

WORLD ENVIRONMENT DAY

JUNE 5, 2021

Today 5th June is the international World Environment Day (WED). This day was declared during the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment (Stockholm, 1972) by the United Nations General Assembly. Over the years it has grown to be a broad, global platform for public outreach that is widely commemorated by stakeholders in about 150 countries. The celebration of this day provides us with an opportunity to broaden the basis for an enlightened opinion and responsible conduct by individuals, enterprises, and communities in preserving and enhancing the environment.

WED 2021 will be celebrated globally under the theme 'Ecosystem restoration' and focus on resetting our relationship with nature. The Global commemoration event will be hosted by Pakistan this year. Here in Uganda, we are celebrating WED 2021 under the national theme 'Restore Uganda's Ecosystems for Sustainable Development'. The theme implores us to make conscious efforts to restore our degraded ecosystems, to be aware that those systems are not only the storehouses for resources that sustain us economically and socially but also, constitute the life support system for human and other forms of life. It's also reminding us of our duty to save nature and all biodiversity.

WED is managed by the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) and, in Uganda, the National Environment Management Authority (NEMA) on behalf of Government of Uganda, is mandated to commemorate this day. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, this year's physical celebrations at Masindi district, Nyabyeya Forest College, are limited to few people.

Restoration activities in Uganda

In Uganda, NEMA has over the years undertaken several restoration activities aimed at recovering and regenerating the lost ecosystem functions and improving community livelihoods. As part of this year's WED celebration, NEMA is undertaking restoration to raise the level of awareness on the need for sustainable use of environment and natural resources in, for example, Masindi and other districts in greater Bunyoro.

The most affected fragile ecosystems targeted include wetlands, riverbanks, lake shores, hilly and mountainous areas. NEMA adopted a community approach to ecosystem restoration and the main reason for this approach is the need to create a sense of ownership and inclusion for sustainability.

Achievements

Using a community approach, NEMA has successfully restored over 10,000,000 ha of degraded ecosystems over the last five years; it continues to engage communities, organized



A garden on the shores of Lake Victoria, such encroachment threatens the ability of the lake to perform its functions

groups, and local governments to restore critically degraded ecosystems.

As we commemorate this year's WED, we need to appreciate the role of communities in ensuring sustainable ecosystems restoration and the need to support them through regular empowerment discourse. All the district local governments should use the WED celebration to launch restoration drives for the different affected ecosystems and ensure regular monitoring to avoid re-encroachment on the restored ecosystems.

RESTORING UGANDA'S ECOSYSTEMS FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT THROUGH COLLECTIVE ACTION AND NATURAL RESOURCES STEWARDSHIP

To support Uganda in sustainably managing its natural resources needed for improved livelihoods and continued economic development, the German government, European Union, UKAID, through Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), and in cooperation with the Ministry of Water and Environment (MWE), is implementing the Natural Resources Stewardship Programme (NatuReS).

ECOSYSTEMS

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Healthy ecosystem at the shores at Lake Victoria in Jinja, Bugembe

NatuReS brings together different actors from the public sector, the private sector, and civil societies to form partnerships to work together to improve natural resource management. These partnerships are built on the understanding that those benefiting from the same natural resources can benefit more through collaboration. They work to find mutually beneficial solutions in sustainable economic growth, and the continued use of these precious resources for generations to come. To this end, NatuReS is establishing several partnerships in Greater Kampala Metropolitan Area (GKMA) and Gulu City, which contribute to the restoration of Uganda's ecosystems. Below are some of these partnerships and what they do:

The **Greater Kampala Metropolitan Area Polyethylene terephthalate (PET) Plastic Recycling partnership** brings together the MWE, NEMA, the Kampala Capital City Authority (KCCA), Coca-Cola Beverages, Mukwano Group of Companies, Uganda Water and Juice Manufacturers Association (UWJMA) and the Global Green Growth Institute (GGGI) to improve the recycling of PET plastics in Greater Kampala. In the

Kampala Integrated Flood Resilience partnership, the MWE collaborates with the Kampala Capital City Authority, GKMA Local Governments, Uganda Manufacturers Association, private sector actors, civil society organizations to promote nature-based solutions for flood management in Kampala City and surrounding areas.

In Gulu city, the MWE, Gulu City Council, National Water and Sewerage Corporation, Takataka Plastics, CEED Uganda and others are working to restore the Oytino catchment area for sustainable supply of water through the **Gulu Integrated Catchment Management Partnership**.

As we commemorate this day, we encourage the public and the private sector to be part of restoring our ecosystems because it is not only our duty, but it is for our own benefit. A healthy ecosystem is beneficial in many ways. They support us with food, they purify our water, protect us from floods. Healthy ecosystems boost tourism and bring us financial gain. But we also simply enjoy them for recreation. Be part of WED 2021 and restore our ecosystems together!



NatuReS supports plastic bottle recycling through the GKMA PET plastic recycling partnership



Sustainable management of wetland ecosystems is one of NatuReS priority areas



Panel discussion with the GKMA PET Plastics Recycling partnership representatives from MWE, NEMA, KCCA, GGGI, UWJMA and Plastic Recycling Industries during NatuReS launch at Uganda Water & Environment Week 2021