

CONCEPT NOTE

THE NINTH UGANDA WATER AND ENVIRONMENT WEEK (UWEWK) 2026

1.0 Background

Uganda Water and Environment Week (UWEWK) is a weeklong event that is organized annually by the Ministry of Water and Environment (MWE) through the Water Resources Institute (WRI). The event has evolved and grown to become the flagship program for advocacy, influencing, information sharing, and learning within the water and environment spectrum. The Ministry of Water and Environment (MWE) in collaboration with key partners has so far held eight annual UWEWKs (2018, 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024 and 2025). These events have attracted high-level political participation including the Vice President, the Prime Minister, Chief Justice, Ministers, members of parliament of the Republic of Uganda, Local Governments, Cultural and Religious Institutions, and other stakeholders both nationally and internationally. Since its inception in 2018, the event seeks to contribute towards the attainment of sustainable socio-economic transformation and achieving Ugandan National Development Plan and vision 2040. It also seeks to contribute to achievement of international agenda such as Agenda 21, Africa Agenda 2063, Water Action Decade, Agenda 2030, global agenda for environment conservation among others. It provides an interface between sector actors and other stakeholders to exchange knowledge and information on management and development water, environment and related natural resources in general and across various sectors of the economy.

2.0 The UWEWK2026

The Uganda Water and Environment Week 2026 will bring together policymakers, scientists, industry players, civil society and other stakeholders to explore opportunities for bridging the gap between policy, research, and on-the-ground implementation. Through high-level plenary discussions, technical meeting/workshops, and demonstration of innovations participants will discuss pressing challenges related to water, environment and climate change and how to address them through innovative approaches. Innovative approaches that will be explored include climate-smart infrastructure, water use efficiency and water storage, financing mechanisms, Nature-Based Solutions (NbS), improved policy and regulatory frameworks. Progress along these various innovations will be showcased and mechanisms for scaling them identified to facilitate achievement of regional and global water, environment and climate change agendas, including the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

In partnership with various national and international organizations, UWEWK 2026 will foster inclusive dialogue and cross-sector collaboration, and explore means of translating ambitions into tangible actions, ensuring that innovative solutions become a bedrock of a water and environment -secure, and climate-resilient country for generations to come.

Africa's aspirations for economic growth; social transformation; regional integration; trade; peace and security are dependent on assuring sustainable availability of its water and other

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natural resources for all purposes. The political agenda of Africa is currently dominated by the urgent need to industrialise as a first step to alleviating persistent poverty. The ambition is to (i) build robust, competitive and climate resilient economies; (ii) accelerate employment and labour productivity growth; and, as a result, and (iii) deliver inclusive socio-economic development and livelihoods improvement. Achievement of this ambition is premised on planning, developing, utilising and managing Africa's natural resources base to actualise the African Union's Vision of: "***an integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa, driven by its own citizens and representing a dynamic force in the global arena***". The African Union Agenda 2063: "***the Africa We Want***" provides the framework and roadmap to achieve the African Union Vision by 2063 through assuring self-reliance, regional integration, industrialisation and enhanced partnerships. The political consensus is that facilitating investments in clean renewable energy, climate smart agriculture and sustainable water and environment resources management and development , among others, underlie strategic approaches to achieve commitments to (i) end hunger in Africa; (ii) alleviate poverty; (iii) boost intra-African trade; (iv) enhance resilience of livelihoods and production systems to climate variability and other related risks; and, (v) address both the environmental factors and the general lack of economic opportunities; and poor service delivery at the local level that lead to community displacement and migration within and across Africa.

Despite the above aspirations, Africa faces severe and increasing water stress and environmental degradation. Key issues include high water demand, extreme weather events like droughts and floods, growing populations, poverty, and the vital link between water security and public health. The continent therefore continues to focus on finding sustainable solutions to address these challenges through improved water and environment management, climate change adaptation, and integrated water, energy, and food (WEF) approaches. Solutions involve scaling up best practices, enhancing local governance, leveraging technology, promoting sustainable business models, and fostering regional cooperation to ensure a water-secure future for the continent.

