



# NATIONAL WETLAND STRATEGIC PLAN 2026- 2036

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*National Wetlands Strategic plan, 2026*

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# FOREWORD

Wetlands are among Uganda’s most vital natural assets, sustaining ecological integrity, economic resilience, and community well-being. Over the past three decades, strategic planning has guided our efforts to conserve, manage, and restore these ecosystems in alignment with national development goals and global commitments such as the Ramsar Convention, the Convention on Biological Diversity, and the Sustainable Development Goals.

The National Wetland Strategic Plan (NWSP) 2026–2036 builds on the lessons and achievements of previous planning cycles (2001–2010 and 2011–2025), which laid the foundation for institutional development, stakeholder engagement, and policy advancement. While progress has been made, challenges, such as limited resources, emerging climate threats, and the drive for socio-economic development, have underscored the need for renewed commitment and adaptive strategies.

This plan reflects our collective ambition to enhance wetland knowledge, strengthen governance systems, and mobilise sustainable financing for wetlands management. It sets four strategic objectives to improve inclusive planning, expand the wetland knowledge base, and reinforce institutional capacity at national, district, and local levels. With an estimated UGX 544.35 billion required for implementation, the NWSP 2026–2036 calls for coordinated action and shared responsibility among all stakeholders.

To meet the Vision 2040 target of 13% wetland coverage, Uganda must intensify its strategic interventions aimed at wetlands conservation. This includes strengthening institutional capacity, harmonising legal frameworks, enhancing public awareness, and mobilising sustainable financing. The National Wetland Strategic Plan (2026–2036) responds to this urgent need by providing a coordinated, inclusive, and forward-looking framework to safeguard wetlands as pillars of ecological resilience and national development.

As we embark on this new phase, we reaffirm our dedication to safeguarding Uganda’s wetlands for current and future generations. Let this plan serve as a blueprint for resilience, sustainability, and inclusive development.



**Hon. Beatrice Atim Anywar**

**Minister of State for Environment holding portfolio for  
Minister of Water and Environment**

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Wetlands Management Department of the Ministry of Water and Environment extends its profound gratitude to all development partners, government departments, private sector entities, and civil society institutions for their unwavering and continued support towards the conservation and sustainable management of wetlands across the country. Your collaborative spirit and shared commitment are fundamental to our national efforts.

The Department acknowledges the long-standing partnership with our development partners who have continued to support wetland conservation in the country. It is because of this support that intact wetlands coverage has increased and many lessons learnt that have formed the basis for the update of this strategic plan.

Special recognition is accorded to the dedicated technical team whose expertise and diligent work formed the backbone of this strategic plan. In particular, appreciation goes to Mr. Joseph Ongol, Ms. Carol Kagaba Kairumba, Ms. Janet Apil, Ms. Felista Musana, Ms. Lydia Kyotalimye, and Mr. George Wamunga for their rigorous analysis and compilation of this Strategic Plan that will guide wetland management in the country for the next ten years.



**David Okurut**  
**Commissioner, Wetlands Management Department**

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**W**etlands are vital ecosystems that deliver critical ecological, economic, and social services, including water purification, flood regulation, carbon storage, biodiversity support, and livelihood sustenance. Despite their importance, wetlands in Uganda face escalating threats from land use conversion, pollution, unsustainable resource use, and climate change.

To address these challenges, the Ministry of Water and Environment has so far implemented two strategic plans beginning with the first Wetlands Sector Strategic Plan (WSSP) 2001–2010, followed by the second WSSP (2011–2025). The purpose of these plans was to guide conservation, sustainable management, and restoration efforts, as well as align wetlands conservation with national development goals and international commitments such as the Ramsar Convention, Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), and Sustainable development Goals (SDGs).

Previous implementation rates of the WSSPs were 34% (2001–2010) and 50% (2011–2025) respectively, with challenges including overly ambitious targets, limited staff, constrained resources, plus other emerging pressures like climate change, urbanisation and flooding that interfered with the realisation of the planned targets. The 2011–2025 WSSP identified numerous gaps including inadequate data, weak compliance enforcement, limited community incentives for conservation, conflicting mandates and limited cross-sectoral integration, institutional capacity constraints and inadequate financing.

Therefore, the National Wetlands Strategic Plan 2026–2036 will build on three decades of experience and lessons and seek to address the identified gaps through:

- Strengthening integrated planning, innovations and value chains for wetland products
- Enhancing the ecological and socio-economic understanding and awareness of wetlands
- Strengthening governance, compliance and institutions that manage wetlands
- Promoting community-based governance and incentives
- Mobilising local and international financing mechanisms

Implementation of this plan will be guided by the following vision, mission and strategic objectives:

## **Vision:**

‘Uganda’s wetlands provide sustainable benefits to the population of Uganda as a whole, mankind in general and the environment.’

## **Mission:**

To ensure the conservation, wise use and protection of wetlands in Uganda through increased appreciation and effective management, as a means to achieving sustainable development throughout the country.

## Strategic objectives:

- To enhance integrated planning, management and innovative action for increased productivity and income from wetlands.
- To strengthen the wetland knowledge base for informed decision-making, stakeholder awareness and participation.
- To strengthen governance systems for sustainable wetlands management
- To increase management capacity for mandated institutions for sustainable wetland conservation at all levels

Implementation of WSSP 2026–2036 will require UGX 544.35 billion, with coordinated action across national, district, and local partners. This strategic plan reaffirms Uganda’s commitment to sustainable wetland management and positions wetlands as central to climate resilience and socio-economic development.



**Dr. Alfred Okot Okidi**

**Permanent Secretary**

# LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

- CBD:** Convention of Biological Diversity  
**CBO:** Community Based Organisation  
**CEPA:** Communication, Education, Participation and Awareness  
**ESIA:** Environment and Social Impact Assessment  
**GCF:** Green Climate Fund  
**GEF:** Global Environment Facility  
**GIS:** Geographic Information System  
**KAP:** Knowledge, Attitude and Practices  
**LGs:** Local Governments  
**MAAIF:** Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries  
**MoEMD:** Ministry of Energy and Mineral Development  
**MLHUD:** Ministry of Lands, Housing and Urban Development  
**MoFPED:** Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning  
**MoFA:** Ministry of Foreign Affairs  
**MoTWA:** Ministry of Tourism, Wildlife and Antiquities  
**MWE:** Ministry of Water and Environment  
**NARO:** National Agricultural Research Organisation  
**NBSAP:** National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan  
**NDCs:** Nationally Determined Contributions  
**NDP:** National Development Plan  
**NEMA:** National Environment Management Authority  
**NGO:** Non-Governmental Organisation  
**NPA:** National Planning Authority  
**NRM:** National Resistance Movement  
**NWIS:** National Wetland Information System  
**NWSP:** National Wetlands Strategic Plan  
**PDM:** Parish Development Model  
**RTSUs:** Regional Technical Support Units
- SDGs:** Sustainable Development Goals  
**UBES:** Uganda Blue Economy Strategy  
**UBOS:** Uganda Bureau of Statistics  
**UGGDS:** Uganda Green Growth Development Strategy  
**UNDP:** United Nations Development Programme  
**WAG:** Wetland Advisory Group  
**WMD:** Wetlands Management Department  
**WSSP:** Wetlands Sector Strategic Plan

# 1.0 BACKGROUND

## 1.1 Introduction

Wetlands in Uganda cover a very extensive area and serve several users with varied interests. Wetlands cover a total area of 33,762.6 square kilometres (13.9% of Uganda's total surface area). However, only 9.3% (22,457.4km<sup>2</sup>) (SOW, 2022) are intact, while the rest is under other forms of land use, majorly agriculture, settlements and industrial developments. The dense network of Uganda's wetlands makes them an essential part of Uganda's drainage system. These wetlands form part of the eight main drainage basins in Uganda: Albert Nile, Aswa, Lake Edward, Lake Kyoga, Kidepo, Lake Victoria, Victoria Nile and Lake Albert.

The Constitution of Uganda, 1995 recognises wetlands and other natural resources as important assets that should be held in trust for the good of all citizens. The Uganda National Policy for the Conservation and Management of Wetland Resources (1995) defines them as “areas where plants and animals have become adapted to temporary or permanent flooding by saline, brackish or fresh water”.

