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Panelists pose for a photo

A panel session in progress discussing the role of water and environment towards achieving Uganda's Tenfold Growth Strategy

Driving Uganda's Tenfold Growth Strategy: The Critical Role of Water and Environment:

Delivering a keynote presentation on behalf of the Permanent Secretary and Secretary to the Treasury at the Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development, Mr. Ssonko Moses underscored the centrality of water and environment as foundational pillars of Uganda's economic transformation agenda. He noted that Uganda's economy has expanded significantly, growing from approximately USD 20.7 billion in 2011 to over USD 50 billion today, with an average annual growth rate of 6.5 percent. This trajectory is expected to accelerate further, particularly with the onset of commercial oil production.

Anchored on the government's "ATM" growth strategy industrial development, tourism, and mineral-based development including oil and gas the presentation emphasized that none of these priority areas can thrive without sustainable water and environment systems. "Agriculture, which employs nearly 70 percent of the population, remains heavily dependent on rainfall, while over 80 percent of the country's electricity is generated through hydropower, directly reliant on water flows", he noted. Similarly, fisheries, tourism, and industrial production all depend on the health and sustainability of ecosystems, reinforcing the framing of water and environment not merely as natural resources, but as critical economic assets.

The Government reaffirmed its commitment to strengthening investments in the sector under the National Development Plan. Key priorities include expanding access to safe water in both rural and urban areas, enhancing integrated water resources management, protecting wetlands and forest ecosystems, and building climate resilience across agriculture and infrastructure systems. Financially, the sector has been allocated approximately UGX 1.3 trillion for the 2025/26 financial year and the medium term about half of the estimated requirements highlighting both progress and the need for increased resource mobilization. These investments are being directed toward water-for-production infrastructure such as irrigation schemes and valley dams, improved water supply systems, and disaster risk mitigation interventions.

In addition, the Government committed to strengthening public investment management by ensuring that all major projects are screened for environment and climate considerations. A new Climate Finance Strategy for 2025–2030 has also been developed to guide the prioritization and implementation of climate and nature-related actions, safeguard development gains, and enhance national resilience to climate shocks.

Further, the presentation issued a strong call to action for all stakeholders. Emphasis was placed on the need for stronger cross-sector coordination, particularly among water, agriculture, energy, and infrastructure sectors, to ensure integrated and climate-resilient planning. The importance of improving efficiency and accountability in the use of limited resources was also highlighted, alongside the urgent need to scale up investments in climate-resilient infrastructure to mitigate the impacts of floods and droughts.

Assoc. Prof. Ibrahim Mike Okumu recieves his token of appreciation

Furthermore, stakeholders were encouraged to explore innovative and sustainable financing mechanisms to bridge the existing funding gap, while supporting the commercialization of agriculture and industrial development through improved infrastructure. The role of communities was equally emphasized, with calls for enhanced participation in ecosystem restoration and conservation efforts, coupled with the provision of sustainable livelihoods to prevent re-encroachment on restored ecosystems.

The session concluded with a reaffirmation of the Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development's commitment to advancing the water and environment agenda as a cornerstone of Uganda's development aspirations under Vision 2040. Participants were urged to leverage the platform provided by Uganda Water and Environment Week 2026 to generate actionable recommendations and strengthen collective efforts toward safeguarding the country's natural resources for both present and future generations.

Contributing to the keynote presentation, a Panel Session was conducted to further dissect the subject matter: "The Role of Water and Environment in Achieving Uganda's Tenfold Growth Strategy"

Deliberations underscored a powerful and consistent message, Uganda's ambitious tenfold growth strategy will only be realised if water and environment resources are sustainably managed and strategically positioned at the centre of development.

Setting the tone for the discussion, panelists emphasized that achieving this transformative growth is not the responsibility of a single actor, but a shared national duty. From industrialization to urban service delivery and environment protection, Stakeholders across sectors were called upon to play an active role in shaping a resilient and inclusive growth pathway.

Representing the Managing Director of National Water and Sewerage Cooperation; Dr. Silver Mugisha, Eng. Amayo Johnson : Deputy Managing Director: National Water and Sewerage Cooperation emphasized that the success of the tenfold growth agenda is fundamentally dependent on how Uganda manages its ecosystems, watersheds, and natural resources. He cautioned that economic expansion must be pursued responsibly, drawing lessons from global and regional experiences such as the Amazon ecosystems and Nigeria's Niger Delta, where environment neglect has led to conflict, ecological degradation, and social unrest. He stressed that Uganda has the opportunity to learn from these precedents and pursue a growth trajectory that safeguards both people and the environment.

Participants during session discussing on Tenfold Growth Strategy

From a financing perspective, Mr. Abaasi Mawanda: Chief Cooperate and institutional Banking Officer, Pearl Bank highlighted the financial sector's commitment to driving this agenda. With over UGX 28 trillion already extended in credit, he noted that the sector has pledged to mobilize up to UGX 490 trillion to support the tenfold growth ambition. However, he emphasized that such growth cannot be sustained without addressing climate and water related risks, which continue to affect productivity, particularly in agriculture, the backbone of Uganda's economy. Reliable water access, especially for irrigation, was identified as a critical enabler for agro industrialization and broader economic transformation.

Bringing a simplified and relatable perspective, Ms. Angela Basiima Tusiime a youth representative engaged the youth audience by framing the strategy as a bold transition from a USD 50 billion to a USD 500 billion economy. She emphasized that while sectors such as agro industrialization, tourism, and mineral development all depend heavily on water, there is an urgent need to adopt sustainable water management practices and explore alternative solutions to prevent resource depletion. Conservation, innovation, and forward-looking planning were highlighted as essential to ensuring long term viability.

Representing Development Partners, Mr. Lalit Patra, WASH Manager from UNICEF Uganda reinforced that environment protection is synonymous with protecting national wealth. He noted that while climate change continues to exert pressure on water and environment systems, Uganda must prioritize adaptation measures to respond to increasing climate variability, including floods, droughts, and landslides. He further emphasized that a well-managed environment creates opportunities for sectors such as tourism and agriculture to thrive.

A key takeaway from the discussion was the need to reposition water, not merely as a social service, but as a critical economic enabler and infrastructure for growth. Without reliable and sustainable water systems, even the most advanced agricultural inputs, industrial investments, or technological interventions risk underperformance.

