



Trees blossoming in the newly restored Gangu Central Forest reserve in Mpigi and Butambala districts. Photo by Simon Ssekidde

# NFA restores Gangu forest

MPIGI/BUTAMBALA

By Simon Ssekidde

Gangu Central Forest Reserve has had its greenery restored after nearly 10 years of degradation by encroachers.

The forest, which measures 1,054 hectares, is shared by Mpigi and Butambala districts and covers Kammengo, Buwama and Bulu sub-counties.

Nicholas Busobozi, the managing supervisor for the National Forestry Authority (NFA) for Mpigi, Gomba and Butambala districts, said they opted to plant indigenous tree species, such as *Prunus Africana*, *Cendrella Ordorata* and *Taminalia Invorensis*, in a move to restore the forest.

"We wanted to plant the indigenous trees that were in the forest before it was degraded to preserve the environment and

restore it to its original state," Busobozi explained.

He said a big chunk of forest land was extensively degraded by members from the community who wanted land to grow crops because the forest land was fertile.

Busobozi said evicting the encroachers from the forest was not easy, and it needed a lot of sensitisation to pave the way for the restoration of the forest.

"We had to conduct a massive eviction process to force some stubborn encroachers off the forest land. We thank God that even village leaders joined the struggle and it registered a great success," he added.

NFA under the Collaborative Forest Management Programme, gave out part of the land to community members to plant their own commercial trees, such as eucalyptus to fight poverty.

"We realised that most people

## BETWEEN THE LINES:

■ Gangu Central Forest Reserve was gazetted in 1932 as a central forest reserve, but it was extensively degraded and destroyed by encroachers for timber, land for agriculture and charcoal.

around our forests lacked land for agriculture and poverty was also another factor which forced people into forest reserves. We initiated the programme to allocate land to the community on contract," he added.

Busobozi said the programme has helped to accommodate former encroachers, who are now given land for free in the forest reserve to conduct environmentally-friendly projects.

Gangu was gazetted by the

colonial government in 1932 as a central forest reserve, but it was extensively degraded and destroyed by encroachers for timber, charcoal and land for agriculture.

In 2014, NFA teamed up with the World Bank and Uganda Electricity Transmission Company Limited and began on a campaign to restore Gangu Central Forest Reserve.

Sam Akol, the LC3 chairperson for Kammengo sub-county in Mpigi, which has the biggest share of the forest reserve, said they are determined to protect the new trees in the forest against encroachers.

He called on the community to support the restoration process of the forest reserve by rendering necessary support to NFA, including guarding it jealously against encroachers.

Most of Uganda's forest cover is fast disappearing and experts say it may lead to a crisis and eventual desertification.