UGANDA DEBT NETWORK (UDN)

IS THE GOVERNMENT PROVIDING ENOUGH RESOURCES TOWARDS NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT? A REVIEW OF THE FY 2020/21 NATIONAL AND BUKEDEA DISTRICT BUDGET.

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INTRODUCTION

Uganda Debt Network (UDN) is a national policy advocacy organization that promotes and advocates for poor and marginalized people to participate in influencing poverty-focused policies, demand for their rights and monitor service delivery to ensure prudent, accountable and transparent resource generation and utilization.

UDN works for socio- economic justice for all citizens. The organization strives to ensure that citizens are empowered to demand for efficient and transparent use of public resources to benefit all, particularly the poor influencing policies to respond to the needs and interests of people is at the heart of UDN's work. UDN works in concern with communities from different parts of the country and national- level strategic allies and partners to eradicate corruption, promote good governance and accountable leadership.

UDN undertook a study on assessing financing for Environment and Natural Resources (ENR) sector including wetland management whose objectives were:

a. To review and analyse budget priority allocations and trends for the implementation water, land and wetland management in Uganda and Bukedea.
b. To identify critical challenges and opportunities for increased financial resourcing for the ENR sector to achieve sustainable social, cultural, economic and political benefits of such resources to men and women.
c. To propose practices actions and strategic advocacy strategy for influencing financing for the sector at sub county, district and national level.

BACKGROUND

Uganda has one of the richest and most diverse natural resource base in Africa. According to a 2018 World Bank report, close to one-third of wealth in low-income countries such as Uganda comes from natural capital. Indeed, key sectors such as Agriculture, tourism, energy, trade and industry to some extent depend on the country's natural resources which makes it a vital component of the country's economy. Inspite of its importance, communities have continued to deplete the country's natural resources, especially wetlands and forests, which has contributed towards climate change. Currently, it is estimated that Uganda loses about 2.6% of its forest cover annually, which is one of the highest in the world[1].

In Uganda, the Environment and Natural Resources (ENR) sub-sector is responsible for ensuring rational and sustainable utilization, development and effective management of environment and natural resources for socioeconomic development of the country. The sub-sector comprises: Forestry, Wetland Resources Management, Meteorology, Environmental Management and Climate Change. At national level, funding for ENR activities is channeled through the water and environment sector. The institutions responsible for environmental management under this sector include: Ministry of Water and Environment (MWE), National Environment Management Authority (NEMA), National Forestry Authority (NFA), Uganda National Meteorological Authority (UNMA), and Local Governments (LGs).

Women constitute the majority of the population in the country. In Bukedea district, as of April 2019, the district had total of 124,754 (52%) women compared to 117 369 (48%) men in the same period. The livelihoods of men and women in Bukedea mainly depends on economic activities such as agriculture. The major causes of the deterioration in the quality and the quantity of the natural resource base in the district is associated with human activity. Some of the wetlands have been encroached on by community members (mainly men) to pave way for the cultivation of crops such as rice and sugarcane. The district has witnessed massive deforestation, which is very rampant on privately owned land where most of the districts tree resources are. Moreover, the participation of women in most natural resource management programs is still limited since most of them do not have adequate ownership rights on these resources, particularly land which has serious implications on the conservation of these resources.

The National Gender Strategy in Uganda requires all development programmes in the country to mainstream gender in their policies and operations. The ENR gender mainstreaming strategy is in place and serves as a framework and a strategic guide for gender responsive planning; budgeting, implementing; monitoring and evaluation; and capacity building for the Environment and Natural Resources Sub-sector. It also creates a foundation on which the ENR stakeholders can holistically mainstream gender into policy formulation; and sub-sector reforms among others. Once mainstreamed it is envisaged that the current unsustainable use of environmental resources will be curtailed. This will further translate into reduced poverty as inequalities in environmental resource use, access and management for women who depend and spend more time and energy on them will be addressed.

Okukretem wetland along Kamutur road in Bukedea District.

