources Institute (WRI). Since its inception in 2018, the event seeks to contribute towards the attainment of sustainable socio-economic transformation in achieving the Ugandan National Development Plan and vision. It provides an opportunity between sector actors and other stakeholders for knowledge exchange, dialoguing, learning for improvement of Uganda's water and environment resources. The Ministry of Water and Environment (MWE) through her de-concentrated regional structures (Albert Management Zone (AWMZ), Technical Support Unit (TSU) 6, Mid-Western Umbrella for Water & Sanitation and the LEAF II Project) in collaboration with key partners celebrated the first Water Week in the Albertine Region in March 2019. Based on the success of the 2019 Water Week, the MWE held the second one in Kabarole District from **Monday 16 March to Friday 20 March 2020**. The zone enhanced a multi-partner collaboration to create public awareness, sensitisation and learning on water resources, environment and climate change.

The overall theme of UWEWK 2020 was **water and environment resources for inclusive-growth, employment and wealth creation.**

1.1 Introduction

IRC Uganda, through the Watershed programme, is working with the local government, political leaders, cultural institutions, CSOs and all stakeholders in implementing WASH and Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM). It is one of the areas of focus in the Kabarole District WASH Master Plan to achieve sustainable services for all.

1.2 Purpose

The overall purpose of UWEWK 2020 was to improve public understanding of the importance of preservation, restoration, sustainable management and development of water and environment resources, as well as understanding the link between WASH and IWRM.

1.3 Objectives

- a. To support the Kabarole District WASH Task Team to raise public awareness, sensitisation and interest in efforts towards preservation of water resources, in this case the River Mpanga.
- b. To support Kabarole District WASH Task team on learning about the WASH-IWRM linkage.
- c. To support Tooro Kingdom, Mpanga Catchment Management Committee and partners conduct a public dialogue on preservation of the water resources (River Mpanga) and the environment.

1.4 Process

Regarding strengthening local systems, IRC works with established structures such as: Kabarole District WASH Task Team, local government, the Catchment Management Committee, the cultural institution and the municipality at all levels on water resource management. The Regional Water and Environment Week is an opportunity for the WASH Task Team to learn more about the relationship between WASH and IWRM, in order to increase their knowledge and ably engage with the community on issues of IWRM.

It is therefore against this background, that IRC joins the AWMZ and supports members of the WASH Task Team to participate in regional UWEWK activities. It is an opportunity to get community members involved in matters that concern water resources and the environment and to jointly identify solutions. Partners within the Rwenzori region are coordinated by the AWMZ to conduct preparatory meetings to identify different activities that will encourage community participation. These activities include clean-up exercises, promotion of good sanitation and hygiene by conducting home improvement campaigns, school debates, promotion of tree planting in schools, exhibitions on new innovations around water and the environment, and public dialogue. This year's event attracted several partners namely: IRC, Caritas HEWASA, Water For People, National Water, Kyaninga Child Development Centre, Tooro Botanical Gardens, Tooro Kingdom, PROTOS, members of the private sector, politicians, community and government agencies.

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RC participated in two major activities during the week in Karungara sub county and Fort Portal Municipality.

2.0 Karangura sub county activities

Hosted by the Chairman of the WASH Task Team who doubles as the District Vice Chairman and District Councillor for Karangura sub county, the WASH Task Team members, joined by the local government, and all stakeholders (TSU6, AWMZ, LEAF11, local government staff, politicians, Tooro Kingdom, the

private sector, IRC, JESE, HEWASA, NRDI, TBG, Water For People and members of the community) engaged in various activities during the day's Regional UWEWK event. They joined in the trading centre clean-up exercise, home improvement campaign and community sensitisation on WASH and IWRM. Karangura sub county was singled out because the River Mpanga supplies drinking water to the whole of Kabarole District and beyond. Therefore, the human activities upstream determined the water quality and quantity that people mid-stream and downstream received. Thus, making it necessary to involve Karangura community in sensitisations to preserve and restore River Mpanga.