In order to give priority to water resources issues on the continent, African Union has designed its theme for 2026 as "***Assuring Sustainable Water Availability and Safe Sanitation Systems to Achieve the Goals of Agenda 2063***". Furthermore, the Africa Water Vision 2063 and Policy has been developed focusing on "A water secure Africa, with safe sanitation for all". The continental aspirations will continue to guide the agenda of the African Union Member states, Uganda included. It is therefore necessary to continue to reflect on the implications of these continental aspirations and devise ways of operationalizing them.

At the national level and in order to achieve transformative growth, and in line with Africa Agenda 2063, Uganda has developed a Tenfold Growth Strategy aimed at expanding the economy from approximately \$50 billion (2023) to \$500 billion by 2040 by focusing on transforming Uganda into a competitive investment, trade, and tourism center in Africa. The strategy focuses on building a knowledge economy based on technological advancements and to invest in emerging sectors and markets, leverage new growth sources, natural

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capital enhancement that inclined to managing forests, swamps, rivers, and lakes. This will feed into the four anchor areas easily referenced as the ATMS: i) Agro-Industrial Development; ii) Tourism Development; iii) Mineral-based Development plus Oil and Gas (petrochemical industry); and iv) Science, Technology, ICT and Innovation including ICT and the Creatives Industry (Knowledge Economy). In addition the strategy focuses on attracting both domestic and foreign investment and improving international trade relationships.

Despite the above national aspirations, which are underpinned by water and environment resources, these resources are under increasing pressure from population growth, rapid urbanisation and economic development. Uganda's population of 46million in 2024 is projected to reach 100m people by 2050. At the very minimum, food production would need to almost double to feed that growing population. This means that the projected water withdrawal for agricultural production will increase in addition to continue degradation of the environment. The country's aspirations for modern and prosperous country, will require a tenfold increase in water just for energy production. In essence, increased water requirements for energy production will result in conflicts with other water users such as agriculture.

The impacts of climate change are expected to magnify these stresses: altering rainfall patterns and water availability; increasing the frequency and severity of floods, droughts and other water-related disasters; and forcing a rethinking of both supply and demand management. The implications for Uganda's water and environment security are profound – and so are the risks to development, peace, and stability. To address the above challenges, there will be a need to mobilise adequate sector capacity – in terms of management arrangements, administrative measures, economic incentives, budgetary resources and instruments to address the impending water and environment insecurity and prepare for the adverse impacts of climate change. By bring together experts, policy makers, academia, researchers, private sector and other stakeholders to dialogue and exchange knowledge and ideas, showcasing innovative science and technologies, nature based solutions, creating awareness etc. on topical issues of water, environment and climate change, the UWEWK2026 will created an informed community that will advance conservation and sustainable development for climate resilient economies.

It is against this background that UWEWK2026 will give special focus to Africa Agenda 2063 and its various implementation frameworks such as the Africa Water Vision 2063 and Policy, and Uganda's Tenfold Growth Strategy. The discussions will also include the outcomes and recommendations from UWEWK2025, COP30, World Water Week 2025 and coming sector events such UN-Water Conference and other related conferences. It will explore their implications to Uganda and discuss the status of their operationalization or domestication and what needs to be done to ensure that they are fully operationalized.

2.1 UWEWK2026: GOAL, OBJECTIVES, THEME AND SUBTHEMES

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MWE through the Water Resources Institute (WRI) will hold the ninth Uganda Water and Environment Week (UWEWK2026) from **Monday 23rd March to Friday 27th March 2026**. The event will also involve commemoration of annual three sector International Days: International Forest Day (March 21st), World Water Day (March 22nd) and World Meteorological Day (March 23rd).

2.2 OVERALL GOAL OF UWEWK2026

The overall goal of UWEWK2026 is to demonstrate the role of water and environment in achieving Uganda's tenfold growth strategy and aligning the sector implementation objectives with Africa Agenda 2063 and other global frameworks.

