

Monitoring SDG 6.2 and 6.3

Case Study 3: Uganda



Background

Uganda, a low-income country in East Africa on the shores of Lake Victoria, is home to 47 million people, including over 1 million refugees from neighbouring countries. 75% of the population live in rural areas. A presidential republic, it has long had a policy of decentralization of services, and a wide range of powers, responsibilities and functions have been transferred to District Local Governments and Lower Local Councils.

While the country has been pushing a steady development agenda with support from Development Partners, poverty levels remain high. And while it has recognized the Human Right to Water and Sanitation, sanitation coverage levels remain low. As per the WHO-UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme (JMP), in 2020 just under 20% of the total population had access to basic sanitation services, just under 18% accessed limited services, and 57% accessed unimproved sanitation. Open defecation rates averaged 4.7%, varying from 5.6% in rural areas to 1.9% in rural areas. Notably, 15.5% of rural households were reported to have access to safely managed sanitation services, which may largely be the result of a push for higher quality on-site sanitation and safe abandonment of pit latrines. Rural sanitation and hygiene programming is largely based on Community-Led Total Sanitation (CLTS) and Home Improvement Campaigns (HIC).

Uganda has long been an active partner in international cooperation, including in the WASH sector. The country is a member of Sanitation and Water for All (SWA), and reports to the UN-Water Global Analysis and Assessment of Sanitation and Drinking Water (GLAAS) process coordinated by the World Health Organization (WHO). It was also part of piloting the GLAAS-associated TrackFin (Tracking Financing to WASH), a methodology to identify and track financing to the WASH sector at the national or sub-national level. Uganda has been the subject of many multi-country studies and case studies, and overall has a well-documented WASH sector. It also undertakes Voluntary National Reviews of progress on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), with the most recent VNR which included reporting on SDG 6 on Water, published in 2020.

WASH sector governance, planning & review

Sector governing bodies

The roles and responsibilities of water and sanitation stakeholders in Uganda are well defined. As stated by UNICEF (2019), “over the last few decades, the Government of Uganda has built a detailed and comprehensive legal and institutional framework to support improved water supply, sanitation and water resources management.”

The Ministry of Water and Environment (MWE) has the overall sector lead. It is responsible for determining priorities, setting policies and standards for water development, and regulating water resource activities and water and sanitation services. Sanitation service delivery is organized differently for urban, and rural and small-town contexts. The National Water and Sewerage Corporation (NWSC), an autonomous public utility owned by the Government of Uganda (GoU) and positioned under the MWE, is responsible for the provision of urban water and sanitation services in all large towns and cities, and an increasing number of small towns. They manage the existing sewerage network and associated treatment infrastructure, but sewerage coverage is still extremely limited (6.4% in 2019, UNICEF).

District and Town Councils are legally in charge of service delivery under the Decentralisation Act. But since 2017, so-called regional Umbrella Authorities for Water and Sanitation have become responsible for directly managing water and sanitation service delivery in most small towns and surrounding rural areas. Under the new arrangement the regional Umbrellas are appointed as water authorities, contract local scheme operators and are in charge of revenue collection. As of June 2019, about half of the gazetted areas (220) were effectively taken over, while the others were still under local government responsibility (UNICEF, 2019). In practice, these Umbrellas are concerned more with water supply than with sanitation, as much of the latter remains on-site in rural areas and rural growth centers.

For rural sanitation and hygiene, the Ministry of Health (MOH) is responsible for hygiene and sanitation promotion for households, through the Environmental Health Division (EHD). Their strategy is largely based on CLTS, and some sanitation marketing. The Ministry of Education and Sport is responsible for hygiene education and provision of sanitation facilities in primary schools. It also promotes handwashing after latrine use in schools. The MWE is responsible for development of public sanitary facilities and promotion of good hygiene and sanitation practices in small towns and rural growth centres. The latter includes CLTS and sanitation marketing, construction of on-site sanitation facilities in public markets and schools, and construction of faecal sludge treatment facilities.

Sector coordination and oversight is ensured through the Water and Environment Sector Working Group (WESWG). Comprising stakeholders from GoU institutions within the sector, civil society organisations and Development Partners, the WESWG meet to agree sector budget submissions and

new projects proposed for the sector, as well as to review sector performance and to deliberate on key sectoral policies.