2.1 Clean-up exercise in Karangura sub county

The clean-up exercise was led by the District Councillors who are members of the WASH Task Team to demonstrate exemplary leadership and encourage members of the community to engage with their leaders in integrated water resources management. Members of the community voluntarily joined the delegation members from the Ministry of Water and Environment, CSOs, Tooro Kingdom and local government to clean up their trading centre. The main facilitator was Hon. Councillor Aaron Byakutanga who uttered awareness messages as the clean up was ongoing. Some of his key messages were:

- Encourage community members to do proper solid waste management by using disposal bins to collect plastics and papers, because littering them in the environment increased the chances of plastics making their way into the river, and as a result the plastics pollute the river and interfere with its flow causing flooding mid-stream.
- Encourage and remind the Karangura community to adhere to the by-law that they put in place to eradicate contamination of the river from open defecation and ensuring that every household has a good toilet.
- Encourage use of ecosan toilets due to poor soil formation and mention the advantages of ecosan by-products for agricultural use.
- Encourage community members to continue preserving the banks of River Mpanga so that the river can recharge and people downstream can enjoy clean and adequate water.

2.2 Home visits to scale up home improvement campaigns

Home improvement campaigns were led by the Public Health Specialist from TSU6 also a member of the WASH Task Team together with the sub county authorities (local council 3, district councillors, local council 1&2, community development officer, Sub County Chief and health assistant] and household heads. The team conducted home visits to assess the sanitation situation in Karangura sub county, using a sanitation checklist designed by Technical Support Unit 6. The checklist set parameters for identifying the model households that meet the sanitation and hygiene standards. Not only were they assessing households but also encouraging households on how best to improve their sanitation and hygiene status. The parameters included:

- Presence of a functional handwashing facility near the toilet and another near or in the kitchen
- Washable toilet floor
- Complete superstructure and a lockable door
- Fly blockage technologies in toilet
- Drying rack
- Waste disposal pit
- Clean compound
- Drinking water containers
- Presence of kitchen and its tidiness

Findings from the home visit to the community members were:

A total number of 30 households were visited.

- 8 out of every 10 households only had a handwashing facility near the toilet area
- 20 out of 30 household toilets were in a poor state as some were filled up and some had no doors and were almost collapsing.
- 20 toilets had faeces around the squat hole and littered around the compound
- Only one home had a safely managed toilet facility
- Food hygiene was not up to standard
- Zero households wash their hands when they are going to eat because they lacked handwashing facilities in the kitchen area.

From the above findings the team concluded that there is still open defecation going on and as a result people in Karangura are basically eating faeces.

Recommendations from the home improvement visiting team are:

- Households with new toilets (substructures) should complete them to superstructure level
- Community members should install a handwashing facility in the kitchen area
- Household members should improve on food hygiene in the kitchen area
- Household members should improve on environmental hygiene in their homesteads

2.3 Key lessons observed and next steps by local council leaders

The findings created a sense of shame in the local council leaders and they admitted that efforts to improve sanitation and hygiene were left to the health assistants and the sub-county authorities only. They had done a lot of sensitisation on good sanitation and hygiene. Mr Mwesige Phenehas reiterated, *“I cannot continue leading a community that has been impoverished because of our poor sanitation and hygiene and for that, I am going to cluster the households in my community in groups of 10, to easily monitor them and in three months all my people will have latrines”*.



Mr. Mwesige Phenehas, local council chairman calling on his fellow local council leaders to adopt clustering of households.



One of the community members reacting to the findings from the home visit sanitation assessments.

Below are key lessons observed and next steps that the local leaders agreed upon:

- **Working with the existing structures:** The local leaders need to join hands with Village Health Teams to ensure continued sensitisation of the by-law that prohibits open defecation.
- **Collaboration:** The secretary for health Hon. Lilian Mugaiga, stressed that for Karangura sub county to achieve increased latrine coverage, there is a need to work with the health assistants to map out households without latrines then work with the enforcement team at the sub county to penalise the households that still do not have a latrine.
- **Community action:** Members of the community realised that sustainable solutions can only come from themselves. The clean-up exercise created a sense of social action among community members to come up with local solutions. Members of the community resolved to conduct clean-up exercises to reduce pollution on water resources and the environment.



One of the local leaders from Tooro Kingdom brainstorming on how to increase latrine coverage

2.4 Action points

- The local council leaders with guidance from the District Health Inspectorate, agreed to meet and jointly develop a village clustering list to increase latrine construction and use.
- The sub county authorities together with community members agreed that they will not issue business licences to shop owners and landlords who do not have a functional waste disposal pit in place.
- The local leaders gave themselves a three-month deadline to ensure all households in their villages have completed the construction of latrines.
- The local leaders agreed to increase sensitisation on the River Mpanga protection by-law.