2.3 SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES OF THE UWEWK2026

The specific objectives of UWEWK2026 are to:

1. Review the status of implementation of the outcomes and recommendations of UWEWK2025, and those of key global, regional and national water, environment and climate change related events
2. Address the specific challenges/ gaps faced by the water and environment sector in delivery of services, etc.
3. Create a platform to discuss innovative solutions to address the challenges faced by the sector in the management and development of the water and environment resources
4. Explore the role of water and environment in rapidly expanding Uganda's economy in a transformative, sustainable and inclusive manner with the goal of growing the capacity of the country's economy to a tenfold growth.

In order to realize the above objectives, the following issues will be explored:

- Methodologies and approaches for domestication of the outcomes and recommendations of key global, regional and national events in addressing the issues and challenges of water, environment and climate change in Uganda.
- Approaches to ensure that environmentally sustainable and inclusive principles are at the forefront of all climate and water resilience planning, policies and financial instruments, human health and productivity for economic growth
- How science, technology and innovation (STI) will address accelerating progress and transforming management and development of water and environment
- The centrality/role of water and environment in achieving Uganda's Ten-fold Growth
- Promoting and leveraging women, children and youth in delivery of WASH services, ecosystem protection and conservation in the water and environment sector. inclusivity in water and environment service delivery and climate diplomacy

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2.4 OVERALL THEME FOR UWEWK2026

The overall theme of UWEWK 2026 is “Water and Environment for an inclusive and prosperous Uganda”.

2.5. UWEWK2026 SUBTHEMES

The four sub-themes for the UWEWK2026 are namely:

- a) Role of water and environment in achieving Uganda's Tenfold Growth strategy
- b) Accelerating progress in water and environment development and management through science, technology, innovations and capacity building
- c) Ensuring environmentally sustainable and climate resilient economies and communities
- d) Leveraging the power and capacity of women, youth and children in delivery of water and environment services

3.0 The UWEWK2026 subthemes

The sub-themes are proposed to address water, environment and climate change issues and challenges and outcomes and recommendations from key global water and environment related events

- a) **Sub-theme 1: Role of water and environment in achieving Uganda's Tenfold Growth strategy**

Water and the environment are key in achieving Uganda's Tenfold Growth strategy as they support key sectors such as agriculture, energy, industry, oil and gas, which are central to structural transformation and economic growth. By ensuring sustainable resource development and management, the strategy aims to boost industrialization and food security, while also fostering tourism through a healthy environment. This requires robust investment in infrastructure and management, with a focus on a water-environment-energy-food nexus to ensure balanced and resilient development. By adopting a nexus approach, Uganda can manage and develop its resources synergistically to ensure that economic and environmental objectives are met simultaneously. For economic competitiveness, access to clean water and sanitation improves public health, hence increasing labour productivity and time available for economic activities is crucial. Considering that water and environment resources are critical resource and raw materials to ATMS, investing in their sustainable development and management will ensure realization of Uganda's Tenfold Growth strategy .

This sub-theme will create a platform for dialoguing on how water and environment resources development and management as well as climate change mitigation and adaptation can support achievement of Uganda’s ten-fold economic growth through ATMS: i) Agro-Industrial Development; ii) Tourism Development; iii) Mineral-based Development plus

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Oil and Gas (petrochemical industry); and iv) Science, Technology, ICT and Innovation. The sub theme will further showcase high-impact growth areas for water and environment resources that will propel a double-digit growth over the NDPIV period and subsequently contribute to 10-fold growth of the economy over the 15 years leading up to 2040

b) **Sub-theme 2: Investment in science, technology, innovation and capacity building to enhance progress in water and environment management and development**

Accelerating progress in water and environment involves integrating science, technology, and innovation (STI) with capacity building to develop and scale solutions for challenges such as climate change and water scarcity. This approach includes investing in research and development, adopting new and digital technologies such as Artificial Intelligence (AI), big data for monitoring infrastructure, developing new water purification and desalination technologies, and implementing cyber-physical systems for smart management of water and environment resources. In addition, there is need for advancement of water and environment management systems, and building human and institutional capacity through training and knowledge sharing. Strategic partnerships and financing are crucial to implementing these initiatives, particularly to achieve global goals such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), specifically SDG 6, 13 and 14.

