

Country Overview – SMM 2025 – UGANDA

Step 1: Country Self-Assessment

The Uganda country assessment was undertaken through a highly participatory process, engaging all members of the SWA Country Team. Diverse constituencies including government ministries and agencies, utilities, civil society organizations (CSOs), research and learning institutions, academia, private sector actors, and external support partners actively contributed. Through a series of in-person and virtual consultations, over 50 stakeholders participated in shaping the assessment findings and recommendations.

Uganda continues to demonstrate strong political commitment and leadership towards advancing the Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH) agenda. This commitment is evidenced through regular high-level policy dialogues, including the first Presidential Dialogue on WASH, consultations with the Right Honorable Speaker of Parliament, the Uganda Water and Environment Week, the Annual Parliamentarians for WASH Symposium, and the Annual WASH CSO Forum. These platforms have elevated WASH as a national development priority, anchored at the highest levels of political engagement, and integrated into wider development discussions on health, education, energy, climate resilience, community development, and food security.

Under the Government's leadership, top decision-makers are actively involved in WASH planning and review processes. Climate risk assessments are routinely conducted and integrated into sector planning and investment decisions. Concrete political and programmatic commitments have been made, most notably the Presidential Pledge to ensure at least two safe water sources per community, doubling the previous national target. Implementation is guided by a costed Sector Investment Plan, aligned with national and district development frameworks. WASH remains a strategic priority in Uganda's key policy documents, including the National Development Plan IV (NDP IV) and the Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC, 2022), with a growing emphasis on inter-sectoral coordination and climate-resilient WASH systems.

Uganda's multi-stakeholder coordination platforms remain inclusive, well-structured, and government-led. Decisions and progress are jointly reviewed and monitored by both state and non-state actors, fostering transparency and accountability. The SWA Mutual Accountability Mechanism continues to play a central role, with partners actively engaging in the identification, implementation, and monitoring of joint commitments to strengthen WASH outcomes.

Despite these advances, key challenges persist. Financing for WASH remains inadequate and continues to decline relative to sector needs. Allocations targeting inequalities and underserved populations have not increased sufficiently to close service gaps. While Uganda has robust

plans and institutional frameworks, financing constraints remain the primary barrier to achieving Sustainable Development Goal 6 (SDG 6) on universal access to water and sanitation. Overall, Uganda has built a solid foundation for WASH governance, coordination, and accountability. To sustain momentum and realize national and global commitments, the country calls for increased public investment, stronger private sector engagement, and enhanced development partner support particularly for innovative financing, climate-resilient infrastructure, and equity-focused programming.

Step 2: Country Profile

1. Water Resources and Climate Context

Uganda is richly endowed with water resources, including extensive wetlands, the White Nile River, and major lakes such as Lake Victoria, Lake Kyoga, and Lake Albert. However, the availability and accessibility of these resources are increasingly under pressure.

Approximately 35% of Uganda's renewable water resources originate outside its borders, creating potential vulnerabilities to upstream pollution and over-abstraction. Rapid urbanization, population growth, and agricultural expansion have accelerated wetland degradation, with more than 40% of wetlands lost since 1994. Uganda's per capita water availability now stands at 1,402 cubic metres per year and is projected to decline further under the influence of climate change. Increased aridity and drought are expected to heighten water scarcity in some areas, while intense rainfall and flooding will worsen erosion, waterlogging, and food insecurity.

To address these risks, Uganda has implemented several climate adaptation interventions, including:

- Development of a National Climate Change Adaptation Strategy and Flood Management Strategy;
- Establishment of early warning systems;
- Protection of lake shores, riverbanks, and catchment areas through nature-based solutions; and
- Construction of flood control and water harvesting infrastructure.

2. Water Supply and Quality

While domestic water supply remains a national priority, Uganda's water sources are increasingly affected by pollution from untreated municipal and industrial waste. Freshwater abstraction is dominated by domestic (51%), agricultural (41%), and industrial (8%) uses, with surface water meeting most demand.

