

Locals formulate by-law to save wetlands

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Voice

"At this time of the season, people in Otuke are busy drinking alcohol because wetlands have been destroyed, trees have been cut down and there is no activity apart from the hot sunshine."

JOHN WAFULA, OTUKE RDC

"In the past, we used to receive rainfall around January before wetlands were degraded but now we are almost in the middle of February but unfortunately we are only experiencing heat wave and dusty winds."

ALEX NYANGA, RESIDENT

wetland encroachment.

"Most communities still operate for short-term gains without consideration of long-term targets or impacts on the environment, society or future generations," says Mr Okello.

He adds that LCs lack capacity to enforce the by-law.

In Otuke, many wetlands have been encroached on by residents seeking land for agriculture. Several residents say changes in rainfall patterns will affect productivity.

"In the past, we used to receive rainfall around January before wetlands were degraded but now we are almost in the middle of February but unfortunately we are only experiencing heat wave and dusty winds," says Mr Alex Nyanga, a resident of Te-Abala village in Orum Sub-county.

570,000

IN THE LAST 20 YEARS, UGANDA HAS LOST ABOUT 570,000 HECTARES OF WETLANDS IN VARIOUS PARTS OF THE COUNTRY.

As temperatures throughout East Africa rise, precipitation is expected to increase, along with the frequency and intensity of droughts, floods and heat waves. Scientists predict that the rate of climate change will be more rapid than previously expected.

Whereas wetlands are a source of livelihood to many Ugandans, they are under a lot of pressure from industrial development, settlement, agriculture, sand and clay mining.

According to the Uganda Wetlands Atlas, wetland destruction costs Uganda nearly Shs2 billion annually, and contamination of water resources, which is partly caused by reduced buffering capacity of wetlands near open water bodies, costs the country nearly Shs38 billion annually.