On the critical link between research and policy,Assoc. Prof. Ibrahim Mike Okumu from Makerere University emphasized that environment research must be placed at the centre of planning processes. He noted that as environment dynamics continue to evolve, research provides the necessary insights on hydrological patterns, soil conditions, and climate variability to inform decision making. He further challenged researchers to communicate their findings in economic terms, highlighting impacts on jobs, productivity, and growth, to strengthen policy influence. He also stressed the importance of ensuring that knowledge reaches local level implementers, including district planners and extension workers, to translate national strategies into tangible results.

On infrastructure development, Eng. Mayo outlined a phased investment approach aligned to a 15-year strategic outlook. He explained that initial efforts will focus on stabilizing and expanding water and sewerage services, followed by scaling up production capacity and investing in bulk water transfer systems. In the long term, the vision is to transition into smart, efficient, and circular water utilities that match Uganda's projected economic growth, he noted.

Addressing financing innovation, Mr. Abaasi Mawanda pointed to emerging mechanisms such as concessional financing, green bonds, blended finance models, and public private partnerships. He noted that these approaches are critical in unlocking resources for climate resilient water and environment investments while reducing reliance on traditional lending structures.

Finally, Ms. Angela Basiima Tusiime highlighted the critical role of youth and women in driving sustainable water and environment solutions. She emphasized the need for inclusive leadership that goes beyond symbolic representation, calling for meaningful participation of young people in decision making processes. She further underscored the importance of practical skilling, environment awareness, and leveraging technology to empower youth as active contributors to the tenfold growth agenda.

Upon the completion of a dialogue focusing on sub theme one of UWEWK2026, **Role of water and environment in achieving Uganda's Tenfold Growth strategy,** had participants split into several parallel sessions that disected a number of topics including but not limited to research, learnings and policy conversations. this segment introduces the different sessions.

Session 1: Role of Water and Environment in achieving Uganda's Tenfold Growth Strategy: Policy, Strategy and scientific papers' presentations.

Timothy Purvis – University of North Carolina, The Water Institute at UNC chapel Hill making a presentation

The session showcased a series of research papers addressing pressing climate, water, and environmental challenges across Uganda, each offering evidence-based insights and practical solutions.

A study on urban resilience in Kampala's informal settlements examined the impacts of environmental degradation and recurrent flooding, proposing green infrastructure and improved water-resilience planning as key interventions. Complementing this, a paper on climate communication explored how storytelling can simplify scientific knowledge and make climate change more accessible to the public.

Research conducted in Mbarara City revealed that over 90% of water sources in the central area operate without valid permits, raising concerns about regulation and service delivery. In Karamoja, a study on Village Savings and Loan Associations demonstrated their effectiveness in sustaining rural water systems, even as external support declines, provided strong leadership and financial management are in place.

Another paper highlighted the risks of lead contamination in water systems, linking it to outdated infrastructure such as hand pumps and pipes, and calling for stricter regulations and adoption of safer materials. On the technological front, studies on digital innovation presented the use of AI and satellite data for real-time flood mapping in Kampala, as well as hydraulic modelling in the Nyamwamba catchment in Kasese, emphasizing the need for improved accuracy and uncertainty analysis.

Waste management research focused on composting as a viable solution to increasing organic waste, supported by findings from comparative farm trials. In southern Uganda, a socio-economic study on soil erosion assessed the adoption of nature-based solutions, identifying barriers such as labor demands and land tenure constraints.

Further research classified Uganda into ecological regions to guide conservation and policy decisions, while another paper examined the water-energy-food nexus, highlighting fragmented sectoral management as a key challenge to inclusive growth. In northern Uganda, a study on non-timber forest products explored their role in supporting livelihoods among refugee and host communities, calling for better integration into policy and practice.

Finally, studies on community water sources revealed that 70% of wells face erosion and 60% are contaminated, alongside findings of high pollutant levels in Lake Victoria sediments. These papers collectively emphasized the need for stronger regulation, improved monitoring systems, and increased investment in sustainable and community-driven solutions.

Session 2: planning water and waste services:

Partcipants share ideas during the session

The Nile Board Room came alive on 24th March 2026 as practitioners, researchers, and sector leaders convened for a timely side event on planning water and waste services during the Uganda Water and Environment Week. The session, jointly organized by Eawag, Makerere University, the National Water and Sewerage Corporation, and the Umbrella of Water and Sanitation, provided a dynamic platform for reflecting on the realities shaping service delivery in Uganda's water and sanitation landscape. Chaired by Prof. Dr. Charles B. Niwagaba, the session drew close to fifty physical participants, all keen to interrogate both persistent and emerging challenges in the sector.

Presentations from Prof. Dr. Charles B. Niwagaba, Dr. Eng. Ronald Sakaya, Emmanuel Muyanja, Marisa Boller, and Dr. Sara Marks set the tone for a deeply engaging discussion. At the heart of the conversation was the need to confront operational and service delivery challenges affecting utilities and the communities they serve. Issues such as vandalism, the culture of free water, and weak community engagement were highlighted as key disruptors to sustainable service provision. Utility providers shared their struggles with fluctuating revenues, particularly during rainy seasons, which often destabilize financial planning and strain operations. The discussion underscored the urgency of strengthening debt management systems and adopting more resilient and forward-looking planning approaches.

From the users' perspective, participants emphasized persistent concerns around water quality and access, especially during dry seasons when scarcity becomes more pronounced. The dialogue brought to light the importance of building trust between service providers and communities through consistent engagement, transparent communication, and targeted leadership training. There was also growing recognition of the potential for community-level water testing solutions, including basic testing approaches that could empower households and local institutions to monitor water safety beyond centralized systems.

The session was further enriched by interactive breakout discussions that allowed participants to dive deeper into critical thematic areas. One group explored capacity building and the need for an integrated planning framework that brings together water supply, sanitation, and solid waste management into a cohesive system. Another group focused on innovation in service delivery, examining how utilities can respond more effectively to changing demand patterns and environmental pressures. Meanwhile, discussions around the role of a water research institute emphasized the importance of understanding seasonal variations in water use and designing adaptive strategies to manage these fluctuations.