Wetlands are among the country's most productive and valuable ecosystems, providing a wide range of ecological, economic, and social benefits. They are estimated to contribute over US\$1 billion per year to the country's national income and provide the following value and services, among many others:

- **Water provision, purification and regulation:** Wetlands purify water and directly supply fresh water, valued at US\$25 million annually, to over 5 million rural residents. Wetlands contribute US\$7.06 million for water recharge/regulation and US\$1.70 billion for flood control annually (Kakuru et al., 2013).
- **Food security and livelihoods:** Wetlands support over 80% of the population through agriculture, fishing, and resource harvesting (Turyahabwe et al., 2013)
- **Carbon storage:** Wetlands store large amounts of carbon, with peatlands alone storing an estimated 192 megatons of carbon (WRM/WBS-2019-01), positioning wetlands as critical climate mitigation assets.
- **Biodiversity conservation:** Wetlands are critical habitats for many species including rare, endemic, migratory and threatened species, including the national bird—the Grey Crowned Crane—and underpinning Uganda's 12 Ramsar sites.
- **Cultural and recreational value:** Many communities in Uganda attach strong spiritual, cultural and recreational values to wetlands. Some tribes have their totems as wetland animals while others perform spiritual rituals in wetlands.

Despite their immense importance, wetlands continue to face increasing pressures from land conversion for agriculture, industrial development and settlement; pollution; unsustainable resource use; and climate change. These pressures are further compounded by inadequate funding, an inadequate knowledge base especially on the economic value of wetlands and their contribution to GDP, weak institutional arrangements and conflicting policies and legal frameworks, thus making wetland management very complex.

In recognition of these challenges, the Ministry of Water and Environment, through the Wetlands Management Department, develops and implements strategic plans to guide coordinated action towards the conservation, sustainable management, restoration of wetlands and address emerging issues. The first Wetlands Strategic Plan was implemented between 2001 and 2010 and the second one from 2011 to 2025, while the third will run from 2026 to 2036.

The envisioned growth in the Ten fold growth Strategy for Uganda would necessitate that the country's natural resources are harnessed and utilised in a sustainable manner. The contribution of wetlands to other sectors such as agriculture, industry, energy needs to be clearly quantified so that this vital resource is given the due conservation profile it deserves.

However, if the target to have the wetlands coverage at 13% as envisioned in Vision 2040, Uganda's development blueprint, is to be realised, there is need to intensify the various interventions as highlighted in the strategic plan.

## **1.2 Rationale for the National Wetland Strategic Plan**

Wetlands are multifunctional ecosystems with intrinsic ecological attributes and socio-economic value that spans local, national, and international scales. Their natural functions—such as water table regulation, flood control, and habitat provision—occur independently of human intervention and are essential to environmental stability. In contrast, the socio-economic benefits of wetlands are more visible and directly linked to human activity. Communities living near wetlands rely heavily on them for food, water, raw materials and trade. Wetland-derived products support livelihoods and are integral to local economies, with many goods exchanged across vast distances. Together, these ecological and economic dimensions underscore the strategic importance of wetlands in Uganda's development planning and justify sustained investment in their conservation and management.

Despite the benefits, wetlands face mounting degradation due to agricultural encroachment, urban expansion, pollution, resource overharvesting, and weak enforcement of legislation. Wetland coverage declined from 15.6% in 1994 to 9.3% in 2022 (SOW, 2022) and this was driven by inadequate funding for conservation, weak institutional capacity, limited awareness, ownership and uncontrolled access plus fragmented legal frameworks. Historical undervaluation and lack of integrated management systems have also accelerated conversion while community-level dynamics, such as tenure systems and land fragmentation further complicate governance. Urban wetlands, notably in Kampala, are increasingly targeted for industrial and residential development, undermining their ecological buffering functions.

Recent gains in coverage reflect the impact of restoration, demarcation, and awareness efforts and signal progress. However, achieving the Vision 2040 target of 13% coverage requires intensified strategic action. Intensified strategic planning and investment are needed to safeguard wetland ecosystems, quantify their economic contributions, and integrate them into national development priorities

The Wetland Sector Strategic Plan provides a framework to address these challenges, quantify cross-sectoral contributions, and elevate wetlands within Uganda's sustainable development agenda.

The NWSP 2026-2036 builds on thirty years of experience and is informed by lessons from implementation of the first Wetlands Sector Strategic Plan 2001-2010 and the second Strategic Plan 2011- 2025.

### 1.3 Strategic alignment to National and International policies and strategies

The NWSP 2026- 2036 is anchored on strong linkages with other policies, plans and strategies. The Plan acts as a strategic bridge between national aspirations for sustainable development and global commitments to wetland conservation, resilience, and nature-based climate solutions. It aligns with both international and national frameworks as shown below:

<p>Ramsar Convention on Wetlands and the Fifth Strategic Plan 2025–2034</p>	<p>Uganda, as a Contracting Party to the Ramsar Convention since 1988, has obligations to promote the wise use of all wetlands, maintain the ecological character of designated Ramsar Sites, and cooperate internationally on shared water systems. The NWSP 2026–2036 therefore implements Ramsar’s “wise use” principle through community-based wetland management. It supports the designation and management of additional Ramsar Sites, in line with Uganda’s target to expand the current network and integrates Ramsar Site Management Plans within the national framework for monitoring and reporting.</p> <p>The Ramsar Strategic Plan 2025–2034 calls for integrating wetlands into national climate, biodiversity, and sustainable development policies — which the NWSP 2026–2036 achieves through cross-sectoral linkages with NDP IV, NBSAP, NDCs, and Vision 2040. It emphasises “investment in wetland health as natural infrastructure”, mirrored in Uganda’s commitment to restoration and financing mechanisms under NWSP 2026–2036. Uganda’s NWSP aligns with Ramsar’s Goal 3 (Strengthening implementation, monitoring, and data-driven management) through NWIS modernization and the State of Wetlands reporting framework.</p>
<p>The Sustainable Development Goals</p>	<p>Whereas wetlands have an indirect contribution to almost all SDGs, the NWSP directly aligns with the following goals and targets:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SDG 1 and SDG 2: End poverty and hunger, supported through livelihood diversification and sustainable agriculture in wetland communities.</li> <li>• SDG 6.6: Protect and restore water-related ecosystems, including wetlands, rivers, and lakes, the central focus of the Plan.</li> <li>• SDG 13: Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts, addressed through ecosystem-based adaptation.</li> <li>• SDG 15: Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, addressed through integrated catchment and wetland management.</li> </ul> <p>The Plan institutionalises SDG 6.6 indicators into the national monitoring framework, facilitating Uganda’s global reporting obligations.</p>

<p>African Union Agenda 2063</p>	<p>Goal 7: Environmentally sustainable and climate resilient economies and communities. The Agenda envisions that by 2063, “Africa’s biodiversity, including its forests, wildlife, wetlands (lakes and rivers), genetic resources, as well as aquatic life will be fully conserved and used sustainably.”</p>
<p>Uganda Vision 2040</p>	<p>Uganda Vision 2040 underscores the need for sustainable exploitation and management of natural resources to support a modern and industrialised economy. The NWSP 2026–2036 contributes to Vision 2040’s strategic direction of achieving a clean, safe, and productive environment through wetland protection, climate adaptation, and ecosystem restoration. The Plan’s emphasis on ecosystem-based adaptation and restoration supports Vision 2040’s goal of green and inclusive growth. The WSSP is consistent with the Vision’s goals for: i) Water Resources Management; ii) Environment and Natural Resources Management; and iii) Climate Change Adaptation.</p>
<p>National Development Plan (NDPIV) (2025/26- 2029/30)</p>	<p>The National Development Plan IV prioritises sustainable natural resource management, climate resilience, and green growth as enablers of socioeconomic transformation. Specific linkages include:</p> <p>Wetlands management directly falls under the programme “Natural Resources, Environment, Climate Change, Land and Water Management”, which emphasises the restoration of degraded ecosystems and sustainable management of wetlands and catchments.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NWSP interventions contribute directly to NDP IV objectives on environmental sustainability, resilience building, and improving household incomes through nature-based enterprises. The focus of Target 3.6.3 is to promote sustainable use and management of natural resources.</li> <li>• The Plan also supports the Human Capital Development and Sustainable Industrialisation programmes by maintaining ecosystem services that underpin health, agriculture, and industrial productivity.</li> </ul>

