

UPDF, NFA in urban tree planting drive

KAMPALA

By Jeff Andrew Lule

The Uganda People's Defense Forces (UPDF) and the National Forestry Authority (NFA) have embarked on a joint campaign to promote urban tree planting in different towns of Uganda.

While launching the campaign at Makindye Military Barracks in Kampala last week, the NFA executive director, Michael Mugisa, said urban forestry is aimed at promoting tree planting in all urban areas to address challenges of climate change.

During the launch, Mugisa was accompanied by Brig. Sabiiti Muzeyi (Military Police commandant), Brig. Sam Kawaga (commandant First Division-Kakiri Barracks) and Col. Don Nabaasa, the Commandant Special Forces Command.

Mugisa said: "This is aimed at promoting tree planting in cities and towns to increase tree coverage in different areas. It will also help to beautify these towns, create more shade, improve the landscape, and protect the environment through

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reducing air pollution as a result of dust and bad gasses from industries."

He said they would begin with tree planning at various government institutions, starting with all army bases.

Mugisa explained that in the new campaign, they do landscaping with selected multipurpose trees suitable for different areas.

More than 50 Pinas Africana trees locally known as *Entasesa* and *Omukote* in Luganda and Rutoro,



Muzeyi planting a tree to launch the urban tree planting campaign at Makindye Military Barracks. Photo by Jeff Andrew Lule

were planted during the launch. The tree species, Mugisa said, is good for treating prostate cancer.

"We want to use this chance to plant multipurpose trees and other disappearing indigenous

tree species," he added.

More funding

Mugisa also revealed that government has increased their budget by sh4b for tree planting this financial year.

The funds are meant for generating tree seedlings for communities and commercial sales.

He said they plan to produce 60 million free community tree seedlings annually and increase commercial seedlings to 40 million.

Mugisa said community tree planting is a strategy by government to promote tree planting countrywide.

Brig. Muzeyi said UPDF's mandate is to protect people and the environment, a reason they joined the campaign.

"Our environment has been degraded. That is why we see strange diseases and endless droughts. It is our mandate to make sure the situation changes to protect our people. We have decided to work with NFA to enforce this campaign beginning with our own army bases countrywide," he added.

Muzeyi said trees play a big role in the formation of rainfall, act as windbreaks and help to absorb bad fumes which are bad to people's health.

NFA is mandated to manage 506 central forest reserves with a total area of 1,265,742 hectares and management of various protected areas.



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