A recurring theme throughout the session was the need to bridge the gap between research and practice. Participants stressed that knowledge generated through research must be translated into accessible and actionable formats, including learning briefs, policy dialogues, and digital platforms such as social media. This, they noted, would not only enhance uptake but also foster a culture of continuous learning and improvement within the sector.

Equally important was the recognition that access to safe water must extend beyond the formal reach of national utilities. The conversation highlighted alternative solutions, including decentralized systems and localized water treatment options, as critical pathways for reaching underserved communities. In parallel, participants examined the financial sustainability of utilities, noting that many resort to delaying payments to contractors as a coping mechanism for cash flow constraints. This prompted a strong call to explore diversified revenue streams, such as offering training services and introducing processing fees, to strengthen financial resilience.

As the session drew to a close, a number of clear takeaways emerged. There was consensus on the need to deepen community engagement and education around water quality and service sustainability. Strengthening leadership, particularly at the local council level, was identified as a key enabler for improved governance and accountability. Participants also emphasized the importance of aligning policies with the realities of customer behavior and livelihood patterns to better manage revenue fluctuations. Above all, the session reinforced the value of collaboration, innovation, and evidence-based planning in advancing equitable and sustainable water and waste services.

The discussions were a powerful reminder that achieving universal access to safe water and sanitation requires not only technical solutions, but also strong institutions, informed communities, and adaptive systems that can respond to an ever-changing environment.

Session 3: DRESS-EA project strengthens Karamoja's fight against climate change effects:

Participants during a session on DRESS- EA project

In Uganda's Karamoja sub-region, where parched earth and failed rains have long defined daily life, a quiet transformation is beginning to take root.

For decades, drought has been a relentless adversary here, shrinking harvests, depleting pasture for livestock, and tightening its grip on already fragile livelihoods.

But a four-year initiative is now offering a glimpse of what a more climate-resilient future could look like.

Launched in 2021 by the Ministry of Water and Environment with support from the Adaptation Fund, the Drought Resilience and Sustainable Systems in East Africa (DRESS-EA) project has trained smallholder farmers and pastoralists on how better they can withstand the intensifying impacts of climate change.

The initiative, is part of a broader $13 million regional effort spanning Djibouti, Kenya, Sudan, and Uganda.

Its footprint in Uganda covers the Lokere Catchment area, stretching across the districts of Moroto, Napak, and Nabilatuk.

Here, communities that once struggled to grow even basic crops are beginning to cultivate not just food, but resilience.

At a project review held on the sidelines of Uganda Water Week 2026 on March 24, 2026, experts and stakeholders reflected on the initiative's progress, and its implications for the future.

While acknowledging its impact, they also underscored the need for sustained investment to expand its reach and ensure long-term success.

Dr. Callist Tindimugaya, the project coordinator, praised both implementers and funders for the strides made so far.

"We want to make sure that everyone is given the opportunity to participate. Let us see how this project can be implemented even better but also set a stage for other projects; and we continue mobilizing resources to implement our projects," he said.

At its core, the DRESS-EA project is built around strengthening early drought warning systems, improving the capacity of stakeholders, equipping farmers with adaptive techniques, and enhancing knowledge sharing on resilience strategies.

For communities on the ground, however, its impact is best measured not in policy frameworks, but in everyday survival.

Emanue Sagal, a farmer from Napak, said the difference is already visible.

"We are a group of 18 farmers and this project supported us through various trainings in various technologies. Today we cultivate a variety of vegetables and food which we partly sell. Members know how to conserve water when it rains, and how to make organic manure. Many now grow food in their own homes," he said.

According to Sagal, hunger, once a constant threat, has significantly reduced.

The project has also equipped farmers with early warning tools, including mobile phones and

radios, enabling them to share critical weather information and prepare in advance. However, he pointed a challenge of post-harvest losses as a persistent problem, calling for more support in storage and preservation techniques.

Another farmer from Lokolimor village, Savior Lomer, recalled how barren the land once was. “But when this project came, they trained us on how to regenerate our soils to be fertile. Now we plant several crops, which we sell in markets. We can now take our children to school and even feed ,” he said.

But experts cautioned that sustaining these gains will require a deeper focus on long-term, nature-based solutions.

Betty Flora Nakiror, a consultant, emphasized the central role of water and range lands management in Karamoja’s future.

“Range lands management is also important because they are pastoralists. You will not hear of any conflicts because they will not be moving to look for grass and water anymore,” she noted.

She noted that in Karamoja, water is not just a resource; it is the foundation of stability.

She also stressed the urgency of practical, community-driven solutions.

Doreen Ankunda, Climate Finance Officer at the Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development said the government is already exploring new financing pathways to sustain and scale such interventions.

She pointed to mechanisms such as carbon credits, green bonds, climate change budget tagging, and debt swapping as potential sources of funding among others.

Hon. John Bosco Ngoya, Member of Parliament for Bokora County, Napak district, warned that progress will stall without a strong focus on sustainability.

“Karamoja has been there for years, a lot had been done but little is seen. Adaptation to our communities is very key. Water is a key component to the Karamoja people. That is what we need, even if they leave everything else,” he said.

Brenda Achiro, Country Director, Water for People Uganda, said collaboration at the local level will determine whether gains made today endure tomorrow.

She emphasized the importance of working closely with local governments to ensure continuity.

“In Mpanga Catchment area we did river bank demarcation, and came up with other alternative income generating activities for the local residents, to ensure they don’t go back to the river banks,” she said.

Session 4: outcomes from COP 30 and Road map to COP 31

The dialogue featured insights from a diverse panel of presenters including Ms. Adrine Musiime who highlighted the adoption of the Berlin Gender Action Plan (BGAP) and emphasized the need for Uganda to embed gender considerations across all climate interventions. She stressed that financing mechanisms should directly support women, youth, and vulnerable communities, while local leadership development and cross-sector collaboration in agriculture, energy, water, and forestry are critical for inclusive climate action.

Prof. John B. Kaddu and Ms. Irene Chepot underscored the importance of moving from planning to implementation. They noted the expanded mandate of the Climate Technology Centre and Network (CTCN) and the launch of the Technology Implementation Program (TIP), encouraging Uganda to deploy technologies at

A panel discussion on the outcomes of COP 30 in progress

the community level, invest in indigenous knowledge systems, and prepare funding-ready projects that attract international support and deliver measurable impact.

