# UMU in crusade for environment protection

By Mathias Mazinga

Uganda Martyrs University, Nkozi (UMU) was recently recognised by the United Nations (UN) as a centre of expertise on education for sustainable development in Greater Masaka.

It coordinates environmental sensitisation programmes in the region, which covers Masaka, Lwengo, Kalungu, Ssembabule, Kyotera, Butambala and Mpigi districts, among others.

Rev. Bro. Aloysius Byaruhanga, the co-ordinator of the programme, explained how the university attained the status. "As a university, we attach great importance to the protection of the environment. We believe that we do not own this world. We are just custodians and therefore we are always mindful of a clean and safe environment in everything we do," Byaruhanga said adding, "All our academic programmes have a component of environment. Even architecture is looked at from the view of a safe environment," he said.

Byaruhanga eplained why they opted to refer to the faculty as the faculty of the built environment saying it is because of the background that when an opportunity came along, they applied.

He said they were then granted the status on account of their profile and programmes,which were found to be impressive.

Byaruhanga further explained that UMU works with UN agencies like The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), government bodies like The National Environment Management Authority (NEMA), other educational institutions and the communities to implement its programmes.

"Our role is to co-ordinate and supervise these programmes. We have centres and partner schools in all these districts. We talk to pupils, students and local communities about the need to save our environment using formal and informal modalities to mobilise our people to be environmentally friendly," Byaruhanga said.



Sister Namutebi and the students from St Augustine's College, Wakiso, displaying the biopesticides made by the students of Uganda Martyrs University during the exhibition last weekend

He added that, "We encourage them to plant trees and educate them about the dangers of deforestation, littering and destructive agricultural practices. We also train teachers, parents and students to protect the environment."

Byaruhanga said in previous years, their agriculture students have showcased impressive innovations like the fireless cooker, the herbal pesticides and standing gardens. Such innovations, especially those that promote the use of renewable energy, will help a great deal in reducing the consumption of wood and the pollution of the environment.

### UMU's cartoon book

UMU has produced a cartoon handbook, aimed at teaching children about the environment in an entertaining way. The handbook links human beings, nature and God. It was authored by Associate Prof. Julius Mwiine, an environment activist and don. It was launched by the minister of State for Higher Education, Hon. Dr. John Chrysostom Muyingo, during the university's 23rd graduation ceremony recently.

### Centre of excellence for agro-ecology and livelihood systems

The commitment of UMU as a champion of environmental conservation is also projected by its approval by the World Bank to become the African Centre of Excellence for Agro-Ecology and Livelihood Systems, where researchers from Africa can do doctoral research on agro-ecology.

The $6m World Bank funded project is to develop capacity for Uganda, Eastern and Southern Africa in the area of agro-ecology.

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