In addition to the WESWF, the National Sanitation Working Group (NSWG) has been championing sanitation and hygiene since 2003. The NSWG is made up of members from Ministry of Water and Environment, Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), line ministries (Ministry of Health, Ministry of Education and Sports, Office of the Prime Minister), Development Partners and other stakeholders in the sector.

The Uganda Water & Sanitation Network (UWASNET) is the national coordinating organization for Civil Society Organisations including social enterprises, development programmes, the private sector, and NGOs in the Water and Environment Sector. UWASNET was founded in 2000 by the Government of Uganda (GoU) through the MWE in partnership with sector development partners, as the umbrella organization for all CSOs operating in the water and sanitation sub-sector. This, as part of the establishment of a Sector Wide Approach (SWAp) which brought together Government, Development Partners and CSOs to develop, fund and implement a single development plan. UWASNET is a key partner in the above mentioned WESWG and NSWG, as well as in the sector's planning and review processes.

Planning and target setting

The Water and Environment Sector links its development goals and plans to Uganda's Vision 2040 targets and five-year National Development Plans designed to contribute to this Vision. As explained in the Water and Environment Sector Performance Report 2018, "the Sector planning and budgeting is guided by procedures issued by the Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development. The authority to approve sector plans and budgets is vested in the Water and Environment Sector Working Group (WESWG) before submission to Parliament for appropriation."

The country prioritizes the elimination of open defecation and achieving universal access to safe water and sanitation services by 2030. In the second National Development plan (NDP II) covering the period 2015/16 – 2019/20, interim targets were set for 2020, by which time the target 'percentage of urban population using an improved sanitation facility not shared with other households' was set at 100%, while for rural populations it was 95%. These targets were not achieved, and since 2018 new sector plans and strategies were developed, including the Joint Water and Environment Sector Support Programme 2018-2023 (JWESSP-II) and the Strategic Sector Investment Plan (SSIP) 2018 - 2030, which is in line with the international (SGD) and national (NDP) overarching target frameworks. The Third National Development Plan 2020/21 to 2024/25 includes the following sanitation target: "Increased access to basic sanitation from (improved toilet) 19 to 40 percent and hand washing from 34 to 50 percent". Progress is monitored using the revised Sector Performance Measurement Framework (2016) which has now been aligned to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Coordination, participation and sector review

A Sector-Wide Approach to planning, implementation, reporting and accountability was first adopted in 2001, when a number of individual donor specific projects and reviews were phased out, and the first Joint Government of Uganda –

Development Partners Water and Sanitation Sector Support Programme (JWSSPS, 2007 to 2013) was implemented.

The Water and Environment Sector assesses its performance, sets priority actions (referred to as undertakings) and offers policy guidance through annual Joint Sector Reviews (JSR). JSRs have been conducted annually since 2008, alongside or interspersed with Joint Technical Reviews.

The reviews follow a pre-determined theme originating from emerging sector issues, and are largely guided by annual Sector Performance Reports (SPR) which report on achievements of annual targets for the key sector performance indicators, agreed actions and undertakings. The reviews allow a broad spectrum of stakeholders to get an insight into, discuss, and influence sector developments.

The JSRs then draw conclusions and make recommendations on the key issues in the sector, whereby binding decisions are formalized into key action areas or undertakings to be endorsed by the Water and Environment Sector Working Group (WESWG). These are implemented in the forth-coming year(s) with the aim of improvement of the overall sector's performance. The JSR's timing is in tandem with the national budgeting cycles.

JSRs are highly participatory. For example, the 2019 Joint Sector Review "had a total of 342 participants that included staff and/or members from: the Ministry of Water and Environment (MWE) and its de-concentrated structures, semi-autonomous agencies, other Government Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs), officials from selected Local Governments, Bilateral Development Partners, Multilateral Development Partners and UN Organisations, Civil Society Organisations, the private sector, Members of Parliament from various constituencies, academia and the media."

Similarly, while the preparation of the SPRs is led by the MWE, the participatory process of developing the report involves multiple stakeholders such as the NWSC, the National Environment Management Authority (NEMA), the National Forestry Authority (NFA), the Uganda National Meteorological Authority (UNMA), the World Bank, the Environment Health Division (EHD) of the MoH, UWASNET and Environment and Natural Resources CSO Network. The primary data sources are Local and Central Government reports and databases at District Local Governments and MWE.

