

The WATERFRONT Newsletter

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How Water and Environment Resources Reinforce Climate Change Resilience

The water and environment resources remain at the core of sustainable socio-economic development, health ecosystems and its survival, Hon. Dr. Emmanuel Otaala remarked.

While delivering opening remarks during the Sixth UWEWK 2023 on behalf of the Speaker of Parliament of Uganda also doubling as the Bukedea Woman MP, Anitah Annet Among ; Hon. Dr. Emmanuel Otaala ; Chairperson, Parliamentary Committee on Environment and Natural Resources said the resources are so critical in ensuring climate resilient development and hence the achievement of the National Development Plan III (NDP III).

The speaker noted that water is central to agriculture, and the mainstay of Uganda's economy, from which about 85% of the population derives their income and livelihood. Thus the provision of adequate water for agriculture will spur transformation of the economy through increased productivity for both livestock and crops. The challenge was attributed the low productivity and low profitability of Ugandan agriculture to among others; lack of access to water sources.

"Agriculture in Uganda is almost completely dependent on rain-fed agriculture due to limited irrigation thus making the farmers highly vulnerable to increasingly unpredictable rainfall pattern," she noted.

Rt. Hon. Speaker Among said approximately 15,000 ha, which is less than 3% of potential irrigable area, had been developed under formal irrigation system, and almost 87% of the total reported losses caused by floods or droughts are from agriculture only.

She said there is no doubt that against growing threats of climate change and associated negative impacts to Ugandan economy, climate-resilient irrigation schemes will be able to provide reliable and sustainable water solution for

Ugandan farmers and contribute to enhance agricultural productivity, improve food security, alleviate rural poverty level, create local job opportunities, and achieve sustainable and inclusive economic growth.

Owing to the above issues, she made the following recommendations including ;enacting and enforcing laws to regulate bush burning, provision of garbage disposal skits for urban authorities to improve on the disposal of waste, development of waste management plan, and to review and update the water and environment laws to stop the degradation of water bodies, wetlands and forests, among others.



"I am happy that the government of Uganda through the MW&E in collaboration with Development Partners and the Private Sector, is addressing a number of these issues amidst limited resources," the speaker noted.

Rt. Hon. Speaker, Among stressed that Parliament has put in place enabling environment in form of laws but have not been implemented. She urged all stakeholders to approach parliament in case there gaps in the laws to be addressed.

"Despite the above, we shall do what it takes to ensure that appropriate laws are put in place to protect water and environment resources and that funds are appropriated to enable water and environment sector at national, regional, local to perform its functions," she pledged.



Tree planting activity in Kamengo Primary school in Fortportal.

UWEWK Regional Activities in the Regional Deconcentrated Structures of MWE.

Different de-concentrated structures which comprise of Water and Sanitation Development Facility (WSDF), Water for Production Regional Centre (WfP), Umbrella of Water and Sanitation Organization, Regional Centers,

Minister Calls for Sustainable Management of Resources Towards Climate Resilience

In his remarks; Honourable Minister for Water and Environment ; Sam Cheptoris said that Water and Environment week 2023 was anchored on the theme Water and Environment for Climate resilient development.

He added that this would be discussed under four sub themes including ; policy, legal and institutional frameworks for climate resilient development, climate resilient ecosystems and infrastructure, capacity and partnerships for climate resilient development and innovative financing mechanisms.

He added that Uganda Water and Environment week is linked to Uganda's national development strategy and the National Development Plan III (NDPIII), achievement of middle income status, Sustainable Development Goals and Parish Development Model.

Water and Environment resources are vital for sustaining life, promoting development and maintaining the environment, he said.

Relatedly, he mentioned that water is key input in most of our socio economic development processes. Further, the Minister mentioned that access to clean and safe water, improved sanitation facilities and practices are pre requisities to a healthy population and therefore have direct impact on the quality of life and productivity of the population.

He mentioned that whereas, water and environment significantly contribute to the national socio-economic development, they are under increasing pressure from many factors among which is climate change.

