

# Climate Change series

**SYMPOSIUM.** Monitor Publications Ltd in partnership with Agricultural Business Initiative, Uganda Coffee Development Authority, the Ministry of Water and Environment Climate Change Department, USAID- Feed the Future and NTV Uganda is organising the first ever Uganda Climate Change Symposium 2017 under the theme "A Climate Smart Uganda: A proud Ugandan" at Kampala Serena Hotel on October 26.

**EFFORT**

**6,000** Affected. More than 6,000 people, who had been mainly growing rice, sugarcane, cassava and sweet potatoes in Limoto-Mpologoma wetland, were evicted early this year.

## Former wetland encroachers to benefit from climate fund

**Climate change series.** As Ugandans prepare for the climate change symposium on Thursday, *Daily Monitor* explored interventions that are being done to mitigate the climate change effects. In the first of a six-part series, **Paul Tajuba** looks at Limoto-Mpologoma wetland system and how former encroachers are coping.



**L**imoto-Mpologoma wetland in eastern Uganda has been a prime source of livelihood for Ms Edisa Munaaba in the last four years.

Indeed, the fertile land was yielding at least six bags of rice per acre every season. She would use the proceedings from her harvest to pay school fees and meet other household needs.

Ms Munaaba, a widow, and more than 6,000 others, who had been mainly growing rice, sugarcane, cassava and sweet potatoes in the wetland, were evicted early this year.

The evictions were led by officials from the National Environment Management Authority (Nema), the government environment watchdog, in collaboration with leaders from Kibuku and Pallisa districts.

Ms Munaaba, who was briefly detained for digging in the wetland, vividly remembers that day when she was ordered out of the wetland and the curses she hurled at the officials in what she thought was a move to deprive her of livelihood at a time she had accumulated debts.

"I know what I was doing is wrong, we were warned but it is the only option for me to get money to pay off my debts," Ms Munaaba said during

the eviction. Nema and district officials invoked section 36 of the National Environment Act that provides for protection of wetlands and prohibiting any person from reclaiming, erecting or demolishing any structure that is fixed in, on, under or above any wetland, to prosecute Munaaba.

Ms Munaaba, like others community members near the wetland, have been selected as pilot beneficiaries of a \$24m (about Shs87b) Green Climate Fund (GCF) premised on supporting initiatives that mitigate and advance adaptation to climate change in developing countries.

"I will use the money to start a business. It will help me reconstruct my life," Ms Munaaba says.

As she gears up for livelihood fund, Mr Job Nalibantya, a fish farmer, has already harnessed the increased water in the wetland to open up more cages.

"There is fresh water now, in the past some ponds were empty," Mr Nalibantya said.

Mr Nalibantya has now 2,000 tilapia and 2,500 catfish in his ponds that he plans to sell in December.

The GCF is a global fund that helps poor countries, which are the more vulnerable to effects of climate change, reduce their greenhouse gas emissions and adapt to climate change.

It was created by the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in 2010, as part of the Convention's financial mechanism.

Climate change is brought about

heavy rainfall or lightning.

The Shs87b cash that was secured by the Ugandan government, Water and Environment minister Sam Cheptoris, said recently will be used to set up small irrigation schemes and also fund alternative livelihoods for the communities who were evicted from the wetland.

"Those adjacent to the wetland and who were using the wetland will be the priority beneficiaries," Mr Cheptoris said.

Other organised groups within the catchment area will soon receive start-up capital in form of revolving funds or heifers as source of income and protein. Tree planting will be incorporated in the programmes for climate regulation purposes, according to Nema officials.

But the pilot Shs87b projects in Limoto wetland, Mr Herbert Nabasa, the Nema official, who led a team to restore the wetland, said would be a white elephant had the environment agency had failed to evict encroachers.

Evictions took more than three years of negotiations between Nema and encroachers before it was effected; a soft approach Mr Nabasa said was taken to minimise confrontations.

"We did a lot of community consultations, sensitisation [prior to eviction], and we won them on our side. We explained to them the magnitude of the problem and why we need to restore this catchment," Mr Nabasa said.