Sector performance monitoring notably also includes budget and finance tracking. In this respect, the Budget Monitoring and Accountability Unit (BMAU) of the Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development (MFPED) tracks the performance of all sectors with a focus on the extent to which the budgets, planned outputs and outcome targets have been achieved, including issues of gender and equity compliance. For WASH, such data is then reported in the Joint Sector Review. For example, the minutes of the 2019 JSR referenced a summary of "the performance of all departments in the sector highlighting that there were unspent balances majorly under the three programmes of Urban Water Supply and Sanitation (12.8 billion), Rural Water Supply and Sanitation (8.94 billion) and Natural Resources Management (4.1 billion)."

In summary, the Uganda WASH sector is well coordinated and participatory in its planning and review. To various degrees this extends to local levels, through District Water

and Sanitation Coordination Committees (CWSCC), and the community level, through bodies such as Water Supply and Sanitation Boards; Water Supply and Sanitation Committees, and Water user Associations.

The GLAAS 2018/2019 Uganda Country Highlights gives the country full marks for its target-setting processes, including inclusion of stakeholders, public consultations and revisions based thereon. The Sanitation and Water for All (SWA) 2017 Uganda Overview also states that “in terms of the SWA collaborative behaviours, all sector processes (planning, budgeting, monitoring and evaluation) are government-led supported by development partners, Civil Society Organisations and Public Private Partnership. These work together to improve the ways of working in the water, sanitation and hygiene sector. All the stakeholders align their programmes and funding to the achievement of the government-led processes.” But it goes on to state that “while the government performance measurement framework is robust, greater use of the findings captured by information systems and reports is needed to drive performance improvements.”

With regards to equity and inclusion, measures to extend services to various vulnerable groups including poor populations, those living in slums/informal settlements or remote areas, women, and people living with disabilities or high burden of disease, are included in policies and plans. However, apart from for populations living in slums or informal settlements, progress against these planned measures is not specifically monitored, and disaggregated data, for example by wealth quintile, is not readily available. But participation procedures, particularly for women’s participation, are defined in laws and policies, and the extent of this participation is judged to be high.

Monitoring SDG target 6.2 and 6.3

Since the early 2000s the Uganda WASH sector measured its performance based on a set of up to 22 ‘golden and platinum indicators’. In order to “ably monitor the SDG indicators” (BMAU, 2019), the Ministry of Water and Environment (MWE) developed a new set of Sector Performance Indicators (SPIs) in FY 2017/18 which replaced the golden and platinum indicators. The 2018 Sector Performance Report was then the first to report against some of these revised indicators.

SPRs present the performance of the sector in terms of investments, targets, achievements, outputs and challenges. They cover access, functionality, management, investment cost and water quality of improved water supplies; sanitation and hygiene; water for production; water resources management; environment and natural resources and cross cutting issues of gender, HIV/AIDS and governance. Data used for the reports is derived largely from databases in the Ministry of Water and Environment, District Local Governments, Sector semi-autonomous agencies, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Education, and the Uganda Bureau of Statistics (UBOS).

With regards to SDG target 6.2, the adoption of the new Sector Performance Framework and the revised indicators has led to greater alignment of reported figures with those in the JMP. But there are still discrepancies. As can be seen in the table hereunder, particularly the rates of reported open

defecation in the SPRs differ quite substantially from the average 4.7% reported by JMP. It needs to be noted that, as described above, SPRs are based mainly on government reported figures, rather than on household surveys and national censuses.

Sanitation and hygiene indicators		2017 / 18	2018 / 19	2019 / 20
11. Basic sanitation: Percentage of population using an improved sanitation facility not shared with other households	Rural	ND	16.6%	18%
	Urban	36.3%	42.8%	44.8%
12. Safely managed sanitation: Percentage of population using safely managed sanitation services	Rural	ND	7.1%	7%
	Urban	26%	37.4%	38.9%
13. Open defecation: Percentage of population practicing open defecation	Rural	8%	22.9%	22%
	Urban	12.6%	12.1%	12.1%
14. Hand washing: Percentage of population with hand washing facilities with soap and water at home	Rural	36.5%	36%	38%
	Urban	39.6%	40%	61.1%
Schools: Percentage of pupils enrolled in schools with basic hand washing facilities	Schools	40%	42%	58%
21. Proportion of wastewater safely treated		ND	28%	30%
22. Proportion of bodies of water with good ambient water quality		ND	ND	ND

Source: MWE Sector Performance Report 2020.