Key Sector concerns in Natural Resource Management Poor enforcement of environment and natural resource laws and policies

Uganda has put in place a number of laws, policies and key institutions geared towards conserving the environment and natural resources for the benefit of men and women. Some of the laws in place include: National Environment Act Cap 153, Land Acquisition Act, National Forestry and Tree Planting Act, 2003, National Land Use Policy, 2008, Constitution of the Republic of Uganda 1995, Budget Act, 2001, National Policy for the Conservation and Management of Wetland Resources, 1995, Local Government Act, Cap 243 and the Plant Protection Act, Cap 31 among others. The General Principle XIII of Uganda's Constitution requires that wetlands be protected as one of the "important natural resources" on behalf of the people of Uganda. The policy guidance for management of wetlands is laid out in the National Environmental Policy 1994 which calls for sustainable use of natural resources, and the National Wetland Policy 1995 which outlines principles for wise use of wetlands and prohibits drainage of wetlands for development activities unless more important environmental management requirements supersede. It also provides for the restoration of degraded wetlands and compels government to cause the offender to foot part or all of the cost (ibid.). To operationalize the provisions in the Constitution and the above policies, Section 36(1) of the National Environment Act Cap 153 (NEA) restricts the use of wetlands and prohibits activities that may degrade them. The National Environment (Wetlands; Riverbanks and Lake Shores Management) Regulations, 2000, give more detailed prescriptions to ensure wise use of wetlands. The Local Government Act (1997) and the NEA also decentralizes the management of wetlands to District Environment Committees, with oversight being provided by NEMA and the Wetlands Management Department. Finally, the Land Act Cap 227 prohibits leasing of wetlands by either the Central or Local government.

Despite the existence of these laws, their enforcement is still weak especially at sub-national levels mainly due to increased pressure for urbanization and industrialization, which has escalated the problem of destruction of natural resources, particularly the wetlands and forests cover, hence threatening the livelihoods of men and women and the country's economic development. For instance, while the National Forestry and Tree Planting Act 2003 (section 38) and the National Environment Act, Cap 153 (section 19) require an environmental impact assessment to be carried out where the intended activity or project is likely to have a significant impact on a forest, this has not been the case since a number of development projects being undertaken in the country without conducting this assessment. In the case of Kampala, a number of natural resources (particularly wetlands) have been reclaimed to pave way for the construction of shopping malls, residential houses, factories and farming activities, which contributed to the rise in the water levels in Lake Victoria. Furthermore, there has been inadequate sensitization of community members on the relevant laws and policies governing the management of natural resources in Uganda. As a result, they have continued to frustrate the exercise of management and restoration of natural resources.

In FY 2020/21, one of the interventions of the Natural Resource Management program is to strengthen compliance with and enforcement of environmental and natural resources legislation and standards at all levels. Inspite of this commitment, the capacity of LGs to enforce this remains limited, evidenced by the limited number of staff to effectively enforce the relevant laws. This is compounded by the problem of political interference in the management of natural resources especially at local government levels. In the case of Bukedea district, there is a lot of political interference in the management of natural resources (especially wetlands). The Oswapai wetland (located near the district headquarters, measuring between 14-16 acres) has been greatly encroached on by the urban dwellers who rent from politicians and prison authorities who are engaged in the degradation to cultivate crops like rice, other wetlands in the district have continued to be rented out to private individuals for other economic activities. This has forced some community members in the district to resist and frustrate efforts towards demarcation of other wetlands in the district as being unfair while the same enforcement officers at the district continue to cultivate Oswapai wetland.

Recommendations

- There is need to enforce some of the key provisions in the environmental management Act to prevent communities from destroying natural resources. Legal action should be taken on those who violate these laws including the ''so called powerful politicians and politically connected persons''. This will serve as a deterrent to the rest of the community members, especially those with similar ambitions. In addition, the MoWE and Local Governments should conduct a name and shame exercise for the environmental degraders.
- The government should introduce incentives for communities and local governments that excel in enacting, implementing, and monitoring bylaws, as a motivation for the other communities
- Since most of the laws above are conservationist in nature, there is need to include restoration policies in all environmental policy regimes so that the already depleted environmental resources are restored together with the community.
- Bukedea district local government should protect and restore Oswapai wetland (located near the district headquarters, measuring between 14-16 acres). This will provide the moral ground to enforce similar measures across other wetlands in the district.

b) Performance of the Environment and Natural Resources (ENR) and Land sub-sectors

The policy objective of the Environment and Natural Resources (ENR) sub-sector is to: Increase wetland ecosystem coverage from 10.9% in FY 2013/14 to 12% FY 2019/20; increase forest cover from 14% in FY 2012/13 to 18% in FY 2019/20; and enhance environmental compliance from 70% in FY 2013/14 to 90% in FY 2019/20. Although the environment and natural resource sub-sector has registered some progress in terms of achieving some of its objectives, it is very unlikely that some of the key targets set out in the Water and Environment sector in the Development plan 2015/16-2019/20 will be achieved by end of FY 2019/20. For instance, while the sector targeted to restore and maintain the integrity of degraded fragile ecosystem and to increase national wetland coverage to 12%, by end of June 2019, the percentage of Uganda's area covered by wetlands was estimated at 8.9%. Likewise, though the proportion of forest coverage has increased from 10% in 2015 to 12.4% in 2019, this is still below the target of 18% set in the sector development plan.