<p>Ministry of Water and Environment Strategic Development Plan (FY 2025/26-2029/30)</p>	<p>The NWSP aligns with the Ministry of Water and Environment Strategic Development Plan whose goal is “Sustainable development and management of water and environment resources for Uganda’s socio-economic transformation.” The NWSP contributes to the following strategic objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To strengthen integrated and sustainable management of water, environment and natural resources.</li> <li>• To coordinate climate change interventions and increase the accuracy and access to weather and climate information.</li> <li>• To strengthen policy, legal, regulatory and coordination frameworks for MWE.</li> </ul>
<p>Uganda Green Growth Development Strategy (UGGDS) (2017-2030)</p>	<p>NWSP aligns with Specific Objective 3 of the Uganda Green Growth Strategy that seeks to ensure that social and economic transition is achieved through a low carbon development pathway that safeguards the integrity of the environment and natural resources.</p>
<p>Uganda Blue Economy Strategy</p>	<p>The National Wetlands Strategic Plan (NWSP 2026–2036) aligns closely with key pillars of the Uganda Blue Economy Strategy (UBES), particularly Sustainable Natural Resources Management, Climate Resilience, and Inclusive Blue Economy Livelihoods. It strengthens UBES:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pillar 1 by restoring and protecting wetlands to sustain ecosystem services that support fisheries, tourism, and water transport.</li> <li>• Pillar 2 by enhancing climate resilience through wetland-based flood control, drought mitigation, and carbon sequestration.</li> <li>• Pillar 6 on inclusive and sustainable blue economy livelihood through community empowerment and wetland-friendly enterprises.</li> </ul>
<p>National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (2025-2035)</p>	<p>The NWSP aligns with;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strategic Objective 1: To increase connectivity, integrity and resilience of ecosystems.</li> <li>• Strategy 1.2. By 2030, at least 30% of degraded ecosystems are restored to enhance biodiversity conservation, connectivity, resilience and ecosystem services.</li> <li>• Strategy 1.5 By 2030, the rate of loss of all-natural habitats, including forests, is at least halved and where feasible brought close to zero.</li> </ul>
<p>The National Policy for the Conservation and Management of Wetland Resources (1995)</p>	<p>Provides the foundational policy framework for wetland conservation and sustainable use in Uganda. NWSP operationalises the policy principles of sustainable use, protection, and restoration of wetlands and builds on the policy’s directive to inventory, demarcate, and monitor wetlands and reinforces the policy’s emphasis on multi-sectoral collaboration and community participation, translating these principles into actionable programmes.</p>

<p>Nationally Determined Contributions</p>	<p>The Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) of the Paris Agreement: Uganda’s NDC (2022 Update) identifies wetland and forest restoration as key adaptation and mitigation actions to address climate change impacts. The NWSP 2026–2036 directly contributes to Adaptation Priority 1: Restoration of degraded ecosystems, and Priority 4: Climate-resilient livelihoods. It further supports the climate change mitigation targets through enhanced carbon sequestration and water regulation services from healthy wetlands. The Plan institutionalises nature-based solutions (NbS) for climate resilience, aligning national wetland management with international climate obligations.</p>
<p>National Resistance Movement (NRM) Manifesto</p>	<p>The NRM Manifesto 2026–2031 places strong emphasis on environmental conservation, sustainable natural resource management, and climate resilience. It specifically commits to strengthening enforcement against wetland encroachment, scaling up wetland demarcation, enhancing catchment-based management, and investing in community-based restoration initiative. The NWSP 2026–2036 directly translates these commitments into clear programmes, priority actions, and measurable performance indicators aimed at restoring degraded wetlands, safeguarding ecosystem services, and supporting resilient livelihoods.</p>
<p>Parish development Model</p>	<p>The PDM seeks to deepen the decentralisation process; improve household incomes; enable inclusive, sustainable, balanced and equitable socio-economic transformation; and increase accountability at local levels.</p> <p>The Parish model has seven pillars and WSSP is well aligned with the following pillars:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mindset change and cross-cutting issues like gender, environment and disability.</li> <li>• Infrastructure and economic services. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social services like primary health care, education, access to clean water, transport and communication.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

#### 1.4 Evaluation of the implementation of the previous Strategic Plan (2011–2025)

The Wetland Sector Strategic Plan (2011–2025) was developed to guide the sustainable management and utilisation of wetlands in line with national development priorities and international obligations such as the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands.

Over the 15-year period, notable progress was made in policy development, community engagement, and ecosystem protection as highlighted in the table below:

<b>WSSP 2011- 2025 objectives</b>	<b>Strategy Areas</b>	<b>Performance on key milestones</b>
To enhance the knowledge base on wetlands for informed decision-making by all stakeholders	Provide national data and information on wetlands	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The National Wetlands Information System was upgraded and linked to the Water and Environment information system to provide stakeholder-specific information at local, national and international levels.</li> <li>• National mapping of wetlands was undertaken and two State of wetlands reports produced (2019 and 2022).</li> <li>• Volume 1 and 2 of the Uganda Wetlands Atlas were developed and disseminated in 2015 and 2016 respectively.</li> <li>• 1,000 maps were produced annually to guide compliance and management decisions.</li> <li>• 6 district and city inventory reports were developed.</li> </ul>
	Support and promote research linked to the quality and productivity of wetlands	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A draft National Wetlands Research strategy was developed.</li> <li>• Research activities were undertaken on greenhouse gases in wetlands, peat depth and carbon stock, wetland functions in collaboration with academia and research institutions.</li> </ul>
	Assess and categorise wetlands and enhance their management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wetlands were gazetted and according to Schedules 3, 4 and 5, wetlands were categorised into ‘fully protected’, ‘partially protected’ and ‘wetlands under community conservation’.</li> </ul>
	Demarcate, gazette and restore wetlands	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 8,614 wetlands in Uganda were gazetted in the <i>Uganda Gazette</i>.</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2,930.29 km of wetland boundaries were clearly demarcated in different parts of the country by the Ministry of Water and Environment and its partners.</li> <li>• 55,149.54 hectares of wetlands were restored in different parts of the country by the Ministry of Water and Environment and its partners.</li> </ul>
To reinforce public and stakeholder awareness for increased participation in wetlands (management) wise use	A National Communication, Education, Participation and Awareness Strategy (CEPA) was developed and operationalised.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A CEPA strategy was prepared.</li> <li>• 15 World Wetlands Days were commemorated.</li> </ul>
	Disseminate information to relevant stakeholders and targeted audiences.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 5 Wetland Resource Guidelines were produced: Inventory guideline, Clay mining guideline, Wetland Restoration guidelines, Wetland community management planning manual, and Rapid Assessment guideline.</li> <li>• 45,000 awareness and promotional materials were produced and disseminated, including brochures, t-shirts, posters, banners.</li> <li>• 4 Bi-annual Wet-News newsletters were produced and disseminated in the first two years of the WSSP.</li> </ul>
	Establish partnerships and networks for awareness raising on wetland issues.	10 Memorandum of Understanding were signed with different stakeholders including private sector, international organisations and civil society organisations to support implementation of wetland activities.
	Develop and implement the wetland capacity development programme.	A capacity development plan was developed and implemented.

<p>Evaluate effectiveness and impact of the CEPA activities and programme (KAP surveys in 2016 and 2020).</p>	<p>No KAP surveys were conducted to evaluate the CEPA programme's performance. As a result, there is limited evidence on the effectiveness and behavioral impact of awareness and outreach activities.</p>
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<p>To improve the planning, management and conservation of wetlands</p>	<p>Support planning and management of wetland systems at regional, inter-district, district and urban local levels.</p>	<p>Community-based wetland management plans, framework management plans and transboundary management plans (Sango Bay, Sio-Siteko, Semliki), covering an area of 9195.33km<sup>2</sup>, were developed and reviewed.</p>
	<p>Promote and support development and implementation of wetland enterprises.</p>	<p>Alternative livelihoods were supported for over 4,000-wetland dependent households and they included apiary, livestock and fish farming.</p>
<p>To strengthen compliance mechanisms and governance systems for effective management of wetlands</p>	<p>Enforce wetlands policy and laws in order to curtail degradation of wetlands in Uganda (Specific wetlands law in place).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The wetlands policy was reviewed and a draft is in place.</li> <li>• The Regulatory Impact Assessment on wetlands management was conducted that recommended the development of a wetlands specific law. A draft wetlands bill is in place.</li> <li>• The National Environment Act, 1995 was reviewed and updated to the NEA Cap 181 and included sections of wetlands management.</li> </ul>

To strengthen institutional capacity for sustainable wetlands management at all levels (National, District and Local)	Establish and strengthen institutional frameworks at national, regional, district and lower local government level.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Established and strengthened Regional Wetlands Technical Support Units based in Wakiso (Central), Lira (North), Mbale (East) and Mbarara (Western).</li> <li>Trainings, technical supervision and backstopping for all local governments were undertaken annually.</li> </ul>
	Build technical capacity for wetlands management at national, regional, district and lower local government levels.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Trained over 3,105 district/community development officers and community members on wetland-based enterprises, wetland restoration and governance.</li> <li>Over 100 wetland officers at national and district levels were trained in GIS and remote sensing, effective communication, monitoring and evaluation (M&amp;E), project development, policy formulation and inventory.</li> <li>Mobilised financing from: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Government of Uganda to support the National Wetland Restoration project.</li> <li>✓ GCF to support “Building Resilient Communities, Wetlands Ecosystems and Associated Catchments Project”.</li> <li>✓ BMZ to support “Sustainable Peatland Management for People, Climate and Biodiversity (Peat4People project)”.</li> <li>✓ GEF to support “Reducing the climate change vulnerability of local communities in Uganda through EbA in forest and wetland ecosystems” project.</li> <li>✓ NGOs, CSOs and private sector for wetland management.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

