

MINISTRY OF WATER AND ENVIRONMENT GLOBAL WATER PARTNERSHIP EASTERN AFRICA.



GLOBAL WATER LEADERSHIP PROGRAMME ON WATER SECURITY AND CLIMATE RESILIENCE

BRIEF

RESPONSE STRATEGY FOR THE BOTTLENECKS AFFECTING
INTEGRATED WATER RESOURCES MANAGEMENT AND WASH
IN UGANDA PRESENTED TO SENIOR MANAGEMENT
ON 29TH February 2024.

February 2024

1.0 Executive Summary

Historically, Uganda is one of the countries with the best policies, ranging from Uganda's Vision 2040 to the National Development Programme II&III, among others, calling for a programme-based planning. These efforts have achieved a great milestone in attempts to meet resource mobilisation strategy and international/global policy standards, such as the SDG 2030, particularly Goal 6.5 on Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) and water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) services in Uganda.

In 2005, the Ministry of Water and Environment kickstarted the sector reform study which led to the decentralisation of the management of water resources through the catchment-based approach. This was intended to address the challenges affecting IWRM. However, the erratic climate change has complicated the management of the water resources. As a result, the Government of Uganda, through Ministry of Water and Environment, in partnership with Global Water Partnership (GWP) through the Global Water Leadership Programme, conducted a root cause analysis of the bottlenecks affecting IWRM and WASH services in Uganda as identified among stakeholders. The following were the findings of the root causes of the bottlenecks in the policy, legal, institutional frameworks and financing of WASH and IWRM in the four regional centers of Upper Nile, Albert, Kyoga and Victoria Water Management zones.

The findings noted the following issues/gaps i.e.

- (i) Inadequate knowledge/information on the buffer zone boundaries.
- (ii) Inadequate awareness about the policies.
- (iii) Political interference.
- (iv) Low and sometimes lack of funding to critical departments.
- (iv) Lack of integrated monitoring and reporting information system that is designed to capture status of the wetlands from grassroots.
- (v) Contradictions/ conflicting policies and Acts.
- (vi) Inadequate and, in some cases, no environmental police officers/ stations on environmental policing.

(vii) Water abstraction/supply normally gets a lot of funding and government prioritisation compared to water source protection.

(viii) The land tenure system hinders implementation of IWRM.

(xi) Delayed justice on environmental degradation.

(xiii) Poor mindset on environmental conservation, among others.

This brief, therefore, states the following strategic actions:

(i) Review and update relevant policies, legal and institutional frameworks i.e. the Water Act, Water and Sanitation Gender Strategy, sector strategic investment plan, the communication strategy, the stakeholder engagement plan and develop guidelines for those that are obsolete.

(ii) Create awareness about the policies and disseminate them widely.

(iii) Translate some of the popular versions of the policies into languages best understood by the local communities; and (iv) Allocate conditional grants for climate change resilience to enable local governments implement climate change mitigation and adaption measures.

2.0 Background

With funding from the United Kingdom Foreign Affairs Department (UKFCDO), the Ministry of Water and Environment and Global Water Partnership – East Africa (GWP-EA) are implementing Global Water Leadership (GWL) Programme. The programme provides critical support to governments in seven low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) of GWP countries spread across five sub-regions i.e.: Central African Republic in central Africa; Rwanda and Uganda in eastern Africa; Malawi and Tanzania in eastern and southern Africa; Nepal in South Asia and the State of Palestine in the Mediterranean to become international models for water leadership and to demonstrate the socio-economic transformations that can be accomplished by making climate-resilient integrated water resources management (IWRM) and water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) services a political priority.

At the core of this success is a commitment to breaking down the silos in which IWRM) and WASH

operate for the development of holistic and climate-resilient solutions. To that end, the GWL programme is implemented through a collaboration comprising GWP, UNICEF, Sanitation and Water for All (SWA), World Health Organisation (WHO) and Joint Monitoring Programme for Water Supply, Sanitation and Hygiene (JMP).

As the sole IWRM implementing partner, Global Water Partnership (GWP) has designed a set of work packages to contribute to Output 1 (Leadership and Collaboration), Output 2 (Evidence, Norms and Standards) and Output 3 (Identifying Systemic and Financial Constraints) for water resources management, and, where possible, climate-resilient WASH services. These Outputs contribute to generating political leadership for water at the national and international levels.

