



# 2026 presidential polls: Climate change activists fault manifestos

There is a need to enforce climate-smart approaches, protect fragile ecosystems and migratory corridors, and ensure harsh punishment for perpetrators of environmental abuse if the country is to have a future amid the effects of climate change. However, most of the manifestos of the presidential candidates lack mechanisms for climate financing and accountability, as **David Walugembe** reports.

With barely a month to the 2026 elections, the urgency for climate-responsive governance has never been greater, to address Uganda's prolonged droughts in some areas, flash floods, landslides, storm winds and hailstorms, heat waves, and rising temperatures.

Globally, Uganda ranks 14th for climate change vulnerability and 163rd for climate change preparedness. About 80 percent

of Uganda's poor households are exposed to climate shocks and already experience income loss, according to the 2025 World Bank report on the Country Climate and Development Report (CCDR).

Anthony Wolimbwa, the national coordinator of the Climate Action Network-Uganda (CAN-U), warns that presidential manifestos lack the core values, depth, and strategy needed to confront rising temperatures,

worsening floods, fossil-fuel risks, prolonged droughts, and the growing climate-induced poverty facing millions.

"Manifestos are instead focusing on large infrastructure projects. We need to see how the youths, women, and old people benefit since they are the ones affected by droughts, floods, and heavy rains," he observes.

Wolimbwa further notes that as Uganda is set to commence

oil production, presidential candidates lack a clear strategy on how the oil and gas sector will uphold climate and environmental protection and how the resources will be used to promote a green economy and reduce pollution.

Fossil fuels are among the key contributors to greenhouse emissions that lead to global warming. The climate activist says none of the manifestos are addressing how the country can use the oil revenues to transition from a high-carbon economy to a

low-carbon economy.

"If there is no strategy, we will be blinded by the oil revenue. We will ignore climate mitigation, which in turn will expose the country. All political parties should go back to the drawing board and plan for our green future," Wolimbwa adds.

The climate activist recommends that the presidential candidates revisit the resolutions of COP30 for policies on tripling funds for climate adaptation to climate risk responsiveness, phasing out fossil fuels, and direct-access funds to compensate losses



Residents seen trying to retrieve a car from a flooded banana plantation in Namakwekwe, Mbale District after Nabuyonga and Namatala rivers burst their banks on July 31, 2022 following all-night rain. PHOTO/FILE/YAHUDU KITUNZI

Opposition National Unity Platform (NUP) presidential candidate Robert Kyagulanyi Ssentamu, alias Bobi Wine, campaigns in Bundibugyo District on December 11, 2025, ahead of the January 15, 2026 General Election. PHOTO/HAND-OUT

## National Resistance Movement (NRM)

The party emphasises that it still has unfinished business when it comes to environmental degradation and climate change, investing in urban forestry and greening of cities, and in supporting value addition for sustainable commercial forestry.

The party pledges to continue promoting the use of alternative sources of energy for cooking, away from charcoal and firewood, by also supporting livestock farmers to invest in bio-digesters for biogas production.

NRM manifesto says the country has made significant strides in environmental protection, pointing out that there has been an increase in the country's forest cover to 13 percent, up from 9.5 percent in 2015. A crackdown on illegal encroachment and unsustainable practices has led to the restoration of crucial buffer zones around major water bodies.



## Issue.

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and damage.

"COP30 was clear on the need to recognise labour rights, social protection, and equity in energy transition. These aspects should be included in the manifestos," he advises.

## Action, justice, and financing

Linda Asaba, the program manager of the United Nations Association of Uganda (UNAU), calls for the enforcement of extended producer responsibility for plastics, mandatory waste segregation and recycling zones for municipalities, strict emission standards for industries and vehicles, and protection of urban wetlands as no-go zones for construction.

"We must have plans to stop climate disasters from happening, rather than a reactive strategy to reduce panic when disasters occur. The Polluter Pays Principle (PPP) is not working.

## Forum for Democratic Change

The presidential candidate says he will prioritise protection and promotion of Uganda's climate by improving land usage and water, and environmental protection against human activities and development. He promises to ensure strict enforcement of policies to protect and conserve wetlands, rivers, and lakes; promote water-saving practices and efficient water use and reduce water wastage; and enforce existing laws and policies to limit pollution for the protection of public health. For land protection, the party pledges to promote sustainable land use practices like agroforestry and conservation agriculture, encourage the use of renewable energy sources to reduce dependence on firewood and charcoal, and develop insurance products and risk transfer mechanisms to help individuals and businesses manage financial risks associated with natural disasters.



Large companies are polluting the environment, but the victims are the ones paying the highest price," she says.

Geoffrey Kasumba, a climate activist, acknowledges the attempts by the presidential candidates to address climate change but says they lack a clear strategy on how to improve climate financing and a sustainable approach to the country's climate resilience for the future.

"We need to invest in nature-based solutions, restore degraded ecosystems, and enhance climate resilience, especially through promoting agroforestry in farming communities. We should empower local communities to design and fund their own adaptation projects, such as water resilient infrastructure, through devolved climate finance. This is more cost-effective than green technology," he says.

