



Call to Government of Uganda to improve financing of the environment sector in order to secure our environment, our wetlands, our forests and ensure food security

A position paper presented ahead of the Water and Environment Joint Sector Review 2013/2014.

Over 90% of the Ugandan population directly or indirectly depends on products and services from environment and natural resources (ENR). Currently ENR contribute over 50% of the country's gross domestic product and the sector contributes more than 92% of energy requirements for the country (National Forest Plan, 2013). ENR continue to form a major source of employment to millions of Ugandans (both formal and informal) and are also a major source of raw materials for industries, contribute towards food security, revenue generation and foreign exchange earnings through tourism.

Currently, the trend is that natural resources (and their management) continue to deteriorate in quality and quantity, affecting the quality of life of the people of Uganda. The poor are becoming poorer as environment conditions become severe due to severe climate variations which, in part, are a result of mismanagement and/or maladministration of natural resources. Parts of the country are becoming food insecure, water insecure, energy insecure and other forms of vulnerability are on a rise. The ENR per capita ratio is getting lower every other year as levels of encroachment continue to escalate and remain unchecked.

The National Development Plan (NDP), currently under review, aims to promote sustainable use of the environment and natural resources to the benefit of the population. The Plan classifies environment and natural resources among the primary growth sectors that directly produce goods and services to cause development. Unfortunately the practice is not commensurate to the spirit of the NDP. There is limited funding dedicated to the management of natural resources. Consequently there is deteriorating governance of the ENR sub-sector as there are governance concerns at implementation, enforcement and compliance level despite the abundance of good policies and laws for natural resources management in the country.

It is for these reasons that the Environment and Natural Resources Civil Society Organizations (ENR CSOs) are making a case for improving financing of the ENR sub-sector in order to secure our environment, our wetlands, our forests and popularising the link between ENR and food security.

Reminding the civic and political leadership of the existing constitutional, policy, ministerial commitments and undertakings, in particular for the financial year (FY) 2013/2014 Joint Sector Review (JSR) Agreed Undertakings which among others were to:

a) Collect and verify baseline data for ENR sector performance measurement framework by the end of the FY 2013/14, and put in place a system for analysis and quality assurance and update it by the end of the FY 2014/15.

Whereas baseline data collection for the Environment and Natural Resources Performance Measurement Framework and related indicators has been piloted at sector institutions (Wetlands Management Department (WMD), National Environment Management Authority (NEMA), Department of Meteorology and some Local Governments), it still remains clear that there is a lack of information across the sector to guide and inform decision making in the management of environment and natural resources. The status quo is that ad hoc decisions are taken that are not informed by science and therefore the resultant deceptions in environment and natural resources management today.

b) Complete demarcation of 6 new wetlands and commence the opening up boundaries of 3 local forest reserves/finalize and implement the management framework of these ecosystems by the end of FY 2013/14.

Whereas there is commendable progress (based on the undertaking) resulting into the demarcation of 120 kilometers of 06 wetlands and over 113 kilometers of forest reserve boundary, it is still a public concern that

boundary opening requires a lot of funding and that communities and government do not know boundaries for wetlands and forest reserves, leading to uncontrollable encroachment that undermines the integrity of the said resources.

c) Operationalise the Oil Contingency Plan for the Albertine Rift Graben by the end of FY 2013 / 2014

Despite the efforts to develop an Oil Contingency Plan and an Environmental Risk Assessment (ERA), the plea of the citizenry is to improve the governance of oil exploration and identify specific resources to support and enforce ecosystem restoration by oil exploration companies and interested community members to guard against environmental catastrophes in future.

d) Develop a pragmatic mechanism for enhancing and improving Local Governments' technical and financial capacities in ENR by the end of FY 2013/14

Whereas over 60 District Environment Officers trained in effective ENR planning management as well as resource mobilization for ENR Management at Local Government level, forestry and wetlands sub-sector have continued to be understaffed leading to high levels of encroachment in forests and wetlands. Whereas there are approved staffing structures for the ministry, the Ministry of Public Services has acted sluggishly to fill the proposed positions to enhance the capacity of the ministry to execute its oversight functionality in ENR management.

The Tree fund as provided for the National Forest Act and approved by Cabinet has never been set up hence denying the country an institutional framework that would be dedicated to community mobilization and resources for tree growing in the country. Meanwhile 90,000 ha of forest cover, most of which is on private land, are being lost annually.