The flagship product of the GWL programme is government-validated response strategies for addressing the most critical barriers to climate-resilient water management and WASH services.

Barriers have been identified by national stakeholders, who have prioritised the top two (2) to four (4) barriers in their respective country. Multistakeholder working groups have been formed – one per barrier – each tasked with developing a response strategy to address their respective barrier.

A response strategy contains two components:

An action plan and a finance plan. The latter is what makes this programme unique from other development programmes because without a realistic finance plan, the actions that have been scoped will not be undertaken, and financial planning is commonly under-considered in the water sector.

Building stakeholder capacity in identifying financing options is, therefore, a key output of the programme.

3.0 Problem Statement

A sound and sustainable utilisation and management of water and environment resources is a cornerstone for the socio-economic transformation of Uganda, with over 15% of the country's catchment area covered by water and natural habitats. These have ripple ecological benefits to the environment and the over 40 million people in Uganda. However, the uncontrolled anthropogenic activities, coupled with erratic climate change, have greatly affected the

integrated water resources management in Uganda. Uganda's forest cover has declined from 13.2% in 2019 to 12.2% in 2021. Despite a notable 0.9% increase in wetland coverage from 13% in 2015 to 13.9 in 2023, compliance to waste water discharge standard was at 34%, compared to the target of 68%. The overall compliance of rural water in respect to E. coli was at 55% against the programme implementation action plan (PIAP) target of 80%, which indicated a 7% decline in compliance compared to 62% in FY 2021/22. Furthermore, the overall compliance to urban water supply in respect to E.coli was at 71% in 2023, compared to 78% in 2022.

In pursuit of attaining the Sustainable Development Goal 6 (SDG 6) by 2030, Uganda has been implementing several interventions, but there has been some gaps and barriers that strain the development. The GWL Programme was officially launched in June 2022 in Uganda, and since then, the programme has been working to strengthen national support for water resources and services management, provide critical information and analysis to identify and resolve barriers, input into water (and/or climate) policies, and help governments access financing to transform the sector and bolster its climate resilience. A stakeholder consultative meeting was organised, and a series of bottlenecks and barriers affecting the achievement of IWRM and WASH services in Uganda were identified as

- (i) Poor enforcement of policies and laws (Acts, ordinances, bylaws).*
 - (ii) Social-cultural norms, attitudes, religious beliefs; (iii) Inadequate co-ordination across institutions; Limited participation of men, women, youth and PWDs in WASH and IWRM.*
 - (iv) Low acceptance levels of IWRM conservation projects due to long-term impacts.*
 - (v) Limited capacity and management of resources;*
 - (vi) Lack of strong civil society and advocacy.*
 - (vii) Increased land degradation for human activities.*
 - (viii) Increased infrastructural development without respect for IWRM and WASH.*
 - (ix) Non-compliance to abstraction and discharge standards.*
 - (x) Political interference, among others.*
-

The bottlenecks were listed, prioritised, analysed and ranked in consultation with country water partners, government ministries, departments and agencies, the private sectors, civil society organisations and UNICEF. The consultation yielded into identification of two (2) mainstream bottlenecks affecting IWRM and WASH i.e.:

- a) Weak policy, legal and institutional frameworks.
- b) Limited finance to implement IWRM and WASH services in Uganda.

Two (2) thematic working groups were constituted based on the two bottlenecks mentioned above.

It is upon this background that a root cause analysis for both bottlenecks was conducted to unearth the factors affecting IWRM and WASH services in Uganda. This followed developing the action plan and finance plan to guide the development of a response strategy.

4.0 Main Objective

The main objective of the response strategy is to strengthen collaborative management and the implementation of an inclusive and climate-resilient IWRM and WASH services in Uganda through the catchment-based integrated water resources management approach.

4.1 Specific Objectives of the Response Strategy

- i) To identify and implement possible solutions to the bottlenecks affecting resilient IWRM/WASH services in Uganda.
- ii) To provide strategic action and finance plans to overcome the bottlenecks.
- iii) To strengthen institutional governance and sustainable financing for IWRM/WASH activities.
- iv) To increase collaboration and capacity of institutions towards implementation of the IWRM/WASH services in Uganda.

