

# CONCEPT NOTE

## THE 8TH UGANDA WATER AND ENVIRONMENT WEEK (UWEWK) 2025

### 1.0 Introduction

Uganda Water and Environment Week (UWEWK) is a weeklong event that is organized annually by the Ministry of Water and Environment (MWE) through the Water Resources Institute (WRI). The event has evolved and grown to become the flagship program for advocacy, influencing, information sharing, and learning within the water and environment spectrum. Since its inception in 2018, the event seeks to contribute to the attainment of sustainable socio-economic transformation and achieving Ugandan National Development Plan and vision 2040. It also seeks to contribute to achievement of international agenda such as 2030 Agenda, Africa Agenda 2063, Water Action Decade, global agenda for environment conservation and climate change among others. UWEWK therefore provides an interface between sector actors and other stakeholders to exchange knowledge and information on management and development water, environment and related natural resources in general and across various sectors of the economy.

### 2.0 Background

The Ministry of Water and Environment (MWE) in collaboration with key partners has so far held seven annual UWEWKs (2018, 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023 and 2024). These events have attracted high-level political participation including the Vice President, the Prime Minister, Chief Justice, Ministers, members of parliament of the Republic of Uganda, Local Governments, Cultural and Religious Institutions, and other stakeholders both nationally and internationally. During the year 2024 several conferences and events related to water, environment and climate change were held at national, regional and international levels. These key events include among others the 7<sup>th</sup> Uganda Water and Environment Week, Africa Water Week, World Water Forum, World Water Week, High-level Political Forum, World Biodiversity Summit, African water and sanitation congress (AfricaSan7 UNFCCC-Conference of Parties (COP29), the Youth Employment and Empowerment Summit 2024, the International Water Association (IWA) Conference etc. Some of the key outcomes, recommendations, messages and commitments from these conferences/events are considered relevant to the Water and Environment sector in Uganda and have been the basis for the formulation of the overall theme and subthemes for UWEWK2025.

UWEWK2025 will therefore give special attention to the outcomes and recommendations from these events. It will explore their implications to Uganda and discuss the status of their operationalization or domestication and what needs to be done to ensure that they are fully operationalized.

### 3.0 UWEWK2025: Goal, Objectives, Theme and Subthemes

MWE through the Water Resources Institute (WRI) will hold the eighth Uganda Water and Environment Week (UWEWK2025) from **Monday 17<sup>th</sup> March to Friday 21<sup>st</sup> March 2025**. The event will also involve commemoration of three Annual Sector International Days namely International Forest Day, World Water Day and World Meteorological Day.

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### 3.1 Overall goal of UWEWK2025

The overall goal of UWEWK2025 is to enhance cooperation and bridge borders for peaceful and sustainable utilization of water and environment resources to ensure resilient communities and improved lives and livelihood.

### 3.2 Specific Objectives of the UWEWK2025

The specific objectives of UWEWK2025 are to:

- a. Review the status of implementation of the outcomes and recommendations of UWEWK2024, and those of key global, regional and national water, environment and climate change related events
- b. Explore approaches for translating science and innovation for effective and efficient use, development and protection of water and environment resources for sustainable future
- c. Review the centrality of water and environment resources for increased production and productivity as guided by NPDIV
- d. Explore role of equitable and sustainable utilization of water and environment for shared peace and prosperity.

### 3.3 Overall theme for UWEWK2025

The overall theme of UWEWK 2025 is “*Water and environment resources for enhanced resilience and improved incomes and livelihoods*”.

### 3.4. UWEWK2025 Subthemes

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

#### a) Sub-theme 1: Water and environment for a peaceful and sustainable future

Water and environment are critical natural resources for humankind and the future of our planet. Although water is our largest natural resource, it's both finite and irreplaceable. It is imperative therefore to recognise the pivotal role water and environment play in shaping peace and conflict worldwide. Water and environment resources contribute to a sustainable future. This ensures rivers and wetlands, ecosystems are healthy and able to support future generations. In a world where over 3 billion people depend on water that crosses national borders, the need for cooperation and equitable access has never been more pressing. Despite this, according to the UN, only 24 countries have cooperation agreements on shared waters.