Lake Victoria, the primary source of municipal water for Kampala and other urban centres, faces serious threats from pollution, eutrophication, and declining oxygen levels due to untreated sewage and agricultural runoff. Shallow wells and springs, critical to rural populations, are increasingly contaminated by poor sanitation and industrial effluent, while groundwater in mining areas faces risks from heavy metal leaching. In arid regions such as

Karamoja, perennial surface water is scarce, and existing valley tanks and dams are inadequate for livestock needs.

3. Access to WASH Services

Access to safe drinking water currently stands at 67% in rural areas and 72.2% in urban areas. However, only 17% of the population has access to safely managed drinking water, while 39% rely on basic services. Significant disparities remain:

- A 36-percentage point gap exists between the richest (80%) and poorest (44%) households;
- Access varies widely between Kampala (97%) and Karamoja (38%);
- In peri-urban and informal settlements, poor households spend up to 22% of their income purchasing water from private vendors.

Sanitation and hygiene lag behind national targets. Access to basic sanitation stands at 43.6% overall (48.1% urban, 31.1% rural), while 6.7% of households continue to practice open defecation—rising to 60.2% in Karamoja. Over 28 million Ugandans lack access to improved sanitation, and only 20% use at least a basic service.

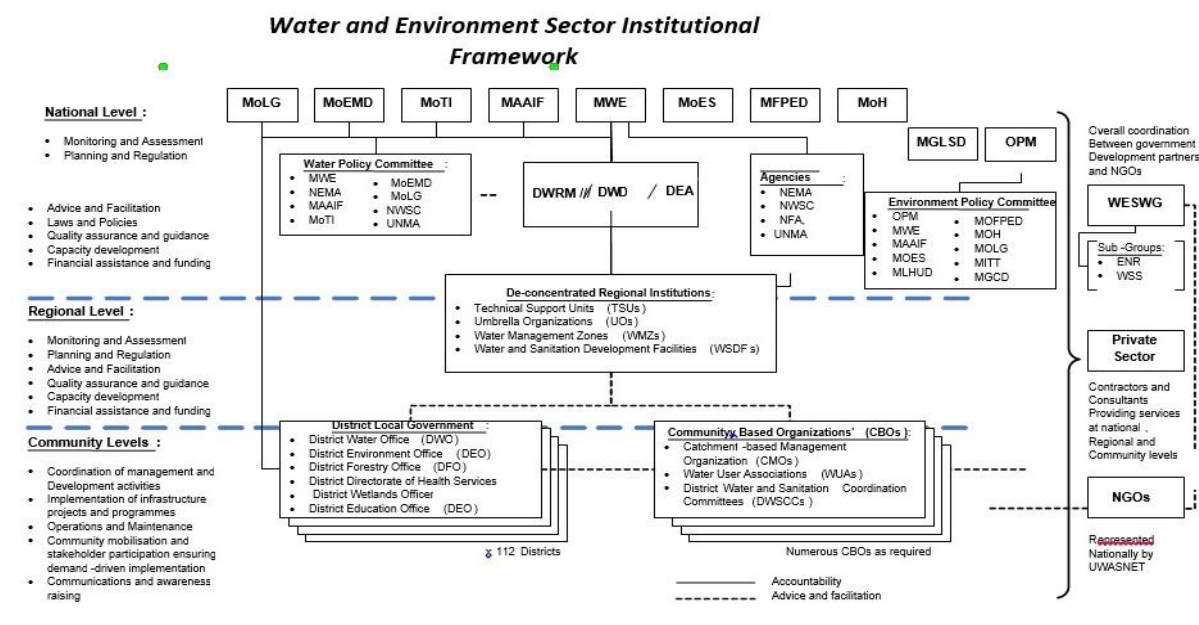
Hygiene indicators also remain low: in 2024, 47.1% of households had a handwashing facility near a toilet, yet only 24.3% had both water and soap.

In institutions:

- The average pupil-to-stance ratio in primary schools is 70:1;
- In healthcare facilities, 69% lack basic water supply, 88% lack basic sanitation, and 54% lack hygiene services.

