Embrace Church of Uganda's tree planting initiative

THE Church of Uganda has officially launched an ambitious 15 million tree-planting campaign as part of activities marking its 150 years of evangelism in Uganda.

The commendable campaign, running between 2026 and 2027, is expected to see the Church mobilise its 39 dioceses and 2,648 parishes to restore degraded ecosystems, strengthen biodiversity and contribute to Uganda's national tree cover restoration goals, while integrating environmental protection and disaster management.

This initiative should serve as a call for both the Government and private sector to follow suit because it is necessary in light of global warming and its devastating effects on ecosystems, livelihoods and economies.

Uganda's forest cover has improved in recent years, with the National Forestry Authority reporting that it increased from 9% in 2015 to about 12% in 2024. However, this remains far below the recommended 24% by the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. Deforestation continues at an alarming rate, driven by agricultural expansion, urbanisation and illegal logging. The Church's campaign offers hope, but reversing decades of ecological degradation is only possible with more drives of the like.

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The initiative emphasises planting indigenous tree species because they are better adapted to local climates, require less water and support biodiversity by providing habitats for native wildlife. Unlike exotic species, they also contribute to soil health and long-term ecosystem stability. Prioritising these species will ensure the restoration of natural balance rather than the introduction of potentially invasive plants.

Climate change poses existential threats worldwide, including prolonged dry spells and droughts, erratic rainfall patterns and frequent floods, all of which affect vulnerable populations. According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, reforestation can mitigate up to 30% of carbon emissions if implemented effectively. For Uganda, where agriculture forms the backbone of the economy, preserving forests and promoting sustainable land use is key for food security and economic resilience.

While the target of 385,000 trees per diocese over two years is realistic, the real challenge lies in implementation and ensuring tree survival. Past tree-planting campaigns have often failed because of poor follow-up mechanisms. The Church must, therefore, actively involve congregations and local communities to foster project ownership and accountability. The establishment of tracking systems will ensure the monitoring of growth, protection of saplings from human interference or livestock and proper maintenance until maturity.