The key strategies and approaches to realize this include Invest in science and technology, research and development for innovations in areas such as water filtration, desalination, and smart water management systems etc. There is also a need to strengthen capacity of water and environment related institutions and training of their personnel to improve performance and foster a skilled workforce. Furthermore, there is need to promote innovation and knowledge sharing, creating platforms for stakeholders to collaboration , sharing best practices, and showcasing innovations. Similarly, there is need to enhance cooperation and collaboration between local communities and other stakeholders to promote sustainable water and environment resource management and address interlinkages between and among SDGs.

This subtheme will focus on discussions on how Science, Technology and Innovation (STI) especially digital solutions can transform management and development of water and environment resources, adapting to and mitigating impacts of climate change while ensuring inclusive and prosperous growth. It will further explore how to strengthen individuals, organizations and institutions to innovate, use science technology and innovation. It will further provide explore use of spatial data and remote sensing as innovative solution in the management of the resources. it will also explore the benefits for investment in early warning systems as tools to mitigate floods and droughts in the country.

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c) Sub-theme 3: Ensuring environmentally sustainable and climate resilient economies and communities

Uganda's economic growth depends heavily on its environmental and natural resources with more than 80 per cent of the population dependent on them for incomes and livelihoods. The country is equally rich in resources, including its diverse wildlife, natural forests, mountains, rivers, lakes, minerals, gas, boasting tropical climate, and cultural wealth that positions it as a popular tourist destination. Water and the environment are crucial for an inclusive and sustainable economy because they provide essential resources, support livelihoods, and underpin human health. An inclusive and sustainable economy views these resources as part of "natural capital," requiring careful management to ensure long-term growth that benefits everyone, not just a few.

Ensuring sustainable and climate-resilient economies and communities requires a multi-faceted approach, including investing in green and grey infrastructure, promoting sustainable economic activities like diversified agriculture and local businesses, and implementing cohesive policies that integrate climate resilience into all levels of planning. Empowering local institutions and communities to take the lead in developing solutions, using both modern and local knowledge, is also crucial.

This subtheme will explore approaches to ensure that environmentally sustainable and inclusive principles are at the forefront of all climate and water resilience planning, policies and financial instruments, human health and productivity for economic growth. It will also explore the usefulness of healthy ecosystems as essentials for climate-resilient infrastructure, protecting economies from natural disasters and ensuring the long-term availability of resources like water for economic stability.

d) Sub-theme 4: Leveraging the power and capacity of women, youth and children in delivery of water and environment services

Within the water and environment sector, children, youth, women, persons with disabilities, marginalized, and vulnerable groups face diverse challenges due to political, economic, and gender-related differences. These differences create unequal access to water and environment services, influenced by cultural, social, physiological, and economic factors. Engaging and empowering women, youth and children in water and environment sectors is crucial for climate mitigation and building resilient communities. This will require their active participation in policy and decision-making, building their capacity through training and education, and recognizing their unique roles as agents of change. Despite being disproportionately vulnerable to environmental shocks and climate change, women and youth possess crucial local knowledge and leadership skills that can drive prevention, mitigation, and adaptation efforts. Women, especially in rural areas, are often heavily dependent on natural resources for food, water, and fuel. This makes them highly vulnerable

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to address environmental changes, water scarcity and ensuring access to clean safe water, sanitation and hygiene. At the same time, their daily responsibilities give them profound local knowledge about resource management and conservation that is invaluable for developing effective, grassroots climate strategies. Women, children and youth are innovative agents of change, developing solutions from renewable energy technologies to sustainable agricultural practices and catchment based integrated water resources management to ecosystem protection.

This sub-theme will provide insights into opportunities and approaches for engaging women, children and youth and leveraging on the potential in delivery of water and environment services. It will deepen understandings of the benefits of increasing representation of women and youth and having equal opportunities to participate in water and environment committees and other decision-making bodies at local, national, and global levels. It will provide rationale for strengthening and supporting women-led and youth-led organizations and networks to create platforms for information exchange, policy influence, and cooperative action. It will enhance the provision of financial support e.g. offering grants, financing, and investment opportunities for women and youth-led enterprises focused on WASH, renewable energy, sustainable agriculture, and climate adaptation among other engagements and leveraging of women and youth in water and environment sector.

