

WORLD ENVIRONMENT DAY
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Growth. Due to population growth, the demand for land has increased forcing some people to encroach on wetlands.

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High population growth rate fuels degradation

The increasing population coupled with poor environmental conservation have been cited as major causes of the environmental degradation in Uganda.

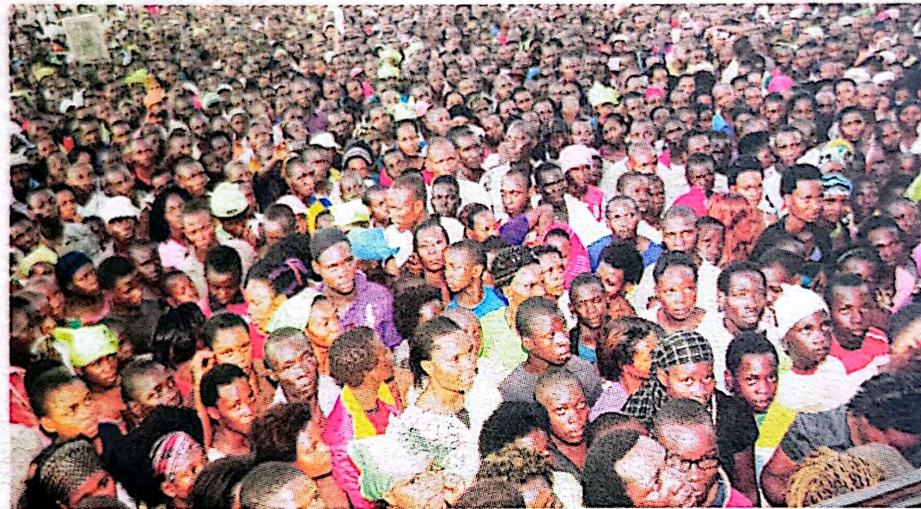
This, according to experts, call for a need to have improved environmental conservation with specific focus on information provision, compliance and enforcement, restoration of degraded ecosystems as well as the participation of all stakeholders.

Encroachment on wetlands, forest reserves for industrialisation and human settlement, deforestation and charcoal burning are some of the activities, which contribute to environmental degradation.

A report released by Uganda Bureau of Statistics (UBOS) late last year, indicated that Uganda's total population size increased to 37.7 million people up from 36.4 million in 2014.

Ms Helen Namirembe Nviri, the UBOS director of population and social statistics indicated that Uganda's current population growth rate per year is 3.03 per cent.

Ms Naomi Karekaho, the spokesperson of National Environmental



The rising population growth rate threatens Uganda's environment management efforts.

FILE PHOTO

Management Authority (Nema), says the increasing number of people has put more pressure on natural resources, especially forests and wetlands.

"Due to the increasing number of people in the country, the rate of deforestation is increasing as many people are looking for where to settle, land for farming, firewood and charcoal. This makes conserva-

tion efforts fruitless," she says.

A report released by Mr Sam Cheptoris, the Minister of Water and Environment during the NRM Manifesto Week recently, indicated that forest cover is estimated at 1,956,664ha down from 2,196,631ha in (2010), 3,220,546ha in (2005), 3,785,167 in (2000), and 4,933,271ha in (1990). This shows that the main cause of the decline

is agricultural expansion in forested areas, biomass energy (fire wood and charcoal) and timber for construction industry.

According to Ms Aisha Alibhai, the public relations officer of National Forestry Authority (NFA), 70 per cent of forests in Uganda are privately owned, therefore, people destroy them as much as they want which affects the government ef-

forts to conserve forests.

Mr Cheptoris says government has put in place policies, laws and regulations to guide the management of environment and natural resources.

"The government supplied a total of 1,856,696 seedlings to the districts of Bududa, Bukwo, Namisindwa and Mbale, catchment areas of Ngenge (Kween), Tochii (Oyam), Wadelai (Nebbi), Mubuku II (Kasese), Doho II (Butaleja), Olweny (Lira) and Agoro (Lamwo) irrigation schemes as well as the districts of Luwero and Nakaseke," he says.

Ms Karekaho says there has been demarcation of government forests so that people don't encroach on them.

"We are also carrying out tree planting drives in different areas and encourage people to conserve the environment on top of telling them the importance of conserving the environment or disadvantages of encroaching on them as some of them do it ignorantly," she adds.

ENCROACHMENT

Encroachment on ecosystems due to high population growth rates and the need for arable land continues to be a big threat to the sector as they experience increased levels of environment degradation and uncontrolled encroachment.