According to the Auditor General's value for money Audit report on the management of Wetlands[2], the Wetlands Management Department's efforts to restore degraded wetlands fell far below the ideal, with only 0.3% of the required area having been restored in the period of 4 years, leaving a restoration shortfall of 99.7% less than two years to 2020. If this trend is to continues, it is very unlikely that the set targets in this area will be met, hence most of the natural resources will be depleted soon. This is compounded by the fact that the sector has failed to complete the process of gazetting and demarcating wetlands, which has encouraged communities to continue encroaching on these resources.

2 A Value for Money Audit Report on the Management of Wetlands in Uganda by the Wetlands Management Department (WMD) under the Ministry of Water and Environment (MWE), by OAG, December 2018

One of the residents in Teso region in his rice field resorted to wetland farming for survival.

Land Subsector

The activities of the lands sub-sector in the country are managed under the Ministry of Lands, Housing & Urban Development. One of the core mandates of this ministry is to ensure rational, sustainable use and effective management of land by ensuring Security of land tenure in the country. The National Land Policy estimates that about 80% of Ugandans hold land under the customary tenure, which is associated with a number of challenges including gender related issues, and vulnerability to tenure insecurity. Article 237 0f the Ugandan constitution elevates customary tenure to be equal to other types of statutory land tenure (for example freehold, leasehold). Despite its recognition in law, most of the land held under the customary tenure system remains unregistered. Unlike other land tenures (such as mailo, leasehold and freehold) whose national registry is being maintained by the Ministry of Lands, Housing and Urban Development, the customary land tenure is being registered by sub-county chiefs, upon approval by District Land Board with support from the Area Land Committees. However, some of the sub-county chiefs and Area land committees are not very conversant with all the required procedures of customary land registration.

The Area Land Committees in Bukedea district are mainly appointed basing on their character and not on their qualifications, and in most cases are not conversant of their roles and responsibilities. As a result, records are not captured in the national land information system, which increases the insecurity of communities who possess land under this tenure.

Worse still, most community members are not aware of the existence of structures such as the Area land committees and the procedures involved in land registration, since they are not recognized and rem unerated within the government structures which has affected the process of land registration.

As part of its performance in FY 2019/20, the Lands, Housing and Urban Development sector disseminated the National Land Policy to 32 districts across the country, which has increased its awareness among the communities. Furthermore, in order to enhance security of land tenure (particularly under customary land ownership), 3,365 Certificates of Customary Ownership were issued in the previous financial year in the districts of Kabale (1,865), Adjumani (1,000) and Butaleja (500) to the marginalized groups including Vulnerable, people with disabilities, men, and women. This is in addition to the 12,008 certificates of titles issued under leasehold, Mailo and Freehold ownership in the same period. – However, land registration is still slow in Bukedea district whereby landowners only pick registration forms from the district land Board but do not return them. Thus, the district neither has a database nor a registry for those who acquired Certificates of Customary Ownership or land titles. In Bukedea district, the sub-county and district leadership were not aware of any issuance of a land title under the customary land tenure in FY 2019/20. However, in FY 2018/19 only one land title was issued in Kangole Sub County under the customary land tenure.

Slow implementation of actions in the National Land Policy Implementation Action plan (FY 2015/16 - 2018/19)

In FY 2015/16, the government of Uganda developed a National Land Policy Implementation Action plan (FY 2015/16- 2018/19) as a deliberate resolution to address major challenges that have hindered the implementation of land reforms, thereby impeding the optimal utilization of land for socio-economic development and transformation. A number of key commitments were made in this plan, most of which have remained un-implemented and or partially implemented. For instance, government's commitment to support the issuance of certificates of title of Customary Ownership by establishing and operationalizing a customary land registry for recording and certification of land rights has not been prioritized in the sector budgets for the last 3 years, including the current FY 2020/21 sector budget since no allocation has been made for this purpose. This plan also committed to develop and implement a costed and time bound action plan for the restoration of degraded fragile ecosystems, which has not yet been done to-date. More so, the dissemination of the action plan has not been effective. For instance, in districts such as Bukedea, the district administration in the lands department are not aware of the existence of the action plan as well as the activities to be implemented in the action plan let alone funding for the implementation of such actions.