The Nile Basin Initiative (NBI) is a partnership among the Nile riparian states that “seeks to develop the river in a cooperative manner, share substantial socioeconomic benefits, and promote regional peace and security. The countries negotiated an Agreement on River Nile called Nile River Basin Cooperative Framework Agreement (CFA) that came in force on 13<sup>th</sup> October 2024. The CFA provides a legal and institutional framework for cooperation over these shared water resources and outlines principles, rights and obligations for management and development of the Nile Basin water resources. The role of the CFA in promoting integrated management, sustainable development, and harmonious utilization of the water

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resources of the Basin, as well as their conservation and protection for the benefit of present and future generations therefore needs to be interrogated.

The nexus between water, environment, conflict and peace is profound, water scarcity can escalate tensions between nations, but cooperation in water and environment utilization can foster relationships and help communities become more resilient. Similarly, as climate change intensifies and populations grow, the pressure on water and environment resources increases alongside the potential for conflict among communities, users and stakeholders. To maintain peace in water scarcity regions, we must invest in sustainable water management systems to provide a long-term solution. That's why water and environment sustainability is vital to the future well-being of humans, aquatic conservation, ecosystems and socio-economic development

The growing pressure on water and environment resources is a challenge that should be at the crux of the climate and security debate. Therefore, this sub-theme seeks to raise awareness of the complex inter-linkages between threats to both the natural world, human security and sustainable future. It will explore the relationship between water, environment and peace, especially in fragile contexts. The subtheme will further explore linkages between water, environment, climate change and foreign policy with regard to transboundary water and environment resources management. It will also focus on benefits of cooperation over shared water resources, the role of improved water and environment management in fragile contexts and how water diplomacy can be a powerful tool for conflict prevention and peacebuilding. The role of security agencies, cultural and religious institutions, and media among others in promoting peace, risk reduction and conflict resolution will be explored.

#### b) Sub-theme 2: Water and environment for climate action

SDG 13 calls for urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts. It is intrinsically linked to all 16 Goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. To address climate change, countries adopted the Paris Agreement to limit global temperature rise to well below 2 degrees Celsius. Climate change is a global health emergency that threatens to reverse decades of health and development gains, cause widespread human suffering, deepen global health inequities, and put at risk the environmental and economic systems we depend on for our survival. Climate action (or climate change action) calls for a range of activities, mechanisms, policy instruments etc. that aim at reducing the severity of human-induced climate change and its impacts. Global action to reduce short-lived climate pollutants can prevent 0.6°C warming of the planet by 2050. Cutting emissions of carbon dioxide and short-lived climate pollutants is critical to slow the rate of global warming and achieve the 2°C target set by the Paris Agreement. Reducing short-lived climate pollutants can have immediate economic benefits from job creation and increased household income as well as lasting ancillary benefits from improved public health, reduced poverty and inequality, and lessened climate change impacts. Without action, the world's average surface temperature is projected to rise over the 21<sup>st</sup> century and is likely to surpass 3°C this century with some areas of the world expected to warm even more. The poorest and most vulnerable people will be affected the most. As the world faces unprecedented frequent floods, droughts, heat waves, fires, and storms, now is a crucial moment for leaders to assess and reaffirm their commitments to climate action.

On water and an environmental scale, climate change is leading to more droughts, storms and floods than previously recorded in history. Concerns of climate change to water supply systems include damage to

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infrastructure from flooding, loss of water sources due to declining rainfall and increasing demand, changes in the water quality of water sources and within distribution chain of water, damaged or poor sanitary systems, poor operation and maintenance, and disruption of essential power systems. Effective management of water and environment resources is central to managing floods and droughts, satisfying the need for different uses, and conserving the resource base and the broader ecosystem.

Therefore, this subtheme will explore innovative water and environment technologies and ways for adapting to and mitigating impacts of climate change to address water scarcity, equity and accessibility, environmental conservation and ecosystem protection. The technologies may include among others, roads for rain harvesting, flood control through water storage mechanisms “store when pretty” to address shortages of water supply in prolonged droughts. Triple Rs (reduce, recycle and reuse) technologies to improve resource efficiency and address pollution of water and environment resources will be explored. Options for transitioning away from the use of oil and gas to clean, safe and renewable energy, transition to zero-carbon transportation systems with an emphasis on active transportation, building local, healthy, and sustainable food and agricultural systems that is central to climate action will be investigated.