4.2 Methodology / Approach

The thematic working groups were constituted, and sampling method was used, with focus on the scope of the works, data collection and analysis. Thematic working groups were composed of government officials, the academia, CSO, country water chapters, MDA, and following the initial consultative meeting, a desk review exercise was conducted on the two bottlenecks identified.

The stakeholders and respondents were identified based on a random sampling method i.e. judgmental sampling technic and interviewed through focus

group discussions. Qualitative data was transcribed, coded and themes generated and refined, whereas for quantitative data, the SPSS tool was used to analyze the data from which two final reports were developed.

5.0 Key Findings

The findings in the brief are informed by the root cause analysis of the bottlenecks highlighted above on IWRM and WASH services undertaken in the four (4) deconcentrated regional centers of Uganda, namely, Upper Nile, Kyoga, Victoria, and Albert water management zones. The root cause analysis was conducted from 7th December 2022 to 23rd March 2023. The following emerged as the key gaps affecting IWRM and WASH services in Uganda.

Gaps in awareness and information dissemination

During the root cause analysis, it was found that there was less knowledge about the policies, legal and institutional frameworks on IWRM and WASH. This was attributed to the low sensitization campaigns, capacity of technical staff, political leaders to competently advance capacity building programs on policy directions, objectives, vision, and its principles. A total of 36.7 % of the respondents highlighted inadequate awareness about the policies as one of the major setbacks affecting IWRM, compared to 6.7% inadequate capacity and budget constraints at 13.3%.

Gaps identified in Inclusiveness.

Inclusiveness of all stakeholders in WASH and IWRM is paramount to meet the policy objectives on sustainable integrated water resources management. Contrary to the Sustainable Development Goal of Leaving No One Behind, there was limited involvement of the vulnerable groups of people, i.e. women, persons with disabilities (PWDs), and the elderly in integrated water resources management. This was evidenced by the lack of an indicator on gender in the Sector Strategic Investment Plan for the water and environment ministry, coupled with the lack of funds earmarked in the Ministerial Policy Statement for FY 2021/2022 & 22/23 on addressing gender gaps in IWRM and WASH services.

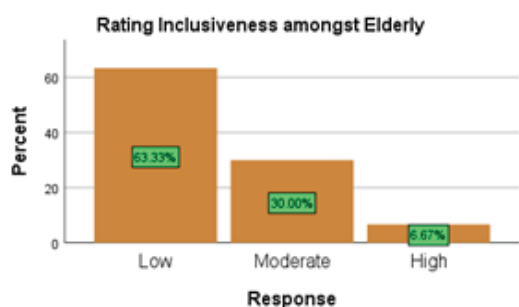


Figure 1: Ratings of inclusivity of the elderly.

In addition, low involvement of persons with physical disability was also registered. This was noted by 56.67% of the respondents, whereas inclusion of the women and the elderly in IWRM and WASH services was rated at 62.5%.

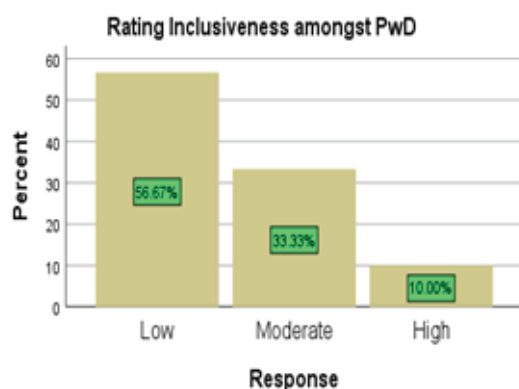


Figure 2: Rating of inclusivity of persons with PwDs.

Political economy and Governance gaps

The brief further highlights grey areas considering the political economy and governance that need to be strengthened to fully embrace the benefits of integrated water resources management. However, efforts geared towards total integrated water resources management have been curtailed by a series of factors such as corruption and political interference, which have hindered the smooth implementation of IWRM and WASH services in Uganda. To reverse the current trends, there is need for strong political will to handle the issue of encroachers of wetlands, lake shores as stipulated in the Wetland Policy, Water Policy and National Environment ACT 2019 (amended).