### **1.4.1 Lessons learnt in implementation of WSSP 2011-2025**

- A) Sufficient resources and technical capacity are foundational: Effective wetland stewardship hinges on robust financial, human, and technical support. Previous efforts reveal that underfunding, limited expertise particularly within local governments and lack of equipment severely constrained monitoring, enforcement, and restoration. Strategic investment in capacity-building directly strengthens wetland protection.
- b) Political Commitment is a catalyst for impact: Government leadership at both national and local levels plays a decisive role in wetland outcomes. Where political will is strong, legal and policy enforcement improves, leading to better conservation. In contrast, weak political engagement often results in unchecked degradation and loss.
- c) Integrating conservation with livelihoods enhances compliance: Wetland policies must align with community needs. Experience shows that overly restrictive measures without viable livelihood alternatives foster resistance and illegal use. Successful approaches harmonise ecological protection with regulated, sustainable access, yielding both environmental and socio-economic gains.
- d) Community engagement strengthens stewardship: Local participation in planning, monitoring, restoration, and resource use fosters ownership and accountability. When communities are actively involved, they become conservation allies, reducing encroachment and promoting sustainable use of wetland resources.
- e) Effective cross-sectoral coordination enhances efforts in wetlands management and minuses ambiguity in institutional mandates.



# 2.SITUATION ANALYSIS

## 2.1 Status of Wetlands in Uganda

The intact wetlands of Uganda currently cover a total area of 22,457.4 km<sup>2</sup> (9.3% of Uganda’s surface area) according to the State of Wetlands Report 2022. This is up from the previous coverage of 21,526 km<sup>2</sup> (8.9% of Uganda’s surface area) as recorded in the 2019 State of Wetlands Report, but down from 37,559.4km<sup>2</sup> (15.6% of Uganda’s surface area) in 1994, indicating a decline in the last 30 years. The positive trend from 2015 is attributed to several efforts, including awareness raising, demarcation and restoration of wetlands.

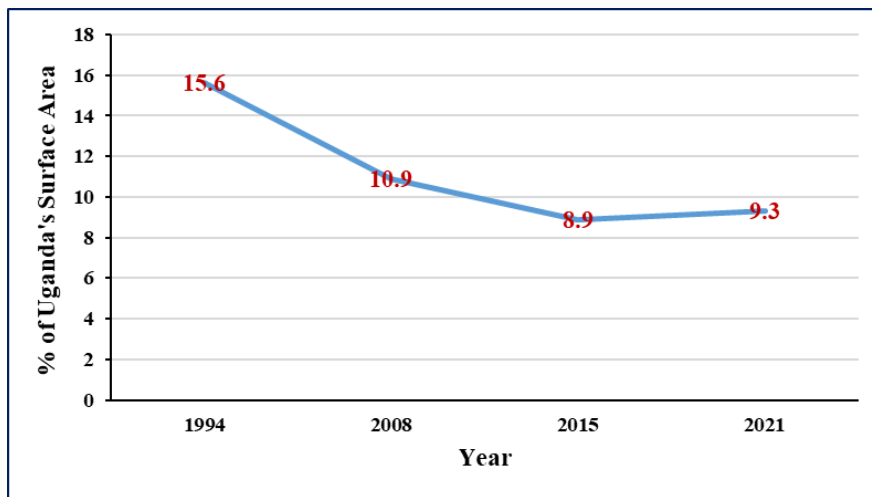


Figure 1: Coverage of intact wetlands in Uganda in 1994, 2008, 2015, and 2021 (Source: State of Wetland Report, 2022)

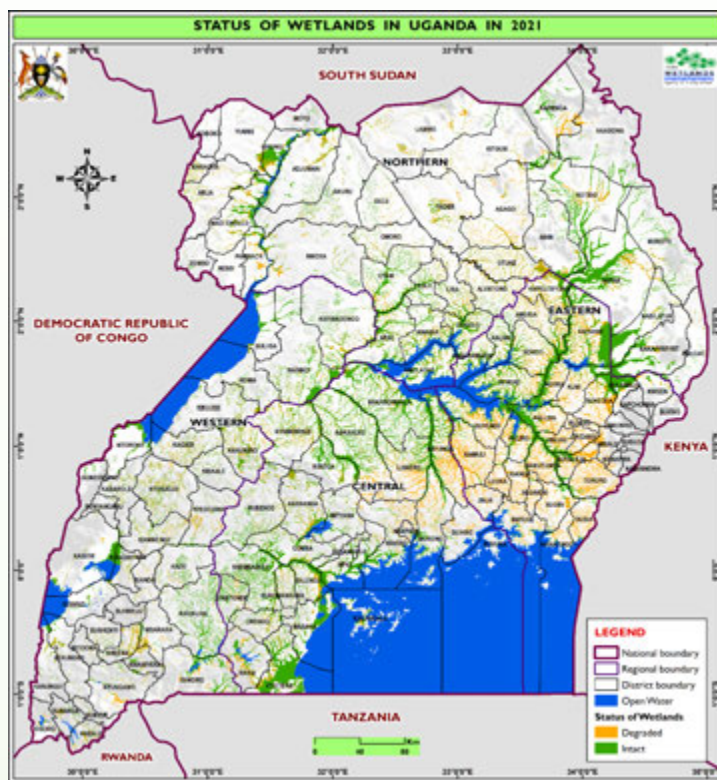


Figure 2: Status of wetlands in Uganda in 2022 (Source: State of Wetland report, 2022)

## 2.4 Opportunities for wetland management

### *Expanding Climate Resilience And Financing Support*

Wetlands are increasingly recognised for their role in climate mitigation and adaptation, particularly in carbon storage, flood regulation, and ecosystem resilience. *Building Resilient Communities, Wetland Ecosystems and Associated Catchments Project*, led by UNDP and the Ministry of Water and Environment, exemplify this potential. Scaling up access to instruments like the GCF, Adaptation Fund, and Global Environment Facility can unlock sustained funding for restoration, community resilience, and nature-based livelihoods.

### *Legal Gazettement to enhance protection and planning*

The formal gazettement of wetlands under national law marked a critical step toward long-term conservation. This legal designation strengthens regulatory authority, facilitates enforcement, and provides a structured basis for integrated wetland planning and sustainable use. Operationalising the gazette offers a pathway to institutionalise wetland protection across sectors and jurisdictions.

### *Policy Review and Legal Reform*

The current review and update of the National Policy for the Conservation and Management of Wetland Resources (1995) together with the development of a wetland-specific law provides an opportunity to: 1) strengthen legal clarity and enforcement mechanisms specific to wetlands beyond general environmental legislation, 2) address emerging challenges such as urbanisation, climate change, and extractive industries and

- 3) align with international obligations under Ramsar, SDGs, and regional frameworks,
- 4) consolidate fragmented mandates and improve coordination among agencies.

### *Strategic Integration into National Planning*

Wetlands have been included in Vision 2040, NDP IV, the Parish Development Model, and Nationally Determined Contributions, among others and this will support the mainstreaming of wetlands and enhance cross-sectoral accountability and resource mobilisation for wetland-related programmes.

### *Political Support*

Political commitment has grown significantly over the years and this led to the development of the ten-year environment and natural resources action plan. In turn there have been several presidential directives to stop degradation of wetlands, stop issuance of wetland permits, and halt the growing of rice in wetlands, among others. This visibility has catalysed public awareness, donor engagement, and institutional reforms aimed at reversing degradation trends.

### *Improved coordination among institutions*

Over the years, there has been improved coordination among the institutions mandated to manage wetland resources. This has been witnessed through joint actions, monitoring and enforcement. Such opportunities allow for harmonised implementation and realisation of bigger results.

## 2.3 Gaps and challenges

Despite notable progress made under the Wetland Sector Strategic Plan (2011–2025), several gaps and challenges limited full implementation of planned activities and the attainment of desired outcomes. These limitations affected the sustainability of interventions and the ability to scale up effective wetland management practices across the country. The challenges were classified under management challenges and policy-related challenges as follows:

### Management related challenges

The management challenges are related to operational, technical, and community-level constraints affecting implementation:

- Institutional capacity constraints: Inadequate staffing, expertise, and logistics at national and district levels.
- Limited funding and at times delayed and intermittent release of funds for implementing planned management interventions,
- Low public awareness and behavioural change led to ineffective translation of awareness into sustainable practices.
- Limited community incentives and slow uptake of the wetland alternative options which was as a result of mind-sets and limited information.
- Inadequate scientific information to guide decision-making.
- According to the Local Government Act, wetlands management is a decentralised function and yet most local governments were incapacitated in terms of staffing, capacity and funding for operations. Whereas, there is a conditional grant for Environment and Natural Resources it is too meagre to meet the management demands of such a vast resource.
- Limited research and data: Absence of a national research agenda and weak partnerships to collect data on wetlands to guide decision-making made tracking of targets difficult since there were no baselines.