### c) Sub-theme 3: Equitable and sustainable use of water and environment resources for improved incomes and livelihoods

Over the past 30 years, Government of Uganda has developed the legal and institutional framework for management and development of water and environment resources. Implementation of water and environment resources management interventions on the ground is ongoing aimed at ensuring that these resources are shared equitably and sustainably for the benefit of all Ugandans and various sectors. For a long time, very little attention was being given to how these resources can contribute to improved incomes and livelihoods. The situation has however changed and most of the water and environment projects now give attention to these issues.

Considering that water and environment resources play important roles in ensuring equitable, sustainable and productive economies, Government through the Ministry of Water and Environment and other stakeholders are undertaking several programmes in the development and utilization of water and environment resources for productive use in crop irrigation, livestock, aquaculture, rural and urban industries and other commercial uses to improve people’s livelihoods and incomes. Construction of medium irrigation schemes, small scale irrigation schemes, earth dams, valley tanks, deep boreholes and bulk water schemes are some of the programs that are utilizing available water and environment resources improved incomes and livelihoods. Furthermore, a number of projects to improve resilience of communities to the risk of floods, droughts and landslides through equitable and sustainable management of water and related resources are ongoing. Through these project interventions communities have registered increased household incomes and improved livelihoods. For instance, under one of the projects to enhance resilience of communities to impacts of climate change through a catchment based management of water and related resources, 26 Women groups were trained in production, business planning and marketing of improved cook stoves, 14 Water and Environment Cooperative Societies were formed and fully registered with Ministry of Trade, Industry and Cooperatives to be a mechanism through which alternative sources of incomes are provided to communities for implementing various

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environmental friendly income generating. The interventions increased the resilience of ecosystems by supporting sustainable management of forests, wetlands and riverbanks, increased the resilience of agricultural landscapes by supporting communities to develop and implement sustainable water harvesting, soil bio-physical and flood control structures. Amidst the great strides made, gaps remain in ensuring meaningful participation of diverse groups particularly women, youths and people with disabilities in the governance of and benefit from natural resources. Whereas policy frameworks allow for this, these groups are usually unable to influence natural resource management and governance decisions due to limited skills and exposure, coupled with inhibitive gender and social norms. It is envisaged under NDPIV, that investing in sustainable technologies and green initiatives will foster innovation and create job opportunities in sectors such as renewable energy, conservation, and environmentally friendly practices that will increase household incomes and improve livelihoods. For equity to be realised out these efforts, deliberate efforts will be needed to build capacity of women, youth and people with disabilities, while focusing gender interventions on shifting inhibitive norms.

Therefore, this sub-theme will highlight the centrality of water and environment resources for socio-economic development, employment creation, and improved incomes and livelihoods. It will explore approaches, practices and policy issues such as sustainable investments in water infrastructure; equitable water and environment governance; water and working conditions; and the links between water-related skills, innovation and decent job creation for people of all genders and age groups. It will also explore and discuss how to build national capacity to leverage green financing for climate change responsive infrastructure development, catchment based integrated management of water and environment resources, and water and environment cooperative societies for improved household income and livelihoods

d) **Sub-theme 4: Water and environment innovations, knowledge and capacity for empowering a new generation**

The current global climate change crisis, characterized by devastating floods, droughts, extreme temperatures, and other environmentally driven catastrophes, underscores the urgent need for a comprehensive response. In this context, the significance of cultivating green skills, particularly among the youth, cannot be overemphasized. According to the United Nations data, Africa is home to the world's youngest population, with 70% of sub-Saharan Africa under 30. This further amplifies the need to integrate environmental considerations into every facet of our society, from economic models to educational systems. The concept of green skills encapsulates this holistic approach, encompassing a spectrum of competencies, knowledge, and capacities that equip new generation to partake in sustainable practices. The skills span from curbing environmental challenges, addressing water resources availability, accessibility of WASH services to advancing sustainable development and abating the far-reaching impacts of climate change. The new generation/youth, standing at the nexus of technological innovation, social dynamism, and visionary thinking, are uniquely positioned to drive transformative change. The rationale behind placing an emphasis on empowering youth is rooted in the recognition that they represent a potent force for shaping the future.

