



The Republic of Uganda

**REPORT ON MONITORING AND EVALUATION OF THE NATIONAL
POLICY FOR THE CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT OF
WETLAND RESOURCES, 1995**

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FOREWORD

The National Policy for the Conservation and Management of Wetland Resources, 1995 was formulated to address the problem of unbalanced, excessive, and inappropriate exploitation of wetland resources. The Policy was monitored and evaluated in January, 2023 to determine the status of its implementation.

The findings revealed that the policy document did not have some key sections such as the objectives, linkages with other frameworks, roles and responsibilities of stakeholders and a policy implementation plan which would guide on carrying out the activities. Due to the gaps in the policy document, implementation of the policy was ineffective as activities were carried out in an ad-hoc manner.

The policy did not achieve the intended goals, and the problem it intended to address persisted as wetland resources coverage reduced from 15.5% to 8.9% of Uganda's geographical area between 1994 and 2021. The degradation compelled Government through Cabinet and H.E the President of the Republic of Uganda to issue various Cabinet directives in

attempt to seek solutions to the problem. Issuance of Cabinet directives was an indication that the policy was not on course of addressing the problem.

In order to avert the situation, I guide that Ministry of Water and Environment conducts a Regulatory Impact Assessment to come up with the most feasible option and appropriate holistic document for use in addressing the wetland resources problem, and strengthen coordination mechanisms to ensure harmonized planning and implementation of interventions that have an impact on Uganda's wetland ecosystems.



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1.0 INTRODUCTION

This report is on monitoring and evaluation of implementation of the *National Policy for the Conservation and Management of Wetland Resources, 1995*. Implementation of the Policy was led by the Ministry of Water and Environment (MWE) and the National Environment Management Authority (NEMA). The purpose of the monitoring and evaluation was to assess the effectiveness and relevance of the policy. The monitoring exercise was conducted between 16th and 31st January, 2023.

2.0 BACKGROUND

Government puts in place public policies as means of addressing public issues towards improving the lives of the citizens. One of the public policies put in place was the National Policy for the Conservation and Management of Wetland Resources which was developed in 1995 to provide a basis for environmentally sound management and rational utilization of the wetland resources. Wetland resources included; marshes, swamps, peat bogs, river deltas, mangroves, river flood plains, and lagoons.

The National Policy for the Conservation and Management of Wetland Resources was monitored and evaluated to assess its effectiveness and relevance in addressing the problem of unbalanced, excessive, and inappropriate exploitation of wetland resources, and achieving its intended goals. It is against this background that monitoring and evaluation of implementation of the National Policy for the Conservation and Management of Wetland Resources was conducted, and report produced to provide practical recommendations on addressing the wetland resources problem.

3.0 PROBLEM STATEMENT

Effective public policy management requires that monitoring and evaluation is conducted regularly and progress documented. Failure to monitor progress on implementation of public policies creates gaps on whether the policies are on the right course as planned or not, which hinders improvements and informed decision making. Since 1986, the Government of Uganda has come up with initiatives, Cabinet directives, policies, laws and projects to restore, maintain and sustainably manage the ever-decreasing wetland cover. According to the wetland mapping

exercises undertaken by Ministry of Water and Environment, wetland coverage declined from 15.6% to 8.9% of the Uganda's geographical coverage between 1994 and 2021. (*Wetlands Report 2021*).

The decline of wetlands had been accelerated by several factors including urbanization, industrial development, population increase, sand and clay mining, uncoordinated planning, and demand for more arable land. Unfortunately, most of these degrading activities were preferably perceived by encroachers as better livelihood opportunities than wetland conservation itself. As a result, the country started suffering diverse effects of climate change, lost biodiversity and shortage of water in some areas. Therefore, there was need to assess the status of implementation of the policy and generate important evidence for meaningful guidance and informed decision making on how to address the wetland resources problems.

4.0 PURPOSE

To assess the effectiveness and relevance of the National Policy for the Conservation and Management of Wetland Resources, 1995.

