



## The Environment and Natural Resources Sub-Sector: What issues are affecting performance?

### Overview

The policy objective of the Environment and Natural Resources (ENR) sub-sector is to: *Increase wetland ecosystem coverage from 10.9% in FY 2013/14 to 12% FY 2019/20; increase forest cover from 14% in FY 2012/13 to 18% in FY 2019/20; and enhance environmental compliance from 70% in FY 2013/14 to 90% in FY 2019/20<sup>1</sup>.*

Every financial year, the Government allocates funds to the various entities responsible for environmental management to implement outputs in the sub-sector geared towards achieving the above policy objective.

Despite continued support, there has not been any significant positive shift in achievement of the sub-sector platinum indicators. Wetland coverage has remained stagnant over the past five years while forest cover has been on the decline.

This policy brief highlights performance trends of the ENR sub-sector, some of the issues affecting performance, and recommendations.

### Key Issues

- Inadequate funding of the ENR sub sector hinders adequate implementation. This has led to under staffing and dilapidated weather monitoring stations.
- The existing legal frameworks on wetlands management are weak. This is worsened by the indifference towards environmental degradation shown by the general public.
- Weak enforcement of existing laws. The country is experiencing dwindling forest cover due to uncontrolled deforestation.

The Government entities responsible for policy, regulation, supervision and development of ENR are: Ministry of Water and Environment (MWE), National Environment Management Authority (NEMA), National Forestry Authority (NFA), Uganda National Meteorological Authority (UNMA), and Local Governments (LGs).

The sub-sector objectives are to: i) Restore and maintain the integrity and functionality of degraded fragile ecosystems, ii) Increase the sustainable use of Environment and Natural Resources, iii) Increase wetland coverage and reduce wetland degradation, iv) Increase the functionality and usage of meteorological information systems, v) Increase the country's resilience to impacts of climate change, vi) Increase afforestation, reforestation, adaptation and mitigate deforestation for sustainable forestry, and vii) Improve climate change legal and institutional framework.

### Introduction

The Environment and Natural Resources (ENR) sub-sector is responsible for ensuring rational and sustainable utilization, development and effective management of environment and natural resources for socio-economic development of the country<sup>1</sup>. The sub-sector comprises: Forestry, Wetland Resources Management, Meteorology, Environmental Management and Climate Change.

<sup>1</sup> National Development Plan II

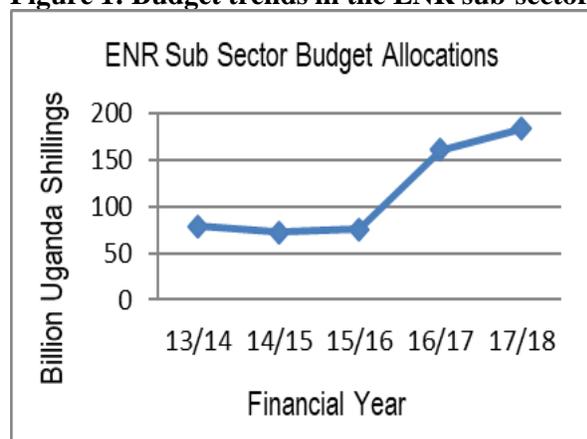


## Performance trends of the ENR sub-sector

### Financial performance

The past five years show an increasing trend in budgetary allocations to the sub-sector (Figure 1). Although this is a positive move, the sub-sector is still largely underfunded especially at the local governments. On average each district receives about Ug shs 5,000,000 per annum as conditional grant for wetland related activities, while the other environment components remain unfunded.

**Figure 1: Budget trends in the ENR sub-sector**



Source: MFPED, Approved Budget Estimates

### Physical performance

The performance trends of the sub-sector on selected platinum indicators is represented in Table 1. The land area covered by wetlands

has stagnated at 10.9% over the years where forest cover is on a reducing trend. Developer compliance to certificate conditions is good. The total number of weather monitoring stations in the country is majorly unknown as there are weather stations owned by other institutions like National Agricultural Research Organisation (NARO) and Uganda Wildlife Authority (UWA) whose existence may not be known to UNMA. By end of FY 2016/17, only 32 districts had functioning weather stations, this leads to poor representation of some regions in the weather information/forecasts presented by UNMA.

According to the prevailing trends, the sub-sector is still far from achieving its objectives. This is partly due to a number of challenges/issues that continue to affect the smooth implementation of activities.

### The ENR sub-sector Performance Issues

**Deforestation** is the biggest challenge in forest management. The high population growth in Uganda puts a lot of pressure on trees and forests to provide wood fuel. There is also rampant clearance of forests for settlement and provision of farmland. This is demonstrated by a reduction in forest cover from 24% in 1990 to 11% in 2015<sup>2</sup> and currently 9% in FY 2016/17 (Table 1).