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By imparting green skills to this cohort, we not only prepare them for sustainable career paths but also empower them to ignite a paradigm shift towards eco-conscious decision-making and behaviours. At its core, green skills foster a profound understanding of the intricate interplay between human activities and the environment. Empowering youth with green skills is a key strategy for making our future more sustainable in various ways. Green skills encompass a diversified spectrum of proficiencies, each with a distinctive role in cultivating a sustainable future such as: i) innovation and technology, ii) adaptation of sustainable practices, iii) responsible consumerism iv) environmental advocacy, v) Operationalization of the O&M framework, vi) climate change adaption and mitigation, vii) education and outreach viii) trans generational knowledge transfer and ix) cultural and social integration among others. These can work towards inclusive, equitable and sustainably addressing water and environmental challenges while promoting inter and intra generational knowledge transfer, capacity building, social justice and cultural preservation. This multiplier effect can lead to a more informed and environmentally conscious society. Additionally, green-skilled youth/new generation can become influential leaders and policymakers, shaping legislation and policies that prioritize sustainability.

By investing in the education and empowerment of new generation with green skills, we are nurturing a generation that is prepared to lead the way toward a more sustainable future. Their actions and choices can drive positive change across various sectors, fostering a healthier planet and a higher quality of life for all.

In addition to green skills, this sub-theme will look at water and environment innovations, focusing on innovative financing and service delivery models that are sustainable and performance-driven. Under this topic, the focus on exploring how innovative financing mechanisms—such as results-based financing and pooled funding structures—can address persistent challenges in the water and sanitation sector, including fragmented funding, inadequate service delivery, poor O&M of WASH facilities and their impact of availability of water and environment resources for multiple uses and weak accountability systems.

This sub-theme will therefore explore how investing in the education and empowerment of new generation with skills green, can nurture a generation that is prepared to lead the way toward a more sustainable future. It will also explore opportunities for technological advancements and cultivating an environmentally literate and empowered youth and new generation. It will further explore a crucial role organizations can play in building a sustainable future by breaking down barriers, collaborating on educational resources, and offering support to schools and communities. Environmental literacy is not just an academic goal but an ethical imperative shaping the leaders and citizens who will drive positive change for our planet. Finally, this sub-theme will explore how innovations in innovative financing and service delivery can create sustainability

### **3. 5 Expected Outputs**

At the end of UWEWK 2025, it is expected that the participants will be able to:

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1. Know the status of implementation of the outcomes and recommendations of UWEWK2024, and those of key global, regional and national water, environment and climate change related events.
2. Identify innovative approaches and solutions for addressing water, environment, and climate change challenges in Uganda.
3. Know the contribution of water, sanitation and environment for peaceful and sustainable future.
4. Appreciate the role of the youth and how to empower them to effectively contribute to the sustainable management and protection of water and environment resources.

## 4.0 PROPOSED ACTIVITIES AND APPROACH

UWEWK2025 will be delivered in a holistic manner so as to create a linkage between previous UWEWKs, and other water, environment and climate change related events held during the year such as World Water Forum, Africa Water Week, World Water Week, High-level Political Forum, World Biodiversity Summit, African water and sanitation congress (AfricaSan7 UNFCCC-Conference of Parties (COP29), the Youth Employment and Empowerment Summit 2024, the International Water Association (IWA). The holistic approach will also amplify the publicity and visibility for the UWEWK through the pre-event activities planned to be implemented between two to three weeks that will cascade into the main event, which will last for five days. It is planned that the overall publicity campaign about the Water and Environment Week will start at least two months prior to the event. The proposed activities for the UWEWK2025 are categorized into (a) pre-event, (b) main event, and (c) post-event activities.

### 4.1 Pre-event Activities

The UWEWK 2025 pre-event activities will include but not be limited to;

- Planning and organising the UWEWK 2025;
- Publicity campaigns, including use of both print and electronic media, radio and TV talk shows, social media platforms and promotional materials prior to the event;
- Decentralised UWEWK2025 activities in line with the sub-themes will be carried out in the 6 de-concentrated regional structures of MWE and will include among others: Radio talk shows, dialogues and panel discussions, paper presentations, regional Hackathon, regional youth debates, marathon, football matches, awareness campaigns, clean up exercises, restorations and others;
- Walking for water, environment and climate change
- A write-shop to support presenters to prepare and improve their presentations writing skills.
- Community involvement activities such as tree planting, clean up exercises and environmental conservation to raise awareness among the communities and stakeholders in environs of MWE Headquarters, Luzira will be held at national level.

