

ONLINE DIALOGUE UNDER THE INTERNATIONAL MAYORS FORUM

**"DELIVERING
BASIC SERVICES TO LEAVE NO ONE BEHIND -
CLOSING THE WASH GAP" : UGANDA LOCAL
GOVERNMENT EXPERIENCES DURING THE COVID-19
PANDEMIC**

8TH OCTOBER 2020

**Presentation By: Gertrude Rose Gamwera
Secretary General, ULGA**

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INTRODUCTION

- Uganda is home to about 46 million people as of 2020 .
- 30% of the population don't have access to safe drinking water with the rural population disproportionately affected.
- The Water and Environment Sector Performance Report (2019) estimates that **21% of Uganda urban population don't have access compared to 30% in the rural areas.**
- A recent study undertaken by GIZ in Kampala found a substantial number (52%) of people living in life and health threatening homes and neighborhoods, **primarily in slums with limited access to safe water and sanitation services.**

STRATEGIC VISION OF THE WASH SECTOR IN UGANDA

- The goal of Uganda's water supply and sanitation sector is to **increase access to water supply and sanitation services from 65% and 70% respectively in 2010 to 100% by 2035.**
- Sector instituted reforms such as the national pro-poor strategy for water and sanitation (2006) to improve effectiveness of the water and sanitation sector in providing services to the poor through undertaking deliberate strategies to improve access to water and sanitation especially for the poor and underserved. *Ministry of Water, Lands and Environment (MWLE) Directorate of Water Development (DWD): Pro- Poor Strategy for the Water and Sanitation Sector (March 2006).*

- The Government under Cabinet Minute 320 (CT 2003) established an Independent Regulatory Entity for the Urban Water and Sanitation Sub-sector under the Director's office known as the Water Utility Regulation Department (WURD) to carry out regulatory functions - regulating water supply and sewerage services for all piped schemes.
- The sector has witnessed an increase in sector allocation as a share of the national budget from 2.9% (UGX 639bn on budget funding against the National budget of UGX 22,002bn) in the FY 2017/18 to 5.0% (UGX 1,263bn on budget funding in the FY 2018/19 against the National budget of UGX 25,093bn).

WASH SERVICE DELIVERY STRUCTURES LOCAL GOVERNMENT LEVEL :

- i. Local Governments (Districts and Town Councils), which are legally in charge of service delivery under the Decentralization Act; through the district water office implementing a Community Based Management System (CBMS) approach including NGOs and Water Users - **The water and sanitation committee (WSC) with consent of the water users, appoint a water source care taker who maintains the water sources, and collects the water user fees sometimes called O&M fees.**
- ii. De-concentrated support structures related to MWE, are at different stages of institutional establishment, including Technical Support Units (TSUs), Water Supply Development Facilities (WSDFs), Water Management Zones (WMZs), and Umbrella for Water and Sanitation Authorities.
- iii. National Water and Sewerage Corporation (NWSC) for urban water supply and sewerage;
- iv. The private sector (water and sanitation infrastructure operators, contractors, consultants and suppliers of goods) self-supply groups.

CHALLENGES AND PROGRESS LOCAL GOVERNMENTS ARE MAKING WITH WATER, SANITATION AND HYGIENE ACCESS IN UGANDA DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

- Currently Uganda has registered a total of 4400 cases in Uganda and 52 deaths have been registered so far and our first case was registered in March 2020.
- UNICEF Humanitarian Report July –August, 2020, reports that as of August, a total of 116,000 people were reached with sufficient quantities of water for drinking, cooking, and personal hygiene.
- Overall, respondents reported an increase in water usage during the Covid-19 period, but still reported challenges with long queues for water and long distances to water sources limiting water use.

KEY NOTABLES

1. COVID 19 Response was Government led and all interventions were championed and coordinated by Central Government.
2. Local Governments through the District Task Teams chaired by a **Resident District Commissioner working closely with the District Leaders**, remained at the fore front of implementation and delivery of essential services.
3. The Ministry of Water and Environment benefitted from the Development Operation funded by World Bank, where it ensured that there was continuous and steady supply of water amongst all health facilities and COVID 19 Quarantine centers across the country.
4. In the context of COVID-19 emergency extension of water and sanitation services in public spaces where the risk of transmitting the virus was considered high, the **water utilities** undertook some of the following measures to increase access to the poor.

INTERVENTIONS/PROGRESS

1. In March, NWSC partnered with Kampala Capital City Authority (KCCA) to install 300 water points to promote free hand washing, hygiene and disinfection. Key targets included the usually crowded public spaces such as markets, informal settlements and transport stations in Kampala's central business district and the city suburbs.

