

# The LVEMP II Civil Society Watch E-bulletin

A Monthly from the **East African Sustainability Watch Network** comprising: Uganda Coalition for Sustainable Development (UCSD), Tanzania Coalition for Sustainable Development (TCSD) and Sustainable Environmental Development Watch Network (SusWatch Kenya)

**September 2017**



*Left to Right: NWSD Jinja GM – Mr. Charles Okuonzi at the Jinja Children’s Hospital Clean-up exercise; The Branch Manager – Namulesa (Opedun P.M shares a light moment with a Councillor; The Guest of Honour - Deputy NWSC MD in charge of Technical Services Mr. Johnson Amayo hands over a certificate to one of the WACOCO groups; PREPARED Project Chief of Party - Dr. Scott McCormick makes his remark at the WACOCO launch. Photos: UCSD*

## **The PREPARED Project, NWSC and UCSD Launch WACOCO Clubs amidst Jubilation**

On the 6<sup>th</sup> September 2017, Planning for Resilience through Policy, Adaptation, Research and Economic Development (PREPARED) Project along with partners in Uganda- Uganda Coalition for Sustainable Development (UCSD) and National Water and Sewerage Corporation (NWSC)-Jinja and Iganga areas; launched 15 clubs of the Water Community Communication clubs (WACOCO).

The event started with a Clean-up exercise of Jinja Children’s; Hospital along Nalufenya road in Jinja. This was followed by a march past through Jinja town that ended at NWSC Jinja office gardens at Bell Avenue.

At the ceremony, the Chief of Party of the PREPARED Project, Dr. Scott McCormick noted that the project is not only a good model for East Africa but globally as well. The project aimed at addressing the level of Non-Rvenue Water (NRW) in Jinja NWSC area that stood at 45% in 2014 that has to date reduced to 21%.

This project involved a Customer Engagement Framework that informed customers about NRW, NWSC operations, customer obligations and responsibilities. One of the approaches used under this Framework is the WACOCO platform which involves politically elected community leaders at the Sub-County, urban Division and Municipal levels. These form a club that oversees water and sanitation issues with in their constituencies and also links with NWSC through the Area Branch Managers. They regularly invite the branch managers to Council meetings and discuss issues of water and sanitation respectively. Other approaches used were 25 hours of 1 hour weekly radio campaigns broadcast on a popular radio station, NWSC staff visiting places of worship and holding community sensitization meetings with customers in Jinja and Iganga areas respectively.

The WACOCO clubs were offered certificates of appreciation by the Deputy Managing Director in charge of Technical Services Mr. Johnson Amayo. He thanked the Councillors for being good ambassadors of NWSC and encouraged them to continue sensitizing the communities about water issues.

The 10 WACOCO clubs working with NWSC in Jinja include Jinja Municipal Council, Jinja Central Division, Walukuba/Masese Division, Mpumudde Division, Njeru Municipal Council, Budondo Sub-County, Mafubira Sub-County, Buwenge Town Council, Bugembe Town Council, Kakira Town Council. In Iganga there are 5 WACOCO clubs that include Iganga Central Division, Iganga Northern Division, Kaliro Town Council, Mayuge Town Council and Bugiri Municipal Council respectively.

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## East African Leaders Raise Climate Change Concerns at the 72<sup>nd</sup> UN General Assembly General Debate



Last month saw the 193 Member States of the United Nations come together in New York for the Annual General Assembly session under the theme: ‘The Sustainable Development Goals: a universal push to transform our world’. East African leaders took to the General Assembly Hall to discuss a wide array of the most important international issues, including climate change, development, peace and security, and international law.

At this year’s annual general debate, Burundi’s Minister for External Relations and International Cooperation – Alain Aime Nyamitwe noted that, ‘Patience was a virtue that climate change did not respect.

‘No State could shirk their responsibility to implement their commitments under the Paris Agreement, regardless of their size or place on the map. Action must be taken today because tomorrow would be too late’, he added

Kenya praised the 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals, highlighting that they had provided the globe with a ‘blueprint’ for a more peaceful world, and ‘for making development and globalization fair and equitable for all’. In her address, Amina Chawahir Mohammed, the Cabinet Secretary for Foreign Affairs and International Trade of Kenya said that Kenya acknowledges the UN’s ‘remarkable role’ in sustaining peace and providing a platform for cooperation and solidarity among nations. At the PEI, we support Ms Mohammed’s argument that collaboration and cooperation amongst the global community is critical in addressing development issues.