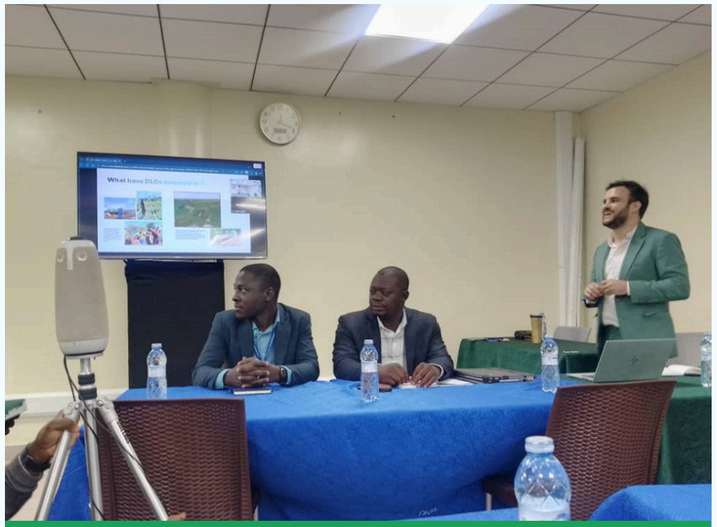
Hon. Winfred Matsiko focused on climate finance, highlighting new opportunities for Uganda through increased adaptation funding and the operationalization of the Loss and Damage Fund. He called for aligning climate finance with national development priorities, strengthening domestic resource mobilization, leveraging public-private partnerships, and engaging in carbon markets. He emphasized the importance of tracking fund utilization and diversifying financing sources to maximize impact and ensure accountability.

Ms. Patricia Muhumuza discussed the need to balance climate ambitions with national development priorities. She noted that Uganda must attract investment, build capacity to respond to external climate policies, and ensure that transitions are inclusive and equitable, protecting livelihoods while scaling low-carbon development.

Ms. Imelda Kazooba highlighted progress in Loss and Damage mechanisms and recommended establishing a national focal point to streamline access to funding and technical support. She emphasized the need for robust monitoring, reporting, and knowledge-generation systems to guide evidence-based decision-making. Ms. Nantege Asha reflected on carbon markets and Uganda’s Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), emphasizing strong regulatory frameworks, stakeholder engagement, and alignment with national strategies. She called for integrating adaptation, mitigation, and just transition strategies while ensuring timely NDC submissions and investment alignment.

The session concluded that COP30 provides Uganda with a clear roadmap for advancing climate-resilient and low-carbon development.

Session 5: From Plans to Local Impact: Decentralized Climate Finance



Panel Discussion

The session highlighted how the Local mechanism is strengthening decentralized climate finance in Uganda by channeling Performance-Based Climate Resilient Grants directly to local governments, enabling them to implement climate adaptation projects based on results and local priorities.

Speakers emphasized that effective access to these funds requires strong planning, use of climate data, timely reporting, and adherence to climate-focused investments. The programme, currently active in 14 districts and expanding further, supports fiscal decentralization while ensuring accountability.

Discussions also underscored the importance of climate risk assessments in guiding evidence-based and inclusive planning, as well as the tangible benefits for communities, including improved infrastructure and resilience for vulnerable populations.

Participants highlighted the critical role of banks, insurance, and development partners in scaling adaptation through tailored financial products, blended finance, and private sector engagement. The key takeaway was that while progress is evident, greater collaboration and innovative financing are needed, as public funding alone is not sufficient to meet climate adaptation needs.

Session 7: Harnessing Agroforestry and Industrial Innovation for Climate Mitigation under Uganda's Climate Change Framework

Hon. David Bahati: Minister of State for Trade, Industry and Cooperatives (Industry) joins a side session on Harnessing Agroforestry and Industrial Innovation for Climate Mitigation Under Uganda's Climate Change Framework (5TH R-L)

The session, chaired by Mr. Musinguzi Laban Joshua, Executive Director of GRO Foundation Uganda, and moderated by Ms. Amutuhaire Marylyn, drew over 75 physical participants and 42 online attendees from government, civil society, industry, and academia.

Mr. Bob Kazungu, Assistant Commissioner in the Department of Forestry Management at the Ministry of Water and Environment, opened the session with remarks on agroforestry as a strategic climate mitigation intervention. He defined agroforestry as the intentional integration of trees, crops, and livestock in spatial or temporal arrangements to enhance productivity, profitability, diversity, and ecosystem sustainability. Agroforestry systems, including agrisilviculture, silvopastoral, aquaforestry, and entomoforestry, were noted for their potential to sequester between 1.5 and 3.5 tons of carbon per hectare annually, contributing to biomass carbon, soil organic carbon, and overall greenhouse gas reduction. Mr. Kazungu emphasized that agroforestry is embedded in Uganda's NDC 2.0 and NDC 3.0, aligned with the Green Growth and low-carbon development agenda, and forms a basis for carbon credit schemes under Afforestation/Reforestation, Improved Forest Management, and REDD+. He also highlighted challenges, including high upfront costs, tenure insecurity, weak value chains, and technical knowledge gaps, and stressed the need for enabling regulations under the 2025 Climate Change Mechanism Regulations.

Hon. David Bahati, Minister of State for Trade, Industry and Cooperatives, delivered the keynote address, underscoring the critical balance between industrial growth and environmental protection. He highlighted that the manufacturing sector contributes 26.4% of Uganda's USD 64 billion GDP, employs 1.8 million people, consumes 70% of the national electricity supply, and contributes UGX 8.16 trillion to national revenue. The Minister emphasized that Uganda's development trajectory must integrate climate mitigation into industrial policy, promoting resource-efficient practices, green technologies, and sustainable sourcing from agroforestry. He called for strengthened collaboration between the Ministry of Trade, Industry and Cooperatives, the Ministry of Water and Environment, GRO Foundation, and development partners to achieve sustainable industrialization while meeting NDC targets.

Mr. Emmanuel Kamugisha, Senior Industrial Officer at MTIC, presented on the policy and operational context for green industrialization. He highlighted that the Industrial Processes and Product Use sector contributes approximately 1.3% of national GHG emissions, and that a phased transition to green industrialization is underway, supported by MTIC's Green Manufacturing Strategy and the Sustainable Wood Based Value Chain Project. Mr. Kamugisha emphasized the importance of local capacity, infrastructure readiness, and just transition measures for workers and MSMEs, as well as the need for robust Measurement, Reporting, and Verification systems to track emissions and carbon removals.