He therefore called for the need to ensure that the resources are sustainably managed and developed if the country's development is to be climate resilient.



the Directorate for Environment Affairs Regional Offices and Water Management Zones (WMZ) representing various directorates and departments under the Ministry of Water and Environment planned and held UWEWK regional activities.

During the Albertine Regional Water and Environment Week in the Albert region, one of the key activities was a WASH/Environment and Climate Change advocacy and awareness creation day held in Kamwenge Town Council in form of Kamwenge Town clean up, stakeholders' engagements and Music, Dance and Drama presentations by schools all focusing on the theme Water and Environment for Climate Resilient Development.



Northern Region female Football competition

The event were graced by the presence of the District chairperson, Mayor Kamwenge Town Council who together flagged off the Town cleaning team, the Ministry of Water and Environment staff from the Regional Offices, District Council members, implementing partners, religious leaders and school teachers and pupils of Kamwenge SS, Kamwenge, St. Paul and Railway Primary Schools

Key highlights from the events and presentation included;

- The need for appropriateness of WASH technologies/infrastructure and Services that can withstand and sustain service delivery amidst shocks and risks paused by Climate change
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- The need for deliberate WASH strategies and plans that support the vulnerable groups of people to cope with Climate Change induced risks.

- The need for joint effort and coordination amongst government, IPs and Private Sector as a key pillar to providing and sustaining Climate Changed adapted WASH solutions including and not limited to joint resource mobilization and co-financing.
- The need for an effective data management system, that will enable availability of timely and accurate data about the WASH/environment and Water resources status quo and any changes; to enable early warning, effective water resource allocation amongst users and for advocacy for policy and operational practices Change.
- As well as key areas observed to be much lacking were; solid waste and fecal sludge management.



Albertine Region climaxed their pre-#UWEWK23 activities by holding the Save River Mpanga Marathon.

Keynote Speaker: Demystifying a Systems Perspective of A Water Cycle

Professor Kalanithy (Kala) Vaira Vamoorthy;

Executive Director, International Water Association (IWA):



While making his key note speech during a dialogue session on Water and Environment for climate resilient development, Professor Kalanithy (Kala) Vaira Vamoorthy; Executive Director, International Water Association (IWA) revealed that water is a system that can be renewed from different heights noting that there is need of a systems perspective of the water cycle. He explained that using integrated modelling allows us to connect all flows for productive uses.

Prof.Kalanithy further highlighted that wastewater is key in water resource management.

"80% of wastewater is not treated but having treatment plants does not mean they work and do their job.", he noted. The professor also pitched into the future saying that for the next 20 years will be the golden age for wastewater, sanitation and increased opportunities. Prof. Kalanithy also noted that Nature based (green)solutions help with adaption and mitigation.

Such examples are Nairobi-Kenya community gardens that increase water retention, Durban green roofs to reduce stormwater run-off, Egypt's increasing permeable surfaces and wetlands(sponge)to increase natural infiltration of rainwater and Addis Ababa - Ethiopia's increasing green cover and restoration of hillsides to reduce flooding and landslides. He warned against living in an uncertain world citing that resiliency that requires adaptive or flexible systems could be the only panacea.

"Some of these systems such as the nature-based solutions provide adaptive capacity and attractive alternatives to sewers. Decentralized systems also enhance resilience. Some of these are Kampala's smart sanitation solutions which include pit emptiers and KCCA GIS based mobile app."

Prof. Kalanithy advises that we adopt and look for opportunities to create new paradigms. He also noted that understanding readiness as one of the important aspects in the project frameworks for evaluating circular water strategies.

"This is done through exploring the potential in emissions, efficiency and resourcefulness. The need to embrace readiness through societal, organizational, legal and technical systems," he said.

He also advised on career development revealing that Uganda needs the following qualifications in climate change Nature Resources Environment and Water management including, Forest ecology, ecosystem, environmental engineers, ecological engineers, river flood analysts and modelling specialists.

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Panel Reactions

In a panel discussion under a topic, dialogue session on water and environment for climate resilient development.

One of the panelists, Mr. Thangavel Palanivel, the Senior Economic Advisor & Head of Strategy and Policy Unit-UNDP- Uganda and Rwanda praised Uganda for its abundant resources such as the vast rivers and lakes. However, he expressed with concern the underutilization of the arable land.

