



Water and sanitation in peri-urban settlements

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PERI-URBAN SETTLEMENTS in Kampala are characterised by high population densities coupled with the apparent agglomeration of different social and economic activities in the face of inadequate infrastructure and poor services including inter alia poor water supply and appalling sanitation standards. Rapid population growth mainly due to the perpetual rural-urban migration and the corresponding increase in economic activities have exerted enormous pressure on resources and infrastructure in peri-urban settlements including water availability and supply (Okello-Oleng: 1991, Serageldin: 1989). The bulk of homesteads in peri-urban sites lack running water systems. Water for domestic use and for business establishments is fetched in jerrycans from taps, wells and springs. The use of flush toilets and disposal of waste water through underground channels is, therefore, virtually non-existent resulting in the use of pit latrines many of which are shallow, poorly constructed and are located amidst the poor housing structures. Due to lack of proper drainage channels, waste water is spilled on surface creating perpetual wet spots with stench as the spilled waste-water contains solid particles of waste material (Mwesigwa and Nuwagaba: 1994). Water from the few taps available is clean but springs which are the common sources of water are polluted by wastes from business enterprises, domestic waste, and chemical detergents (Mougoest: 1993, Tevera: 1993). In extreme cases bathing and washing of clothes in wells or near wells where at the same time water for domestic use is fetched has been observed in Kiswa, Katzamiti and Nakawa settlements (Mwesigwa and Nuwagaba: 1994) High costs of piped water have also led some residents to resort to water from unprotected water channels some of which are dangerously located near sewerage systems like the case in Kibuli and Makerere Kivulu settlements. In low lying areas like Bwaise, traces of sewage from latrines has been detected in wells and springs.

Given the inability of the city authorities to sustain urban services due to inadequate resources, the improvement of the above poor status of water supply and sanitation in peri-urban settlements and their sustainability would best be achieved through intensifying the ongoing community efforts geared towards improving their environment in general and water supply and sanitation in particular.

Community response has been in the form of communal digging of drainage channels and cleaning them especially when they get blocked, regulations (bye-laws)

by RCs for each homestead to have a properly constructed latrine, and regulations requiring residents to spill domestic waste-water in channels and pits. In some localities taps have been constructed through communal cash contributions and associations formed to sensitise residents on the need for proper sanitation. The situation is, however, far from good and these efforts have, so far, had little impact because of the high and ever growing population in peri-urban settlements leading to congestion and further aggravation of the sanitation problem. Leading to congestion and further aggravation of the sanitation problem. It is generally held by urban authorities that since peri-urban settlements are unplanned and are constructed outside city regulations, they are temporary and will be displaced in future by other legal developments in the city (Mwesigwa and Nuwagaba 1994). Peri-urban settlements are, however, a product of the whole city socio-economic set up and accommodate a significant number of city dwellers (Mwesigwa: 1987, Wabwire: 1992). Action, therefore, is imperative. Below are some of the necessary measures for the sustainability of water and sanitation based focus on group discussions, participatory appraisals and interviews carried out by the author, early this year;

- Urban authorities in collaboration with RCs should facilitate the community to further consolidate the on-going efforts.
- Given the meagre urban authority financial resources, the community should be involved in planning and execution of water and sanitation programmes.
- Where possible, security of tenure on land should be granted to encourage homesteads manage their environment more responsibly.
- RCs and their residents should be assisted in getting to possible NGOs both local and international who can further assist them in their water and sanitation programmes.

Water supply and sanitation in peri-urban settlements are far from satisfactory and provide a fertile ground for disease. Peri-urban settlements are, however, part and parcel of the city and coming to grips with their water and sanitation problems would provide relief for the whole city.

References

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