5.0 OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the monitoring and evaluation exercise were:

- i. To assess the extent of change of the problem the policy intended to address.
- ii. To establish the extent of achievement of the goals of the policy.
- iii. To determine the extent of application of the policy strategies.
- iv. To assess the alignment of policy problem and objectives with the activities.

6.0 SCOPE

Implementation of the National Policy for the Conservation and Management of Wetland Resources was undertaken by Ministry of Water and Environment and National Environment

Management Authority. The other key players were; Ministry of Lands, Housing and Urban Development, District Land Boards and Area Land Committees, District Wetland/Environment and Natural Resources Departments and Lower Local Government Councils. These formed the population within which a sample was drawn for the monitoring exercise.

7.0 METHODOLOGY

Monitoring and evaluation was conducted by staff of Cabinet Secretariat and the Policy Analyst Officers in the Ministry of Water and Environment. The following was applied:

7.1 Sample and Sampling Method

The monitoring exercise was conducted in Ministry of Water and Environment, National Environment Management Authority, selected Cities of Kampala, Mbarara, and Lira, and selected Local Governments of: Rukiga, Kasese, Masaka, Mityana, Pallisa and Luuka. The sample was purposively selected from the different regions in the country based on the public outcry on wetland degradation.

7.2 Data Types and Sources

Both primary and secondary data were used in the exercise. Primary data was collected from the in Ministry of Water and Environment, National Environment Management Authority, and selected Local Governments and Cities. Secondary data was obtained from reports on State of Wetlands in Uganda, Uganda Wetlands Atlas II, and Program & Sector Performance Reports generated by the Ministry of Water and Environment.

7.3 Data Collection Methods and Tools

Data was collected through questionnaires, interview guide and document review.

7.4 Data Analysis

Data was analyzed using Microsoft Word and Excel. Presentation of findings was through pictures, tables, and narrative for better outlay and understanding.

8.0 FINDINGS

This section highlights the summary and detailed findings out of the monitoring and evaluation of implementation of the National Policy for the Conservation and Management of Wetland Resources.

8.1 Summary of Findings

Summary of findings highlights the key discoveries about the design of the policy document, and an assessment of implementation of the policy.

8.1.1 Summary of the Design of the National Policy for the Conservation and Management of Wetland Resources, 1995

The design of the policy lacked some key sections and had gaps in other sections. These were identified as follows:

- i. **Problem Statement:** Whereas the policy document had a problem statement, the statement lacked causes of the issue/problem that could form key areas of focus for

formulating policy objectives and generating strategic actions/interventions.

ii. **Objectives of the Policy:** The policy document did not have a section on the objectives it intended to achieve. The policy only highlighted six goals which formed the basis for monitoring and evaluation. A good policy document should have one goal and at least 5 objectives.

iii. **Expected Outcomes:** The policy document did not have a section on expected outcomes to facilitate formulation of targets hence hindering tracking of performance during monitoring and evaluation.

iv. **Linkages with other Frameworks:** The policy document did not show how its implementation would complement and build synergies with other National, Regional and International frameworks.

v. **Implementation Framework:** The policy document did not have a section that would guide on: coordination & leadership; information, education, communication & dissemination; feedback mechanisms; implementation stages & drivers; and funding mechanisms. This made implementation of the policy difficult due to absence of

coordination, communication & dissemination strategies, and an implementation action plan.

vi. **Roles and Responsibilities of Stakeholders:** The Policy document did not have a section on roles and responsibilities of stakeholders and this promoted silo mentality during implementation. The key stakeholders whose roles and responsibilities should have been clearly indicated in the policy document included: Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries, Ministry of Lands, Housing and Urban Development, Office of the President, Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development, and Ministry of Justice and Constitutional Affairs.

vii. **Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning Framework:** The Policy did not have a mechanism to guide policy monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning.

The Ministry of Water and Environment should review the National Policy for the Conservation and Management of Wetland Resources and come up with a holistic document to

guide implementation, and strengthen the collaboration and coordination mechanisms across all sectors, for better addressing of the wetland problem.

