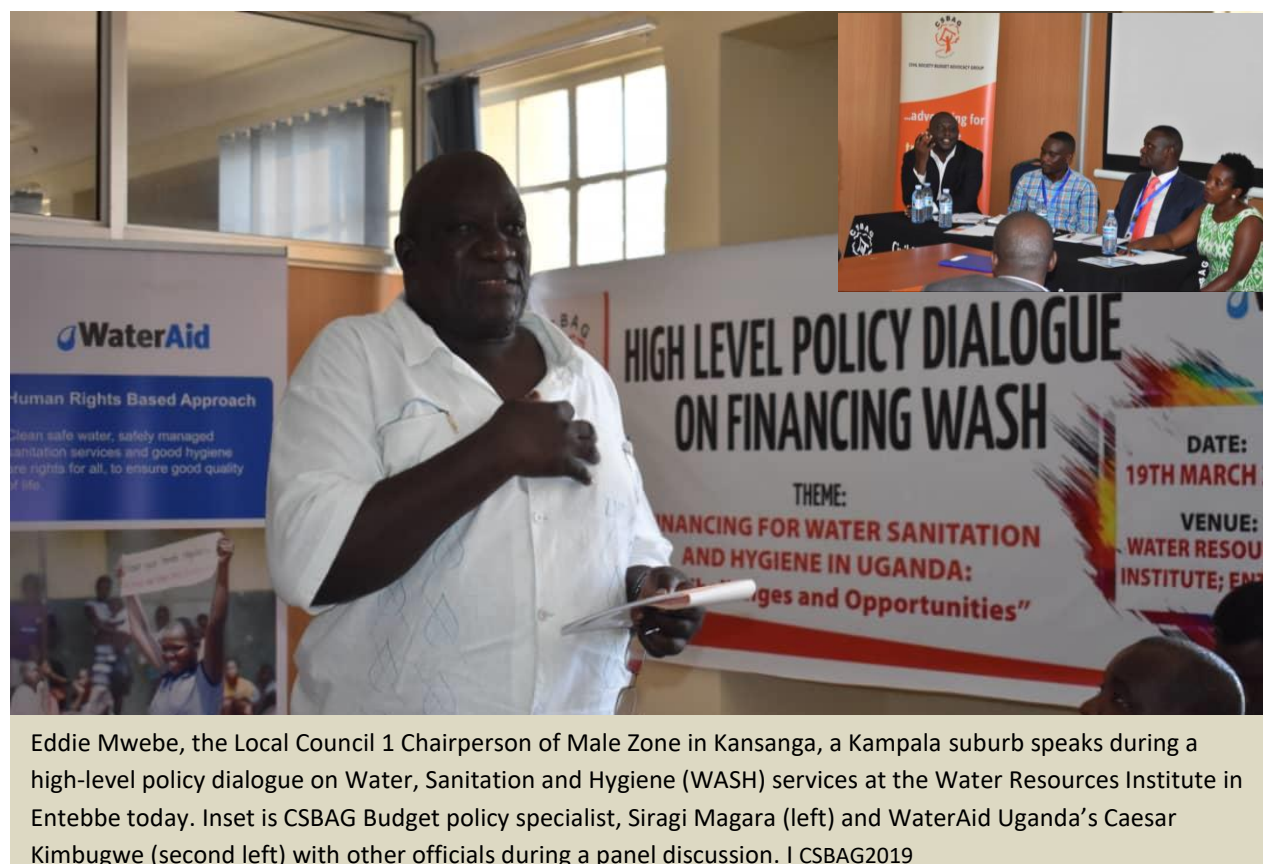


Leaders ask Ugandans to play active role in **improving water, sanitation services**



“Every citizen should actively seek information on how much money is allocated...”

Local leaders have called upon Ugandans to actively engage in improving Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH) services in their communities because of their effect on people’s quality of life and economic growth.