“Less than 1% arable land is being utilized with irrigation but this is a practice happening in other countries. Uganda needs to expand the irrigation network to at least 5%. This will serve the increasing population and Uganda will be able to export more food products.”

Hon. Dr. Emmanuel Otaala, the chairperson Parliamentary committee on Environment and Natural Resources explained Parliament's pivotal role in advocating for Water and Environment.

He advised the Water and Environment partner advocates to change the mode of operation. “If you are doing things the same way, you will continue to get the same results. Look at what policies that we can put in place to change the status quo. Parliament is ready to listen to you the technocrats or implementing arm of government and will support.” He noted.

Dr. Dick M. Kamugasha, Deputy Executive Director at the Uganda Industrial Research Institute urged industrialists to reach a balance with environment protectionists to enable harmonized development.

Mr. Alfred Okot Okidi, the Permanent Secretary Ministry of Water and Environment explained the need to realize that the shift towards sustainable Water and Environment management needs preparing the public in that direction.

“The Ministry is working with the grassroots population. 70% of funding goes down to grassroots level and it's addressing the private sector. That explains why we have water catchment committees,” Mr. Okidi said.

Mr. Kizito, the board member on Environment and Water, Bulungibwansi in the Kingdom of Buganda noted the Kingdom's support to environment conservation.

“As a kingdom, we have a full Ministry in charge of Water and Environment. The Kingdom works through its people in that each information echoed at Mengo goes to the grassroots. We are using that the system and numbers to mobilize the numbers,” Mr. Kizito noted.

Sports and games is the other way that the Kingdom mobilizes people. Such is through the Masaza and Kabaka runs



Professor Kalanithy (Kala) Vaira Vamoorthy Executive Director, International Water Association (IWA) and the panelists of the Dialogue session on Water and Environment for climate-resilient development by

Deminisfying the Role of Water and Environment Resources Towards the Climate Resilient Development and Sociology-Economic Transformation of Uganda

The walk: The Walkers Association of Uganda (WAU) in partnership with the Ministry of Water and Environment (MWE) within the framework of UWEWK 2023 organized a 320km walk for water and environment for climate resilient development from the King Fisher Development Area, Kikuube District to the Ministry of Water and Environment in Luzira, Kampala via the North Western route from 1st - 10th March, 2023.

This aimed at providing an understanding of the role of Water and Environment resources in contributing towards the climate resilient development and Socio-Economic Transformation of Uganda, specifically;

- Raising awareness about the UWEWK 2023 and the relevance of its theme and sub-themes to the people of Uganda.
- Demonstrating the pivotal role of water and environment resources in promoting climate-resilience.
- Demonstrating the linkage between water, forest, wetland degradation and climate change.
- Improving sanitation and hygiene among communities through promotion of effective hand washing.

The walk for water and environment for climate resilient development started from Kampala at the Ministry of Water and Environment Headquarters and later a Flag off at Lake Albert by the Minister of Water and Environment. (King Fisher Development Area).

During the trek, the walkers engaged in a number of activities including Symbolic tree planting, Radio talk shows and press conferences, Clean - up activities, Sensitization on proper waste management, Seedling distribution.

The walk was categorised by numerous stop overs along the way like at Kikuube District (Office of the RDC), Bugoma Central Reserve (Kyangwali Sub-county), Hoima District Local Government, Hoima City (Bunyoro Kingdom, Rotary Club, Industries and general public), Church Service (Bunyoro Diocese), Kafu, Kyankwanzi District, Kiboga District,

Lwamata Sub-county, Bukomero Sub-county, Kakiri, Wakiso (Nansana Town Council), Lubigi Wetland, Parliament of Uganda and finally Ministry of Water and Environment Headquarters for Closure activities.

Various activities were carried out during the walk for instance Stakeholders' engagement, Sensitizations on issues like Oil production, Water use, Pollution, Waste management and Climate change, symbolic tree planting, clean - up activities and many others.