Kasumba suggests the need to integrate climate risk forecasts into the annual and medium-term budget planning, and introduce a national adaptation fund to support community-level climate adaptation, protecting livelihoods in vulnerable

districts.

Constantine Apuru, the founder of Eco Space Foundation Uganda, insists that the presidential manifestos missed out on addressing how to combat rising temperatures and heat waves, how to expand a nationwide tree-planting program, how to protect existing green belts, and how to integrate heat-resilient urban planning, including shaded public spaces and climate-smart infrastructure.

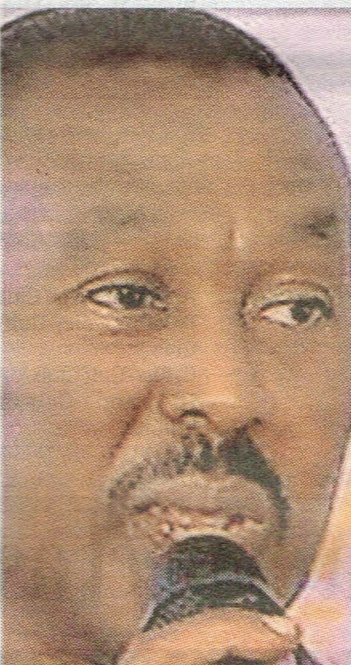
Julius Kitone, a campaigner with Plant Based Treaty Uganda, says the manifestos should have outlined a national mitigation pathway compatible with limiting global temperature rise to 1.5°C.

"We should have sector-specific emission reduction targets for energy, agriculture, transport, land use and waste. The manifestos should introduce a national food-system transformation strategy to guide the transition toward plant-based value chains, regenerative agriculture, drought-resistant crops and sustainable public procurement for schools, hospitals and other institutions," he observes.

## Alliance for National Transformation (ANT)

The manifesto does not have a specific section that addressed key climate issues, but briefly highlights key interventions in the section on energy infrastructure, Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH), environment, agriculture, and infrastructural development, among other sections.

To educate the masses on the impact of climate change, the party pledges to promote awareness campaigns, especially in both rural and urban areas, on the need to apply irrigation in light of the effects of climate change, which are all increasing the need for better water management skills and practices.



He suggests the need to adopt binding pollution and waste-management standards and strengthen circular economy practices.

Desire Ndyamwesigwa, a climate activist, recounts that the manifestos fail to address how they will mitigate fossil-fuel risk management and disaster preparedness to reduce the risks of economic growth to Uganda's ecosystem.

"The National Unity Platform (NUP) party highlights climate resilience, sustainable natural-resource governance, and protection of sensitive ecosystems, yet lacks strategies for managing large extractive projects like oil pipelines. The Forum for Democratic Change (FDC) will promote responsible land use but remains silent on the long-term climate implications of industrial development," he states.

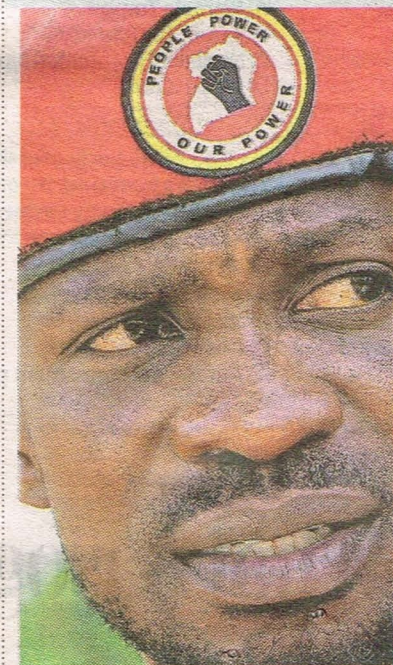
## Enforcing existing laws

Alvin Mutebi, a climate analyst, says the presidential manifestos fail to show how citizens will be engaged in understanding the effects of climate change to their livelihoods

## National Unity Platform

The manifesto focuses on ensuring sustainable management of natural resources and climate resilience mechanisms, restoring three million hectares of degraded forests to promote a green environment, and restoring wetlands and rangelands by 2030. The presidential candidate says he will also promote climate-smart agriculture by fast-tracking the supply of drought-tolerant and disease-resistant seeds and affordable irrigation kits and rolling out nationwide conservation agriculture program to build resilience against change.

"We shall expand training in vocational climate-resilient construction, solar technology, and forest-based livelihoods, also partnering with financial institutions to develop green credit lines for MSMEs investing in low-carbon solutions," the manifesto reads in part.



and strengthening the enforcement mechanism.

"There was a presidential directive against people settling in high-risk mountainous areas, but up to now, in places like Bududa, Manafwa, and Sironko, people still settle there and carry out human activities despite the directive," he says.

Annually, about 200,000 Ugandans are affected by heavy rainfall, floods, landslides, and other climatic disasters.

According to the Country Climate and Development Report (CCDR), if no serious actions are taken to mitigate the climatic crisis by 2050, Uganda is likely to face more risks like droughts and floods, leading to more than 613,200 people below the poverty line, a GDP drop of 3.1 percent, and an increase in deaths from waterborne diseases and malaria.

The report further indicates that without intervention, Uganda will experience an increased cost of road maintenance and repairs to USD \$14-26 million per year due to floods.