Participants raised questions on carbon finance access for MSMEs, recommended tree species for agroforestry, sustainable biomass utilization, land tenure security, MRV capacity, and incentives for green industry. Responses highlighted government support through aggregation of MSME activities, cooperative structures, blended financing models, and capacity-building programs. Mixed-species agroforestry approaches were recommended to balance ecological resilience and commercial value, while sustainable woodlots, pyrolysis, and improved cookstoves were proposed to ensure circular biomass use. Carbon Rights Agreements registered under the National Land Information System were emphasized as critical for secure land and tree tenure.

The session concluded that agroforestry is a critical climate mitigation intervention with adaptation co-benefits and that Uganda's manufacturing sector remains central to socio-economic transformation. Integration of agroforestry with industrial innovation offers a practical pathway to achieve both economic growth and climate objectives. Recommendations included establishing a cross-sectoral technical working group, expanding carbon market standards, piloting integrated agroforestry-industrial hubs, strengthening MRV systems, securing land and tree tenure, developing green incentives for industry, and building MSME capacity to participate in sustainable agroforestry value chains. Key takeaways emphasized that Uganda's policy framework provides a foundation for integrated climate and industrial action, that phased transitions can protect workers and MSMEs, and that collaboration between GRO Foundation, MTIC, the Ministry of Water and Environment, and private sector actors can deliver measurable results for both the economy and the environment.

Hon. David Bahati, Minister of State for Trade, Industry and Cooperatives, delivers the keynote address, highlighting the manufacturing sector's contribution to GDP and the importance of balancing industrial growth with environmental protection.

Mr. Bob Kazungu, Assistant Commissioner – Department of Forestry Management (MWE), presents on the climate mitigation potential of agroforestry and its alignment with NDC 3.0 and the Climate Change Mechanism Regulations 2025.

A view of session participants, including representatives from government ministries, private sector, civil society, academia, and development partners, engaging in discussions at the WEIS Room.

Session 9: Mpanga Water Fund.

Presentation during the session Dr. Guma Brian, Team Leader,Albert Water Management Zone from Ministry of Water and Environment brought into focus the ecological and economic significance of the Mpanga catchment, a landscape that spans critical ecosystems including national parks such as Rwenzori, Kibale and Queen Elizabeth, over 30 crater lakes, and the Ramsar-listed Lake George. Beyond its ecological richness, the catchment plays a vital role in supporting water supply systems, hydropower generation, and livelihoods across Fort Portal, Kamwenge, and surrounding communities.

Framed within the broader concept of Water Funds, the presentation underscored how nature-based solutions can be harnessed to improve water quality and availability by restoring and protecting ecosystems. Water Funds were described as innovative financing and governance mechanisms that leverage natural infrastructure such as forests, wetlands, and riverbanks to regulate water systems more sustainably than traditional grey infrastructure alone.

Ms. Grace Kanweri Senior Program Officer Water for People Uganda making a presentation on Mpanga Water Fund Pre-feasibility assesment

The Mpanga Catchment Investment Program (CIP) prefeasibility assessment sought to determine whether the right conditions exist to establish such a mechanism. Findings revealed that while the catchment holds immense potential, it is currently under pressure from a range of degradation drivers, including deforestation, poor agricultural practices, riverbank encroachment, and poorly maintained infrastructure such as gravel roads. These challenges have direct implications for water quality, sedimentation, and overall ecosystem health.

In response, the study identified a suite of prioritized nature-based solutions capable of reversing degradation trends while delivering multiple co-benefits. Interventions such as agroforestry and regenerative agriculture, riparian buffer restoration, wetland rehabilitation, soil and water conservation measures, and farmer-managed natural regeneration were highlighted as practical pathways to improve water quality and availability. At the same time, these interventions promise to enhance carbon sequestration, strengthen climate resilience, boost agricultural productivity, and create livelihood opportunities for local communities.

What stood out strongly in the presentation was the clear articulation of shared value across stakeholders. From National Water and Sewerage Corporation abstraction points and hydropower producers to smallholder farmers and downstream urban populations, the benefits of investing in the Mpanga catchment are far-reaching. Improved water purification, increased agricultural yields, enhanced biodiversity, and expanded ecotourism opportunities all point to a model where environmental conservation and economic development are mutually reinforcing.

The prefeasibility assessment ultimately positioned the Mpanga CIP as a transformative opportunity, describing it as a strategic investment capable of restoring ecosystems, strengthening water security, and uplifting communities. With a favorable benefit-to-cost outlook and strong conservation value, the initiative demonstrates how integrated catchment management can contribute to long-term resilience and sustainability.

Looking ahead, the presenters called for a more detailed feasibility study to deepen the analysis. This next phase will focus on refining the business case, exploring financing options, defining governance structures, and identifying implementation partners. As discussions at UWEWK 2026 continue to emphasize innovation and investment, the Mpanga Water Fund stands out as a promising example of how Uganda can harness nature to secure its water future.

Session 10: Learning from Practice: Translating Equitable Delivery Experience into Policy Action

Ms. Patricia Asianut, Consultant, presented the pilot's findings, highlighting innovative mechanisms tested to improve water access for low-income households. These included the 40:60 installment payment model, "Little and Often" payments, free connections, and mainstream connections. The evaluation revealed that the 40:60 payment approach was particularly effective, with 76% of customers meeting repayment within six months and over 92% within a year. In contrast, free connections proved unsustainable, with most beneficiaries disengaging, and the "Little and Often" model faced adoption challenges due to high transaction costs.

The presentation underscored the need for standardized definitions and tools to identify equitable service customers, robust monitoring through revolving funds, and the importance of engaging community leaders while avoiding blanket assumptions. It was also noted that poverty is dynamic, requiring continuous re-assessment and flexible strategies.