Beyond the above-mentioned indicators, the SPR also reports on sanitation service levels. The 2020 SPR reported that “according to district reports, access to some form of sanitation in rural areas increased from 77.2% in FY 2019/20 to 78%. In urban areas, access to some form of sanitation also increased from 87.9% to 89.1%. Use of basic sanitation in rural areas increased from 16.6% to 18% and in urban areas from 42.8% to 44.8%. Use of safely managed sanitation in rural areas remained at 7.1% and in urban areas increased from 37.4% to 39.2%.”

The switch from the golden and platinum indicators to the revised Sector Performance Framework may be responsible for some perceived discrepancies and shifts in the reported results. For example, in the 2018 SPR, MWE reported that, based on district reports, access to rural basic sanitation stood at 79% in Financial Year 2017/18, and 8% of the rural

population was practicing open defecation. In contrast, the 2020 report did not include any rural basic sanitation data for 2017/18, and showed a large jump in reported rural OD, from 8% in 2017/18 to 22.9% in 2018/19.

As reported in the 2020 SPR: “The revised sector performance measurement framework, 2016 remains not disseminated. With limited support from UNICEF, the ministry produced a guide for computation of the WASH indicators but this also needs widespread dissemination across the Water and Sanitation sub-sector. This is partially responsible for the persistent lack of data (including baselines) on a number of sector performance indicators since FY 2016/17 the first year of implementation of the revised framework.”

In the 2019 JSR sector partners agreed on 13 undertakings for the 2019/20 Financial Year. One of these, Undertaking no. 10, aimed to ‘Disseminate the sanitation monitoring indicators, measurement framework and develop an improved MIS system (digital based) by FY 2019/20.’ The overseeing committee for this work included staff from MWE, MOH, UWASNET, and UNICEF. In the 2020 JTR it was reported that work was ongoing: a company had been contracted with support from UNICEF to develop the improved MIS system, and dissemination of sanitation monitoring indicators and measurement frameworks to districts and CSOs had been completed for 3 districts. Overall, though, the Undertaking was delayed, mainly because of COVID 19 and financial constraints, and so was carried over to next FY 2020/2021.

With regards to measuring SDG target 6.3, data from Uganda was included in the 2018 UN Water/WHO/UN HABITAT report ‘Progress on Wastewater Treatment; Piloting the monitoring methodology and initial findings for SDG indicator 6.3.1’. Among others, the report stated that “only 1 percent of the urban population in Uganda is connected to sewers and 27 percent has improved on-site facilities. Currently, the National Water and Sewerage Corporation (NWSC) of Uganda operates 25 treatment plants nationwide. Of these, 24 are designed to receive solely wastewater and one is designed to co-treat faecal sludge from on-site facilities with wastewater from sewers.”

While the report noted that the percentage of safely treated wastewater flows from households in Uganda in 2015 was less than 25%, it also highlighted that Uganda was the only among the 9 African countries included in the publication that reported performance-based data on treated domestic wastewater, rather than just technology-based data.

The 2020 SPR reported an increase of the ‘proportion of wastewater safely treated’ to 30% by 2019/20.

Wastewater & water quality indicators	2017 / 18	2018 / 19	2019 / 20
21. Proportion of wastewater safely treated	ND	28%	30%
22. Proportion of bodies of water with good ambient water quality	ND	ND	ND

Source: MWE Sector Performance Report 2020

Beyond Indicators 21 and 22, Uganda measures (industry) compliance to the national wastewater effluent discharge standard, which is still very low, on average 30% (2020 SPR).

It also measures water quality for rural and small town (drinking) water sources, by collecting and testing samples for bacteriological safety or E. coli. As noted in the SPR 2020: “The average compliance to the permits (surface water, groundwater and wastewater discharge) conditions increased to 77.6% from 73% in FY 2018/19.”

To contribute to improved understanding of wastewater treatment in Uganda, the 2018/19 SPR included the following planned undertaking: “Faecal Sludge Management Undertaking 2: Conduct a baseline on the operation performance of the existing Faecal Sludge Treatment Plants (FSTPs) by end of FY 2018/2019”. The 2019 SPR then reported that this undertaking was 100% achieved.

In conclusion, several publications including the SPRs and JSR reports still note ongoing challenges concerning sanitation sector monitoring, such as around data quality. But thanks to the open and transparent sector planning and review processes, such challenges are not only discussed, but also addressed. This sets Uganda in good stead for continued progress on monitoring SDG 6.2 and 6.3.

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SuSanA SDG 6.2 and 6.3 Monitoring Case study

SuSanA 2022 (Last updated: March 03, 2022)

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