

Namutumba turns to PDM cash to enforce sanitation

KAMPALA. Authorities in Namutumba District have resolved to deny Parish Development Model (PDM) funds to residents without pit-latrines as part of efforts to improve sanitation and curb hygiene-related diseases.

The move comes amid growing concern over poor sanitation coverage in the district, where health officials say nearly 38 percent of homesteads lack pit-latrines, exposing communities to diseases such as cholera, typhoid, and diarrhoea.

The directive was announced during the district's commemoration of National Sanitation Week held at Bugiri Church grounds in Kagulu Sub-county at the weekend.

The event was held under the theme: "Accelerating safely managed sanitation for a healthier Uganda."

The annual sanitation campaign was revitalised by the Ministry of Health in 2025 following its launch in Katanga slum in Kampala, with the aim of mobilising communities to improve hygiene and reduce preventable diseases linked to poor sanitation.

Representing the chief administrative officer, Mr Ali Balimumit, the assistant

secretary in the CAO's office, said the district would use access to PDM funds as leverage to compel households to construct pit-latrines.

"To fight open defecation, our strict enforcement is that people without latrines will not receive PDM money," Mr Balimumit said.

He added that district leaders, the resident district commissioner's office, and other stakeholders had agreed to enforce the measure during the next round of PDM disbursements.

"PDM money is meant to improve livelihoods, but some beneficiaries are unwilling to improve sanitation in their homes. We want residents to first meet basic hygiene standards," he said.

Officials argue that poor sanitation is undermining government poverty alleviation programmes, with many households reportedly spending PDM funds on medical treatment for diseases associated with poor hygiene.

Mr Paul Waiswa, the deputy RDC for Namutumba, said linking sanitation to PDM eligibility was necessary because open defecation is rampant

"People have embraced the PDM programme, so we are saying that the first qualification for receiving the money is having a toilet," Mr Waiswa said.

The district health officer, Dr James Kirya, warned that open defecation continues to fuel outbreaks of diseases, particularly among children.

"Children are in hospitals suffering from diarrhoea because of poor sanitation and open defecation. Besides denying them PDM money, we are also going to arrest offenders under the Public Health Act," Dr Kirya said.

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forcement campaign in March targeting households without pit-latrines. Under the exercise, affected homes were initially given 14 days to construct toilets or face prosecution.

The campaign, supported by NGO ALBOH Uganda, has seen vulnerable households receive tools such as spades and pick mattocks to facilitate latrine construction. However, authorities say progress remains slow despite the intervention.

Cultural beliefs

Officials attribute resistance partly to poverty and cultural beliefs.

According to local leaders, there are members of a certain clan who traditionally do not use pit-latrines, while others cite religious and cultural reasons for resisting sanitation measures.

Residents, however, say the cost of constructing modern washable pit-latrines is beyond the reach of many poor households.

Ms Mary Nairuba, a resident, said constructing a standard washable pit-latrine costs about Shs2 million.

"How do you expect a poor man living in a grass-thatched house to raise Shs2 million for a pit-latrine?" she wondered.

Another resident, Mr Waiswa Kisubi of Kagulu Village, argued that denying residents PDM funds contradicts the programme's guidelines.

"PDM money has nothing to do with owning a pit-latrine. Government should instead give us enough time to construct them," he said.

Residents also appealed to the government to increase access to clean water by constructing more boreholes in underserved communities.

Despite the concerns, authorities have now extended the ultimatum to 21 days for households without pit-latrines to comply, warning that defaulters risk prosecution under the Public Health Act in addition to being excluded from future PDM funding.

Under the PDM initiative, the government sends Shs100 million in revolving funds to each parish annually to help households trapped in the subsistence economy transition into the money economy.