### Policy challenges;

The policy-related challenges and gaps reflect systemic, legal, and strategic issues that affected implementation of the WSSP:

- Weak enforcement and impunity: Lack of sufficient judicial infrastructure to address wetland cases was a big hiccup. The weak enforcement, coupled with weak fines and court sentences that were not punitive enough to deter further encroachment and degradation, slowed progress in realisation of the set targets.
- Weak multi-sectoral coordination: The uncoordinated government efforts to protect and save wetlands were evident through the conflicting institutional mandates, policies and laws with regard to management and use of wetlands.
- Illegal Issuance of titles in wetlands: Conflicting land administration practices and weak inter-agency collaboration continued to pose challenges in execution of the WSSP.
- Emerging pressures: Climate change, oil exploration, and urban and industrial expansion not addressed in existing wetland policy frameworks all brought with them new challenges in terms of management.
- Inadequate due diligence prior to permit issuance and weak enforcement of permit conditions led to non-compliance and increased wetland encroachment affecting WSSP success.

## **2.4 Opportunities for wetland management**

### *Expanding Climate Resilience And Financing Support*

Wetlands are increasingly recognised for their role in climate mitigation and adaptation, particularly in carbon storage, flood regulation, and ecosystem resilience. Uganda is well-positioned to leverage this momentum by accessing global climate finance mechanisms. Ongoing initiatives such as the Green Climate Fund-backed “*Building Resilient Communities, Wetland Ecosystems and Associated Catchments Project*”, led by UNDP and the Ministry of Water and Environment, exemplify this potential. Scaling up access to instruments like the GCF, Adaptation Fund, and Global Environment Facility can unlock sustained funding for restoration, community resilience, and nature-based livelihoods.

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## 3. STRATEGIC DIRECTION FOR WETLANDS MANAGEMENT

Development of this strategic direction was informed by the lessons learnt from implementing the previous wetland sector strategic plans, the current trends and emerging issues and urgent need to reverse wetland degradation in order to realise the Vision 2040 target on wetland cover, while taking into consideration the need for innovation and sustainable development.

### 3.1 Vision and Mission and objectives

#### Vision

“Uganda’s wetlands provide sustainable benefits to the population of Uganda as a whole, mankind in general and the environment.”

#### Mission

To ensure the conservation, wise use and protection of wetlands in Uganda through increased appreciation and effective management, as a means to achieving sustainable development throughout the country.

#### Main objective

To increase national wetland coverage from 9.3% to 11.0% and sustainably manage wetlands for enhanced ecosystem services, climate resilience, and community livelihoods.

#### Strategic objectives

1. To enhance integrated planning, management and innovative action for increased productivity and income from wetlands.
2. To strengthen the wetland knowledge base for informed decision-making, stakeholder awareness and participation.
3. To strengthen governance systems for sustainable wetlands management.
4. To increase management capacity for mandated institutions for sustainable wetland conservation at all levels.

### 3.2 Objectives, Strategies, Outputs and Actions for NWSP 2026-2036

The NWSP 2026-2036 through the different strategic objectives and actions sets out to strengthen conservation of wetlands and increase the contribution of wetlands to sustainable development and transformation for human wellbeing.

#### **Strategic Objective 1: To enhance integrated planning, management and innovative action for increased productivity and income from wetlands.**

This objective seeks to strengthen integrated planning, management, and innovative action to ensure wetlands contribute more effectively to both ecological sustainability and community livelihoods. By aligning district and community wetland action plans with broader development frameworks, securing habitats through boundary demarcation and restoration, and promoting wetland-based enterprises such as eco-tourism and value-added products, this objective aims to balance conservation with economic opportunity. The result is enhanced productivity and income from wetlands, while safeguarding their critical role in biodiversity, climate resilience, and national development.

## **STRATEGY 1: Promote effective and efficient planning and management of wetlands at regional, national, district levels.**

### **Output 1: 146 DWAPs/CWAPs updated/developed and integrated into DDPs.**

- I. Review, update and support the preparation of new City/District Wetland Action Plans (DWAPs) for all local governments
- II. Lobby/advocate for the integration of District Wetland Action Plans into the District/ City Development Plans
- III. Conduct sensitisation and training of district technical staff on wetlands management planning

### **Output 2: Community-based wetland management plans developed and implemented for 8,296.5Ha (25%) of wetlands**

- I. Prepare and implement Community-Based Wetlands Management Plans (CBWMPs)
- II. Monitor implementation of the management plans

### **Output 3: 10 Framework management plans for inter-district and transboundary wetlands reviewed and implemented.**

- I. Coordinate the development of framework management plans
- II. Facilitate and monitor implementation of various wetland management plans
- III. Formulate and operationalise the inter-district wetland committees for wetland systems

### **Output 4: 6 Ramsar sites designated and management of all Ramsar sites strengthened**

- I. Update Ramsar information sheets for the 12 Ramsar sites
- II. Identify and designate 6 wetland sites as Ramsar sites
- III. Develop and operationalise ecological monitoring systems for Ramsar sites and wetland reserves

## **STRATEGY 2: Secure wetland habitats and boundaries.**

### **Output 1: 8,000km of wetland boundary length demarcated**

- I. Conduct rapid assessments of degraded wetlands
  - II. Mobilise and engage stakeholders in preparation for demarcation
  - III. Procure and install branded concrete pillars along 8,000km of wetland boundaries
- Output 2: 150,000ha of degraded wetlands restored**
- I. Mobilise and conduct stakeholder engagement in preparation for restoration
  - II. Conduct restoration of 150,000Ha of degraded wetland systems
  - III. Undertake post-restoration ecological monitoring to assess impact of restoration
  - IV. Implement grievance redress mechanisms

### **Output 3: Compliance monitoring and enforcement undertaken**

- I. Provide compliance assistance to regulated communities
- II. Conduct routine surveillance on wetlands prone to degradation
- III. Conduct enforcement activities to halt degradation
- IV. Review and update the compliance monitoring and enforcement strategy
- V. Support the cancellation of titles in wetlands
- VI. Review, monitor and audit ESIA's of projects in or near wetlands

## **STRATEGY 3: Promote and support development and implementation of wetland-based enterprises.**

### **Output 1: Wetland-based enterprises and wise use models promoted**

- I. Conduct needs assessment of wetlands-dependent communities for the establishment of livelihood enterprises
- II. Value addition of wetland products in collaboration with the private sector and other stakeholders
- III. Promote and support different wetland-based enterprises
- IV. Set up 8 demonstration sites for innovative sustainable wetland management techniques

### **Output 2: Wetland-based tourism promoted**

- I. Undertake feasibility studies for the development of ecoparks
- II. Establish 7 Wetland ecoparks
- III. Promote public-private sector investments in wetland conservation
- IV. Support local community initiatives through establishment of Community Conservation Areas (CCAs)

## **Strategic Objective 2: To strengthen the wetland knowledge base for informed decision making, stakeholder awareness and participation.**

Objective 2 focuses on building a strong knowledge base to guide wetland conservation and sustainable use. By generating reliable data, conducting applied research, and strengthening national information systems, this objective ensures that decision-makers have access to accurate and timely insights. It also emphasises education, awareness campaigns, and stakeholder participation, enabling communities, institutions, and partners to engage meaningfully in wetland management. Ultimately, this objective seeks to create an informed society where policies, investments, and conservation actions are grounded in evidence, fostering both ecological resilience and inclusive participation.