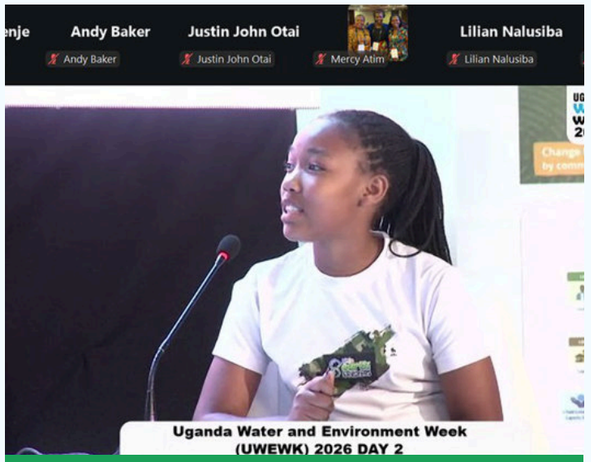
Country Director, WaterAid, Dr. Joyce Mpalanyi Magala –Giving recommendations to improve ES in Uganda

Participants discussed key considerations for scaling equitable water services. Questions raised included exploring reduced tariffs and the level of effort required for customer follow-up, with the presenter noting that focusing on connection fees ensures sustainability while intensive customer engagement ultimately enhances billing, revenue, and retention.

Key takeaways from the session included the effectiveness of the 40:60 installment model, the limitations of free connections, and the need for policy flexibility that allows utilities to innovate while meeting inclusion targets. The discussion concluded with a consensus that Uganda's 2006 Pro-Poor Strategy requires urgent revision to institutionalize equitable service delivery, supported by dedicated financing mechanisms, standardized customer identification tools, and performance-linked targets for utilities.

The session reinforced that successful equitable water service delivery hinges on flexible, context-specific approaches, active engagement with vulnerable communities, and innovative financing strategies that make access both sustainable and inclusive.

Session 11: Lauch of Locally Led Adaptation (LLA), Community of Practice (CoP)



Young Climate activist Grace Ninsiima calls for inclusion in decision making

The launch of the Uganda Locally-Led Adaptation Community of Practice (LLA-CoP) marked a significant step in strengthening Uganda's response to climate change through more inclusive and community-driven approaches. The platform, established under the LIFE-AR initiative, brings together a diverse range of stakeholders committed to advancing locally-led adaptation across the country.

During the launch, it was emphasized that effective climate adaptation must go beyond policy commitments to actively empower communities as key actors in decision-making processes. Presenting on behalf of Makerere University, Prof. David Mfitumukiza highlighted the importance of grounding adaptation efforts in local knowledge systems, priorities, and lived realities, noting that communities are best placed to identify and sustain solutions that respond to their unique challenges.

Participants underscored the need to bridge the gap between national frameworks and implementation at the local level, pointing to the role of the Community of Practice as a connector between policy, research, and practice. By fostering collaboration among government institutions, academia, civil society, and development partners, the LLA-CoP is expected to strengthen coordination and promote shared learning.

The discussions further highlighted the importance of building capacity at all levels, particularly in ensuring that communities have access to information, financing, and technical support. The platform will serve as a space for knowledge exchange, documentation of best practices, and the co-creation of innovative, context-specific solutions.

The launch session also reinforced the understanding of adaptation as a continuous and evolving process, requiring sustained engagement, learning, and flexibility. In this regard, the LLA-CoP is positioned as a long-term mechanism to support dialogue, reflection, and collective action.

From Pilot to Systems Transformation: The LIFE-AR Uganda Experience

During the implementation of the LIFE-AR initiative in Uganda, a compelling story of resilience, innovation, and community-driven transformation has unfolded. What began as targeted pilot interventions has steadily evolved into a broader systems approach, demonstrating how climate adaptation efforts can move beyond isolated successes to influence sustainable, long-term change.

Across districts such as Kaabong, investments have not only improved infrastructure but have also strengthened community ownership and participation. Early engagements brought communities together under shared spaces, fostering

dialogue on water access, resilience, and local priorities. These conversations laid the groundwork for practical interventions that directly respond to local needs.

Speaking during the session, Ms. Mellisa Boller (UNCDF) noted that the Local Climate Adaptive Living Facility (LoCAL), launched in 2014, has evolved into a globally recognized climate finance mechanism. She highlighted ongoing innovations to expand its grant-based model to include de-risking tools that attract private sector investment. She also emphasized that while climate finance is evolving rapidly, the gap between available adaptation funding and actual needs continues to widen amid increasing climate shocks. Encouragingly, about 35% of companies now have adaptation plans, reflecting growing private sector commitment to resilience.

To address these challenges, two strategic priorities were identified: improving local governments' access to climate finance for inclusive and gender-responsive investments, and establishing standardized, performance-based climate resilience grant systems. Strengthened collaboration between governments, private sector, and development partners was emphasized as essential to bridging the climate finance gap.

In the panel discussion, Ms. Samantha Atinga highlighted the effectiveness of direct cash transfers in empowering communities to make their own adaptation decisions, with evidence of investments in relocation, livelihoods, and wellbeing. Dr. Alex Nimsima stressed the need for evidence-based, forward-looking adaptation and the role of academia in linking research to policy and practice. Grace Ninsiima, a children's climate activist, called for stronger youth engagement and integration of climate education into school curricula, while Rita, a Community Development Officer from Kalungu District, emphasized the importance of participatory structures in strengthening community ownership and accountability.

Young activist Grace Ninsiima joins a panel of Experts

The session culminated in the launch of the Uganda Locally Led Adaptation Community of Practice (LLA-CoP) by the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Water and Environment, Dr. Alfred Okot Okidi, who called for stakeholders to ensure that locally led adaptation becomes a practical reality. Established under the LIFE-AR initiative, the platform brings together government, academia, civil society, and development partners to advance inclusive, community-driven adaptation.

It was emphasized that effective adaptation must empower communities as key decision-makers. Prof. David Mfitumukiza (Makerere University) underscored the importance of grounding solutions in local knowledge and lived experiences. The LLA-CoP will serve as a platform for coordination, knowledge sharing, capacity building, and co-creation of context-specific solutions, helping bridge the gap between policy and local implementation

From Pilot to Systems Transformation: The LIFE-AR Uganda Experience

A sneak peak of a presentation

During the implementation of the LIFE-AR initiative in Uganda, a compelling story of resilience, innovation, and community-driven transformation has unfolded. What began as targeted pilot interventions has steadily evolved into a broader systems approach, demonstrating how climate adaptation efforts can move beyond isolated successes to influence sustainable, long-term change.