These gaps undermine public health, education outcomes, and resilience to climate-induced disease outbreaks.

4. Institutional Framework



The WASH sector in Uganda operates under a multi-ministerial framework, coordinated primarily by the Ministry of Water and Environment (MWE). Other key ministries include the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Education and Sports, and the Ministry of Local Government. Their roles include policy guidance, planning, regulation, quality assurance, capacity development, and resource mobilization.

Under Uganda's decentralization policy, District Local Governments are responsible for WASH service delivery at the community level. The sector is further supported by civil society organizations under the Uganda Water and Sanitation NGO Network (UWASNET), development partners, and the private sector—forming a strong multi-stakeholder ecosystem that promotes coordination and mutual accountability.

5. Key Challenges

a) **Institutional Fragmentation and Coordination Gaps:**

Multiple actors operate with overlapping or unclear mandates, reducing coherence in planning, budgeting, and implementation—particularly in sanitation and hygiene. Decentralization has further complicated coordination, with weak inter-sectoral mechanisms at the district level.

b) **Regulatory and Enforcement Weaknesses:**

Despite comprehensive laws for water resource management, enforcement remains inconsistent, especially in wetlands and fragile ecosystems. Limited institutional capacity and community awareness hinder effective regulation, and climate resilience is not yet fully embedded in technical standards.

c) **Financing and Resource Mobilization Deficits:**

The sector remains highly dependent on external financing, with limited domestic investment—especially in rural areas. Capacity to prepare bankable proposals for climate and infrastructure financing is low, constraining access to international funds.

d) **Equity and Inclusion Gaps:**

Gender mainstreaming and inclusion of vulnerable groups remain weak. Populations in informal settlements, refugee camps, island communities, and fishing villages often face barriers to accessing services. Participation of women, youth, and marginalized groups in decision-making and monitoring remains limited.

e) These systemic gaps continue to challenge Uganda's ability to deliver inclusive, climate-resilient WASH services and achieve SDG 6.

6. National Priorities and Opportunities

Uganda's WASH sector priorities are aligned with the National Development Plan IV (NDP IV), the NRM Manifesto, and the Vision 2040, and are consistent with global commitments including the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the SWA Mutual Accountability Mechanism.

Priority focus areas include:

- Expanding safely managed, climate-resilient water and sanitation services;
- Strengthening sector governance, coordination, and accountability mechanisms;
- Increasing domestic financing and private sector participation;
- Promoting nature-based solutions for water security; and
- Addressing inequalities and gender gaps in access and participation.

Conclusion

Uganda has made significant progress in strengthening WASH governance, leadership, and policy frameworks. However, achieving universal and climate-resilient WASH services requires enhanced investment, stronger institutional coordination, and inclusive approaches that leave no one behind. The Government of Uganda remains committed to working with partners under the SWA framework to advance this agenda and accelerate progress towards SDG 6.

Mutual Accountability Mechanism Commitments

Existing MAM Commitment Update Form	
Review each <u>Existing Active Commitment</u> listed in the attached report and provide any updates to your commitments by filling out the fields below.	
1. Original Commitment Text <i>Develop a climate financing WASH investment plan by 2023</i>	Achieved
2. Is this commitment still relevant? (Yes or No) <i>If 'Yes', the commitment will remain active in the MAM. If 'No', it will be archived.</i>	No
3. Are there any changes to be made to the commitment? (e.g. wording, target year, contact person)	No
4. Progress rating on fulfilling commitment:	<i>Place a mark next to the rating that best describes progress to date</i>
☒ No Progress (0%)	
☐ Limited Progress (25–49%)	
☐ Some Progress (50–74%)	
☐ Substantially Fulfilled (75–99%)	
☐ Fully Fulfilled (100%)	100%
4. Briefly explain why the selected rating was given. Include any relevant reports, links, or evidence if available.	Completed as planned

