

Recycling plastic bottles can help in conserving environment

One does not have to travel far within Kampala before encountering used plastic bottles littered on our streets and dumped in water drainage channels. These bottles block drainage systems, are a hazard to the environment as well as to our health. Some people pick these bottles, fill them with water or juice for sale to unsuspecting customers.

While authorities such as Kampala Capital City Authority (KCCA) invest a lot of time and money to open the drainage channels, sooner than later, they get clogged with these bottles and other plastic materials. The authorities and residents keep running in circles in regard to the plastic materials.

Developed countries like Germany have successfully devised ways of maintaining streets and the environment free of plastic bottles and related materials. And local authorities do not have to clear the environment of the unwanted plastics. The secret to their success is the extra fee of between 25 and



50 Euro cents (between Shs1,000 and Shs2,000) to the retail price of drinks sold in plastic bottles. This fee is reclaimable when the bottle is returned to the supermarket. Consequently, you will rarely see plastic bottles on the streets of Germany given that each bottle is regarded as gold. What if we were to try a similar approach in Kampala? Authorities such as the National Environment Management Authority (Nema)

could direct all producers of drinks in Uganda to add an extra fee to the retail price of items purchased in plastic bottles and make that fee refundable. The collection of bottles and issuing of the refund could be awarded as a tender to an entity in conjunction with major supermarkets. To augment this, plastic bottle collection centres or machines could be set up at supermarkets to provide additional points for collection and refund. To complete the cycle, collected bottles would then be delivered back to the manufacturers for re-use.

The extra charge does not in any way affect the price of the commodity, but rather takes a little money from the consumer's pocket (temporarily) and rewards their environmentally conscious behaviour once it's returned. Incentive-based approaches to protecting our environment can lead to re-emergence of a "greener" Uganda.

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