

UGANDA INPUT IN THEMATIC CONCEPT PAPER ON WATER ACTION DECADE

I. Introduction

Water is central to achieving all SDGs. Water accelerates action across the whole SDG agenda because of its interconnections with a range of sectors such as health, agriculture, protection of biodiversity and enhancing climate action, energy, sustaining peace and regional integration, and, as such, can supply life, food security, livelihoods as well as transform the global economy. However, there is deep concern in Africa that lack of access to a safe drinking water, basic sanitation and sound hygiene, water-related disasters, water scarcity and water pollution will be further exacerbated by urbanization, population growth, desertification, drought and other extreme weather events and climate change, as well as by the lack of capacity to ensure integrated water resource management.

The new Decade has therefore focused on the sustainable development and integrated management of water resources for the achievement of social, economic and environmental objectives and on the implementation and promotion of related programmes and projects, as well as on the furtherance of cooperation and partnership at all levels in order to help to achieve internationally agreed water-related goals and targets, including those contained in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

II. Overview of the challenge, current status and interlinkages

Water resources are considered as both an infrastructure and an ingredient for human resource development and protection of ecosystems integrity. Water has been recognized as an opportunity and pillar in the Uganda Vision 2040 and the National Development Plan (NDP III). Water plays a critical role in employment and wealth creation, enhancement of Uganda's competitiveness and in fostering socio-economic transformation. It is for this reason that Uganda has already integrated SDGs in its National Development Plan whose implementation has already started. Indeed, SDG6 indicators have already been integrated in the revised water and environmental sector performance monitoring framework in Uganda and the country will be reporting formally on the revised framework regularly.

Uganda has however faced several challenges and pressures, such as high population growth, environmental degradation, pollution, climate variability and change, etc. Uganda and the rest of Eastern Africa have been facing recurrent challenges of floods, prolonged dry spells, droughts, and landslides, and these have affected socio-economic development. Uganda has experienced severe flooding and rising water levels in major bodies of water since October 2019, most notably Lake Victoria. Uganda was hard hit by the impact of COVID-19 Pandemic, locust invasion and the epidemics such as Ebola

which is still impacting negatively the country. The war in neighboring South Sudan, Somalia and currently Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) have also greatly affected the country. The current refugee influx therefore has increased the demand for services especially water services, sanitation and hygiene (WASH). Financing has continued to go down with very few development partners coming in to support the sector. This has therefore made it difficult to achieve the targets of the water action decade.

While there has been greater focus to sustainable development and integrated management of water resources for the achievement of social, economic and environmental objectives of nations, the implementation and promotion of related programmes and projects are critical, as well as on the furtherance of cooperation and partnership at all levels. This will further help to achieve internationally agreed water-related goals and targets, including those contained in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. All in all, more still needs to be done to ensure that these principles are adopted by all countries.

While it is quite clear that by investing in the sustainable management of water resources, the world will be scoring on almost all the SDGs; and while also it is clear that water is at the centre of survival, adaptation and mitigation of the effects of climate change, water has not taken centre stage in the financing agenda of Uganda and indeed in most countries especially in Africa. Similarly, although the World Economic Forum ranks the water crisis in the top 3 of global risks for the third consecutive year little priority has been given to water. Thus, water challenges continue to have devastating local and global effects. It is also worth noting that not many people are aware of the Water Action Decade despite the fact that we are half way its implementation.

With regard to SDGs, the role played by the UN-Water, the United Nations inter-agency coordination mechanism for all freshwater related matters, in the work towards the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its dedicated goal on water and sanitation (SDG 6) remains critical. This is possible since UN-Water is also the United Nations system's focal point for SDG 6 in the Inter-agency Expert Group on SDG Indicators (IAEG-SDGs). World over, the methodologies for monitoring SDG 6 indicators proposed by the UN Water underwent piloting in 2016 in a number of countries including Uganda. The piloting informed finalization of the methodologies that are under implementation at a global scale to enable the establishment of a global baseline for SDG 6 indicators and progressively report on the achievement of SDG6 targets. There is however a need to have a deeper global understanding of the Sustainable Development Goals most especially in relation to fresh water resources, assess the progress made in the implementation of the SDG methodologies to obtain the baseline for each of the indicators, and challenges faced. While momentum has been set in Uganda to fast track implementation of the various SDG6 targets and set a baseline, a

lot of technical and financial support is still needed to enable reporting on all the SDG6 indicators.

III. Overview of opportunities for progress and transformative solutions

Uganda is committed to accelerating the Water action Decade through partnerships with various stakeholders through NDP III and SDGs. Currently there are coordination platforms from the national to the local levels aimed at creating partnerships and collaboration for improved service delivery. There is however a lot that still needs to be done to scale delivery of services and achieve SDG targets as discussed below.

1. Financing

Financing to the sector has continued to go down with very few development partners coming in to support the sector. This has therefore made it difficult to provide services to the people considering that the country has been hard hit by many challenges such as flooding, rising water levels, locusts, COVID-19 Pandemic, Ebola, refugee influx among others. The ability to mobilize development financing from the ever-evolving potential sources and prudent management of public resources at national, local government and sector levels are some of the critical attributes of an Integrated National Financing Framework (INFF). As recommended by the Development Finance Assessment (DFA) for Uganda (2019) that was undertaken by Government with UNDP support, the country will need to be supported to prepare an INFF. The INFF will need to be complemented by the Uganda Domestic Resource Mobilization (DRM) 2019/2020 - 2023/24 Strategy and Public Investment Financing Strategy (UN Uganda, 2020).

