In this article, “Environmental health practices, constraints and possible interventions in peri-urban settlements in developing countries – a review of Kampala, Uganda”. The researchers studied environmental health practices, constraints and possible interventions in peri-urban settlements in developing countries. Kampala, Uganda was used as a prototype of a developing country. Kampala is the capital of Uganda and like most cities in developing countries it is experiencing urbanization. Urbanization leads to an increase in population and rapid development of peri-urban (informal) settlements. More than 60% of the city’s population resides in these settlements with lack of clear policies and effective programmes for meeting the needs of the poor resulting in slums which have the lowest basic service levels (sanitation, water supply, solid waste collection, storm water and grey water disposal).

These researchers reviewed earlier studies on infrastructure development and sustainability within Kampala’s peri-urban settlements, field surveys in a typical peri-urban settlement in the city (Bwaise III Parish) and structured interviews with key personnel from the National Water and Sewerage Corporation (NWSC), Kampala City Council (KCC), and the National Environment Management Authority (NEMA). They presented findings on current environmental health practices, perspectives of local communities, interviewed institutions on constraints and presented possible solutions to basic service provision. The implications of these viewpoints for possible environmental health interventions are presented.

Epidemiological surveillance undertaken by the Ministry of Health (MoH), shows that diseases due to poor sanitation, specifically diarrhea, are among Kampala’s top 5 causes of morbidity and mortality especially among children. Cases of cholera increase in these densely settled areas during rainy seasons. If the current growth trends prevail, the populations of poor urban residents in Kampala will more than double by 2015 with the majority of them having no access to safe water and hygienic sanitation.

The study methodology is Kampala. The district of Kampala is divided into 5 divisions and 99 parishes. Each parish consists of zones/villages. The 5 divisions of Kampala city are Nakawa, Rubaga, Kawempe, Makindye and Central division. Kawempe, where the study area, Bwaise III is located, is the poorest of the city’s 5 divisions. A poor urban settlement, largely unplanned with one of the highest population growth rates in Kampala. A desk study was undertaken to review information from previous studies with focus on the peri-urban settlements’ current status, constraints to basic service delivery, knowledge, attitudes and practices related to hygiene, and health education. Questionnaires, field observations and photographing were used for field survey. A pre-tested questionnaire was administered to 30 households (HHs) chosen randomly. These represented 1% of the household number in the parish (5 HHs in each zone). The survey explored people’s socio-economic status, current environmental sanitation practices and perception on problems related to basic service provision (water supply, solid waste
management, sanitation, and drainage of grey and storm water), causes of these problems, solutions to inadequacies and who is responsible, and their willingness to pay.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE ARTICLE

Several people reside in urban poverty. These are individuals and households lacking safe, secure and healthy shelter with basic infrastructure like piped water and adequate provision for sanitation, drainage and removal of household wastes; have inadequate income and unstable or risk asset base; are not empowered, and with limited or no safety net (Sheuya, 2007). The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) gives urgency to the challenge of basic service provision for the rapidly expanding informal and peri-urban settlements in African cities. Targets 7C and 7D of MDG7 aims at reducing by half the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation by 2015 and achieving a significant improvement in the lives of at least 100 million slums dwellers by 2020.

This research paper intends to inform policy makers, researchers, institutions and development partners about the problems and constraints that exist in provision of basic services in Kampala’s peri-urban settlements and such similar areas and implications for possible environmental health intervention. The Ministry of Lands Housing and Urban Development should improve infrastructure planning within the city, collaborate with city planning institutions and involve both genders in community participation to ensure sustainability. There is lack of political will to enforce necessary regulations. This is a wakeup call to our politicians to protect the health of the populace and the environment in peri urban slums in developing countries.

EVALUATION OF THE ARTICLE

This article is clear and can be used as a prototype in any peri urban settlement in any developing country in Africa because the researchers selected the poorest peri urban settlement in Kampala, Uganda. The environmental health practices, constraints and possible interventions in peri-urban settlements in Kampala, Uganda were properly outlined. They collected data from randomly chosen households, reviewed previous studies while focusing on the peri-urban settlements’ current status, constraints to basic service delivery, knowledge, attitudes and practices related to hygiene, and health education and used questionnaires, field observations and photographing for field survey. A pre-tested questionnaire was administered to 30 households (HHs) chosen randomly. These represented 1% of the household number in the parish (5 HHs in each zone). The survey explored people’s socio-economic status, current environmental sanitation practices and perception on problems related to basic service provision (water supply, solid waste. The researchers did a good job.