

Buganda Kingdom wants at least 2.8 million trees planted by 2028 across its 18 counties to restore degraded forests.

BYDAN WANDERA

Buganda Kingdom and Bethany Land Institute officials have championed the planting of indigenous trees on four acres in Makulubita Sub-county, Luweero District. This is a bid to restore natural forest areas in the kingdom.

On April 22, when stakeholders celebrated the International Earth Day under the theme 'Our power, our planet', conservationists in Luweero joined Buganda Kingdom officials in the tour of the site on Bowa Hill in Makulubita.

While the initial forest rehabilitation plan at Bowa Hill was to rehabilitate 10 acres, officials said the four acres successfully planted is a great milestone.

Buganda Kingdom targets at least 10 acres of indigenous forest trees planted on land in each of the 18 counties that constitute Buganda. We have the land, but the challenge has been the failure of our people to appreciate nature. Trees that were cut down earlier were never replaced. The forest areas got destroyed through tree cutting, among other human activities," Mr Yotham Ntege, the officer-in-charge of lands and infrastructure in Bulemezi County, revealed on April 22.

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Mengo restores 4 acres of natural forest trees



Buganda Kingdom, Bethany Land Institute officials, and a section of conservationists tour the site on Bowa Hill in Luweero District where they planted four acres indigenous trees, on April 22. PHOTO/DAN WANDERA

18 counties through the restoration of the degraded forest sites.

"Tree species that are already endangered and are part of the trees targeted for planting include the Albizia (Mugavu) and Mvule (Milicia excelsa) trees, often targeted for the hardwood

timber and wood fuel (charcoal)," Mr Derik Kavuma, a conservationist, said.

Mr Herbert Kasujja, the Luweero forestry officer, said the district has already rolled out a tree planting programme with the distribution of free tree seedlings, especially indigenous species.

"We are working with communities, in partnership with organisations to boost the tree-planting exercise. We also have a local 10-hectare forest reserve in Makulubita owned by the district local government, where a tree replanting exercise is ongoing," he said.

ABOUT FOREST COVER LOSS

Global Forest Watch (GFW), in a report, said the districts of Luweero and Nakaseke lost 8,450 hectares of tree cover within the natural tree forest areas in 2023. GFW is an initiative from the World Resources Institute (WRI) that is committed to providing the best publicly available data and tools for monitoring and protecting the world's forests.

But Luweero District officials said the different forest tree collaborative efforts have so far successfully restored 46 acres of forest trees at Kalagala Forest Reserve and 25 acres in Makulubita Sub-county.

Lazarus, a natural forest covering more than 250 acres, is another addition to the forestry regeneration efforts by other stakeholders including the Catholic Church. Lazarus forest, which is under the custodianship of the Bethany Land Institute, Kasana Luweero Diocese, has been undergoing rehabilitation since 2021.

Mr Kassujja also revealed that when Luweero District lost a 62-hectare natural forest land exchanged for an industrial zone at Nyimbwa Sub-county in 2017, the industrialists compensated the district.

"The district used this money to get bigger land measuring 160 hectares, now under forest rehabilitation in Buntumula Sub-county," he said.