Protecting Limoto-Mpologoma wetland from degradation guaran-

### Shs87 billion

**Support.** Green Climate Fund premised on supporting initiatives that mitigate and advance adaptation to climate change in developing countries. The money will enable former encroachers of Limoto-Mpologoma to set up various income generating activities.

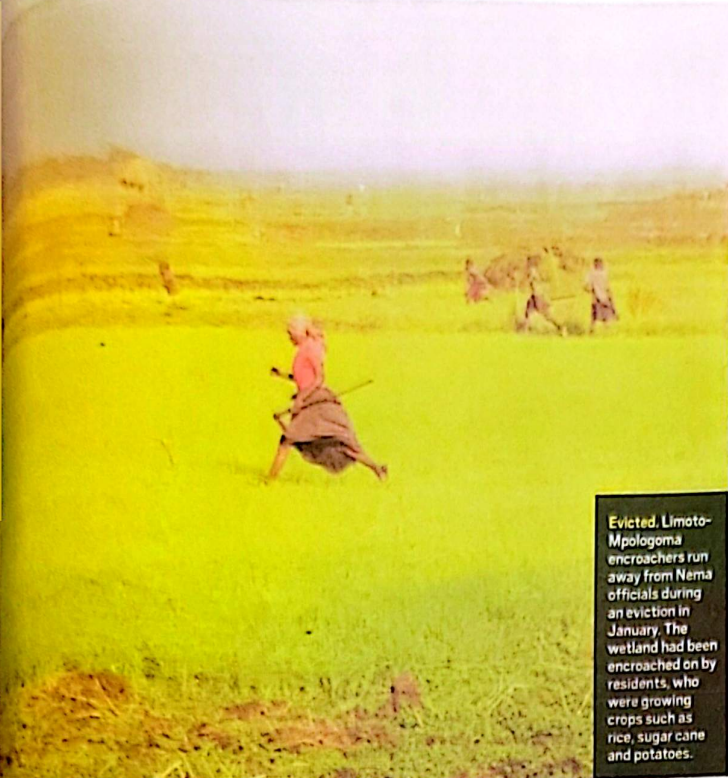
by many factors such as emission of dangerous gases from factories into the atmosphere, deforestation, and wetland degradation.

Uganda, like other countries in the world, is experiencing climate change effects in form of prolonged droughts, mudslides, floods and

**Restored.** Mr David Okurut, the Kibuku District natural resources officer, points at the regenerated section of Limoto wetland recently. PHOTOS BY PAUL TAJUBA



**Approach.** "We did a lot of community consultations, sensitisation (prior to eviction), and we won them on our side. We explained to them the magnitude of the problem and why we need to restore this catchment." **HERBERT NABASA, NEMA OFFICIAL**



**Evicted.** Limoto-Mpologoma encroachers run away from Nema officials during an eviction in January. The wetland had been encroached on by residents, who were growing crops such as rice, sugar cane and potatoes.



**Improved.** A worker attends to a fishpond. Fish farming has been boosted as a result of restoring the wetland.

tees the shallow Lake Kyoga of water inflow to prevent it from drying up.

"Limoto recharges Lake Lemwe too, and because of degradation, Palisa did not have water for the last three years and a jerrycan of water went for Shs1,000. At some point, they had the money, but there was no water," Mr Nabasa added.

Already, he said, the 1,720 Km<sup>2</sup> Lake has been severely degraded through human activities such as rice cultivation, deforestation and over grazing that have resulted into soil erosion, and siltation.

"Lake Kyoga is part of the big catchment area that supports huge population and we need to protect it," Mr Nabasa said.

The Victoria Nile flows through the same lake on its way from Lake Victoria to Lake Albert. Another source of water is the Mount Elgon region on the border between Uganda and Kenya.

The lake composite reaches a maximum depth at about 5.7 metres, and most of it is less than 4 m in depth.

But about eight months ago, Limoto had been drained and there was no way the government would think of setting up an irrigation scheme for the local communities.

The wetland has now regenerated after the eviction and it is now generating clean water. Fishermen are having a field day just like pastoralists, who have plenty of water and pasture

for their animals.

"What we see now is the regeneration and recovery of the system. We see fish coming back in what were previous gardens... a lot of ecosystems service and functions are coming back," Mr Nabasa said of the wetland that supports five districts.

