

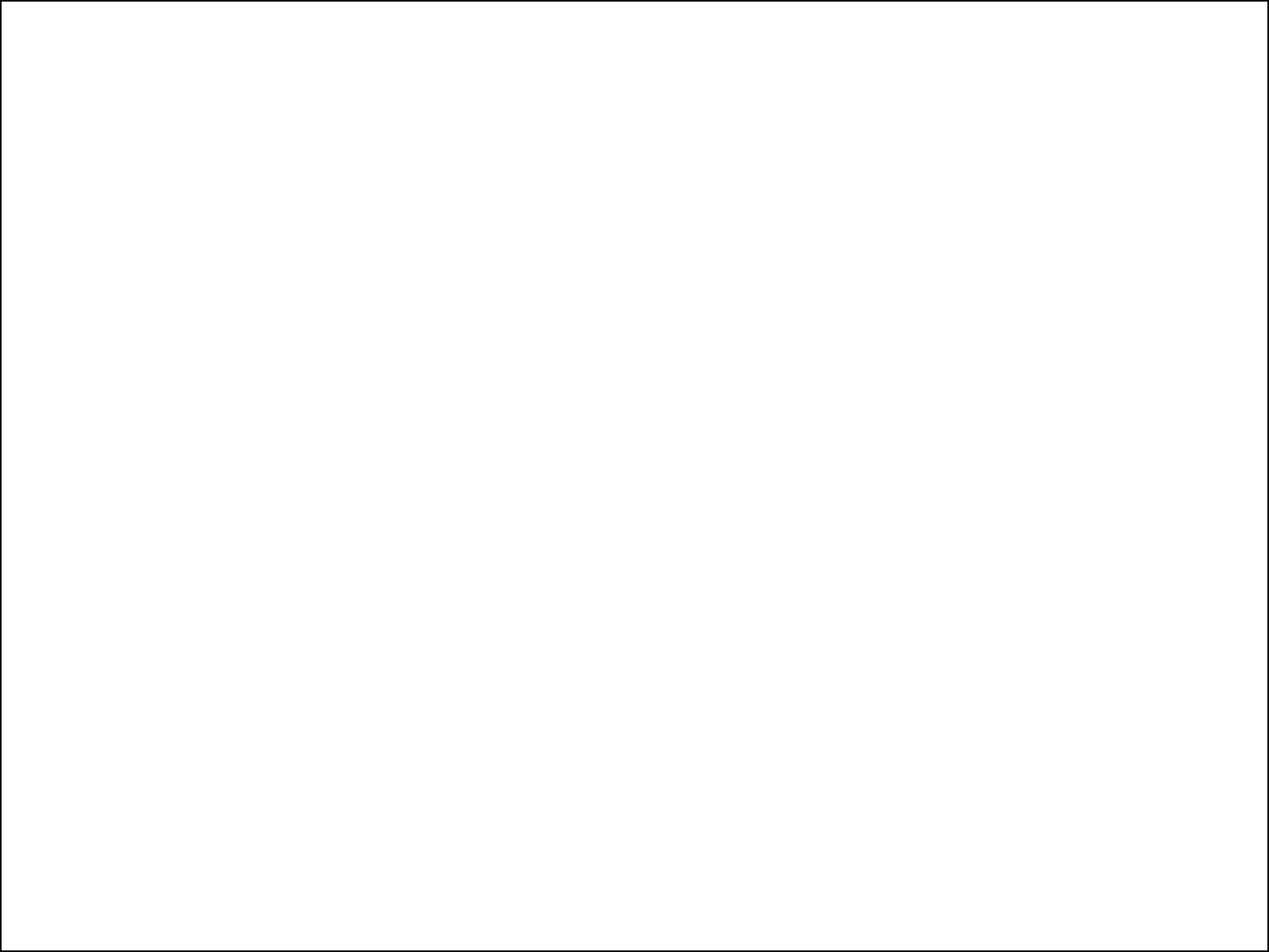


POLICY BRIEF ON BARRIERS TO WOMEN'S NATURAL RESOURCE RIGHTS



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There is also lack of clear wetland boundaries and demarcation for effective monitoring of community access by natural resources department which has contributed to wetland encroachment and depletion.

Introduction

UDN is a national policy advocacy organization that promotes and advocates for poor and marginalized people to participate 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 poor people is at the heart of UDN's work. UDN works in concert with communities from different parts of the country and national-level strategic allies and partners to eradicate corruption, promote good governance and accountable leadership.