#### 4.1.1 Methodology and approach for delivery of pre-event activities for UWEWK2025 in MWE de-concentrated structure

The UWEWK2025 pre-event activities in de-concentrated structures will be held as hybrid (virtual and physical) to ensure wider reach out to stakeholders at national, regional and international level. The

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UWEWK regional activities will be held 1 to 3 weeks prior to the main event under the subthemes that feed into the overall theme of the UWEWK2025. The sub-themes are: *a) Water and environment for a peaceful and sustainable future, b) Water and environment for climate action c) Equitable and sustainable use of water and environment resources for improved incomes and livelihoods and d) Water and environment innovations, knowledge and capacity for empowering a new generation.* Each of the 2 regional de-concentrated structures will focus on one subthemes as part of their regional activities and discussions. The proposed subtheme distribution for the regional UWEWK2025 are as follows:

- a. Water and environment for a peaceful and sustainable future - **Karamoja and Mbale**
- b. Equitable and sustainable use of water and environment resources for improved incomes and livelihoods - **Wakiso and Mbarara**
- c. Water and environment for climate action.- **Fort Portal**
- d. Water and environment innovations, knowledge and capacity for empowering a new generation - **Lira**

## 4.2 UWEWK2025 Main Event

The UWEWK 2025 main event will also be held as hybrid (physical and virtual) at the Ministry of Water and Environment auditorium and will include among others: Official opening and closing of UWEWK2025; Commemoration of Sector International days; discussion of outcomes and recommendations of UWEWK 2024 and those from global and regional water, environment and climate change related events; paper and posters presentations; parallel sessions (side events, applied trainings, national youth debate, career talk, hackathon for the finalist etc.); exhibition; awards and so many other activities.

The official opening and closing ceremonies will be televised live on selected national televisions on **Monday 17<sup>th</sup> March 2025 from 9:00 am to 12:00 noon and Friday March 21<sup>st</sup> 2025 from 2:00 PM to 4:00 PM** respectively. The opening will have a keynote presentation and a dialogue focusing on the overall theme while the closing ceremony will have a dialogue focusing on the outcomes of the event.

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

Parallel sessions will be organized collaboratively with relevant stakeholders and partners working in those specific areas and will be held from Monday 17<sup>th</sup> to Friday 21<sup>st</sup> March 2025. The parallel sessions will include paper presentations, applied trainings, field visits and side events.

## 4.3 Post Event Activities

The post event activities will include among others:

- Preparation of the summary of the outcomes of UWEWK2025 and UWEWK2025 overall report.
- Implementation of the recommendations and outcomes of UWEWK2025.

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- Continuous communication and dissemination of information about the UWEWK past, present and the future events through various communication channels and audiences planning and preparations of UWEWK2026.

## 5.0 COORDINATION AND MANAGEMENT

The Ministry of Water and Environment through the Water Resources Institute will lead the organization of the Uganda Water and Environment Week 2025. For effective coordination and management, the WRI will work closely with partners (national and international), including Government ministries, departments and agencies (MDAs), Development Partners, non-governmental organizations, UN agencies, academic institutions, private sector and other relevant institutions.

A National Organising Committee and Sub Committees involving varied stakeholders will be established to support the coordination and management of UWEWK2025.

## 6.0 PROPOSED BUDGET

The estimated budget for the UWEWK2025 is **UGX 1,036,330,000**. This will cover pre-event activities, conference, field trips, community engagements, commemoration of three international days, entertainment, printing and publications, publicity and communication, and overall conference preparation. The proposed sources of funding for the Uganda Water Week 2025 are the Government of Uganda (GoU), Strategic Partners, side event fees and exhibition fees.

## 7.0 PARTNERS AND SPONSORS

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

## 8.0 EXPRESSION OF INTEREST

Individuals, institutions and organizations that would like to participate in the Uganda Water and Environment Week 2025 will need to do so by Expression of Interest (EOI) through physical or online registration. Details of the various deadlines will be indicated in the call for abstracts, papers and invitation for registration.

For any further information, please contact us on;

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