In the spirit of delivering development through partnership, 48 NGOs that are members of the ENR CSO network invested USD 6,549,951 in the sector. These resources have been utilized to network and expand the negotiation space through meetings, workshops, awareness and communication initiative in support of the above undertakings. In addition, the network has promoted legal timber trade and forest certification as alternative approaches to ensure responsible forest management. ENR CSOs have also participated in the review of the National Environment Management Policy as well as the National Environment Act. ENR CSOs have also spent resources to address governance issues of the sector; advocating for improved accountability, effectiveness in delivery of services. ENR CSOs have also promoted the use of information technology to curb illegalities, have promoted ecosystem restoration and promoted farmer managed natural regeneration – a process involving growing of trees from stumps, roots and natural germinations in the wild.

The ENR-CSO Network acknowledges the work government has managed to accomplish in the sector including what has been highlighted above. However, the following key performance challenges have continued to hamper the securing of environment and natural resources service delivery and would require urgent attention for subsequent sectoral planning and financing.

There is limited facilitation for the District Natural Resources Offices (forestry, environment, wetlands) yet they manage the decentralized natural resources on private land. Districts continue to miss out on government funding through conditional grants and this has escalated natural resources degradation exemplified by loss of 92,000 hectares of forests per year.

Despite the recent effort to nullify illegal titles in wetlands, there is increased partitioning of in wetlands and forest reserves because the district land

boards have not been adequately facilitated to clarify the status of tenure and the respective ministry has equally failed to offer the much needed support of securing tenure of wetlands and forest reserves.

Despite the existence of the Environment Protection Police Force (EPPF), there is weak enforcement resulting into high encroachment levels in both wetlands and forest reserves. The EPPF remains a weak enforcement structure, lacks numerical capacity to protect environment and therefore can hardly deliver its mandate.

Going forward, sector institutions will require resources to effectively execute their mandates. Overall the Directorate of Environment (and the departments there in such as the forest sector support department, the climate change department, the environment department) is underfunded. The autonomous bodies too (such as NEMA, NFA and recently UNMA) are struggling to find resources to execute their mandate.

ENR CSOs therefore suggest the following recommendations to address the above sector challenges:

- The implementation of the natural resources conditional grants for local governments from which each sub-sector (forestry, wetlands, environment and climate change) can draw resources using a vote calculated based on percentage should be expedited.
- For weather and climate change, ENR CSOs urge government to establish a vote function for Uganda National Meteorological Authority (UNMA) to leapfrog its operations. In addition, ENR CSOs urge government to allocate adequate resources for implementation of the recently approved National Climate Change Policy and initiate the process of developing a climate change law and/or Act.
- For Departments within the Directorate of Environment and the autonomous institutions attached to it, ENR CSOs urge government to proportionately increase funding within the respective votes, that measures with the mandates of the institutions
- Demarcation of wetlands and forest reserves has been a major undertaking for government for the last 4 years but actual demarcation has not been fully effected due to a number of technical, social and institutional factors. We urge government to avail the necessary financial resources in order for mandated institutions to be able to open wetland and forest reserve boundaries and abate further gross degradation of wetlands, especially those in urban areas.
- The nullification of all land titles in wetlands issued less than 10 years ago was welcomed by a wider layer of stakeholders as a big step in abating further degradation of the remaining wetlands. ENR CSOs urge government to find resources to enforce the nullification of the titles and consequently evict the concerned parties. In addition, ENR CSOs urge government to nullify land titles in forest reserves too whilst insulating the process against corruption.
- There is an ongoing review process for the National Environment Act and the National Environment Management Policy. ENR CSOs urge government to cease this opportunity to clarify the mandates of the many institutions in the sector (NEMA, WMD, NFA, UWA, UNMA) to avoid future contests between institutions that would rather be collaborating to manage the country's natural capital.
- ENR CSOs urge government to identify additional financial resources, adequate logistical facilitation and additional staffing to the Environment Protection Police Force so that it can effectively carry out its mandate.
- The ENR sector lacks information to guide its action. ENR CSOs urge government to finance the information gathering process and produce annually the state of wetlands report, the state of forests report to inform future the decisions within the sub-sector.

In order to attain the above recommendation, sector actors need to develop mechanisms for motivating political will to support the cause and galvanising non-traditional funding (such as cooperate social responsibility) and enhance professionalism to improve on the image of the sector.

In conclusion ENR CSOs pledge to continue partnering with the Ministry of Water and Environment to deliver development in the sector and be part of the recommendations to develop a clear and effective roadmap towards improved financing and governance of the sector and ensure the implementation of the recommendations and undertakings for the FY 2014/2015.

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Escalating forest degradation in a private forest in Kyebando Sub-county in Kibaale district. Photo by WWF