Across districts such as Kaabong, investments have not only improved infrastructure but have also strengthened community ownership and participation. Early engagements brought communities together under shared spaces, fostering dialogue on water access, resilience, and local priorities. These conversations laid the groundwork for practical interventions that directly respond to local needs.

One of the most visible milestones has been the commissioning of water sources, where communities gathered to celebrate improved access to safe water. These moments symbolized more than infrastructure delivery; they reflected restored dignity, reduced vulnerability, and a renewed sense of hope. Media coverage of these achievements further amplified the impact, highlighting how coordinated efforts can transform livelihoods.

The journey has also been marked by tangible environmental and infrastructural improvements. In Kaabong, for instance, previously inaccessible or degraded areas have undergone remarkable transformation, showcasing the shift from "before" to "after."

Investments in land restoration and water resource development have enhanced both ecological sustainability and economic potential for local populations.

At the implementation level, collaboration among stakeholders has been central. Government entities, technical partners, and communities have worked side by side, as seen in field activities involving machinery deployment and site development. These joint efforts have ensured that interventions are not only technically sound but also locally relevant and owned.

Speaking during this session, Ms. Mellisa Boller; UNCDF noted that the, Local Climate Adaptive Living Facility launched as an innovative mechanism for climate finance delivery in 2014, it is now an international standard with global reach.

In 2026, UNCDF is innovating once again with LoCAL while building on an existing and widely recognized grant-based approach to expand the UNCDF climate finance offer to include derisking tools that crowd-in private sector finance.

She further mentioned that the development landscape had shifted significantly adding that, climate finance dynamics are evolving rapidly, yet the gap between available adaptation funding and the resources required continues to widen, even as climate-related shocks and impacts intensify around the world.

The private sector is increasingly acknowledging that resilience across value chains is no longer optional. Currently, about 35% of companies have a formal adaptation plan, reflecting a growing awareness of climate risks and a commitment to proactive measures.

To address these challenges, efforts are focused on two strategic objectives. The first is to enhance local governments' access to climate finance, supporting them to implement inclusive and gender-responsive climate change investments that reach communities most vulnerable to climate impacts. The second is to establish a standard, internationally recognized country mechanism for performance-based climate resilience grants, creating incentives for effective and measurable climate interventions.

Bridging the climate finance gap will require strong collaboration between governments, the private sector, and development partners. By increasing local access to finance and linking funding to performance, we can accelerate climate-resilient development and ensure that communities are better prepared for the challenges ahead.

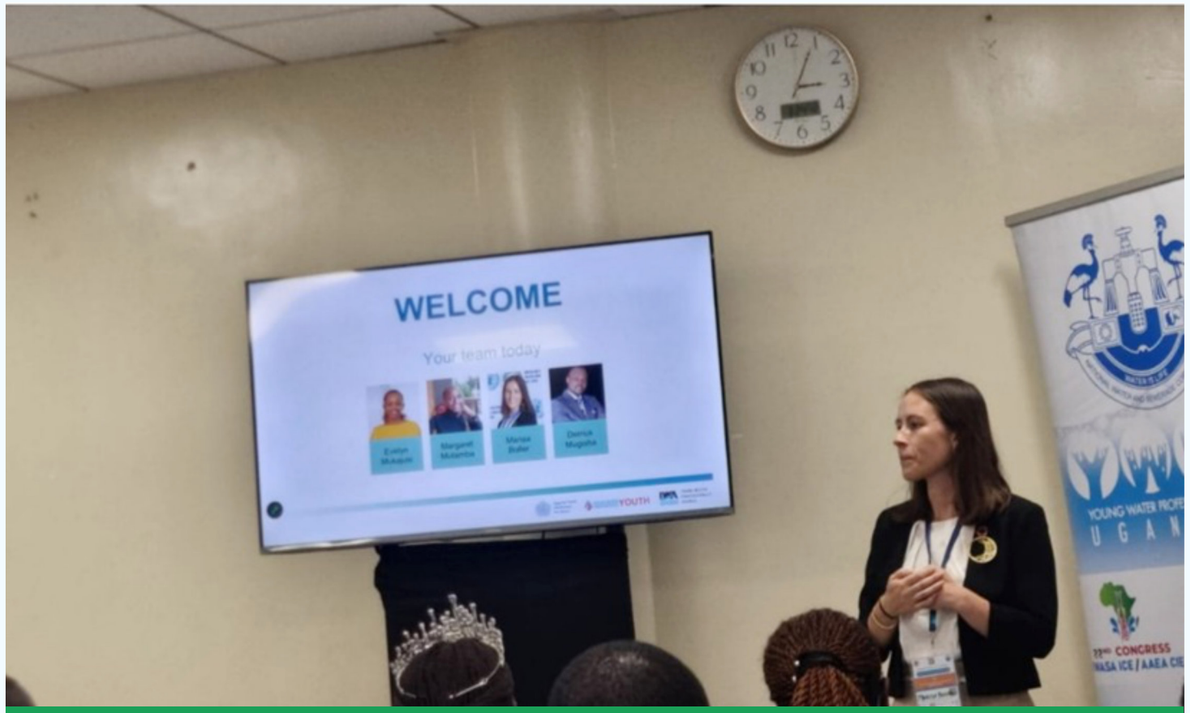
Relatedly, the session was followed by a panel conversation that dissected the different parameters within the scope under discussion. Ms. Samantha Atinga emphasized that direct cash transfers empower communities to make their own adaptation decisions, with evidence showing investments in relocation, livelihoods, and wellbeing, while challenging assumptions about misuse of funds and pointing to the value of combining cash with infrastructure support.

Dr. Alex Nimsima stressed the importance of evidence-based and forward-looking adaptation, highlighting the role of academia in research, training, and bridging policy and practice. Meanwhile, Children's climate activist Grace Ninsiima underscored the active role of young people in climate action and called for climate education to be integrated into school curricula.

Rita, a Community Development Officer from Kalungu District, highlighted how participatory structures have strengthened community involvement, ownership, and accountability in identifying and implementing adaptation priorities.

Ultimately, the session culminated into the launch of the Uganda Locally Led Adaptation (LLA) Community of Practice (COP). The launch was done by the Guest of Honor, the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Water and Environment; Dr Alfred Okot Okidi calling on Stakeholders to ensure that adaptation is effective and Local leadership is not just a principle but a growing reality we actively enable.