Background

Women play an essential role in the management of natural resources, including land, water, forests and energy and often have a profound traditional and contemporary knowledge of the natural world around them. Women's triple role as water, firewood and food collectors, put them so close to the environment and so, they tend to face a lot of challenges which

include; Spending a lot of time and energy in fetching water and collecting firewood, facing the effect of extreme weather such as drought and floods resulting into food and water shortages, loss of school time by children, especially girls, leading to poor academic performance when fetching water and firewood. Women are also exposed to sexual violence as they delay at wells or forests in search of water and firewood.

It is the responsibility of the State to secure women's rights to natural resources through putting in place responsive laws and policies, budgetary provisions and disbursements for effective implementation. Lack of alternative sources of energy and other natural resources has caused much pressure on natural resources leading to their depletion. For instance, over 90% of Ugandans depend on wood fuel as a source of energy and this has led to deforestation. Uganda Debt Network undertook a study on women's access to natural resources in Bukedea whose objectives were;

- a. To review the existing policy and legal framework for promotion and protection of women and children's rights to access, control and utilization of land, water and environment.
- b. To review and analyze budget and disbursement trends for the implementation water, land and forest resources especially for women.

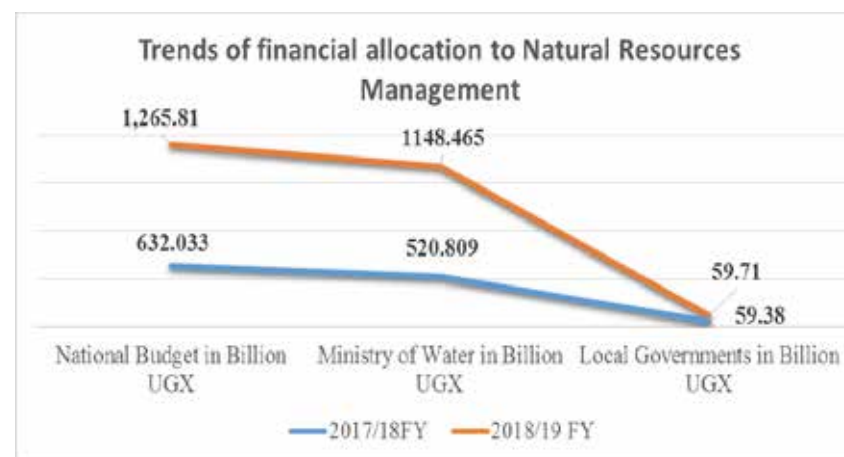
- c. To identify critical opportunities and challenges (legal, social, cultural, economic and political) to the full protection and promotion of women resource rights.
- d. To propose actionable recommendations and provide a road map for demand and supply side advocacy for increased financing towards ENR sector for women's resource rights at local and national level.

The study identified challenges and opportunities that can be harnessed to address the current situation. Key challenges included; high poverty levels, limited resource envelope for implementing women natural resources, limited autonomy of local government to plan for natural resources, environmental degradation of wetlands and forests and limited technical capacity to mainstream gender. In spite of these challenges, key opportunities were identified which included, enabling policy and laws that are conducive for gender mainstreaming. However, such opportunities have not been harnessed causing a number of gaps in laws and policies many of which have not been implemented.

KEY ISSUES RAISED BY THE STUDY


The past trends in financial allocation to management of Natural resources has indicated a slight increase in amount allocated at National level between 2017/18 and 2018/2019¹ Financial year by 2.9%, making it 5% as share of Nation Budget. Whereas government is commended for such an increase, it is still minimal to cause a change. The allocation at Local Government level has however not changed for the past two years, but

¹ Approved Budget Estimates, FY 2018/19, Vol 1: Central Government Votes




instead reduced as a number of local governments depend on transfers from Ministry of Water and Environment to fund their Natural resources budgets. The wetlands management department (WMD) has not worked at its maximum levels. Restoration of degraded wetlands fell far below the ideal, with only 0.3% of the required area having been restored, the short fall of 99.7% cannot be achieved by 2020. In addition, there has been a delay to gazette wetlands and complete demarcation which makes it difficult to identify wetland boundaries and discourage continued encroachment. Moreover, both NEMA and WMD have limited capacity to supervise and monitor issuance of permits and titles in Wetlands, yet once permit and titles are issued cancellation is even much more expensive for instance, 6.74 Billion² is required to council wetland permits and titles in Kampala and Wakiso alone.

