

Draining Wetlands Increases Water Treatment Costs



Restoration process after aviccion



Restoration process taking place on Lubigi wetland in Kampala



Demolition of settlements built in a wetland during the restoration process

NWSC is shifting the intake point of Gabba

11

project

to Katosi works because the Inner Murchison Bay is highly polluted yet the surrounding wetlands have been tampered with

When there is scarcity of clean piped water in homes, schools, hospitals, prisons, police, industries, public offices and factories, sometimes it is not because there is no water at all but it might be due to the exorbitant cost of treatment affecting constant supply.

The process of water treatment by specialists is important so that contaminants and undesirable components are removed and their concentration is reduced.

The encroachment and destruction of wetlands by all illegal actors must stop so that the cost of treating water also reduces and in the end, government and other utilities will have reduced cost thus be able to supply adequate clean piped water to everyone.

Draining of wetlands increases the treatment costs of water as already experienced by the National Water and Sewerage Corporation (NWSC).

The Corporation is shifting the intake point of Gabba 11 project to Katosi works because the Inner Murchison Bay is highly polluted yet the surrounding wetlands have been tampered with.

According to Mr. Collins Oloya Commissioner Wetlands Department and also Acting Director for Environment Affairs in the Ministry of Water and Environment, NWSC is currently incurring cost of treatment five times which is translated to people (more money people have to pay to buy a jerrycan of clean piped water).

“In Mbarara and Arua districts, the cost of water has increased just because a lot of money and other resources have to be invested in treating water for home consumption,” Mr. Oloya says.

“The projection of Uganda having a water source per village, will depend on the way we take care of our existing wetlands through restoring the degraded ones and also to enhance constant research on weather surface and underground water.

The target of ensuring that Uganda gets sufficient electricity, will also depend on

how well we restore the wetlands and the forests in the catchments to maintain the water flow to support the power stations but without that, electrical power generation capacity will continue to decrease,"he asserts.

This, he says, has been evident in the Mpanga mini hydroelectric power station in Kamwenge district which has an installation capacity of 8megawatts but is only operating at 3megawatts.

"This is because the catchment of Mpanga River right from Kabalarole to Kamwenge has been degraded "he says.

Mr. Oloya believes that wetland loss is responsible for increased incidences of permanent flooding along the main telecommunication and transport links, leading to destruction of lives and properties.

Direct discharge of volumes of waste water, silts and effluent into the water bodies escalates the pollution load and reduce fish catch, coupled with increased prevalence of water borne diseases such as Cholera, Typhoid, dysentery resulting from poor sanitation and hygiene leading to reduced human productivity.

He observes that release of large volumes of carbon into the atmosphere leads to global warming scenarios.

He urges government to ensure that there is sufficient funding most especially to the districts to restore the wetlands within their jurisdiction.

"For the wetlands which traverse the districts like Mpologoma in Eastern, Katonga in Central, Okole in Northern and Rwizi in Western, we need joint efforts amongst the different stake holders,"

Oloya says the Department has developed projects for the restoration of wetlands to cover the whole of Uganda under the title, National Wetland Restoration Project which will soon be sold to Development Partners for support.

The Department has also developed an enforcement compliance strategy to guide inspection and monitoring implementation of wetland laws.

"We have officers from the districts, Environment Police Unit who arrest the culprits. These have arrested a number of encroachers, charged and evicted a number of them. We have intensified monitoring and the districts are ensuring compliance," Mr. Oloya reveals.

BY COMMUNICATIONS UNIT



The Environment Police Unit carrying out the inspection of wetlands in Kampala district