Review each <u>Existing Active Commitment</u> listed in the attached report and provide any updates to your commitments by filling out the fields below.	
1. Original Commitment Text <i>Develop a NAP for the WASH sector by 2024</i>	Achieved
2. Is this commitment still relevant? (Yes or No) <i>If 'Yes', the commitment will remain active in the MAM. If 'No', it will be archived.</i>	No
3. Are there any changes to be made to the commitment? (e.g. wording, target year, contact person)	No
4. Progress rating on fulfilling commitment:	<i>Place a mark next to the rating that best describes progress to date</i>
 No Progress (0%)	
 Limited Progress (25–49%)	
 Some Progress (50–74%)	
 Substantially Fulfilled (75–99%)	
 Fully Fulfilled (100%)	100%
4. Briefly explain why the selected rating was given. Include any relevant reports, links, or evidence if available.	Completed as planned

Review each <u>Existing Active Commitment</u> listed in the attached report and provide any updates to your commitments by filling out the fields below.	
1. Original Commitment Text	Partly achieved
Build capacity of stakeholders to understand and mainstream the WASH and climate change NEXUS in their programmes and projects by 2024	
2. Is this commitment still relevant? (Yes or No)	Yes
If 'Yes', the commitment will remain active in the MAM. If 'No', it will be archived.	
3. Are there any changes to be made to the commitment? (e.g. wording, target year, contact person)	No
4. Progress rating on fulfilling commitment:	Place a mark next to the rating that best describes progress to date
● No Progress (0%)	
● Limited Progress (25–49%)	
● Some Progress (50–74%)	50%
● Substantially Fulfilled (75–99%)	
● Fully Fulfilled (100%)	
4. Briefly explain why the selected rating was given. Include any relevant reports, links, or evidence if available.	Capacity building of stakeholders still ongoing targeting different stakeholders at all levels.

New MAM Commitment Submission Form	
Add any new commitment to be registered in the MAM by filling out the fields below.	
1. Full Commitment Text <i>Clearly state the commitment using SMART criteria (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound).</i>	<i>Popularization of the WASH NAP by 2027</i>
2. Lead Ministry / Institution	Ministry of Water and Environment
3. Contact person for this commitment <i>Name and email address</i>	Dr. Alfred Okot Okidi Permanent Secretary Ministry of Water and Environment alfred.okidi64@gmail.com
4. Is this commitment integrated with national plans or strategies? <i>Specify links to national development plans, NDCs, NAPs, investment frameworks, etc.</i>	Yes - Uganda National Determined Contributions: Uganda's Updated Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) United Nations Development Programme Fourth-National-Development-Plan-NDPIV-1.pdf Water-and-Environment-Sector-Investment-Plan-2018.pdf
5. Expected Completion Date (Year/Month)	December 2027
6. Indicators or milestones to track progress <i>List 1–3 specific indicators or outputs that will help track implementation.</i>	1. Existent popular version 2. Number of capacity building sessions 3. No. of stakeholder engagement meetings
7. Is this commitment part of a Head-of-State compact developed through the Heads of State Initiative (HoSI)? (Yes or No)	No

New MAM Commitment Submission Form	
Add any new commitment to be registered in the MAM by filling out the fields below.	
1. Full Commitment Text <i>Clearly state the commitment using SMART criteria (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound).</i>	Popularization of the Health NAP by 2027
2. Lead Ministry / Institution	Ministry of Health
3. Contact person for this commitment <i>Name and email address</i>	Dr. Diana Atwine Permanent Secretary Ministry of Health datwine1273@gmail.com
4. Is this commitment integrated with national plans or strategies? <i>Specify links to national development plans, NDCs, NAPs, investment frameworks, etc.</i>	Yes - Uganda National Determined Contributions: Uganda's Updated Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) United Nations Development Programme Fourth-National-Development-Plan-NDPIV-1.pdf
5. Expected Completion Date (Year/Month)	December 2027
6. Indicators or milestones to track progress <i>List 1–3 specific indicators or outputs that will help track implementation.</i>	1. Existent popular version 2. Number of capacity building sessions 3. No. of stakeholder engagement meetings
7. Is this commitment part of a Head-of-State compact developed through the Heads of State Initiative (HoSI)? (Yes or No)	No