**Eviction**

Mr David Okurut, the Kibuku District natural resources officer, said they were strained to the limit when it came to evicting the encroachers since some politicians were against the move.

"It was not easy because this is where people were planting rice as their main source of food," Mr Okurut said.

"We talked to them to voluntarily vacate the system well aware that government had other provisions of livelihood options. They had to go because boreholes had dried up," he added.

Eastern Uganda has the biggest surface area of wetlands covering about 10,299sq km which is about 23 per cent of the total wetland area coverage in the country and most of these recharge Lake Kyoga, according to Nema.

The degradation has had a direct negative impact on the livelihoods of the local communities by affecting the agricultural productivity in areas affected due to prolonged drought, reduced soil fertility and crop yields as well as reducing the fishing potential of Lake Kyoga and its catchment.

Besides storing and recharging lakes and boreholes, wetlands modify climate, control floods, and filter water, among others.

In Uganda, scientists say, natural features such as wetlands and forests influence 40 per cent of rainfall received in the country and any destruction on them means little or no rainfall. The 60 per cent influence comes from Central Pacific Ocean and Indian Ocean cooling or warming effects.

**About Limoto wetland**

Limoto-Mpologoma wetland system is approximately 35km and covers about five districts that form part of Bukedi sub-region.

In Kibuku District alone, Limoto wetland stretches in five sub-counties: Kabweri, Kadama, Kibuku, Buseta and Kasasira. It supports more than 300,000 people.

Limoto was heavily degraded during the 2016 election campaigns when rivalry camps allied to Kibuku County MP Herbert Kinobere and his predecessor Saleh Kamba accused each other of instructing people to invade the wetland in exchange for votes.

In all district fights, Kibuku LC5 chairperson, Mr Charles Kadyama, said often times, political individual interests do not match those of the public good.

Together with the Kibuku Resident District Commissioner, Ms Margaret Wazikonnya, he worked jointly with conservationists to ensure the wetland is restored. The result has been a rejuvenating wetland capable of providing water for irrigation as well as support ecosystem.

# Speaker roots for tree fund

BY PAUL TAJUBA  
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**KAMPALA.** The National Tree Fund meant to finance tree planting and growing, which has stalled for more than a decade, will be operationalized next Financial Year, Speaker Rebecca Kadaga, has said.

"I will not allow the Ministry of Finance to get away with it. On the issue of tree fund, I am on his neck (Finance Minister Matia Kasasira). In the next budget, there must be a tree fund. There is no escape. We cannot let you continue to suffer, we give you work but we do not give you capacity to work," Ms Kadaga said on October 10.

She was speaking at the Young Water Professionals Ugandan chapter, an event organised by National Water and Sewerage Corporation (NWSC) in Bugolobi, a Kampala suburb where the one million tree plant campaign was launched.

To address the dwindling forest cover in the country, Parliament in 2003 enacted the National Forestry and Tree Planting Act that establishes a Tree Fund.

Under section 40 of the Act, government is mandated to establish a Tree Fund to provide a funding mechanism for promoting tree planting and growing at both national and local levels.

The fund, Mr Sam Cheptoris yesterday said would go a long way in reviving the dwindling forest cover.

**“If the Tree Fund is operationalised, I am sure we shall do a lot to green this country.”** SAM CHEPTORIS, MINISTER OF WATER AND ENVIRONMENT

A recent Water and Environment sector review indicated that Uganda's forest cover is now at just 9 per cent.

Ms Kadaga asked all corporations in the country to support environment conservations and "if they did, things would be moving. It is okay to support football, but you can as well support the environment," she added.

Mr Sam Cheptoris, the Minister of Water and Environment, said a number of initiatives premised at re-greening the economy, have been put in place including; a plan to plant 100m trees in the next five years, protecting what is currently available and giving incentives for private sector to plant trees.

"If that is [Tree Fund] operationalized, I am sure we shall do a lot to green this country," Mr Cheptoris said.

Dr Silver Mugisha, the NWSC executive director, said although it is not their mandate to plant trees, their business entirely depends on trees, a reason they are motivated to plant trees.

Dr Mugisha pointed out the ever increasing urban water coverage from 24 towns about four years ago to now 218 towns across the country serving a population of 6.3m people in urban centres as a testimony to protect the environment.