Session 12: Youth for Water in Uganda and Beyond: From Fragmented Action to Sustainable Integrational Partnerships.



Ms. Marisa Boller presenting on the pillars of Strengthening Youth Engagement

The session opened with remarks from Ms. Evelyn Mukajusi of the National Water and Sewerage Corporation and President of the Young Water Professionals, who linked the discussion to the broader UWEWK 2026 theme of inclusive and prosperous water and environmental development. She emphasized the critical role of youth participation and the need for more intentional spaces that bring young actors together to collaborate, network, and unlock their untapped potential.

Building on this, Ms. Marisa Boller from Swiss Water Partnerships highlighted the importance of capacity building, institutional positioning, and innovation as key pillars for strengthening youth engagement. She noted that despite growing youth-led initiatives, young people remain underrepresented in official delegations and high-level global platforms. She pointed to opportunities such as the Global Youth Movement for Water and the SWP Youth Water Challenge as entry points for young innovators to contribute solutions to global water challenges.

Contributions from other speakers showcased practical youth-led initiatives already making an impact. Mr. Edwin Muhumuza shared experiences from Youth Go Green, where young people are actively engaged in waste management, green economy initiatives, and entrepreneurship programs. Mr. Mugoya Daniel highlighted efforts by Young Water Professionals in promoting inclusivity through capacity-building initiatives, including AI trainings and symbolic campaigns such as the water pot challenge, which drew attention to the burden of water access on women.

Discussions also explored environmental stewardship, with Mr. Nyerere from End Plastic Pollution Uganda emphasizing youth-led awareness campaigns and innovative approaches to waste management that generate livelihoods. The session further noted ongoing efforts to strengthen youth coordination, including a partnership between the Ministry of Water and Environment and the Youth Climate Council, aimed at institutionalizing youth participation.

A key highlight of the session was the introduction of the National Youth Water and Environment Database by Ms. Maggie Mutamba, representing the Uganda Youth Parliament for Water. The database aims to consolidate and connect youth-led initiatives across the country. Participants emphasized the need for clarity of purpose, intentional data collection, and structured coordination mechanisms to ensure the platform effectively supports collaboration and visibility of youth efforts.

Session 13: Unravelling the dynamics of financing for WASH- Ministry of Water and Environment/WHO, IRC-Uganda(Wetland Library)

Ivan Biiza, Economist, WASH Accounts Focal Point Officer MWE making his presentation.

:Uganda turns to data to fix WASH financing gaps

At a sideline session during UWEWK 2026, a growing concern took center stage: Uganda's ability to improve water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) services may hinge not just on how much money is available, but on how well that money is tracked.

Discussions revealed that while financing continues to flow into the sector, gaps in data, coordination and accountability are limiting its impact.

The session focused on understanding the full picture of WASH financing.

According to economic experts, tracking has historically focused on national budgets and allocations, leaving out significant contributions from non-state actors, private entities and communities.

This they argue has made it difficult to assess whether resources are reaching the populations that need them most or being distributed equitably across regions.

While making his presentation on unraveling the dynamics of financing to the WASH sector, Ivan Biiza, an economist with the Ministry of Water and Environment and the WASH Accounts focal point officer, emphasized that global efforts have already begun to address this gap.

"So, what we are talking about here is that, with support from World Health Organization, from their tracking of WASH performance across the globe, they picked out a section of tracking financing in WASH and came up with a methodology called TRACFIN," he said.

The approach, developed by World Health Organization (WHO), is designed to systematically follow financial flows in the sector and provide a clearer understanding of how resources are mobilized and used.

Biiza outlined Uganda's journey in applying the TRACFIN methodology.

He explained that the country implemented its first phase between 2017 and 2018, focusing largely on national-level actors.

"According to the WHO, they have designed their methodology of TRACFIN to be implemented in phases," he said, noting that Uganda has since completed a second phase that significantly broadened the scope.

He stressed that the latest phase has moved beyond central government institutions to include a wider range of actors and local realities.

"We have just concluded the second phase of tracking WASH accounts, and at this level, we expanded the scope further to include the other players in WASH, apart from the national level players, and also go down deeper to the local governments and bring the local government experience in terms of WASH financing," he added.

To test this approach, Biiza noted that three districts were selected as pilots: Jinja, representing an urban city context; Yumbe, reflecting refugee-hosting dynamics; and Luwero, offering insights from a long-established district.

His presentation underscored that financing in the WASH sector goes far beyond budget lines. "On the offset, we have realized time and again that financing is only related to what the budget is and what monies have been allocated. But in the WASH sector, we've come to appreciate that there are other levels of financing…that are left out and are not tracked in any way," he noted.

This includes examining who provides services, who uses them, who funds them, and how decisions are made about allocation.

The findings also raised deeper governance questions.

"We wanted to also understand with the financing that is available, who decides where to finance what?" Biiza asked, pointing to concerns about inclusivity in decision-making. He questioned whether financing decisions are concentrated among a few actors, leaving communities as passive beneficiaries rather than active participants.

The implications, he noted, could affect the sustainability of WASH services if local voices are not involved in determining priorities.

Despite these challenges, the study produced what he described as clear and actionable results.

Targeted reforms

The next step, he said, is to translate findings into targeted reforms.

"We are thinking we don't have to come up with 20 political briefs, but we are saying we need critical important policy briefs," he added.

These briefs are intended to guide decision-makers toward practical improvements.

"The intention is to have them inform decision-makers at respective levels…we believe if ABCD…is taken up from a policy review stage, we can have a very formidable output."

Biiza stressed that beyond policy reform, the target is to interest more potential funders to come and bridge the gap in the WASH sector. "The WASH sector is suffering…mainly because of one limitation of inadequate resources," he added.

Biiza noted that another major gap which persists is data.

He explained that Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), NGOs and private sector actors were singled out as key contributors whose financial data is often missing or incomplete.

"One of the gaps we have identified is that we have a lot of players in the WASH sector, but they do not pay too much attention to data collection," Biiza said.

"We believe with data timely collected, analysed and even published, it contributes to a great deal in terms of the evidence-based impact we want," he added

THE
WATERFRONT

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