Furthermore, though the National Land Policy Implementation Action plan proposes a number of legal and regulatory reforms aimed at protecting the land rights of vulnerable persons (particularly women and young children), much progress has been registered to this effect. Some of these reforms include: the amendment of the Land Act Cap 227 to restore the power of traditional leaders in matters of land administration on customary tenure, conditional on their observance of the rights of vulnerable groups, the review of the Marriage and Divorce Bill to make legal provision for joint or spousal co-ownership of family land as well as the proposal to restore the consent clause to protect children below 18 years and the amendment of the Succession Act Cap 162 to provide for the right to succession and inheritance of family land by women and children. In addition, the action plan provides for the establishment of a land policy implementation unit, which to date has never been actualized.

Recommendations

- More resources should be allocated in the national budget towards restoration of natural resources. In addition, the government should expedite the process of demarcating and gazetting natural resources such as forests and wetlands and ensure that the various laws on the protection of these resources are effectively enforced to safeguard against the destruction of natural resources in the country.
- The government should fast track the implementation of actions in the National Land Policy Implementation Action plan, especially actions that are aimed at securing and promoting the land rights of vulnerable citizens such as women and children. Also, funding for these actions should be provided for in the sector budget to ensure effective implementation of these actions at national and local level.
- The government through MLHUD should prioritize resource allocation to cater for the establishment of the customary land registry to enable this tenure to function at an optimum level. In addition, there is need for the customary tenure to be included in the Land Information System to give it the prominence it deserves through security of data, ease of access and retrieval.

c) Addressing gender issues in the ENR sub-sector

A group of women interviewed on challenges encountered in acquiring their land rights.

Women play an essential role in the management of natural resources, especially water, forests and energy resources. In rural areas, most women are highly depende1nt on local natural resources for their livelihood in their role to secure water, food and energy for cooking and heating. The effects of climate resulting from the destruction of natural resources, including drought, uncertain rainfall and deforestation, make it harder for them to secure these resources. In order to mainstream gender issues at all levels, the National Gender Strategy in Uganda requires all development programs in the country to mainstream gender in their policies and operations. In terms of gender and equity compliance, though the performance of the Water and environment sector was above the recommended score of 50%, its performance in this area declined from 71.5% in FY 2018/19 to 62.7% in FY 2019/20. Inspite of this score, the natural resources sub sector is facing a number of challenges that are preventing it from effectively integrating and addressing gender concerns in its programs. For instance, most of the activities in the sub-sector are too generic and the budgeting does not explicitly bring out gender issues. Moreover, the sub-sector does not have clearly defined gender sensitive indicators to enable them measure progress of gender mainstreaming in the sector. In addition, most of the data presented by the sector is not gender disaggregated to clearly indicate impact on men, women, boys and girls. This is compounded by the fact that most officers (particularly at LG levels) have limited knowledge about gender mainstreaming issues and policies in the sector, making it hard for them to handle these issues. This is a clear indication that some of these relevant policies have not been adequately disseminated to the relevant authorities.

Recommendations

- The water and Environment sector should work closely with the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development as well as the Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC) to train staff in the natural resources sub-sector (particularly those at sub-national levels) in gender mainstreaming to enable them effectively handle gender issues in the sub-sector including planning, budgeting and generation of gender disaggregated data for the sector.
- Furthermore, related gender policies for the sub-sector should be widely disseminated to all government staff including at local government levels.

d). Poor Funding for Natural Resource Management activities at national and local levels

Although funding towards the water and environment sector has been increasing overtime, allocations towards institutions that are directly charged with the mandate of managing natural resources in the country have remained stagnant and have not greatly benefited from the increased resources. For instance, in FY 2020/21, the sector's budget has been increased by 52% from 1,105.73 billion in FY 2019/20 to 1,681.66 billion in 2020/21. With this increase, the share of Water and Environment sector budget to the national budget has improved from 2.7% in 2019/20 to 4% next financial year. Despite the huge increase, the budget for the Water and Environment sector has remained skewed towards the Ministry of Water and Environment vote which received a budget increase of 59.4% from 931.91 billion in 2019/20 to 1,485.52 billion the coming year (see table 2 below for details) and takes 88.3% of the total sector budget.

The balance (i.e 11.7%) is to be shared among the various institutions such as NEMA, NFA, and Local Governments, with local government (where the bulk of service delivery is supposed to take place) receiving a mere 94.90 billion, which is a mere 5.6% of the total sector budget. Out of the 94.90 billion allocated to local governments, 89.4 billion (83.7%) is allocated to rural water and sanitation, while a mere 3 billion (3.2%) is allocated towards natural resource management. This implies gross under funding of the natural resource component for local governments, which has serious implications on the effective implementation of natural resource management initiatives at local government levels.