## **STRATEGY 1: Generate data, information and coordinate applied research on wetlands.**

### **Output 1: Inventory and mapping of wetlands conducted**

- I. Update the national wetland inventory
- II. Undertake national peatlands mapping and assessment

### **Output 2: National wetland information management strengthened**

- I. Develop and disseminate the State of Wetlands report every 5 years
- II. Upgrade the NWIS to online services and link it to relevant stakeholders at local, national and international levels
- III. Produce and disseminate GIS maps of wetlands at various levels

### **Output 3: Natural Capital Accounts (NCA) for wetlands developed**

- I. Undertake economic valuation of wetland ecosystem services
- II. Undertake wetland assessments including water demand assessments, biodiversity assessment and soil carbon assessments
- III. Develop accounts for wetlands

### **Output 4: Applied research on wetlands coordinated**

- I. Review the wetland research strategy
- II. Develop MOUs with academia and research institutions to undertake tailored research
- III. Develop proposals to support applied research for wetland management

- IV. Establish and equip a national wetlands research centre
- V. Disseminate research information

## **STRATEGY 2: Promote education, participation and awareness on wetlands and strengthen partnerships for conservation.**

### **Output 1: CEPA strategy updated and operationalized**

- I. Review and update 5-year CEPA Strategy
- II. Conduct wetland “wise use” dissemination campaigns and sensitisation through dialogues, mass multimedia and other channels
- III. Conduct two Knowledge, Attitude and Participation (KAP) surveys
- IV. Produce and disseminate information, education and communication packages for various stakeholders
- V. Establish, equip and profile wetland resources and education centres
- VI. Promote wetland education in schools
- VII. Commemorate annual World Wetlands Day and other conservation days

### **Output 2: Strategic Partnerships and networks for effective wetlands management strengthened.**

- I. Establish collaborative agreements with partners such as private sector, cultural institutions and religious institutions
- II. Create platforms for knowledge exchange e.g LG political leader’s forum, Mayors forum, academia etc
- III. Mobilise resources through partnerships for implementation of wetland interventions
- IV. Undertake stakeholder mapping and strengthen NGO/CBO collaboration in wetlands management

### **Output 3: Participation in national, regional and international wetland forums and networks enhanced**

- I. Support WMD staff to participate in regional and international meetings
- II. Technically backstop and support the Uganda Wetlands Forum, dialogues and symposium

## **Strategic Objective 3: To strengthen governance systems for sustainable wetlands management.**

**Objective 3** is centred on reinforcing governance frameworks to ensure wetlands are managed sustainably and equitably. It emphasises the review and development of policies, laws, and regulations specific to wetlands, alongside operationalising tools such as the wetlands gazette and user permit systems. By strengthening institutional accountability, enforcing compliance, and promoting transparent allocation of wetland use rights, this objective seeks to create a robust governance environment. The result is improved oversight, reduced degradation, and a legal and institutional foundation that supports long-term conservation, while balancing ecological integrity with community and national development needs.

## **STRATEGY 1: Strengthen policies and laws for effective wetland management.**

### **Output 1: Review of existing policies undertaken**

- I. Review and update wetlands policy
- II. Implement the policy
- III. Develop and update wetland resource use guidelines.

IV. Promote biodiversity offsets and payment for ecosystem services offset mechanisms

### **Output 2: Wetland-specific law developed and enforced**

- I. Develop the Wetland Act
- II. Develop wetlands regulations to operationalise the Act
- III. Support the development of wetland bye-laws and ordinances

### **Output 3: Wetlands gazette operationalised**

- I. Develop a strategy and guidelines for the implementation of the wetlands gazette
- II. Regularly update the wetlands gazette
- III. List the different wetlands across the country under the 3 wetland categories
- IV. Develop guidelines for the management of the 3 categories of wetlands
- V. Popularise the gazette

## **STRATEGY 2: Regulate use and access through wetland permits.**

### **Output 1: Issuance of wetland user permits managed**

- I. Set up an online application system for permits
- II. Establish a permit assessment committee
- III. Put in place a payment system for user permits
- IV. Monitor compliance to permits
- V. Create a permits database linked to the NWIS

## **Strategic Objective 4: To increase management capacity for mandated institutions for sustainable wetland conservation at all levels.**

The aim is to build strong institutional capacity for sustainable wetland conservation across national, regional, district, and local levels. It focuses on equipping and retooling wetland offices; training and supporting environment and natural resource officers; and strengthening coordination frameworks such as regional technical units and advisory groups. By investing in skills development, performance management, and institutional structures, this objective ensures that mandated institutions are empowered to effectively plan, implement, and monitor wetland conservation initiatives. The result is a more resilient governance system capable of safeguarding wetlands while enabling communities and stakeholders to benefit from their ecological and economic value.

## **STRATEGY 1: Develop and implement the wetland training and capacity development programme.**

### **Output 1: WMD capacity development plan developed and operationalised**

- I. Capacity Development Plan reviewed after every 5 years
- II. Equip and retool wetland offices at all levels
- III. Recruit and train staff in line with their skills and capabilities
- IV. Undertake performance management of personnel

### **Output 2: Training and retooling of ENR officers in local governments undertaken**

- I. Provide specialised training to local, urban and WMD staff in order to enhance their performance
- II. Provide technical backstopping and support supervision to local and urban authorities in wetlands management
- III. Retool and equip the local and urban ENR offices

## **STRATEGY 2: Establish and strengthen institutional frameworks at national, regional, district and lower local government level.**

### **Output 1: Wetland management institutions established and strengthened.**

- I. Create 3 new regional technical coordination units (Albert, Karamoja, Arua)
- II. Operationalise the Wetland Advisory Group
- III. Support the operationalisation of the Ramsar Centre for Eastern Africa
- IV. Strengthen wetland enforcement and compliance

### **Output 2: District Environment and Natural Resources Committees establishment supported**

- I. Support the establishment of District Environment and Natural Resources Committees
- II. Provide technical support to the District Environment and Natural Resources Committee

## **STRATEGY 3: Financing NWSP 2026-2036**

### **Output 1: Resources for implementation of the WSSP mobilised**

- I. Prepare annual and quarterly budgets for the planned activities
- II. Lobby for increased funding for ENR both at central and local government level
- III. Mobilise funding from bilateral and multilateral donor agencies through bankable projects



## 4. IMPLEMENTATION ARRANGEMENTS

The implementation arrangements of the National Wetlands Strategic Plan 2026-2036 will apply strong institutional coordination, clear governance frameworks, and the active participation of all stakeholders to promote an integrated, multi-sectoral approach that aligns national priorities with local actions.

Through a coordinated framework, the Plan seeks to strengthen institutional capacity, promote sustainable use, and secure the long-term resilience of the nation's wetland ecosystems for the benefit of Uganda's population. This strategy will be implemented by the Wetlands Management Department together with implementation partners at national, district, and local levels.

### 4.1 Coordination arrangements

#### Multi-Level Coordination System

Implementation of the National Wetlands Strategic Plan 2026-2036 will be guided by a multi-level coordination system designed to ensure coherence and alignment of actions across national, regional, and local levels, as well as strong linkages with CSOs, the private sector and NGOs.

##### National level:

**Wetlands Management Department** will coordinate and mobilise resources for the implementation of the plan. It will further engage the Wetlands Advisory Group (WAG) for strategic guidance on the implementation of the plan.

The **Wetland Advisory Group (WAG)**, comprising representatives from key line ministries (MWE, MAAIF, MoTWA, NEMA, MoFPED, MLHUD, MoEMD), CSOs and NGOs, among others will provide oversight of the National Wetlands Strategic Plan and will provide strategic guidance and support national policy alignment, resource mobilisation, and strategic decision-making.

##### Regional level:

Regional Technical Support Units (RTSUs), operating under the Ministry of Water and Environment, will serve as the essential link in implementation of the National Wetlands Strategic Plan. RTSUs will provide technical guidance to local authorities in planning, implementing, and monitoring conservation and restoration activities, while supporting the integration of wetlands management into District Development plans and land-use plans.

##### Local Level:

**Local Governments:** As per the Local Government Act, wetlands management is a decentralised function. Therefore, DLGs and CLGs will coordinate implementation of wetland activities working closely with lower local governments, relevant stakeholders and resource user groups.

#### ENR-CSO Network

The Environmental and Natural Resources-Civil Society Organization (ENR-CSO) Network will provide a platform of civil society organisations (CSOs) to actively engage in wetland-related activities so as to aid collaboration, resource mobilisation, reporting, knowledge sharing, and joint action among CSOs, NGOs, and other stakeholders to promote sustainable wetlands management and overall environmental stewardship.

## Private Sector

The NWSP recognises the contribution of the private sector in wetlands conservation measures. To enhance this collaboration, engagement with the private sector at different levels will be prioritised in order to mobilise and utilise available resources in terms of technical expertise, knowledge base, logistics and financial inputs towards wetlands conservation and management.

## Cultural or Traditional Institutions

The Constitution of Uganda recognises people's culture, customs, beliefs, wishes, traditions, aspirations, and the traditional institutions and their leaders. Traditional institutions and knowledge have a role to play in ecological governance. Wetlands are of great cultural significance to communities. They are places where some communities conduct traditional rituals, collect local herbs and therefore they need to be preserved and respected. They will foster communities to revive their strength, cohesion and governance systems to protect wetlands resources and cultural heritage. Further, cultural institutions will promote and raise awareness of the traditional value of wetlands.