8.1.2 Summary of Implementation of the Policy

The summary of the key areas of focus of the monitoring exercise: the policy problem, goals and strategies is as given below;

- i. There was increasing loss of the wetlands in the country from 15.6% to 8.9% of Uganda's geographical coverage between 1994 and 2021.
- ii. None of the policy goals was achieved.
- iii. There were no planned activities.
- iv. H.E the President and Cabinet issued a number of Directives and Decisions as an attempt to seek solutions to the wetland resources problem.
- v. Implementation of the policy was ad-hoc as there was no implementation plan.

- vi. There was limited collaboration among stakeholders which led to limited execution of their roles and responsibilities.

8.2 Detailed Findings

This section presents the overview the National Policy for the Conservation and Management of Wetland Resources, and details of the assessment of effectiveness and relevance of implementation of the policy.

The Policy Problem

The problem the policy intended to address was unbalanced, excessive, and inappropriate exploitation of wetland resources. The problem had resulted into; water loss, reduced run off control, soil erosion, reduced traditional use, restricted ownership of the resource, reduced economic flexibility, crop pest risks, and health problems.

Note: The problem statement lacked causes that would guide on the formulation of objectives and actions.

The Policy Goals

The policy document had 5 goals which were:

- i. Establish the principles by which wetland resources can be optimally used, and their productivity can be maintained into the future.
- ii. End existing unsustainable exploitative practices in wetlands to avert the decline in their productivity.
- iii. Maintain a biological diversity in wetlands either in the natural community of plants and animals or in the multiplicity of agricultural activity.
- iv. Maintain the functions and values derived from wetland resources throughout Uganda.
- v. Promote the recognition and integration of wetland functions in resource management and economic development decision making with regard to sector policies and programs such as forestry, agriculture, fisheries, wildlife and sound environmental management; Developing public awareness; Research and Inventory; Capacity Building; Promoting International actions; and Wetlands legislation and Institutional arrangements.

The Policy Objectives

The policy document did not have a section on policy objectives. The policy objectives should be more specific and measurable to facilitate achievement of the policy goal. From the analysis of the policy document, the five policy goals were more suitable to be objectives if improved upon.

Planned Policy Activities

The policy document did not have planned activities to be carried out to achieve the goals and address the problem. Rather, the Policy document indicated Strategies under key thematic areas. The Policy Strategies are summarized as follows:

- i. Stopping human development activities that drain wetlands;
- ii. Promoting environmentally sound management practices;
- iii. Promoting sustainable use of wetlands;
- iv. Establish conservation measures of wetlands;
- v. Ensuring water supply and effluent treatment for protected wetlands;
- vi. Government to control the tenure and use of wetlands;
- vii. Recovering previously drained wetlands;
- viii. Conducting Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) and Monitoring;

- ix. Promoting public awareness and understanding of wetland resources;
- x. Carrying out research and inventory of wetlands;
- xi. Conducting capacity building for those involved in the protection of wetlands;
- xii. Promoting international actions; and
- xiii. Formulating wetland legislation.

Application of the strategies would require the Ministry to come up with specific activities under each strategy that would be carried out to facilitate achievement of the goals and addressing of the problem. It was further established that there was no implementation action plan for the policy.

8.2.1. Assessment of Effectiveness of the Policy

Assessment of effectiveness involved analysis of the extent of change of the problem, achievement of the goals and application of strategies. The results of monitoring and evaluation are reflected as follows.

a) Change in the Problem

In terms of change in the problem, monitoring and evaluation focused on establishing whether the problem the policy intended to address had either increased, reduced or remained the same.

The problem of unbalanced, excessive, and inappropriate exploitation of wetland resources which the policy intended to address did not have specific indicators and baseline data. This limited the assessment of the change of the problem.

However, from the monitoring exercise, it was observed that exploitation of the wetland resources had resulted into their degradation which increased from 15.5% (37,346 out of 241,038 km²) in 1994 to 8.9% (21,526 out of 241,038 km²) in 2021 (*Source: Wetlands Report 2021*).

