

THE KIIHA WATERSHED WHICH PROVIDES WATER IS FACED WITH SHRINKING NATURAL RESOURCES

MASINDI

By Agnes Nantambi

Encroachers of Kacukura, Kabango, Kasubi, Kasokwa and Mubende wetlands within the Kiiha catchment area in Masindi district could not wait anymore for the presidential directive to catch up with them. They decided to spearhead the restoration of wet lands.

Kiiha watershed which is part of the Kafu River sub catchment, lies in the Albert water management Zone (AWMZ) of the Ministry of Water and Environment and provides water resources for a number of people and business entities in western Uganda.

Currently, the watershed which provides water and environment resources for sustaining livelihoods, agriculture, commercial and ecosystem services is faced with shrinking natural resources, large scale migration and rapid farmland conversions.

"The situation is further exacerbated by the unpredictable impacts of climate change, lack of land for future scenarios of water use and demand, inadequate collaboration and co-operation as well as limited awareness among stakeholders," explained Jackson Kitamirike the team leader of AWMZ.

He noted that seasonal dry spells threaten the sustainable water supply for the population and business in the Masindi

Masindi wetland encroachers turn into conservationists



Calist Tindimugaya plants a tree while others look on during the second Kiiha catchment management meeting in Masindi. Photo by Agnes Nantambi

area, as well as the broader watershed. Speaking during the second Kiiha catchment management meeting in Masindi, Kitamirike revealed that under the international water stewardship programme, the Government partnered with the private sector and other stake holders to mitigate water-related risks around the

catchment.

The project supported by the GIZ, UKAID and the German co-operation is aimed at improving security for water users in the Kiiha watershed by tackling shared water risks.

"Others are to support catchment management organisation (CMO) to enhance improved management of

the Kiiha watershed, as well as providing input to the development of the catchment management plan," he said.

Khadir Kirungi, the Hoima district chairperson, and also Kiiha catchment committee chairperson stressed that more efforts to protect the catchment are needed to enhance sustainability of factories in the

area.

"We no longer get the amount of rain that we used to get in the past. Therefore, we decided to protect the catchment beginning with sensitisation of the community on using the wetlands and the future dangers," he said.

He applauded the community, for forming associations among themselves on how to use the wetlands and planting the natural trees to conserve and restore the wetlands and forests.

"We hope that in six months from now, we shall have restored the wetlands from 60 to 85%," he said.

According to a survey conducted by Earth Consult Uganda Limited on restoration of wetlands and re-greening of areas in identified hotspots in the Kiiha watershed, major activities within the wetlands are the cultivation of crops, distilling of waragi, cutting trees for firewood and charcoal, waste disposal, animal grazing, sand mining and brick making.

The reports show that the impacts of the activities lead to changes in the rainfall patterns and distribution, loss

of bio-diversity, especially due to the destruction of wetland vegetation and areas that act as habitats for wild animals and also the pollution of water sources.

The report also highlights that formation of structures and associations such as Kakamuwega and Kikaweca respectively has done a lot to restore the wetland.

"These have helped in promoting awareness about the importance and functions of wetlands, educating stakeholders on the environmental impacts of wetland degradation," he said.

The commissioner for Water Resources Management and Regulation Dr Calist Tindimugaya, said the efforts are part of the implementation programme called catchment based water resources management.

"We are trying to manage, develop, and protect water resources following a unit through which water moves since it does not follow administrative boundaries. That is why we are bringing together the stakeholders who share it while destroying its catchment," he said.

He said that about 60 hectares of the catchment have been degraded yet the resources available cannot restore all the degraded parts.

During the meeting, the delegates castigated NEMA for giving protection to the degraders of wetlands.