### 4.2 Institutional roles and responsibilities

Institution	Roles and Responsibilities
Ministry of Water and Environment - Wetlands Management Department	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Provide overall coordination, policy direction, and capacity-building for all implementing agencies.</li><li>• Formulate, review, and enforce the national wetland management policies, legislation, and strategic plans in line with international commitments.</li><li>• Coordinate the mainstreaming of wetland conservation across all relevant sectors (agriculture, water, energy, lands, and tourism).</li><li>• Monitor and report on the state of wetlands in the country.</li><li>• Maintain clear ecological boundaries of all wetlands in the country through demarcation.</li><li>• Provide regulatory guidelines to wetland user communities.</li><li>• Ensure the ecological status of wetlands is maintained through restoration and demarcation of boundaries.</li><li>• Guide the sustainable use of wetland resources through issuance of wetland user permits for regulated activities.</li></ul>
NEMA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Regulate and coordinate wetland-related provisions of the law.</li><li>• Review and approve Environmental and Social Impact Assessments (ESIAs).</li><li>• Ensure that developments in or near wetlands adhere to sustainable management principles.</li><li>• Regulate management of wastes and pollution that potentially affect wetland ecosystems.</li></ul>

Ministry of Local Government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monitor compliance to mitigation measures and relevant regulations, policies, and laws.</li> <li>• Implementation of the Local Government Act and its provisions.</li> </ul>
District and City Local Governments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop DWAPS and mainstream wetland management activities into district development plans.</li> <li>• Mobilise and facilitate community awareness, participation, and access to wetland resources.</li> <li>• Implement wetland management plans and regulations at the district, city, or municipal level.</li> <li>• Enforce relevant national legislation, ordinances and bye-laws governing wetland use and management.</li> <li>• Develop district ordinances for management of wetlands.</li> <li>• Support regular update of district wetland inventories.</li> <li>• Coordinate conflict resolution related to wetland access, use, and ownership.</li> </ul>
Ministry of Finance Planning and Urban Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide financing for the implementation of interventions.</li> <li>• Budget monitoring.</li> </ul>
National Planning Authority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coordinate and harmonise planning and reporting to include wetlands.</li> </ul>
Ministry of Tourism, Wildlife and Antiquities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop guidelines and standards for sustainable eco-park and ecotourism development.</li> <li>• Ensure compliance with tourism regulations.</li> <li>• Integrate eco-parks into the national tourism development agenda.</li> <li>• Support community wetland-based tourism initiatives that generate employment and income.</li> </ul>
Non-Governmental Organisations and Civil Society Organisations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support the implementation of the plan.</li> <li>• Facilitate community mobilisation and empowerment for participatory wetland management.</li> <li>• Advocate for the enforcement of wetland-related policies and laws.</li> <li>• Document and disseminate best practices and lessons learned in wetland conservation.</li> <li>• Support the mobilisation of resources for implementation of the plan.</li> </ul>
Ministry of Lands Housing and Urban Development (MLHUD)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Physical and land use planning.</li> <li>• Alignment of Lands data with wetland data to avoid titling of wetlands.</li> </ul>



## 5. MONITORING, EVALUATION AND LEARNING (MEL) PLAN

Effective implementation of the NWSP 2026–2036) will depend on a comprehensive Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) system designed to track progress, assess performance, and promote continuous learning and accountability among all stakeholders. This MEL plan outlines the mechanisms and procedures for the systematic collection, analysis, reporting, and utilisation of data to support evidence-based decision-making, resource allocation, and enhance adaptive management. The plan is aligned with the National Monitoring and Evaluation Policy (NMEP), the National Development Plan IV (NDP IV) results framework, and the Ministry of Water and Environment (MWE) Sector Performance Framework.

### 5.1 Purpose of the MEL Plan

The MEL plan for the Wetlands Sector Strategic Plan (NWSP 2026–2036) is designed to provide a systematic approach for tracking progress, assessing performance, and facilitating learning throughout the implementation period. The purpose of the MEL plan is to:

1. Track progress toward achieving the goals, outcomes, and outputs of the WSSP 2026–2036.
2. Promote accountability and transparency for performance and results across all levels.
3. Facilitate evidence-based policy formulation, planning, and adaptive management.
4. Enhance sectoral learning, knowledge sharing, and stakeholder participation.
5. Provide timely and reliable information to guide decision-making, resource allocation, and programme adjustments.

### 5.2 Theory of Change

The results chain provides a logical sequence showing how financial, human, and technical resources invested in the NWSP will be transformed through targeted activities into measurable outputs, intermediate outcomes, and lasting impacts. The Theory of Change assumes that increased investment in wetland restoration, protection, and sustainable use together with improved institutional coordination, effective enforcement, and active community participation will lead to enhanced wetland integrity, improved ecosystem service delivery, and increased climate resilience.

#### Key Assumptions

- Adequate and sustained financing, human resource capacity, and technical support at all levels.
- Continued political commitment and policy support for wetland conservation.
- Effective enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and bye-laws.
- Collaboration among government agencies, development partners, the private sector, and communities.
- Adoption of inclusive approaches that promote gender equality and community ownership of wetland management initiatives.

# Theory of Change

**IMPACT**  
**Heathy wetlands contributing to national development, biodiversity conservation & climate resilience**

**INTERMEDIATE OUTCOMES**

Enhanced Wetland Productivity ↔ Improved Ecological integrity ↔ Strengthened Institutions & Governance

**INTERMEDIATE OUTCOMES**

Integrated Wetland Planning ↔ Community Participation ↔ Secured & Restored Wetlands ↔ Enhanced Livelihoods & Knowledge

**STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 1**  
 Enhance Integrated Planning, Management & Innovative Action for improved Wetland productivity & Income

**STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 2**  
 Strengthen Wetland knowledge Base for improved Decision Making, Awareness & Participation

**STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 3**  
 Strengthen Governance Systems for Sustainable Wetlands Management

**STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 4**  
 To increase management capacity for mandated institutions for sustainable wetlands conservation at all levels

- 1 146 DWAPs/CWAPs updates/developed and integrated into DDPs
- 2 Community based wetland management Plans developed and implemented for 8296.5Ha (25%) of wetlands
- 3 C10 Framework management plans for inter-district and Transboundary Wetlands reviewed and implemented.
- 4 6 Ramsar sites designated and management of all Ramsar sites strengthened
- 5 8000km of wetland boundary length demarcated.
- 6 150,000ha of degraded wetlands restored
- 7 Compliance monitoring and enforcement undertaken
- 8 Wetland based enterprises and wise use models promoted
- 9 Wetland based tourism promoted

- 10 Inventory and mapping of wetlands conducted
- 11 National wetland information management strengthened
- 12 Natural Capital Accounts (NCA) for wetlands developed
- 13 Applied research on wetlands coordinated
- 14 CEPA strategy updated and operationalized
- 15 Strategic Partnerships and networks for effective wetlands management strengthened
- 16 Participation in National, Regional & International Wetland forums and networks enhanced

- 17 IReview of existing policies undertaken
- 18 Wetland specific law development and enforced
- 19 Wetland gazette operationalized
- 20 Issuance of wetland user permits managed

- 21 WMD capacity development plan developed and operationalized
- 22 Training and retooling of ENR Officers in local governments undertaken
- 23 Wetland management institutions established and strengthened
- 24 District Environment and Natural Resources Committees established
- 25 Resources for implementation of WSSP mobilized

**INPUTS**  
 Technical, Financial & Human Resources

**ASSUMPTIONS**

- Adequate & Sustainable Funding
- Political & Policy Support
- Effective Law Enforcement
- Collaboration & Partnership
- Gender Equality & Community Ownership

## 6. RISK MANAGEMENT AND MITIGATION

Uganda's wetlands are essential to the country's ecological stability, water security, climate resilience, and the livelihoods of millions of people and to ensure that the goals of the National Wetlands Strategic Plan are achieved, it is necessary to adopt a proactive risk management and mitigation approach to handle risks that could hinder effective conservation and restoration efforts.

<b>Risk</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Mitigation measures</b>
Policy fragmentation and overlapping mandates	Conflicts between environment, agriculture, water, and urban development sub-sectors.	Multi-sectoral coordination platforms; regular joint sessions for the Wetlands Advisory Group that caters for all sectors with overlapping mandates;  Sharing databases and wetland shapefiles to avoid overlaps for example titling, land use planning etc.  Reviewing and alignment of policies.
Livelihood conflicts	Wetland-dependent communities may resist conservation measures.	Support livelihoods; promote eco-tourism; participatory planning and continued awareness.
Competing land and water demands	Conflicts between conservation and agricultural water needs.  Over-abstraction of surface and groundwater.	Support livelihoods (e.g., ecotourism, sustainable aquaculture).  Regulating through water abstraction permits and wetland user permits.
Community resistance during restorations and evictions	Evictions or restoration interventions could attract conflicts and resistance.	Early stakeholder engagement and capacity-building.
Insufficient funding for the implementation of the strategy	Budget limitations and dependence on donors.	Carbon financing, donor coordination;  Improving on private sector partnerships.