3.1 EXPECTED OUTPUTS

At the end of UWEWK 2026, it is expected that the participants will be able to:

- a) The stakeholders will be informed on the status of implementation of the outcomes and recommendations of UWEWK2025, and those of key global, regional and national water, environment and climate change related events.
- b) Understanding of the centrality of water and environment as pillars for achieving Uganda's tenfold strategic growth
- c) Understanding of the importance of science, technology and innovation (STI) in accelerating progress and transforming management and development of water and environment resources
- d) Provide assurance of the need for environmentally sustainable and climate resilient economies and communities to achieve Uganda's middle-income status.

3.2 EXPECTED OUTCOMES

The expected outcomes from the UWEWK2026 include among others:

1. Strengthened water and environment sector to contribute effectively to Africa Agenda 2063, Agenda 2030, NDPIV, Vision 2040, and PDM
2. Adoption of new science, technology and innovation frameworks in management and development of water, environment and related resources

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3. Increased financing commitments by partners and adoption of blended financing for water and environment sector
4. Increased stakeholder coordination and engagement to support sector plans
5. Enhanced youth and women participation in water, environment and climate change programs.

4.0 PROPOSED ACTIVITIES AND APPROACH

The holistic approach in delivering of the UWEWK2026 is anticipated to create a linkage between previous UWEWKs, and other national, regional and global water, environment and climate change related events. The approach will also amplify the publicity and visibility for the UWEWK through the pre-event activities planned to be implemented between two to three weeks that will cascade into the main event, which will last five days. It is planned that the overall publicity campaign about the Water and Environment Week will start at least two months prior to the event. The proposed activities for the UWEWK2026 are categorized into (a) pre-event, (b) main event, and (c) post-event activities.

.1 PRE-EVENT ACTIVITIES

The UWEWK 2026 pre-event activities will include but not be limited to;

- Planning and organising the UWEWK 2026;
- Publicity campaigns, including use of both print and electronic media, radio and TV talk shows, social media platforms and promotional materials prior to the event;
- Decentralised UWEWK2026 activities in line with the sub-themes will be carried out in the 6 de-concentrated regional structures of MWE and will include among others: Radio talk shows, dialogues and panel discussions, paper presentations, regional Hackathon, regional youth debates, marathon, football matches, awareness campaigns, clean up exercises, restorations and others;
- Walking for water, environment and climate change
- A write-shop to support presenters to prepare and improve their presentations and writing skills.
- Community involvement activities such as tree planting, clean up exercises and environmental conservation/restoration, awareness campaign in environs of MWE Headquarters, Luzira will be held at national level.
- Hackathon involving secondary and university students showcasing science and technology innovation around water, environment and climate change.

4.1.1 Methodology and approach to the UWEWK2026 in MWE Regional

The UWEWK2026 in de-concentrated structures will be held as hybrid (virtual and physical) to ensure wider reach out to stakeholders at national, regional and international level. The mini-UWEWK regional activities will be held 2 to 3 weeks prior to the main event under the subthemes that feed into the overall theme of the UWEWK2026. Each of the 2 regional de-

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concentrated structures will focus on at least one of the subthemes as part of their regional activities and discussions. Each region will have an open day involving, key note address aligned to subtheme allocated to the region preceded by a dialogue. Additionally, some of the abstracts that focus on local level issues in each region will be presented from that region.