2. Data and information

Ensuring availability of adequate and reliable quality freshwater resources for all uses requires good quality and reliable data and forecasts. The government recognized that, there is need to invest in smart water technologies to improve collection of data on water resources variability, water use and water demand. Data collection is done with different modalities in different countries. Technical and economic institutions provide their relevant data, sometimes through the National Statistical Office (NSO), particularly for the economic data. Although data collection and its modality remains ultimately a responsibility of each country. Additionally, past and present water quality monitoring data is already available for many countries through the Water Global Water Quality Information System. FAO, World Bank, UNSD and other international institutions also compile, harmonize and publish data in sectoral databases such FAO's AQUASTAT, WB's Databank and UNSD's UNdata.

3. Capacity development

Realizing the objectives of the water Action Decade requires building inclusive human and institutional capacities in all the relevant sectors and different levels in order to maximize economic and social welfare in an equitable manner and this results in improved service delivery, operation and maintenance, increased job and wealth creation. Capacity development (CD) is at the heart of the sector performance and achievement of the sector goals in the National Development Plan III and Uganda Vision 2040, Sector Investment Plan and other policy documents supported by a wide ranging policy and legal framework. For the Water and Environment Sector, human resources is as crucial as financial resources. The importance of capacity development has therefore long been recognized by the sector and considerable resources have been devoted to capacity building since the early 1990s (W&E, 2012).

Capacity building in water resource-related fields involving universities and other academic institutions working very closely with relevant government agencies can help to improve service delivery. Uganda has established the Water Resources Institute (WRI) as a centre of excellence for building the capacity of sector stakeholders and is making use of retired professionals in the water and environment sectors as a way of enhancing institutional and human capacity.

As a way of exploiting the potential for partnerships and collaboration, Uganda organizes annual water week events geared at sharing information and best practices. Having started in 2018, the annual water weeks have attracted over 5,000 local and international participants who dialogue and exchange ideas and best practices on issues related to water and help build capacity of stakeholders across board.

4. Innovation

Uganda has embedded SDGs into its national developing planning process, and recognizes NDP III as a vehicle towards accelerating the achievement of these goals. The Government, with support from the United Nations system, rolled-out the integrated Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) simulation model to analyze and identify SDG accelerators to guide prioritization of the goals in national development planning. The model identified governance, environment and industry as SDG accelerators for Uganda linked to 12 of the 18 NDP III programmes, additionally noting that the human capital development sectors of health, education and water and sanitation are also vital to the attainment of the SDGs (UN Uganda, 2020). In respect to the water quality monitoring, conventional approaches to monitoring water quality as well as rapidly evolving innovative data sources, such as earth

observations and citizen science, real-time monitoring tools, need to be employed to help fill data gaps.

5. Governance

The governance mechanisms for water requires an integrated and cross-sectoral approach involving all the stakeholders. At the national level, governance arrangement for cross sectoral cooperation, scientific cooperation and water across the 2030 agenda exist through the Natural Resources, Environment, Climate Change, Land and Water Management programme of Uganda's third National Development Plan which aims to stop, reduce and reverse environmental degradation and the adverse effects of climate change as well as improve utilisation of natural resources for sustainable economic growth and livelihood security. The national level governance arrangement is also provided through the Water Policy Committee that is provided for in the Water Act. The committee promotes inter-Ministerial and inter-sectoral coordination over a wide range of water resources management and development issues. The Water Policy Committee provides an avenue for promoting IWRM at national level and guiding the strategic management and development of water resources of the country. There is also an SDG Coordination framework at the national level that is currently being supported by the Government of Uganda and the United Nations Country Team through the Resident Coordinator's office.

At the sub-national level, four Water Management Zones (WMZ) were created following hydrological boundaries. Their primary role is to facilitate sustainable development of the water resources for the economic and social benefit of the people in the catchment and to implement the water management measures needed to protect and conserve the catchment and its water resources, ensure sustainability and reduce or resolve conflicts over resource use.

At the local level, Catchment Management Organisations (CMO) have been created comprising several bodies namely Catchment Stakeholder Forum (CSF) that brings together all actors in the catchment management, Catchment Management Committee (CMC) composed of representatives of all relevant stakeholder groups, Catchment Management Secretariat (CMS) that provides support to the Catchment Management Committee in coordinating the planning and implementation of activities in the catchment, and Catchment Technical Committee (CTC) that is the technical arm of the CMO and brings technical expertise and knowledge during implementation of activities.

At community level Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), and Community Based Organizations (CBOs) work with local communities to manage and implement activities related to protection of water sources and community mobilisation and citizen participation.

IV. Recommendations

- a) Key messages on financing of water and sanitation need to be developed and addressed to the Ministers of Finance in UN Member states. Similarly, mechanisms for regular dialogue between water and environment line ministers and ministries and those of finance should be established.
- b) More needs to be done by the international community through the UN and its member states to ensure that water issues are given their rightful place in sustainable development most especially in developing countries.
- c) There is need to promote the Water Action Decade and its priorities among the UN member states and at the various levels so that the agreed principles and priorities are domesticated and fully implemented.
- d) The role played by the UN-Water, the United Nations inter-agency coordination mechanism for all freshwater related matters, in the work towards the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its dedicated goal on water and sanitation (SDG 6) remains critical and should be strengthened.
- e) There is need to build institutional and human capacities to mobilize financial resources from domestic sources including from the private sector.

V. Guiding Questions

- a) What needs to be done to ensure that Water Action Decade is given more priority among the UN member states and at the various levels so that the agreed principles and priorities are domesticated and realized by 2028?
- b) What strategies need to be put in place to ensure that water takes centre stage in the financing agenda of countries especially in Africa?
- c) How to strengthen Continental and regional institutions through UN for implementation of Water Decade especially in developing and east developed countries. Annual conferences on Water, valuation of water and placement in the national accounting system, demand management and Life cycle management