Walkers delivering a statement to Parliament

Clean Up in Entebbe Municipality - Wakiso District and Kampala - Nakawa/Central Division



Under the context of UWEWK 2023, the Ministry of Water and Environment organized clean up exercise in Entebbe Municipality. This was primised on supporting tourism and local economies, protecting wildlife and raising public awareness of the threat of litter to both wildlife and communities.

The objectives of the clean up exercise included ; raising awareness about the UWEWK 2023 and the relevance of its theme and sub-themes to the people of Uganda; demonstrating the pivotal role of water, hygiene, sanitation and environment in promoting economic growth and improved livelihood of communities and climate-resilience, highlighting the role of inclusiveness in water and environment systems for climate resilient communities and ecosystem within the Municipality.

The clean up amplified Visibility and awareness about the UWEWK national event, the activity educated and informed the target audience on issues of water, environment and climate change



University Students Develop Innovative Solutions

The Uganda Water and Environment Week 2023 University Hackathon held from 6th to 7th February 2023 was the second of its kind. The University Hackathon was a pre-UWEWK activity aimed at involving university students to develop innovative solutions to addressing WASH challenges under the 2023 theme of “Water and Environment for Climate Resilient Socio-economic Development”.

For this year, university students from Makerere University, Makerere University Business School, Busitema University, Mbarara University of Science and Technology, King Ceasor University, and Kampala International University formed teams that collaborated to develop innovative solutions that addressed the challenges under four sub-themes;

- Enhancing water and environment security for climate-resilient development.
- Inclusive water and environment systems for climate resilient communities and ecosystems.
- Developing capacity and partnerships for climate-resilient development.
- Innovative financing for climate resilient socio-economic development.

The different teams were presented with a challenge to; Develop an innovative nature-based solution or idea that encourages public and private participation, engagement and support to local communities in Uganda in taking necessary actions in relation to water and environment for climate resilient development.

In the teams, they were to develop a solution or idea; To address challenges of inclusiveness in water and environment systems for climate resilient development in Uganda.

- That builds on and contributes to innovative initiatives and ideas to pre-disaster and post disaster
- Creates positive impact on water and environment for climate resilient socio-economic development for sustainable cities, towns, and local communities.



Team ‘Ultimates’ with participants from Makerere University and Kampala International University merged as winners with a solution and idea of a Real-Time Monitoring System to Hack Deforestation after identifying deforestation as a major environmental problem in Uganda with an estimated 90,000 hectares of forests being lost per year. Their solution aimed at creating an app that uses satellite imagery to monitor and track deforestation in Uganda and uses machine learning algorithms to identify areas of forest cover loss in real-time and alert authorities and conservation groups. The app would also provide a platform for individuals, ministries, departments, agencies, and NGOs to report and track illegal logging and deforestation activities.



The Nile Run



Among other key pre-event activities that conducted in the context of UWEWK 2023 included the Nile run that took place in Jinja with an objective of attracting people across the world to participate in the annual event through running and walking, at the same time raising funds to conserve this important resource. The event offered an opportunity to purchase tree seedlings and other requirements for growing the trees, to secure equipment for removing plastics from the Lake Victoria. Furthermore, this offered an opportunity to educate people in and around Lake Victoria how to protect the Lake and River from further pollution and to work with organizations around the Lake to limit the release of toxic materials into the Lake.

Central Region concluded their pre-#UWEWK23 celebrations in Masulita Town, Wakiso District by engaging in tree planting exercise led by the Wakiso District Chairman Dr. Matia Lwanga Bwanika



Development Partners Call for More WASH Funding



The government has been urged to increase more as the sector continues to be constrained.

While delivering her speech at the opening of the sixth Uganda Water and Environment Week (UWEWK) 2023, the Head of Coordination Office for Development Cooperation of the Austrian Embassy in Kampala, Dr Kremser Roswitha called for an increased funding in the Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH). She stressed that an effective and coordinated donor contribution becomes even more pertinent as the sector is becoming more resource constrained.

“As development partners, we stand ready to support the country to access it – as is demonstrated by the very vibrant environmental partners group,” She pledged.