**Table 1: ENR Sub-Sector Performance on Selected Platinum Indicators**

| Platinum Indicators   | Achievements |            |             |            |
|---|--------------|------------|-------------|------------|
|   | FY 2013/14   | FY 2014/15 | FY 2015/16  | FY 2016/17 |
| % Uganda's land area covered by wetlands                          | 10.904       | 10.91      | 10.9        | 10.9       |
| % of Uganda's land area covered by forest                         | 15           | 11         | 10 -11      | 9          |
| % Survival of tree seedlings past year 3                          | 75           | 78         | 75          | 76         |
| % Developers complying with certificate of approval conditions    | 70           | 66         | unknown     | 70-75      |
| % Meteorological rainfall observation network coverage of country | unknown      | unknown    | 95 stations | unknown    |

Source: Uganda Water and Environment Sector Performance Reports 2015-2017

<sup>2</sup> Uganda Water and Environment Sector Performance Report 2017



**Wetland degradation:** the percentage of Uganda's land area covered by wetlands is estimated at 10.9%. Although the wetland cover has stagnated over the years, there is massive encroachment and degradation by private developers and settlers who in some cases own land titles.

In FY 2016/17 the MWE arrested 131 suspected encroachers on various wetlands by the help of the Environment Protection Police. Examples of degraded wetlands in the country include Limoto wetland in eastern Uganda, Kanyabukanja wetland in Buhweju District, which have been degraded by the local communities for purposes of farming.



Cattle grazing in a degraded section of Kanyabukanja wetland in Buhweju District

The delayed finalization of the wetlands bill is a stumbling block in wetlands management as the existing legal frameworks are weak and do not address key wetland issues.

**Under staffing** in the sub-sector impedes the effective management of existing and emerging environmental issues in the country. The staffing level at NEMA currently stands at 30% of the approved structure. In UNMA weather records for synoptic stations are recorded for only 12 hours instead of the recommended 24 hours daily due to staffing gaps. For example, at the station located within the Kabale District headquarters, there

were only two staff out of the six required. The Natural Resources Department in most districts is managed by only one or two staff out of an approved structure of 11 staff.<sup>3</sup> In FY 2016/17, Pallisa District had two staff i.e. the District Natural Resources Officer and the Senior Environment Officer.

The general **public is indifferent towards environmental management**. This results in environmental degradation through indiscriminate dumping of garbage/waste along drainage channels, wetlands and water bodies. This public impunity is due to the weak law enforcement and inadequate awareness.

**Lack of institutional coordination and conflicting mandates** among the entities implementing environmental activities resulting in blame games hence continuous environmental degradation. For example there is lack of transparency in Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) processes among MDAs resulting in continued approval of projects in fragile ecosystems<sup>4</sup>.

**Dilapidated weather monitoring infrastructure:** Some weather monitoring stations were installed during the 1970s and have since been rundown over the years, leading to ineffective weather monitoring. Even the weather radar that was procured during the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in 2007 is currently nonfunctional.

## Conclusion

The ENR sub-sector has not performed satisfactorily over the past five years. Funding to all the entities has generally been low with the LGs most affected. In terms of selected platinum indicators analyzed, stagnation of

<sup>3</sup> Ministry of Public Service; Approved Structure for District Local Governments.

<sup>4</sup> MWE; Sector Performance Report 2017



wetland coverage and decline of forest cover is observed. The sub-sector NDP II objective to increase the targets by FY 2019/20 shall not be realized if the prevailing issues affecting performance are not addressed.

### Recommendations

- ✦ The MFPED should provide additional conditional grants for the ENR sub-sector in order to supplement the low allocations. Additionally, funds accrued as Appropriation in Aid (AIA) in environmental entities should be used to implement environmental activities.
- ✦ The National Forestry Authority (NFA) should prevent unplanned settlements inside forests by identifying legitimate spaces in forest reserves, and providing appropriate incentives to engage settlers in forest governance. Where resettlement is necessary, the NFA should formulate a fair and responsible system of resettling those already residing within boundaries of the forest reserves.
- ✦ The MWE should expedite the finalization of the wetlands bill so that key wetland management issues are addressed. The NEMA should also fast-track cancellation of land titles in wetlands and put into practice the presidential directive of “No encroachment on wetlands.”
- ✦ The MFPED should consider increasing the wage bill allocation to the ENR sub-sector entities to support recruitment of necessary personnel in the approved structures.
- ✦ The NEMA, NFA and MWE should increase environmental awareness among the general public, and in addition environmental inspections and audit measures should be strengthened through naming and shaming environmental degraders.

- ✦ The MWE should spear head and ensure streamlined coordination of the ENR institutions through harmonizing and clearly spelling out their mandates.
- ✦ The MFPED should provide special funds for the procurement and installation of new automatic weather monitoring stations countrywide.

### References

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