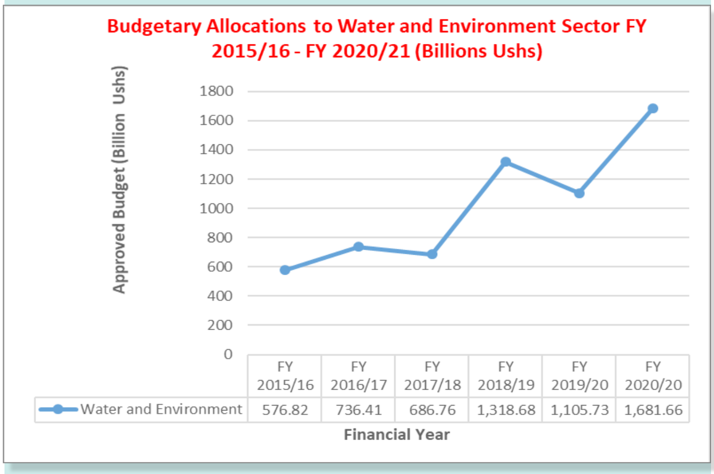

Table 1: Intra-sectoral Allocations for the Water and Environment Sector FY 2019/20-FY 2020/21 (Billions Ushs)

	FY 2019/20						FY 2020/21					
Sub-sector	Wage	Non-wage Rec	Dom Devt	External financing	Total	% share 2019/20	Wage	Non-wage Rec	Dom Devt	External financing	Total	% share 2020/21
Ministry of Water and Environment	7.182	14.681	386.764	523.287	931.91	85.3%	13	14.738	380.946	1,076.83	1,485.52	88.3%
Kampala Capital City Authority	8.39	7.369	0.175	0.31	16.244	1.5%	8.39	7.369	0.175	0	15.93	0.9%
National Environment Management Authority	6.722	18.34	0.99	0	26.052	2.4%	6.722	18.34	0.99	0	26.05	1.5%
National Forestry Authority	6.466	20.151	5.883	0	32.5	3.0%	6.466	20.151	5.883	0	32.50	1.9%
Uganda National Meteorological Authority	7.413	5.148	14.202	0	26.763	2.4%	7.413	5.148	14.202	0	26.76	1.6%
Local Governments	0	7.79	51.54	0	59.33	5.4%	0	15.5	79.4	0	94.90	5.6%
Total	**36.172**	**73.479**	**459.554**	**523.597**	**1092.802**	**100.0%**	**41.99**	**81.245**	**481.596**	**1,076.83**	**1,681.66**	**100.0%**

Source: *Approved Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure (various issues), Vol 1, Central Govt votes*

Financing for natural resource management in Bukedea district

As indicated in table 3 below, although funding towards the natural resources department has been increasing overtime, in FY 2020/21, the amount allocated towards this department has been reduced by more than 50% from 227.507 million in FY 2019/20 to 104.092 million in FY 2020/21. This represents a share of only 0.4% of the total district budget. The decline in the natural resources budget was mainly attributed to the drop in the District Discretionary Equalization Grant (DDEG) and mainly affected the domestic development budget which reduced by 87.4% from 119.359million in FY 2019/20 to a mere 15 million shillings the coming FY. This sharp decline will largely affect the operations of this department. For instance, activities such as land management and forestry are not funded in the next budget, yet the district has continued to experience diminishing natural resources, particularly loss of forestry cover. In addition, the department has inadequate equipment to enable it effectively execute their activities. For instance, it has only one Global Positioning System (GPS) machine and one laptop which has to serve the entire district. Fuel allocated to the natural resource department is also inadequate. On average, Bukedea district natural resource department receives between 400,000 to 500,000/= worth of fuel per quarter, which has to be shared among the 3 officers in the department. Since most of the activities of this department are field based, this amount is inadequate for the officers to traverse all the 11 sub-counties and the surrounding town councils.

Currently, the Senior Environment Officer of Bukedea district is allocated about 6 million shillings annually (and about 1.5 million shillings per quarter) to support activities on natural resource management, which has to be shared among all the 11 sub-counties and surrounding town councils. This amount is too little to enable the department to effectively undertake its mandate. 2020/21 budget tripled on the side of the conditional grant that increased from 6 million to 21 million specifically for wetlands and forestry sectors

Table 2 Allocations of Bukedea Natural resources budget (Trend) FY 2017/18 – FY 2020/21 (000 Ushs)