As a result of the increased wetland degradation, Government through Cabinet and H.E the President of the Republic of Uganda issued various Cabinet directives as an attempt to seek solutions to the problem. The Directives issued relating to the matter include:

- ***Cabinet Minute 148 (CT 2021): Identifying activities recommended in wetlands***
- ***Cabinet Minute 154 (CT 2021):***
- i. *Cancellation of all land titles issued in wetlands and protected areas.*
 - ii. *Apprehension and prosecution of officials who facilitated issuance of titles in wetlands.*
 - iii. *Enforcement of the 100 meters lake shore and big rivers, and 50 meters from the slow-flowing small rivers.*
 - iv. *Suspension of issuance of Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Certificates by the National Environment Management Authority to Private Developers in wetlands and other protected areas.*
 - v. *Sensitization of Local Government Leaders where encroachment on protected areas was rampant, so that they can address them on the matter.*
 - vi. *Suspension of farming in wetlands either by Government or Private Sector.*
 - vii. *Conduct a census of encroachers in wetlands for proper planning.*

➤ **H.E the President Directive in his letter PO/11 dated 31st July 2022:** H.E the President directed the Minister for the Presidency to devise mechanisms on compensating encroachers in the wetland areas of Busoga, Bukedi and Kigezi regions. This was hinged on the understanding that Government had misled the population to go into wetlands in the areas of Bukedi, Busoga and Kigezi, after starting some interventions, for example the Kibimba rice scheme, that had negative impact on wetlands.

Issuance of the above Directives can be attributed to failure of the National Policy for the Conservation and Management of Wetland Resources to address the targeted problem. Ministry of Water and Environment should conduct a Regulatory Impact Assessment (RIA) to clearly identify the issue(s) under wetland resources and come up with the most feasible option and appropriate holistic document for use in addressing the problem. This would avoid piecemeal interventions that have failed to address the wetland resources problem.

b) Achievement of the Policy Goals

The assessment involved establishing the extent of attainment of the policy goals. The monitoring and evaluation revealed the following:

Goal 1: Establish the principles by which wetland resources can be optimally used, and their productivity can be maintained into the future

There were no principles established other than those in the policy document.

The principles highlighted in the policy document were:

- i. Wetland resources form an integral part of the environment and their conservation must be pursued in the context of an interaction between conservation and the overall development strategies and activities.
- ii. Wetland conservation can only be achieved through a coordinated and co-operative approach involving all the concerned people and organisations in the country, including the local communities.

- iii. It is of vital importance for wetland conservation and management that the present attitudes and perceptions of Ugandans regarding wetland be changed.

The above principles were not specific to effectively guide implementation of the policy. Further, having a goal on establishment of principles does not suffice since these have to be part of the policy document.

Goal 2: End existing unsustainable exploitative practices in wetlands to avert the decline in their productivity.

This goal was not achieved as unsustainable exploitative practices continued to take place in wetlands. These included:

- i. Burning of wetland vegetation.
- ii. Construction of electricity transmission lines, valley dams, springs, wells, industrial parks and roads in wetlands.
- iii. Extraction activities such as: sand, clay and gold mining; small hold farming activities; wood, papyrus and grass harvesting; over fishing and use of illegal fishing methods;

waste disposal; establishment of washing bays; and unplanned urbanisation & settlements.

Below are pictures showing exploitative practices in wetlands.



Rice growing in Pallisa



Rice growing in Lwela

Achievement of this goal required stringent enforcement of relevant laws that prohibit people from carrying out unsustainable exploitative practices in wetlands.

Goal 3: Maintain a biological diversity in wetlands either in the natural community of plants and animals or in the multiplicity of agricultural activity.

As a result of wetland degradation that increased from 15.5% to 8.9% between 1994 and 2021, it was difficult to maintain the wetland biological diversity of water, fauna, flora and soil. As wetlands are degraded, the microorganisms that form food for

the fauna and flora are affected leading to reduction of water nutrient and oxygen levels that may result into extinction of some fauna and flora species, among other effects.

Goal 4: Maintain the functions and values derived from wetland resources throughout Uganda.

Wetlands functions defined in the policy document were summarized into ecological and social economic functions.

Ecological functions include: Maintenance of the water table for water supplies for day to day activities; prevention of erosion; reduction in extremes of flow as wetlands act like leaky dams, ponding back water when they receive it and subsequently letting it flow through slowly; serving as sediment traps material eroded from the surrounding catchment by rivers which prevents downstream resources of dams, farmland, rivers and lakes from being silted up; and serving as Wildlife habitats and centers of biological diversity.