Gaps in policies, strategies, and institutional frameworks

There was no indicator on gender in the sector Strategic Investment Plan as reflected in the views of the respondents during the root cause analysis of the bottlenecks, where by 63.33% of the respondents said the budgets did not adequately address issues of gender in IWRM and WASH.

Furthermore, Section 5.2 of the Water Policy on research, innovations and technology recognizes the importance of appropriate technology through the ATC but it does not show the strategy to operationalize appropriate technology. This was validated by the 87.5 % of the respondents whom when interviewed noted that the Water policy does not adequately address the issues of innovations and appropriate technology in IWRM and WASH. Respondents proposed actions such as;

- (i) Financing new innovations.
- (ii) Availing alternatives to technologies which have not properly worked
- (iii) Conducting massive sensitization among the stakeholders about the policies and new innovations.
- (iv) Increasing budgets for the departments responsible for implementation and enforcement of these policies.

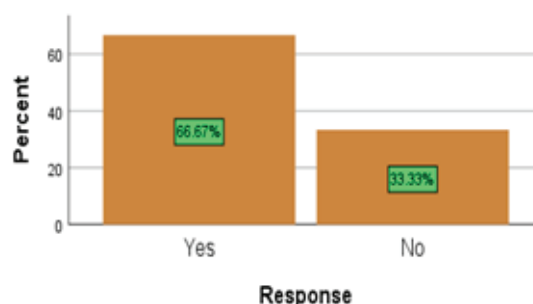


Figure 3: Responses on adherences to policies & frameworks.

The findings from the data analysis indicate 66.67 % of the respondents agreed that the National Environment Act adequately addresses issues of enforcement and compliance in relation to resilient IWRM and WASH services in the Albert Water Management Zone. However, these efforts would be boosted if environmental police were recruited at sub-county lower local governments and facilitated to arrest encroachers and have them arraigned before environmental courts or tribunals.

Budget and financing gaps

It was also noted that 87.5% of the respondents believed that the Ministry of Water and Environment budget does not adequately address the issues of inclusiveness by considering gender, people with disabilities and climate resilience in WASH and IWRM. This was highlighted by 70% of respondents, who noted that the PwDs and elders were left out in

the management of water resources. This was due to the low institutional capacity to mobilize resources, diversion of funds as often, funds intended for IWRM/WASH projects are diverted to supporting other competing activities considered to be more important upon approval. According to the 2022 annual portfolio performance report (APPR), Ug Shs 580 billion was allocated to the Ministry compared to the planned budget of Ug Shs 980 billion, leaving a deficit of Ug Shs 400 billion. Of the Ug Shs 580B allocated, only Ug Shs 466 billion was released, representing 82% of the allocation. These financial gaps are a great hinderance to attainment of the IWRM goals and Ministry vision.

Unfortunately, the non-reverting of funds unspent the previous year tends to be taken back to the consolidated accounts, leaving a big financial gap.

It was hence proposed that a certificate of gender compliance and other cross-cutting issues be issued to all projects and programmes. Developers are mandated to ensure that a gender responsive budget is mainstreamed and adhered to at all levels of planning.

Technical Capacity Gaps:

The ability to disseminate information on IWRM and WASH services is one of the areas that was found wanting across ministries, departments, agencies, and local governments. This was mainly attributed to the inadequate technical knowledge about policies on IWRM, their formation, implementation, Monitoring and Evaluation, 71.4% of the respondents indicated that these ordinances and byelaws on IWRM and WASH services have not adequately addressed the issues of compliance and enforcement due to inadequate knowledge to formulate the ordinances, and byelaws by responsible technical staff.

Planning and coordination gaps

The brief noted that despite efforts geared towards a programme-based approach to implementation of IWRM, some government ministries, departments, and agencies (MDAs) were still working in silos, despite other cross-cutting issues affecting IWRM

such as climate change and gender, among others, which requires coordinated planning and implementation. For example, Ministry of Agriculture Animal Industries and Fisheries is promoting large-scale rice schemes in Teso region which is done in wetlands in the name of food security and livelihood improvement, whereas the Ministry of Water and Environment calls for sustainable utilization of the wetlands, yet the scale of limitation is not clearly stated. This is, therefore, addressed in the Wetland Policy 2022 (under Review) which advocates the polluter pays principle.