3.0 Fort Portal municipal activities

Activities in Fort Portal Municipality focused on increasing awareness and sensitisation on proper waste management to keep the River Mpanga and the environment free from pollution. River Mpanga flows through the Municipality and is faced with pressure from human activities leading to pollution, contamination and degradation. Municipal duty bearers were mobilised to conduct a massive sensitisation to polluters and remind them of the policies and regulations governing water resources and the environment. A symbolic clean-up exercise was carried out around the Municipality to demonstrate exemplary leadership by the leaders and authorities that Fort Portal Municipality as it is transitioning to a city, should remain clean.

Below are sensitisation messages and speeches by different leaders:

His Worship Rev. Musana Ateenyi, the Municipality Mayor

- He thanked members of the public for participating in the Water and Environment Week and in joining the clean-up exercise, remarking that cleanliness is next to Godliness.
- He reminded the public that good environmental hygiene is not only the responsibility of the municipal authorities but also the public, especially the business community.
- He as mayor authorised the town clerk to close the shops that don't properly dispose of their waste.

Hon. Mary Rwakyaka, District Councillor and member of the WASH Task Team

- She urged members of the business community to dispose of their waste in the municipal litter bins and warned that ignorance of the law is no defence.
- She informed the public that if they do not adhere to the waste disposal standards of the municipality, she will use enforcement on those that are adamant so that they can be apprehended.

Town Clerk - South Division

- She urged the members of the public to change behaviour and attitude towards waste management and stressed that punitive measures will be enforced on those that are not adhering to the call of keeping the town clean.

Team Leader AWMZ

- He explained the background of UWEWK and the regional activities that were already bringing good initiatives, such as the local council leaders forming the sanitation task force in Karangura sub county. He highlighted school debates that were aimed at imparting environmental protection skills in pupils, so that when they grow up, they will continue to plant trees because they are aware of the benefits of trees. The team leader explained that the event this year expanded to the lower catchment areas of Kamwenge and Ibanda because the activities upstream affect those downstream.
- He urged members to take responsibility to ensure that the water resources are fully protected for a good quality of life. He informed the public that people cannot have a healthy life without clean water.
- He highlighted some of the activities that would be done on 20 March to climax the regional event and these would include a public dialogue where panellists would be discussing policy issues affecting water resources.

Lt. Colonel Steven Tayebwa, Political Commissar in Rwenzori Region

- He thanked the Ministry of Water and Environment for having come to help clean the city, because all these years the Uganda People's Defence Force (UPDF) conducted these exercises during the "Tarehe Sita", to identify themselves with the civilians and give back to the community.
- He assured participants that the UPDF will always be ready to join clean-up activities, because there is no better way of giving back to the community. As UPDF they believe that a healthy population steers economic transformation. And he urged the public to live in a clean environment.

Rt. Rev. Muhirwa Akiiki of Fort Portal Diocese (Guest of Honour)

- He briefly reflected that since the Regional Water and Environment events begun last year, ***"we are making an impact, and we are writing a bold statement to many of the people in the city to see our commitment and also call upon their commitment to preserve the environment"***. He asked the public to take a moment of silence to remember the AWMZ late Team Leader, Mr. Jackson

Kitamirike. He thanked the Ministry of Water and Environment and public for actively participating in the Water and Environment Events.

- He encouraged the MWE to try as much as possible to invite and involve the private sector like Shell, landlords, hotels because they are all polluters of the environment.
- He mentioned that, **“government makes policies but many of those policies have not had teeth to bite, everyone lives without being mindful of the policy and also the importance of the environment that we live in”**. He reminded the public that degradation of the environment is a sin, and therefore people should stop being selfish but rather consider the environment as a moral obligation.
- He explained that water and environment are not only a local concern, but a global concern, because last year after the Regional Water Week was commemorated here, many of the partners proceeded to attend the national event and others proceeded to the Stockholm World Water Week to reflect on the importance of water and the environment.
- He encouraged the public to guard the environment, keep the rivers and tributaries clean for this generation and the ones s to come.

Annex

Pictures of the activities



Some of the WASH Taskforce Team and community members assessing sanitation and hygiene during home visits



Clean-up exercise with Community members in Karangura S/C HEWASA doing sanitation marketing for Finish Mondial



Clean-up exercise in Fort Portal Municipality



Team Leader AWMZ addressing the sensitisation meeting attended by stakeholders

Challenges

- The Regional UWEWK was not climaxed with a public dialogue as planned due to the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Way forward

- The public dialogue on water and environment protection and restoration was postponed to a date that will be determined after the restrictions have been lifted.

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