The hand washing facilities also had a public health message inscribed on them to emphasize the importance of proper hygiene: "Your health is in your hands. Wash your hands with soap and stay safe"

NWSC promised to replicate this strategy in all its towns of operation across the country.

2. NWSC mobilized emergency support to secure and extend water services in water stressed urban areas.

About 60% of Ugandans in urban areas live in informal settlements, which have low coverage of piped water. Whilst NWSC has been erecting public standpipes to serve such areas, several locations remain at the periphery of the water network. The measures announced by authorities to prevent the spread of the virus such as hand washing, physical distancing, or community-wide lockdowns are particularly difficult to observe in these places.

To address these challenges, **NWSC partnered with two leading private sector enterprises, MTN Uganda and Roofing Uganda LTD to improvise low-cost water service provision arrangements to benefit an estimated 30,000 residents.**

3. NWSC and umbrella authorities **suspended water disconnections for non-payment**, aware that customers' earnings were being interrupted by lockdown, a message that was re-enforced in a speech on 30th March by President Museveni. However this measure only provides temporary relief as customers will have to pay the accumulated arrears.
4. During this period, Development Partners like UNICEF supported 274 health facilities with WASH supplies and PPE in the high-risk districts of Iganga (13 health centres), Adjumani (10 HCs), Kampala (24 HCs), Wakiso (36 HCs), and Mukono (22 HCs), Masaka (16 HCs), Hoima (22 HCs), Kasese (38 HCs), Kamwenge (25 HCs), Kikuube (27 HCs), Moroto (8 HCs), Kotido (9 HCs), and Napak (7 HCs), in addition to 17 regional referral hospitals across the country.

Overall, UNICEF WASH support reached 340,695 people (166,940 male, 173,754 female) against the target of 315,000 people with critical WASH supplies and services from March through the end of August.

5. With UNICEF support, in July and August 2020, a total of 168 boreholes were rehabilitated benefiting 3,900 people residing in the high-risk districts of Adjumani, Yumbe, Kiryandongo, Arua, and Isingiro to ensure continuity of water services for handwashing and other needs among refugee- and host-communities.
6. UNICEF also provided support to the districts to rehabilitate eight boreholes (two in Ntoroko, one in Kikuube, and five in Moyo). The rehabilitated boreholes are expected to benefit 2,400 people. In addition, one borehole was rehabilitated in the cholera-affected community of Loptuk, Moroto district, ensuring the availability of safe water.

7. UNICEF supported the construction of a piped water supply system in Nakivale refugee settlement to benefit over 1,500 refugees and host populations within and around the settlement. Cumulatively, 116,732 people have accessed sufficient supplies of water of appropriate quality for drinking, cooking, and personal hygiene.
8. During the floods in the months of July and August, UNICEF also provided WASH supplies to Ntoroko and Kagadi districts for the flood response and to Kotido district for the cholera response, benefiting a total of 20,737 people (4,147 households).

CRITICAL INTERVENTIONS GOING FORWARD – ANNUAL SECTOR NEGOTIATIONS - (Article 193, 1995 Constitution of the Republic of Uganda)

1. **SKILLED HUMAN RESOURCE VACANCIES** - Most District Water Officers posts are not being advertised and filled by the LGs and this affected the performance of the program and Health Centers were inadequately staffed, with most of their staff were in acting positions especially the heads of departments.
 - **LGs shall allow for secondment of staff from MoWE especially for districts that have failed to attract staff and shall regularize the DWOs seconded to them into the LG staff structures.**
2. **THE MUNICIPAL WATER AND SANITATION GRANT IS NON-EXISTENT** since this was a responsibility of the Urban and Sewerage Department under the National Water and Sewerage Corporation.
 - **MoWE/ Municipal Councils shall allocate funds at the Municipal level for implementation/ coordination of water supply and sanitation capital development projects, related software, supervision, monitoring, coordination, and operation costs to the officer responsible for water.**

3. A **NON-EXISTENT URBAN DEVELOPMENT GRANT**, which makes preparation, formulation and implementation of detailed physical development plans was being hindered by the high costs involved in the physical planning process.
 - **The MoWE shall in consultation with MoFPED establish an Urban Development Grant.**
4. MoWE reported that the **GROUND WATER SOURCES WERE BEING HEAVILY EXPLOITED**, which had intensified their contamination.
 - **MoWE emphasized the need for all LGs to implement at least one mini piped water systems of not more than 100 connections.**

5. MoWE noted that the **FREQUENCY AND CONSISTENCE OF WATER QUALITY TESTING HAD DETERIORATED IN LGS.** This had been worsened by the fact that many people were constructing near the water sources and subsequently contaminating them.
 - **LGs shall on a quarterly basis submit to the MoWE the results of water quality tests that they will have carried out, and are to test at least 20% of all their water sources annually.**

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