Social economic functions included: Production of plants such as papyrus and similar plants that are used in the production of thatching, mats, baskets while the palms and smaller-sized trees

are used as structural building materials; foods and medicine supply; fishing since wetlands harbor a substantial population of fish, which have traditionally been caught as an important food item in many parts of Uganda; Cattle grazing since wetlands have soils that are permanently or seasonally moist, have for long been used as grazing areas for livestock especially during the dry season; Water supply for communities; and nutrient & toxin retention. Wetlands also act as tourist attractions. The diversity of wetland biological communities have a potential for earning tourism income.

Some efforts were made in maintaining the functions and values derived from wetland resources. The functions were maintained through: construction of soil and water storage and retention facilities to enhance infiltration in wetland systems for example, in Rufuha wetland in Ntungamo District, Kabanyonyi wetland in Kabale District and Papaya wetland in Pallisa District; and cancellation of land titles in wetlands for example, over 300 titles issued in wetlands in Greater Kampala Metropolitan Area (GKMA) were cancelled.

Despite having clear functions and values derived from wetland resources, the goal was not achieved as there was increased degradation of wetland resources in Uganda.

Goal 5: Promote the recognition and integration of wetland functions in resource management and economic development decision making with regard to sector policies and programs such as forestry, agriculture, fisheries, wildlife and sound environmental management.

Recognition and integration of the wetland functions is a prerequisite in the development of the policy where linkage to other National, Regional and International frameworks is done. Therefore, having this goal was inappropriate. In addition, the policy document did not highlight its linkage with other National, Regional and International frameworks such as the 1971 Ramsar Convention on Wetlands. Lack of linkage with other frameworks limited synergies and complementarities with other stakeholders in implementation of the policy.

c) Application of Policy Strategies

The policy document highlighted a number of strategies under the different thematic areas to be applied during implementation of the policy. Policy strategies are approaches of integrating activities to facilitate achievement of the goal, objectives and addressing the problem. This requires coming up with an implementation plan which clearly indicates the activities, the required resources, sources of funding and stakeholders to implement the plan.

The policy document did not highlight planned activities and resource allocation for achievement of the goals and addressing the wetland resources problem. This led to ad-hoc implementation as there was no plan to guide implementation of the policy.

Although the policy document did not have planned activities and an implementation plan, the monitoring exercise revealed that some activities were carried out and these included:

- i. Restoration and protection of degraded ecosystems: A total of 29,557.24ha of wetlands were restored across the

country between FY 2019/20 and 2021/22. These included: Orapada, Mpologoma, Pece and Okole wetlands.

- ii. Kilometers of wetlands demarcated: Between FY 2019/20 and 2021/22, 2,151.99 Km of wetlands were demarcated with pillars, beacons and live markers for example, Lumbuye and Muzizi in Luuka and Kyenjojo districts respectively.
- iii. Wetland Gazettement: The Ministry embarked on the process of gazetting all wetlands in the country. The process involved delineation of all wetland boundaries, generation of boundary coordinates, production of maps and agreement on the categorization criteria. This process was still ongoing.
- iv. Development of soil and water retention facilities: The Ministry of Water and Environment through the *Building Resilient Communities, Wetland Ecosystems and Associated Catchments in Uganda Project*, constructed nine soil and water storage and retention facilities to enhance infiltration in wetland systems in Western Uganda (Rufuha wetland in Ntungamo and Kabanyonyi wetland in

Kabale) and Eastern Uganda (Agu Wetland in Ngora, Nyakambu wetland and Papaya wetland in Pallisa).

- v. Cancellation of titles in wetlands: As of February 2020, a total of 300 illegal land titles had been cancelled by Ministry of Lands, Housing and Urban Development. However, there was no indicative figure of the total illegal land titles that were to be cancelled.
- vi. Integration of Environment Protection Force in environmental management: The Environment Protection Force carried out monitoring, community policing and enforcement of restoration orders on wetlands.
- vii. Sensitization and awareness creation: This was undertaken in all the Districts monitored through the District Environment Officers and Wetlands Officers.