Department	FY 2017/18	FY 2018/19	FY 2019/20	FY 2020/21	FY 2020/21 (%) share
Administration	3,812,049	3,859,745	5,153,787	5,254,278	18.9%
Finance	264,210	300,150	299,608	155,016	0.6%
Statutory Bodies	567,152	646,415	674,106	520,599	1.9%
Production and Marketing	1,801,362	1,926,888	2,328,128	1,603,595	5.8%
Health	1,919,292	2,729,101	2,796,426	2,556,812	9.2%
Education	12,042,236	13,269,617	14,926,084	14,736,888	53.1%
Roads and Engineering	1,139,448	1,630,763	1,772,890	1,528,509	5.5%
Water	577,092	650,054	681,277	654,439	2.4%
Natural Resources	136,366	187,773	227,507	104,092	0.4%
Community Based Services	915,310	1,142,268	1,079,152	393,489	1.4%
Planning	257,208	248,154	335,142	153,824	0.6%
Internal Audit	60,086	59,259	61,259	42,112	0.2%
Trade, Industry and Local Development			33,983	52,256	0.2%
Total	**23,491,811**	**26,650,189**	**30,369,348**	**27,755,910**	**100%**

Source: Bukedea District BFP FYS 2017/18 -2020/21

Recommendation

Given the impact of natural resources on most sectors of the economy, funding towards natural resource management activities at all levels should be increased as a priority given the adverse effects of climate change. In particular, resources towards institutions such as NEMA, NFA and local governments should be increased so that they can play an effective role in the protection of the country's natural resources. In the case of Bukedea district, the development budget for the natural resources department should be increased from the proposed 15 million in FY 2020/21 to at least 120 million (which is slightly above the 119.359 million allocated in FY 2019/20) and should be geared towards activities that contribute directly to the restoration of natural resources in the district including tree planting which have for long remained unfunded.

e). Financing for land management at national level and in Bukedea district

Although the budget for the Lands, Housing and Urban Development sector has been steadily decreasing since FY 2018/19, the allocation towards the lands administration and management sub-sector has slightly increased from 14.86 billion the previous year to 51.809 billion in FY 2020/21. Despite this increase, the allocation for land administration and management for FY 2020/21 is half of what was allocated in FY 2018/19 (see table 3 below), which is inadequate to effectively run all the land operations/ activities in the country. Furthermore, inspite of the frequent land conflicts in the country, 70% of the 51.809 billion allocated to the Land Administration and Management subsector/program is planned to be spent on the Competitiveness and enterprise development project, which has serious implications on the implementation of key priorities in the lands sub-sector.

Table 3: Lands, Housing and Urban Development sector allocation by the program, FY 2017/18 – 2020/21, Billion Uganda Shillings

Programme	FY 2017/18	FY 2018/19	FY 2019/20	FY 2020/21
Land, Administration & Management	46.25	114.015	14.862	51.809
Physical Planning & Urban Development	20.45	47.136	126.37	70.251
Housing	1.613	1.623	1.723	1.405
Policy, Planning and Support Services	41.451	35.883	25.97	34.951
Total	109.764	198.657	168.925	158.416

Source: Ministerial policy statements FYs 2017/18-FY 2020/21

Financing land management activities in Bukedea district

In FY 2020/21, though Bukedea district was allocated a total of 520.599 million shillings for local statutory bodies, the LG land management services was provided with a budget of only 17.771 million shillings for FY 2020/21, which constitutes only 3% of the entire budget. Despite the minimal budget allocated towards this budget line, all resources allocated to land management services are to be spent on recurrent costs, mainly on allowances for casual and temporary workers (see table 5 below). Moreover, the budget for land management services has remained constant at 17.771 million shillings in FY 2020/21, which is inadequate for the entire land operations in the district.

Currently, the Areal Land committees in Bukedea district are not receiving any funding from government, which has fueled corruption tendencies in the district, hence some members conspire with land grabbers. Since there is no standard fee for inspection, these committees only receive facilitation from parties interested in registering their land which ranges between 200,000/= to 300,000/= depending on the size of the land. At times, the sharing of money generated from the clients is a problem, since there is no documentation on how the money is to be shared between the committee members.