Tanzania’s Minister for Foreign Affairs, East Africa, Regional and International Cooperation – Augustine P. Mahiga, said that climate change had become an existential challenge to the planet. He gave the disheartening example of melting of the snows and glaciers of Kilimanjaro, the highest mountain in Africa.

Rwanda’s President Paul Kagame urged the United Nations to treat all people with impartiality and respect, and to be a good steward of the funds entrusted to it. He expressed Rwanda’s support to the spirit of reform taking root at the UN. “Abuse and waste are therefore not a mere public relations problem, but an existential threat, which must be tackled head-on,” Paul Kagame said.

Uganda’s President – YK Museveni noted that the SDG framework is a different way of diagnosing and providing a prescription for the problems of under-development. He added that, ‘We are happy that, at last, the global agenda captures most of the ingredients necessary for growth and transformation of societies as happened in the past for those societies that pioneered the Industrial Revolution. In particular, the inclusion of energy on the list of the SDGs is a departure from the past global agendas’.

During this Summit, African leaders also called for urgent measures to mitigate the effects of climate change. Seychelles President Danny Faure Mr. Faure called for a cooperative approach in limiting global warming greenhouse emissions. Togo’s Prime Minister, Selom Komi Klassou, also emphasised the importance of carrying out the Paris accord as well as the SDGs. “The challenges facing our world have a real impact on development of Africa,” he said. “And one of the imperatives, in order to confront it effectively, remains the continent’s economic transformation. Investment needs to be increased in the fields of science, industry, agribusiness and high technology.” Over the next few years, we hope to see the effects of increased investment on the continent to tackle climate change.

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## CSOs urge Uganda to ratify the Minamata Convention on Mercury ahead of a Global meeting



IPEN awareness on Mercury pollution: Photo: ENB

Mercury is toxic to human health, posing a particular threat to the development of the child in utero and early in life. Mercury exists in various forms: elemental (or metallic); inorganic (e.g. mercuric chloride); and organic (e.g., methyl- and ethyl mercury), which all have different toxic effects, including on the nervous, digestive and immune systems, and on lungs, kidneys, skin and eyes.

It has been estimated that among selected subsistence fishing populations, between 1.5/1000 and 17/1000 children showed cognitive impacts caused by the consumption of fish containing mercury.

Mercury releases in the environment result mainly from human activity, particularly from coal-fired power stations, residential heating systems, waste incinerators and as a result of mining for mercury, gold and other metals. Once in the environment, elemental mercury is naturally transformed into methylmercury that bio accumulates in fish and shellfish.

Human exposure occurs mainly through inhalation of elemental mercury vapours during industrial processes and through consumption of contaminated fish and shellfish.

The first Conference of the Parties (COP1) to the Minamata Convention on Mercury took place from 24-29 September 2017 in Geneva, Switzerland. The Minamata Convention, which was adopted on 10 October 2013 and entered into force on 16 August 2017, bans new and phases out existing mercury mines, contains measures to control air emissions, and regulates the informal sector of artisanal and small-scale gold mining.

COP1 considered a number of issues including matters related to reporting, effectiveness evaluation, the financial mechanism, arrangements for a permanent secretariat, compliance and guidance, and guidelines related to technical aspects of the Convention. A High-Level Segment, which provided an interactive platform for high-level delegates to demonstrate political leadership and raise awareness of and support for implementation of the Convention, attended by two Heads of State and Government and 80 ministers.

According to the Minamata Convention website, Rwanda is the only signatory to this Convention in East Africa that has ratified it on 29/6/2017. But according to the Uganda National Association of Community and Occupational Health (UNACOH), over 20,000 artisanal and small gold miners are exposed to life threatening illnesses from mercury use in Uganda, as they use crude mercury to separate gold from its ore.

It is in this regard that Uganda Coalition for Sustainable Development, National Association of Professional Environmentalists (NAPE) and Pro Biodiversity Conservationists of Uganda (PROBICO) brought up the urgency of Uganda to ratify the Minamata Convention in a statement released August 25, 2017 in Kampala. The statement notes that, 'artisanal mining which is a growing phenomenon in Uganda, uses the largest amount of mercury – estimated at about 100 to 150 tons to amalgamate gold from the ore per year without recovering mercury'. The 3 NGOs urge the Minister of Water and Environment to hasten Uganda's ratification of the Minamata Convention.

Read the full CSO statement from here: <http://tinyurl.com/y9e3oora>