6.0 Summary of Challenges:

- i. Inadequate information about the buffer zone boundaries.
- ii. Inadequate consideration of gender issues in the sector strategic investment plan and ministerial policy statements.
- iii. A series of strategies, guidelines and plans had expired, and others were not inclusive enough to drive social and gender transformative actions in IWRM and WASH.
- iv. Low and sometimes lack of funding to critical departments such as the district natural resources department, renders the sector non-functional and hand capped.
- v. Lack of a harmonized integrated monitoring and evaluation strategy to help capture information across all the sectors of water and environment.

7.0 Proposed Actions.

- i. Review and update policy, legal and institutional frameworks. This includes developing guidelines to operationalize the policies, updating the communication and gender strategies, and developing popular versions of the byelaws, policies and disseminating them. Others are engendering IWRM and WASH strategies, climate change mainstreaming guidelines and the CDSR tool and demonstrating water source protection in the four-water management zone.

ii. Improve institutional and stakeholder collaborations, partnership, and linkages through technical and high-level political dialogues, as well as operationalization of the interministerial committees. A policy dialogue between Ministry of Water and Environment and other sister MDAs on harmonization of conflicting policy directions and mandates to ensure a collaborative and deliberate policy direction is taken to address the massive environmental degradation.

iii. Strengthen political economy and governance of IWRM and WASH services in Uganda by building capacity of technical and legal practitioners on policy formulation, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation. Advocate and sensitize the public, legal practitioners about environmental justice, partnering with legal institutions to offer short courses, training political and other legal practitioners, organizing dialogue meetings with parliamentarians, and issuing bi-annual periodic briefs.

iv. Mainstream the water source protection budget in the ministerial policy statement, budget framework paper and issue a certificate of compliance to project and programme developers to take into consideration IWRM and climate resilience.

v. Conditional grants be allocated to the districts to strengthen climate change resilience and environmental conservation, specifically to enable local governments implement climate change mitigation and adaptation measures.

vi. Establish environmental police stations/ officers at lower local units such as at sub-county level to ensure that those degrading the environment are apprehended, arraigned in the courts of law and punished as per the National Environment Act 2019

vii. Develop new innovative financing mechanisms such as public-private partnerships, water user fees, and green bonds to mobilize additional resources for IWRM. The private sector and NGOs should be encouraged to provide off-budget support. Innovative financing instruments for gender transformation in water including use of blended finance instruments and foster inclusion of private sector should be prioritized.

viii. Local government should collect taxes such as Pay as You Earn, VAT, withholding tax, and budget for their use at the source. The use of non-tax revenue at the source, such as permit processing fees and water quality analysis fees should be promoted.

8.0. Conclusion

In the effort to achieve inclusive and resilient IWRM and WASH services in Uganda, a deliberate effort needs to be directed through inter-ministerial collaborations, and dialogues, reviews and harmonization of policies, strategies, plans, and guidelines. It further calls for a paradigm shift from business as usual' if the SDG 2030 Goal 6.5 is to be achieved by expediting the adoption and financing of the response strategy in order to address the highlighted bottlenecks through the four strategic objectives, namely:

(i) Strengthening policy implementation of IWRM & WASH.

(ii) Reviewing and updating the information and communication strategy for inclusive communication mechanisms for different groups.

(iii) Developing a harmonized monitoring and evaluation data collection tool on IWRM, WASH and climate change.

(iv) Promoting the economic, social, cultural and political value of water; (v) Improving coordination and collaboration of IWRM/WASH interventions among different MDAs, CBOs, NGOs, private sector and local governments following programme-based planning and budgeting approach.

(vi) Hastening the justice processes on environmental degradation and encroachment.

Global Water Partnership Eastern Africa.

Visiting address: Plot 12 Mpigi Road, Entebbe.

Postal address: P.O.Box 192 Entebbe, Uganda.

Email: info@gwpea.org

Tel: +256 (414) 321-424/ +256 (414) 705-000

Web: www.gwp.org/en/GWP-Eastern-Africa/

Discover the IWRM Action Hub : iwrmactionhub.org