



Manase plants a jackfruit tree at Alaba Primary School in Bidi Bidi Settlement Zone 2 to restore the environment. Photo by Robert Ariaka

Over 46,000 trees planted on environment day

YUMBE

By Robert Ariaka

Yumbe district local government, together with the NGOs implementing programmes in refugee settlements took the World Environment Day to Uganda's biggest settlement, Bidibidi Refugee Settlement.

The leaders jointly undertook a massive tree planting drive to restore the environment.

Wadia Manase, the resident district commissioner of Yumbe, while presiding over the celebrations, said people who were cutting down trees, were killing the environment and ought to stop the vice.

He also said the current generation had failed to manage environment-related issues and needed sensitisation.

"We have failed to control tree cutting because we aim at making money, forgetting the dangers it causes," Wadia said.

Fred Okura, the project

manager of the environment protection project for the Adventist Development Relief Agency (ADRA), one of the refugee implementing partners based in Bidi Bidi settlement, said they had planted trees in schools, hospitals and churches, among others.

"About 46,250 trees have already been planted on 46 hectares of land. They included neem, moringa and fruit tree species. These types are indigenous and drought-resistant," Okura said.

He said before the arrival of the refugees, the area was green, but many trees were cut down to accommodate the settlement.

"We are giving five seedlings of trees to be planted by every household in both the refugee camp and among the host communities. Right now, we are mobilising people to plant trees to ensure that the destroyed environment is recovered," Okura said.

He said, for the sake of the future of the country, people

ought to plant trees and it had to be done in all parts of the region.

Charity Faridha, the speaker of Yumbe district, said the district vegetation had been degraded through charcoal burning, selling of logs and firewood.

She said before the refugee settlement was in place, the district had resolved to ban charcoal burning. She said the ban was enforced and it had reduced the rate of tree cutting.

"However, we still have a challenge of cutting trees for firewood and construction," she added.

Rashid Kawawa, the LC3 chairperson of Kochi sub-county where Bidibidi settlement is located, said deforestation for timber, charcoal and other uses, had left the sub-county exposed to desertification. He said if there was no deliberate move to restore the environment, the region was prone to drought.

The celebrations of the World Environment Day were focused on the theme: "Beat Plastic Pollution".