<p>Weak enforcement</p>	<p>Illegal wetland conversion as a result of impunity, bribery and unregulated use.</p>	<p>Strengthen transparency and accountability in the enforcement of the laws.</p> <p>Building capacity of enforcement teams and improving institutional coordination.</p>
<p>Climate change risks</p>	<p>Changes in rainfall patterns and prolonged dry spells can cause prolonged inundation or drying of the wetlands which consequently affects the survival of dependant fauna and flora.</p> <p>Additionally, prolonged droughts will attract more encroachment of wetlands for water to support agriculture and other water related needs.</p>	<p>Restoration of natural hydrology by re-establishing flow regimes and removing barriers.</p> <p>Coordination across sub-sectors (agriculture, water, forestry, disaster-risk management and climate change) to reduce cumulative climate pressures on wetlands.</p> <p>Support community-based adaptation initiatives, such as early-warning flood systems, and nature-based livelihoods that reduce pressure on wetlands.</p>



## 7. BUDGET AND FINANCING PLAN

### 7.1 Financing WSSP 2026- 2036

In line with Strategic Objective 4, the Strategic Plan has been developed with a specific budget ceiling or resource envelope in mind. A budget ceiling or resource envelope of UGX 1.16trillion has been budgeted for based on the need to strengthen wetland conservation across the country and it is believed that such a sum can be found – from central government subventions, local government contributions, bilateral and multilateral donor grants, and other less conventional forms of funding.

**Table 5: Indicative Expenditure Budget by Major Cost (UGX billion) Categories**

Cost of category	Year										Total
	26-27	27-28	28-29	29-30	30-31	31-32	32-33	33-34	34-35	35-36	2026-2036
Wetland boundary demarcations	3.4	3.7	4	4.4	4.8	5.1	5.4	5.8	6.1	7.3	50
Wetlands restorations	4.5	4.8	5	5.4	5.8	6.1	6.3	6.6	7	7.5	59
Institutional support	0.63	0.75	0.94	1.19	1.44	1.75	2.19	2.75	3.5	4.86	20
Compliance measures & governance	1.65	1.97	2.38	2.84	3.41	4.09	4.91	5.89	6.06	8.8	42
Awareness and information & training materials	0.5	1.22	1.51	1.81	2.17	2.3	0.5	3.74	4	4.25	22
Wetland inventory and assessment	1.46	1.75	2.1	2.52	3.02	3.63	4.36	5.23	6.28	5.65	36
Wetlands infrastructure	7	8.2	9.1	10	11.4	12.5	13.6	14.7	15.8	17.7	120

W e t l a n d management & planning	0.8	1.2	1.6	2.15	2.49	3.1	3.42	4.08	4.06	5.1	28
Incentives for conservation	2.3	2.75	3.3	3.95	4.7	5.6	6.7	7.9	9.3	9.5	56
D i s t r i c t support	0.84	0.95	1.09	1.23	1.59	1.87	1.89	2.43	2.81	3.3	18
W e t l a n d research & valuation	0.96	1.15	1.38	1.66	1.99	2.39	2.87	3.04	3.4	3.6	22.44
Wetland protection and gazettement	1.15	2.45	2.94	3.53	4.24	5.07	6.08	6.4	7.85	9.2	48.91
Staff development	0.35	0.44	0.5	0.62	0.7	0.95	1	1.2	1.4	2.84	10
Management and operations	0.4	0.58	0.64	0.8	0.95	1.21	1.45	1.64	1.74	2.59	12
<b>Total</b>	25.94	31.91	36.48	42.1	48.7	55.66	60.67	71.4	79.3	92.19	544.35

## 8. ANNEXES

### 8.1 Monitoring and evaluation framework

Performance of the NWSP will be measured using a set of well-defined indicators.

<b>Strategic Objective</b>	<b>Key Outputs</b>	<b>Performance Indicators</b>	<b>Base line (2025)</b>	<b>Targets (2036)</b>	<b>Means of Verification /Data Sources</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Responsible Institution(s)</b>	<b>Learning &amp; Adaptive Use</b>
Objective 1: Enhance integrated planning, management and innovative action for increased productivity and income from wetlands	DWAPs/CWAPs updated and integrated into DDPs	Number of DWAPs developed/ updated and integrated	111	146	Annual progress reports, District Development Plan (DDPs)	Annual	WMD, LGs	Inform local planning and budget reviews
	Community-based Wetland Management Plans implemented	Area (Ha) of wetlands under management plans	9,699ha	8296.5ha	Field monitoring reports, plans	Annual	WMD, LGs	Adjust community engagement approaches

	Framework management plans reviewed and implemented	Number of framework plans developed	55	10	Management plan reports	Annual	WMD	Guide cross-district coordination
	Ramsar sites designated and strengthened	Number of Ramsar sites designated	12	6	Ramsar reports, Ramsar information sheets Instrument of designation	Annual	WMD, MWE, MoFA	Inform global reporting and site protection
Objective 1 – Strategy 2: Secure wetland habitats and boundaries	Wetland boundaries demarcated	Km of boundary demarcated	2,096.4 km	8,000 km	Demarcation reports, maps	Quarterly, Annual	WMD, LGs	Refine demarcation priorities
	Wetlands restored	Ha of degraded wetlands restored	55,149.54 ha	150,000 ha	Restoration reports	Quarterly	WMD, LGs, Partners	Inform restoration practices
	Compliance monitoring and enforcement undertaken	Number of enforcement actions implemented	-	Annual increase	Compliance reports	Quarterly	WMD, NEMA, LGs	Improve enforcement strategies

Objective 1 – Strategy 3: Promote wetland-based enterprises	Wetland-based enterprises supported	Number of wise-use models promoted	15	8	Project reports	Annual		WMD, Private sector	Scale up successful models
		Number of households benefitting from wetland-based enterprises	1 9 , 1 3 4 HHs	2 5 , 0 0 0 HHs	Project reports	Annual		WMD, Private sector	Scale up successful models
	Eco-parks established	Number of wetland eco-parks established	0	7	Performance reports, Ecopark layout designs	Annual		WMD, LGs, MoTWA, Private sector	Inform eco-tourism investments
Objective 2 Strategy 1: Strengthen the wetland knowledge base for informed decision-making	National wetland inventory updated	Updated inventory in place	1	1	Inventory Reports and GIS maps	Every years	5	WMD, LGs, UBOS	Guide planning and reporting
	State of Wetlands Reports produced	Number of reports published	2	2	State of wetlands reports	Every years	5	WMD, MWE	Inform policy reviews

	Natural Capital Accounts developed	Wetland account	0	1	Wetland account Ecosystem services reports	10years	WMD, NPA, UBOS	Support resource valuation
	Applied research coordinated	Number of studies and MOUs with academia	3	7	R e s e a r c h reports, MOUs	Annual	WMD, NARO, Academia	Strengthen knowledge sharing
Objective 2 – Strategy 2: Promote education, awareness, and partnerships	CEPA Strategy updated and operationalised	Updated CEPA Strategy	1	2	CEPA reports	Annual	WMD	Enhance outreach effectiveness
	Stakeholder partnerships strengthened	Number of collaborative agreements signed	5	20	MoUs, reports	Annual	WMD, Partners	Facilitate joint resource mobilisation
	Participation in national/ international forums enhanced	Number of meetings and forums supported	10	30	Reports	Annual	WMD	Strengthen representation and visibility

Objective 3: Strengthen governance systems for sustainable wetlands management	Wetlands Policy reviewed	Updated Policy	Draft Policy	1 Policy	Cabinet memo, Policy	Once	MWE	Guide policy implementation
	Wetland Act developed and enforced	Wetland Act enacted	0	1	Cabinet memo, Act	Once	MWE, Parliament	Strengthen legal framework
	Bye-laws and ordinances development supported	Number of bye-laws, ordinances, Number of reports	2	10	Reports, LG ordinances	Annual	LGs, WMD	Promote decentralised governance
Objective 4: Increase institutional capacity for sustainable wetland conservation	Capacity Development Plan operationalised	Number of plans implemented	1	2	Needs Assessment report, Capacity Development Plan	Annual	WMD, LGs	Inform HR and capacity priorities
	Regional coordination units established	Number of regional units functional	4	7	Organisational reports, 3 Coordination Units	Annual	WMD	Improve decentralised management
	Resources mobilised for WSSP	% of budget realized	UGX 8B	1.61T	Financial reports	Annual	WMD, MWE	Guide financing strategies

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