The proposed subtheme allocation for the regional UWEWK2026 are as follows:

- a) Role of water and environment in achieving Uganda's Tenfold Growth strategy – **Fort Portal**
- b) Accelerating progress in water and environment through science, technology, innovations and capacity building – **Mbarara and Wakiso**
- c) Ensuring environmentally sustainable and climate resilient economies and communities - **Lira**
- d) Leveraging the power and capacity of women, youth and children in delivery of water and environment services - **Mbale and Karamoja**

4.2 METHODOLOGY AND APPROACH FOR THE UWEWK2026 NATIONAL EVENT

The UWEWK 2026 main event will also be held as hybrid (physical and virtual) at the Ministry of Water and Environment auditorium. The national event will include among others the following:

METHODOLOGY AND APPROACH TO THE UWEWK2026 MAIN EVENT

- Official opening and closing of UWEWK2026,
- Commemoration of Sector International days,
- Status on the implementation of the outcomes and recommendations of UWEWK 2025 and those for global and regional water, environment and climate change related events,
- Hackathon involving winners of regional secondary and university students competitions showcasing science and technology innovation around water, environment and climate change
- Paper and posters presentations, Technical Sessions, Plenary Sessions etc
- Parallel sessions (side events, applied trainings, national youth debate, career talk, etc.),
- Exhibition, awards and so many other activities.

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The official opening and closing ceremonies will be televised live on selected national television on **Monday 23rd March 2026 from 9:00 am to 12:00 noon and Friday March 27th 2026 from 2:00 PM to 5:00 PM** respectively. The opening will have a keynote presentation from a seasoned expert and a dialogue focusing on the overall theme while the closing ceremony will have a dialogue focusing on the outcomes of the event.

Four thematic dialogues each focusing on the sub theme of the event will run during the event. These will also include among other a keynote presentation by a seasoned expert and a panel discussion from experts on the topic of the day.

Parallel sessions will be organized collaboratively with relevant stakeholders and partners working in those specific areas and will be held from Monday 24th to Friday 27th March 2026. The parallel sessions will include paper presentations, applied trainings, field visits and side events etc.

4.3 POST EVENT ACTIVITIES

The post event activities will include among others:

- Preparation of the summary of the outcomes of UWEWK2026 and UWEWK2026 overall report.
- Implementation of the recommendations and outcomes of UWEWK2026.
- Continuous communication and dissemination of information about the UWEWK past, present and the future events through various communication channels and audiences planning and preparations of UWEWK2026.

5.0 COORDINATION AND MANAGEMENT

The Ministry of Water and Environment through the Water Resources Institute will lead the organization of the Uganda Water and Environment Week 2026. For effective coordination and management, the WRI will work closely with partners (national and international), including Government ministries, departments and agencies (MDAs), Development Partners, academic institutions, UN agencies, as well as private sector institutions and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), International Water and Sanitation Centres among others.

A National Organising Committee and Sub Committees involving varied stakeholders will be established to support the preparation, coordination and management of UWEWK2026.

6.0 PROPOSED BUDGET

The estimated budget for the UWEWK2026 is **UGX, 1,200,000,000**. This will cover pre-event activities, conference, field trips, community engagements, commemoration of three international days, entertainment, printing and publications, publicity and communication, and overall conference preparation. The proposed sources of funding for the Uganda Water

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Week 2025 are the Government of Uganda (GoU), Strategic Partners, side event fees and exhibition fees.

7.0 PARTNERS AND SPONSORS

Partners will be sought and considered as co-conveners and/or sponsors, depending on their contribution towards the event. As sponsors, partners will enjoy preferential treatment in terms of appearance on publicity materials, and mentions in the media and during conferences, which will help to increase their visibility and contribution to the water and environment sector in Uganda.

8.0 EXPRESSION OF INTEREST

Individuals, institutions and organizations that would like to participate in the Uganda Water and Environment Week 2026 will need to do so by Expression of Interest (EOI) through physical or online registration. Details of the various deadlines will be indicated in the call for abstracts, papers and invitation for registration.

REFERENCES:

1. *Agenda 2063, Africa We Want, Africa Union*
2. *Annemiek Jenniskens: With Women Better Results in Water Management, Women for Water Partnership*
3. *Environmental Sustainability, Climate Change and Resilience Pillar, Strategy Paper (2016-2021); UNDP*
4. *Strategy for the water and sanitation sector in Africa (2023-2030), AMCOW youth and gender inclusion*
5. *Ten-fold growth Strategy, Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development, Uganda*
6. *Water and Sanitation Gender Strategy, Ministry of Water and Environment, Uganda*

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