² Auditor General Report to Parliament 2018




54% of the population in Bukedea is poor, **20%** live in absolute poverty hence reliance on natural resources for their livelihood



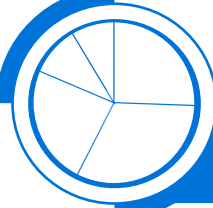
99% of households in Bukedea rely on biomass for their household energy which has exerted pressure on existing forest resources



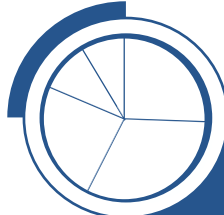
99% of land in Bukedea is customarily owned, discriminated women ownership and control over natural resources




Wetland coverage dropped from **15.5%** in 1994 to **13%** in 2015. **31%** of the remaining wetlands countrywide are degraded of which 46% is from Eastern Uganda



6% of the National budget allocated to Natural resource management is negligible to conserve natural resources.



4.4% of Bukedea district Budget allocated to Natural resources and 0.45% of sub county budget allocated to Natural resources due to lack of prioritization of natural resources by the sub counties




Only **65%** of recurrent expenditure for natural resources was released from Central government to Bukedea. The District was expected to cover up from local revenue whose collection was at 17%?



Management of natural resources has not been fully devolved to local government. LGs have continued to rely on Central government for planning and financing.



Natural resources policies / laws are silent about gender mainstreaming in natural resource management yet there is Low capacity of Local Government to mainstream gender in natural resource management



The 2016-2021 environment and natural resources sub-sector gender mainstreaming strategy has not been implemented.



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POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Sustainability of natural resources management calls for involvement of women who are the highest users of natural resources especially land, forests and water. Uganda Debt Network study on women's natural resources in Bukedea district and the national level presents challenges and opportunities that need to be addressed. The study recommends the following policy recommendations;

1. Increase financing for women natural resources:

Whereas there has been an increase in budget allocation to natural resource management at national level, such budgets have not catered for women involvement in the management of natural resources especially at lower levels. Local Governments should have a deliberate effort to include women participation in natural resource management as a key performance indicator for local governments.

This will compel Local Governments to have specific budget lines for wetland demarcation, community sensitization, environmental protection, wetland restoration and tree planting as well as capacity building of Local Government staff in mainstreaming gender in natural resource management. Stakeholders need to be engaged to dialogue on the best way to increase financing for women natural resources.

2. Enforce guidelines on Mainstreaming women in natural resource management:

The Equal Opportunities commission has played a big role to ensure that ministerial and sectorial plans and budgets are compliant to gender issues, but less efforts have been made to ensure that implementation of such plans are also assessed for their compliance.

Strict guidelines for gender mainstreaming would contribute to address other structural challenges that affect implementation of such budgets. There is need to change Customs and practices that discriminate against women especially in accessing productive resources. Increasing number of women in decision making positions is one avenue through which women's grievances pertaining to natural resources can be amplified.

3. Civil society to strengthen the capacity of women groups to advocate for their rights in natural resource management:

There is need to create awareness on women's rights on natural resources management to enable them play their role of preserving such resources as well as holding government accountable for the resources they are entrusted. For example the management of the Gravitational Flow Scheme (GFS) under the MWE.

4. Economic empowerment of women:

Government of Uganda should promote Labour saving and income generating devices for women to eradicate poverty. This will contribute to reduced pressure on natural resources. Communities should also be empowered to adapt to climate change and build their resilience while taking in consideration gender aspects to natural resource management. Funding modalities such as Ministry of Gender Women Empowerment program should specifically promote energy saving technologies alongside other economic empowerment outcomes.

- 5. Decentralize Management of Natural resources to Local Governments.** Natural resource depletion is felt much at community level yet it's not a key local government priority under decentralization. Devolution of Natural Resources Management to local government would compel them to plan and allocate resources for the management of such resources but also enable Environmental Officers at Local government to be involved in issuance of permits, titles and supervision of land use.

Conclusion

Women's triple role as water, firewood and food collectors, put them so close to the environment yet they have not been involved in processes and decisions that preserve wetlands. Natural resource degradation affects women more than men and yet they are hardly involved in natural resources management especially at Local government level. Efforts have been made at National level to increase budget allocation for wetland management but this has not been reciprocated at local government level. Local governments hence need to prioritize natural resource management for sustainability of all development processes with women as key actors in natural resource management.

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