MINISTRY OF WATER AND ENVIRONMENT
GLOBAL WATER LEADERSHIP PROGRAMME
IN A CHANGING CLIMATE

POLICY BRIEF ON

THE ROOT CAUSES OF THE BOTTLENECKS AFFECTING POLICY, LEGAL AND INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORKS FOR INTEGRATED WATER RESOURCES MANAGEMENT (IWRM), WATER, SANITATION AND HYGIENE (WASH) SERVICES IN UGANDA

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1.0 Executive Summary

Historically, Uganda is one of the countries with the best policies ranging from vision 2040 agenda to National Development Program II&III and the IV that is in pipeline which calls for a programme-based planning, these efforts have achieved a great milestone in attempts to meet international and global policy standards such as the sustainable development goal 2030 on integrated water resources management and WASH services in Uganda.

As a result, the Government of Uganda through Ministry of Water and Environment in partnership with Global Water Partnership (GWP) through Global Water Leadership Program funded by FCDO (UK Government) conducted a desk review exercise coupled with a root cause analysis of the bottlenecks in the Policy, Legal and Institutional Frameworks in WASH and IWRM in the four regional centers of Upper Nile, Albert, Kyoga and Victoria Water Management Zones.

The policy brief highlights the findings of the root causes of the bottlenecks in Policy, Legal and Institutional Framework affecting IWRM and WASH services in Uganda i.e:

(i) Lack of information on the buffer zone boundaries.
(ii) Inadequate policy awareness.
(iii) Political interference
(iv) Low and sometimes lack of funding to critical departments.
(iv) Lack of integrated and monitoring and reporting information system that is designed to capture status of the wetlands.
(v) Contradictions/conflicting policies, and ACTS.
(vi) Inadequate or no environmental police officers/stations on environmental policing.
(vii) Water abstraction/supply normally gets a lot of funding and government prioritization compared to water source protection.
(viii) The land tenure system hinders implementation of IWRM.
(ix) Delayed justice on environmental degradation
(x) Poor mindset on environmental conservation among others.

The policy brief therefore, recommends:

(i) Review and update of relevant institutional frameworks namely the Water Act, Water and Sanitation Gender Strategy, strategic sector investment plan, the communication strategy, and the Stakeholder engagement plan.
(ii) Create awareness about the policies and disseminate them widely.
(iii) Translate the policies into local languages best understood by the local communities.
(iv) Conditional grants be allocated to climate change resilience to enable local governments implement climate change mitigation and adaption measures.
(v) Increase funds and manpower for environmental policing and enforcement.

2.0 Key Findings

The findings in the policy brief is informed by the root cause analysis of the bottlenecks in policy, legal and institutional frameworks 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. It aims at bridging the policy gaps in IWRM and WASH services experienced in implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policy performance. It therefore calls for inclusive participation, ownership and resilient IWRM and WASH services at all levels of policy implementation.

**Awareness:**
The ability of stakeholders to comprehend and apply the information and knowledge about the policy directions, vision, objectives and action by the political, religious, technical and cultural leaders on sustainable water security and climate resilience was one of the areas of concern. In the Upper-Nile Water Management Zone, unaware about the water and environment policies, ACTS, and regulations, 36.7% of the respondents highlighted inadequate awareness as one of the major setbacks affecting IWRM, among other issues raised were inadequate capacity at 6.7%, low budget at 13.3%.

**Inclusiveness:**
Inclusiveness of all stakeholders in WASH and IWRM is very 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, youths, persons with disability, 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 Ministry, this was coupled with lack of funds which was earmarked in the Ministerial Policy statement for FY 2021/2022 & 22/23 on addressing gender gaps in IWRM and WASH services.

Table 1: Ratings of inclusivity of the elderly
In addition, low involvement of persons with physical disability was also registered. This was noted by 75% of the respondents whereas inclusion of the women and the elderly in IWRM and WASH services was rated at 62.5%.
Political economy and Governance

The brief further highlights grey areas in light to the political economy and governance that needs to be strengthened in order 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. It was also noted that there were issues of corruption and political interference that hindered the smooth implementation of integrated water resources management and WASH services in Uganda hence policies being weakened. It calls upon a honest 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).

Policies, strategies and frameworks

The brief notices that there was no indicator on gender in the sector strategic investment plan, this is as well reflected in the views of the respondents during the root cause analysis of the bottlenecks where by 63.33% of the respondents said that the budgets do not adequately address issues of gender in IWRM and WASH.

Budget and financing

It was also noted that 87.5% of the respondents believed that the MWE 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 the 70% of respondents who noted that the PWDs and elders were left out in the management of water resources. It was hence proposed that a certificate of gender compliance be issued out to all projects and programmes developers to ensure that gender responsive budget is mainstreamed and adhered to at all levels of planning.

Capacity:

The ability to make informed decision on the implementation and dissemination of 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 technical incompetencies exhibited. It was reported as one of the stumbling blocks to the attainment of an integrated Water Resources Management. For example, 71.4 % of the respondents indicated that these ordinances and byelaws on IWRM and WASH services have not...
addressed the issues of compliance due to Lack of adequate Knowledge to formulate the ordinances and byelaws by responsible technical staff.

3.0 Summary of Challenges:

i. Inadequate information about the buffer zone boundaries and policies is strongly mentioned across the 4 water management zones as one of the greatest hinderances to effective implementation of IWRM and WASH services in Uganda.

ii. The sector strategic Investment plan and Ministerial Policy statements did not adequately address gender and issues affecting gender.

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 like natural resources department renders the sector non-functional and hand capped on issues like enforcement.

v. Lack of a harmonized integrated and monitoring strategy to help to capture information across all sectors.

4.0 Recommendations.

i. Review and update the policy, legal and institutional frameworks in particularly the water policy, the sector strategic investment plan, the Gender and sanitation strategy, communication strategy and develop a harmonized M&E strategy on IWRM and WASH taking into consideration inclusivity and climate resilience.

ii. The mind set change agenda through capacity building of technical officers on policy implementation, and sensitization to challenge the deep rooted patriarchal, cultural and institutional norms, beliefs and practices that inhibit gender transformative action and climate resilience among technical officers, political and cultural leaders, and the grass root communities on inclusive and climate resilient IWRM and WASH services.

iii. Mainstream 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 WASH Climate Resilience.
iv. A Policy Dialogue between Ministry of Water and Environment and other sister MDA on harmonization of conflicting policy directions and mandates to ensure a collaborative and deliberate policy direction should be taken into consideration to address the massive environmental degradation.

v. Conditional grants be allocated to 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 i.e., 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.

5.0 Conclusion.

To achieve inclusive and resilient IWRM and WASH in Uganda, a deliberate effort needs to be directed through inter-ministerial collaborations, dialogues on reviews and harmonization of policies, strategies, plans and guidelines that are not only intentional but also national on promoting inclusive and climate resilient Integrated Water Resources Management and WASH services.