Despite carrying out the above activities, assessment of their effectiveness was difficult due to lack of baseline information.

8.2.2. Assessment of Relevance of the Policy

Assessment of relevance involves analysis of the extent to which implementation of policy activities enables achievement of the objectives and addressing of the problem.

The National Policy for the Conservation and Management of Wetland Resources neither highlighted planned activities nor objectives to be attained which made assessment of its relevance difficult.

There is, therefore, need for Ministry of Water and Environment to carry out a Regulatory Impact Assessment that will facilitate effective identification of the issue(s) under wetland resources with their causes and effects which will enable formulation of strategic objectives and actions to enable realisation of the intended results.

8.3 Challenges

The challenges faced during implementation of the Policy included:

- i. Limited collaboration among stakeholders which led to limited execution of their roles and responsibilities.
- ii. Resistance of wetland encroachers to evacuate wetlands due to uncoordinated enforcement by the relevant institutions.

- iii. Increasing land conflicts: This was associated with the issuance of land titles in wetlands by the Ministry of Lands Housing and Urban. For example, encroachers on the Lwera wetland had land titles thus downplaying the interventions by the Ministry of Water and Environment.
- iv. Conflicting policies among sectors: This was a result of inadequate consultation during policy development. For example, the policy on establishment of Industrial Parks in each region led to degazettement of several wetlands to allow construction of Industrial Parks.
- v. Lack of an updated comprehensive wetland inventory: This exposed many wetlands to encroachment and exploitation.
- vi. Provision of alternative means of survival to encroachers that did not sustain their livelihood. For example, communities that had adopted alternative practices like bamboo planting were frustrated by the low earning that would not even cater for their basic needs.
- vii. Inadequate manpower: This led to ineffective enforcement and compliance with policy, legal and regulatory frameworks on wetland management.

- viii. Inadequate funding: This was prevalent in all the areas monitored but especially Local Governments where the environment and natural resources departments were poorly funded to manage the environment activities and oversee wetland management.

8.4 Proposals to Address the Challenges

The following proposals were made to address the above mentioned challenges:

- i. Finalization of gazettement of wetlands: Ministry of Water and Environment should expedite finalization of gazettement of all the wetland in the Country.
- ii. Restoration and protection of degraded ecosystems: There is need to enhance the restoration and protection of degraded eco systems through engagement of all stakeholders.
- iii. Cancellation of land titles in wetlands: There is need to establish the number of land titles issued in wetlands and have all of them cancelled.
- iv. Strengthen enforcement of wetland laws: There is need to strengthen enforcement of wetland laws through regular

monitoring, community policing, enforcement of restoration orders, environment and social impact assessments conditions of approval, and regulation of environmentally violating activities with a concentration on wetlands.

- v. Sensitization/awareness creation: There is need for continuous sensitization in all districts through the District Environment Officers and Wetlands Officers.

9.0 CONCLUSION

Government's efforts to reclaim the degraded and encroached wetlands did not yield much results. The rate of degradation surpassed the restoration efforts evidenced by the declining wetland cover which reduced from 15.6% to 8.9% of the Uganda's geographical coverage between 1994 and 2021. To avert the situation, there is need for the Ministry of Water and Environment to conduct a Regulatory Impact Assessment (RIA) to clearly identify the issue(s) under wetland resources and come up with the most feasible option and appropriate document for use in addressing the wetland resources problem. If this is not

done, the wetland resource will continue to disappear and frustrate the achievement of the National aspirations of increasing the area of land covered by wetlands to 9.57% by 2025 as planned in the third National Development Plan (NDP III).

10.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations should be considered for better addressing of the wetland resources problem:

- i. Ministry of Water and Environment should conduct a Regulatory Impact Assessment to come up with the most feasible option and appropriate document for use in addressing the wetland resources problem.
- ii. Ministry of Water and Environment should strengthen collaboration and coordination mechanisms with all stakeholders to ensure harmonized planning and implementation of interventions that have an impact on wetland ecosystems.

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