Table 4: Intra-sectoral Allocations for Bukedea District Local Statutory Bodies budget FY 2020/21 (Ushs 000)

Local Statutory Bodies	Allocation FY 2020/21	% allocation
LG Council Administration Services	248,025	48%
LG Procurement Management Services	19,000	4%
LG Staff Recruitment Services	25,392	5%
LG Land Management Services	17,771	3%
LG Financial Accountability	24,300	5%
LG Political and executive oversight	148,111	28%
Standing Committees Services	38,000	7%
Grand Total	**520,599**	**100%**

Source: Bukedea District Budget estimates, FY 2020/21

Table 5: Breakdown of Bukedea Districts Statutory expenditures under LG land management services, FY 2019/20-2020/21

LG Land Management Services	FY 2019/29	FY 2020/21
Allowances (Incl. Casuals, Temporary)	10,771	10,771
Welfare and Entertainment	1,600	1,600
Printing, Stationery, Photocopying and Binding	1,600	1,600
Travel inland	3,800	3,800
Grand Total	**17,771**	**17,771**

Source: Bukedea District Budget estimates, FY 2020/21

In Bukedea district, there are a number of challenges that are hindering the implementation of land reforms in the district. Currently, the corruption tendencies in both government and traditional systems have led to rampant land grabbing by the rich people who in most cases default land laws and procedures for acquiring land. In some communities, some clan leaders end up selling land without the consent of the Clans committee, which has fueled a number of family conflicts. In some cases, there is forgery of land documents like agreements that are most times used. Furthermore, some local authorities are required to handle land cases at community level yet do not have the capacity to do so. For instance, the Community Development Officer's office is required to handle family land cases, but they do not have adequate capacity and mandate to do so.

Recommendations'

- The MLHUD should increase the budget allocation towards the lands administration and management sub-sector to enable it fully implement commitments in the National Land policy implementation Action plan.
- Within the budget for LHUD, nugatory expenditures such as stationery, photocopying & binding, subscriptions, Consultancy services, Hire of Venues, Printing, travels abroad, Advertising and Public relations, Workshops and seminars, Welfare and entertainment account for Ugx 47,5bn, which is almost 30% of the entire LHUD sector allocation. With the impact of COVID 19 on the entire economy, this can be foregone for now and the resources re-allocated to essential areas such as surveying, mapping, and conflict management including supporting vulnerable communities and person in Bukedea for example to register their Customary land to ensure that land being a universal sector is conflict-free and able to facilitate the recovery of other sectors.
- For the case of Bukedea district, the budget for land administration and management sub-department/sector should be increased to take care of the ever-increasing land conflicts in the district. In particular, resources should be re-allocated from wasteful expenditures such as entertainment, photocopying and allocated towards development costs within this sub-sector. Also structures such as Area Land committees should be facilitated to enable them to undertake their mandate.

f). Understaffing for key Natural Resource Management institutions

At national level, the natural resources sub-sector has remained understaffed which has negatively affected the implementation of key programs within the sub-sector, especially those under the ministry and local governments (particularly on wetlands and forestry management). For instance, under the Ministry of Water and Environment (vote 19), though the established staff structure is 701 staff, only 342 positions (about 48%) are filled. The affected departments include departments of Climate Change, Environment management, Wetlands, Forestry and Nyabyeya Forestry Training Institute. To fill the required structure, the ministry requires an additional Shs. 5.817billion which is not catered for in the FY 2020/21 budget. In addition, the sector lacks adequate Environmental Protection Police Force, whose current staffing stands at 186 compared to the desired 350 force required in the short term. For the case of NEMA, the institution currently has a total of 128 staff including support staff, but requires an additional 76 staff for it to effectively undertake its mandate. This coupled with the funding wage bill gap of Ushs 4.1 billion, makes it quite difficult for this institution to effectively implement its activities at both local and national levels and to effectively implement the National Environment Act 2019. In FY2020/21, with the exception of the Ministry of Water and Environment (which received an additional 5.818 billion shillings for wage), the wage component for all the other institutions under natural resource management has remained constant for the next FY (see table 2 above), which clearly indicates that there is no commitment from the government to address staffing gaps in these institutions this financial year.

The staffing problem is even worse at the district levels. For instance, in Bukedea district, out of the approved 11 positions in the natural resource department, only 3 staff are available (i.e. the Senior Environment Officer (who is also acting as the District Natural Resource Officer), the Land Management Officer and the Staff Surveyor – who are all men). Also, the wage component of Bukedea district for the natural resource department has remained constant at 82 million received the previous year, which implies that there is no commitment to recruit more staff in the natural resource department in FY 2020/21.

Recommendation

To effectively enforce environmental management issues at all levels, the government should increase the budgets for key institutions such as NEMA, and NFA whose budgets have not changed for some time. In particular, the wage component for these institutions should be increased to cater for the recruitment of new staff to meet the staffing requirements in these institutions to at least 50%.