Speaking at a high level policy dialogue on WASH financing organized by CSBAG and WaterAid Uganda, Eddie Mwebe, the Local Council 1 Chairperson of Male Zone in Kansanga, a Kampala suburb, has advised citizens to take the initiative to find out how much money is allocated to WASH services for different institutions in each financial year and thereafter demand for quality services and government accountability.

“Every citizen should actively seek information on how

much money is allocated to schools and hospitals to cater for WASH services. It is upon this background that they will gain the confidence to follow up and check whether this money is being put to good use,” said Mwebe.

In January 2019, CSBAG in collaboration with Water Aid Uganda undertook a study to assess sustainable financing alternatives for Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) in Kampala. CSBAG in partnership with WaterAid Uganda is also facilitating the strengthening of community structures to play an active role in the national budget process and to sustain WASH services in Kampala. The project empowers civil society and non-state actors to assess the effectiveness of existing citizen feedback and accountability mechanisms with the aim of making recommendations to improve WASH services provision and sustainability as well as strengthen sub-national WASH budget monitoring structures.

Existing challenges to WASH

Collins Amanyana, a senior economist at the Ministry of Water and Environment noted that 4.5 million Ugandans lack access to safe water while 892 Ugandans have no access to sanitation services. He also added that there is a close link between sanitation and poverty. “People who are considered poor are more likely to access poor WASH services compared to the rich,” said Amanyana.

The CSBAG and WaterAid Uganda study revealed that WASH challenges in Kampala Capital City Authority (KCCA) include poor drainage, high population growth rates which has resulted in the emergence of informal settlements, constant flooding, insufficient human resources, and poor fecal management among others. Mwebe noted that limited and inadequate financing for WASH services is the biggest challenge to water, sanitation, and hygiene in schools and hospitals. He explains that a primary school may receive only UGX 100,000 a year to cater for WASH services yet it has over 1,300 pupils.

The Ministry of Water and Environment Sector Investment Plan (2018) indicates that an average of UGX 1, 926.9 trillion per year is required to meet the sector’s targets. Basing on the current funding levels however, there is a deficit of about 1.3 trillion per year. In Uganda, financing for the water sector has stagnated at a rate of 3% of the national budget yet the population growth rate has increased at a rate of 3.2% and more local governments have been created. The current national budget therefore is insufficient to meet national WASH targets.

CSO contribution

Mwebe thanked and appreciated CSBAG and WaterAid for creating awareness on WASH services in the Kansanga community and enabling citizens gain an understanding of their responsibility towards monitoring WASH services in different government institutions. “Many government institutions like schools and hospitals have inadequate knowledge and information about WASH or the fact that WASH services are allocated funds by government. We are grateful to CSBAG and WaterAid Uganda for taking the initiative to sensitize ordinary Ugandans about financing WASH services,” said Mwebe. He however noted that there is need to organize more interactive engagements like seminars, dialogues, and conferences with local leaders, citizens and other stakeholders to ensure that more people gain knowledge about WASH services.

Recommendations

Siragi Magara, a Budget Policy Specialist at CSBAG noted that there are no specific government Ministries, Departments, and Agencies (MDAs) in charge of WASH services. He called for coordination and mainstreaming of WASH issues in all MDAs in order to improve WASH. Caesar Kimbugwe, the Project Manager for Sustainable WASH at Water Aid Uganda advised Ministry of Water and KCCA to conduct continuous sensitization programs for citizens in order to create awareness about citizens’ role in improving WASH services. Mwebe has advised government to bring WASH services closer to the people. He explains that a big percentage of Ugandans do not know that whereas it is a citizen’s duty to pay water bills for example, government has the responsibility of ensuring that citizens have access to clean water, or deliver public toilets in accessible areas. Government should therefore make quality WASH services available and accessible to all Ugandans. Mwebe also added that following up on financing WASH services will not only increase transparency and ensure that leaders are held accountable but will also enhance citizens’ engagement in service delivery.