Dr. Roswitha who was representing European Union (EU); one of the key partners in the sector, stressed that EU and its national governments have set clear objectives to guide the European environment policy and vision until 2050.

“This is supported by dedicated research programmes, legislation, and funding. Green growth is at the heart of the global EU policy to ensure that global economic growth is environmentally sustainable,” She noted.

She said the Austrian Ministry for Foreign Affairs, in cooperation with the competent line ministries and organizations in Austria, promotes environmental protection and climate change adaptation as well as mitigation strategies at the global level.

“Therefore, the Austrian Development Cooperation mirrors these goals in our activities including within Uganda. Some might wonder why we as Europe put so much emphasize on environmental protection. But as climate activists do not stop to remind us they never get tired to ask us “Are we not all breathing the same air?” she noted.

UWEWK is timely

Dr. Roswitha said UWEWK is a timely platform to point out some of the critical yet outstanding ongoing milestones and the

contribution of Austria, Germany, and fellow EU member states in the Water and Environment Sectors in Uganda in the midst of global challenges.

“Just to mention that Austria and Germany support water and sanitation, integrated water management, natural resources management and climate change sectors with a portfolio of EUR 81 Million (EUR 33 million grant funding). Our projects are implemented through our esteemed partners, including Non-Government Organizations (NGOs), government institutions, UN agencies and academic partners in all corners of this beautiful country, but I have to say that we put a special emphasis on the northern regions,” she added.

She stressed that regarding support from the entire EU member states and institutions, altogether, a total of EUR 500 million (including EUR 60 million grants) is being invested in WASH and while about EUR 250 million is invested in the Environment Sector as reported by the various DPs in the WSDPG and ECCDPG working groups.

“This clearly demonstrates the EU’s commitment to the sector, and we are certain, that together with our partners we can make a meaningful contribution,” she noted.

Dr. Roswitha noted that the globally, the Austrian Development Cooperation focuses on three key development areas in developing countries across the world- and these include: Combating poverty, Ensuring peace, and preserving the environment.

Dr. Roswitha cited that even in circumstances of recent crises, the Austrian government alongside other EU partners was able to mobilise more resources for the sector, notably within the COVID-19 pandemic and outbreak of the Ebola Virus.

“We were once more reminded of the simple, but so important act of washing our hands,” she added.

She noted that the current global climate change increases the magnitude of existing problems, particularly in developing countries, stressing that this is not merely an environmental or water problem; but it also jeopardizes our joint efforts towards sustainable development and poverty reduction.

She also said that the recently signed EU Forestry Partnership will ensure that Uganda’s forests can fully contribute to Uganda’s sustainable economic and social development; and with a view on safeguarding environmental protection.



"I had the privilege to personally admire the magnificence of Bugoma and Zoka forest and I truly wish that many, many generations to come will also enjoy their cool breeze – just as I did," She added.

She stressed that Austria in efforts to support towards the protection of the environment in Uganda, they are working with partners like UNDP, IUCN, GWP and the MWE on Wetlands Restoration.

"By protecting and restoring wetlands, we are protecting habitats of wild animals and breeding grounds for thousands of birds including the beautiful Crested Crane, Uganda's National bird. However, I am wondering if the changing of gears in our policies and actions is fast enough," Dr. Roswitha added.

She stressed that the balance between pre-disaster and post-disaster investment depends on the specific context and the nature of the disaster. "Many experts – some in this room – however

recommend investing more in preparedness and impress upon us to put more emphasis on adaptation to the global threats caused by climate change. This will also yield in much higher returns for investment in some of Uganda's most water stressed regions. Can we jointly make Uganda's North green and fertile?" she noted.

The Co-Chairperson of Uganda Joint Christian Council, and Archbishop of the Orthodox Church, Metropolitan, Jeronymos Muzeeyi said that an integrated and interdisciplinary approach to water and environment issues can help the country, not only the 'Pearl of Africa', but also to be truly the "Garden of Eden" of Holy Scriptures

"The world was given to man as a gift," a gift from God, the Creator, a healing gift, a gift of wonder and beauty. It is our duty to protect God's creation for the future generations," She noted.



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