In Bukedea district, the wage bill for the district should be increased to enable the district to increase its current staffing of 3 people to the approved/ recommended 11 people or at least 50% in the district staff structure. This will enable the district to employ more personnel in the natural resource management department. The issue of gender should also be taken into consideration to ensure equal representation of both men and female in all key positions in the district as a measure towards addressing gender inequality.

g). Key sector priorities and strategic objectives not being funded

Women found fetching water from one of the rivers in Tajar Parish in Kamutur Sub County, Bukedea district trying to cope with water shortage after the water sources being devastated by floods

In the FY 2020/21 budget, as one of its strategic objectives, the Water and Environment sector aims at increasing the sustainable use of the environment and natural resources through restoration and maintenance of degraded ecosystems and to undertake massive nationwide tree planting, and to promote the wise use of wetlands through implementation of approved management plans developed in a participatory manner. Currently, the sector is still grappling with some challenges that are inhibiting it from achieving these objectives. For instance, the rate of environment and natural resources degradation in all regions of Uganda is much higher than the rate at which these resources are being restored (i.e. wetland degradation is 70 times the rate of restoration). This coupled with the high population growth rate and increase in the level of economic activities at both local and national levels and illegal titling of forest reserves, has serious implications on the sustainability of some of these initiatives.

Furthermore, even with these challenges, some of the activities that directly contribute towards the above objectives have remained unfunded and are listed as unfunded priorities for the sector. For instance, in FY 2020/21, Water Resources Management requires additional Ushs 10billion shillings for implementation of Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) through catchment based Management Plans, the Environment and Natural Resources subsector also requires at least Ushs15billion annually for tree planting, critical wet land restoration, Support to local Governments and enforcement activities on fragile ecosystems to contain the climate change effects. All of these additional required resources are not available in the national budget, hence some of these initiatives will either be partially implemented or not implemented at all, which has serious implications on the attainment of some of the sector objectives. In the FY 2020/21 budget, under the output of ''restoration of degraded and protection of ecosystems, no funds have been allocated under the budget line for agricultural supplies, yet it is very critical for the attainment of the strategic objectives of the Water and Environment sector. In Bukedea district, there is no funding allocated by government for key activities such as tree planting and wetland restoration, which has affected the efforts by the natural resource department to restore natural resources in the district. This perhaps explains why the department has failed to demarcate existing wetlands and swamps in the district.

Recommendation

The water and environment sector should prioritize funding for key activities such as restoration of wetlands and tree planting that directly contribute towards the attainment of its strategic objectives of the sector. In addition, there is need to re-allocate resources within the sector to cater for key unfunded priorities under the natural resource management component. For instance, the funds allocated towards welfare and entertainment as well as those for workshops should be reduced and re-allocated towards the restoration of natural resources, since it is very unlikely that they will be fully utilised in the COVID-19 period. At district levels (in particular- Bukedea district), the government should provide resources for key activities such as demarcation, restoration of wetlands and tree planting among others.

Conclusion

Generally, funding towards the management of natural resources in Uganda has remained very low yet these resources have continued to diminish. Environment, land and natural resources constitute a significant economic base of Uganda especially the rural poor. Currently, the rate of environmental degradation and mismanagement of natural resources such as land, forests, and wetlands remains a major obstacle to enhanced agricultural production and productivity and income generation of the rural population in Bukedea especially women whose fulltime job is in the garden yet have no control and user rights over land, wetlands and other NR resources. The National Development Plan (NDP) III estimates that wetland degradation in Uganda is over 70 times the rate of restoration, which calls for urgent interventions to reverse this trend. Research from Uganda Wildlife Society indicates that gross returns to the national economy from biodiversity alone can be as high as US$ 63.9 billion per year, implying that environmental resources, if used properly, can contribute significantly to Uganda's national economic development and to the attainment of the sustainable development goals (SDGS) (in particular goals 1, 2, 5, 7, 10, 13 and 15 on elimination of poverty, elimination of hunger, promotion of clean water and sanitation, promotion of affordable and clean energy, reduced inequalities, climate action and on life of land. Since Uganda is one of the countries in the world with the highest population growth rate, this pauses a serious challenge to environmental and natural resource management due to the increase in the amount of economic activities. This therefore calls for greater efforts to ensure that these resources are sustainably managed to achieve a pro-poor economic growth that builds for the majority rural poor. In order to address issues of natural resource management in the country, the NDP III has proposed some key interventions in the next 5 years. Some of these include; strengthening enforcement capacity for improved compliance levels, Strengthening conservation, restoration of forests, wetlands and water catchments and hilly and mountainous areas, among others. If all these actions are fully implemented as planned, the stock of natural resources in the country will be increased, which will positively impact on other sectors of the economy, in particular agriculture, tourism, trade and energy.

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