



ENR-CSO Network Newsletter

Special Edition on World Environment Day, 5th June 2025

Beat Plastic Pollution

EDITORIAL



As we release this edition of the Newsletter, we pause to recognize and celebrate the power of unity in advancing environmental stewardship. Our strength as a Network lies in our shared vision, collaborative action, and unwavering commitment to safeguarding our environment.

In this issue, we emphasise plastic pollution. We commend the Government of Uganda for the bold steps it has taken to curb plastic pollution across the country, including policy measures to ban single-use plastics, promote recycling, and raise awareness about the dangers of un-managed plastic waste.

ENR-CSOs walk this journey alongside government agencies, local governments, private sector actors, and communities. Our members continue to amplify citizen voices, hold duty bearers accountable, support waste management innovations, and integrate anti-plastic pollution messaging into our broader work.

ENR CSOs have contributed thought-provoking articles, insights, and success stories to this newsletter, and demonstrated the knowledge, passion, and commitment driving our collective efforts. In a way, the newsletters is a call to action.

Message from Chairperson ENRCSO Network

June 2025

World Environment Day

Celebrations

Ending Plastic Pollution



Fellow environmental defenders, distinguished guests, government officials, community members, development partners, and friends of nature,

Today we join the rest of the world in commemorating World Environment Day 2025, under the national theme: "Ending Plastic Pollution." This theme is not only timely, but deeply relevant to the environmental challenges facing Uganda — particularly the rising menace of plastic pollution, which threatens to undermine decades of progress in land and ecosystem restoration.

Uganda, like many developing countries, is battling a growing plastic crisis. Single-use plastics are now found in every corner of our country, from the peaks of Mt. Rwenzori to the shores of Lake Victoria, and from the markets of Kampala to the highlands of Kabale. These plastics are clogging our drainage systems, degrading our soils, contaminating our water sources, and endangering

both livestock and wildlife. Rural districts like Kabale, Nakasongola, Kaabong, Soroti, and many others, are not spared, as waste slowly makes its way into farmland, wetlands, and even food chains.

As the ENR-CSOs Network, we raise our collective voice today to say: enough is enough. We must treat plastic pollution as an urgent national environmental and public health issue. While land restoration is essential for climate resilience, that restoration effort must go hand in hand with reducing plastic waste, promoting eco-friendly alternatives, and strengthening community-led waste management systems.

We commend the efforts already underway by communities, private sector actors, and some local governments in piloting bans, plastic buy-back programs, and recycling innovations. However, more needs to be done. We call upon: Government to enforce existing regulations on plastic usage, particularly the ban on single-use plastics under 30 microns, and introduce incentives

for companies investing in biodegradable packaging.

Private sector to take full responsibility for the plastic products they place on the market through extended producer responsibility or even certification schemes.

Communities to take a lead role in educating households, sorting waste at source, and demanding action from their leaders.

Development partners and CSOs to increase investment in research, public education, and innovative waste solutions tailored to rural and urban Uganda.

As the celebrations are in Kabale, known for its hills, valleys, and fragile ecosystems, we urge all residents to become champions of environmental protection. Let us clean up our neighbourhoods, plant indigenous trees, restore eroded lands, and say no to plastics that poison our soils and waters.

This World Environment Day must not end as a mere celebration. Let it be a turning point, a renewed commitment, a national awakening. Let us restore our land, protect our water, and rid Uganda of the plastic threat once and for all.

Gaster Kiyangi
Tree Talk Plus
Chairperson, ENR CSO Network

Ending Plastic Pollution in Uganda: A Call to Action for a Greener Future

By Joel Wako, Albertine Rift Conservation Society (ARCOS)

Plastic pollution remains one of Uganda's most urgent environmental challenges, contributing significantly to land and water degradation. From the narrow and congested streets of Kampala to the fragile ecosystems of the Albertine Rift and the expansive waters of Lake Victoria, the unchecked spread of plastic waste is wreaking havoc, eroding biodiversity and threatening human well-being.

As Uganda continues to urbanise and develop, the urgency to take decisive, collective, and unwavering action has never been greater. We must confront this beast before it escalates beyond our ability to contain it.

Uganda generates about 600 metric tons of plastic waste daily, but only 40% is collected, with minimal recycling. The rest pollutes water bodies and the environment. Kampala is hardest hit, producing around 800,000 metric tons annually, yet only 6% is recycled, according to KCCA and the Uganda Cleaner Production Centre (2021). Most waste ends up in landfills, drainage systems, or illegal dumps. Poor infrastructure and weak governance worsen the problem, especially during rains. A 2022 World Bank report estimates Kampala loses over UGX 50 billion (USD 13 million) annually to flood-related damages linked to poor waste management.

Lake Victoria is severely affected by plastic pollution. Plastics washed into the lake through runoff and drainage release toxic chemicals and nutrients,



FIG 1 ARCOS staff and local youth collaborated to remove waste and preserve the Lake Kivu's ecosystem.

leading to algal blooms. These blooms reduce oxygen levels, kill aquatic life, destroy fish breeding grounds, and create dead zones. This harms the ecosystem and threatens the livelihoods of fishing communities. The water also becomes unsafe for drinking and recreation.

Plastic pollution also poses a threat through microplastics—plastic particles

Youth: The Missing Link in Plastic Waste Management and Environmental Advocacy? By Richard Hamba,

TEENS Uganda

As the world marks World Environment Day on June 5th, 2025, under the theme "United Against Plastic Pollution" for Uganda, TEENS Uganda calls upon the youth to rise as catalysts for change in the fight against plastic pollution and environmental degradation.

In Uganda, plastic waste continues to choke our ecosystems, clogging drainage systems, polluting water bodies, and threatening biodiversity. Yet, the role of young people in addressing this crisis remains underutilised. Youth are not just future leaders; they are today's innovators, educators, and community mobilizers.

smaller than 5mm formed from the breakdown of larger plastics. These have been found in Uganda's lakes, soils, and even food. Research shows that humans are increasingly ingesting microplastics through contaminated food and water, and more and more terrifying, it appears in the blood and organs of human beings in some studies (Wandera et al, 2022).

For men, the danger is particularly terrifying. Microplastic contamination has been associated with damaged sperm quality, hormonal disruption, and even infertility in some studies. According to a 2023 study published in the peer-reviewed scientific journal *Toxics*, a few of the substances applied in plastics, like phthalates and bisphenol A (BPA), interfere with the creation of testosterone and damage sperm DNA. As plastics accumulate in food webs and rivers, Ugandan men and households become more and more unknowingly exposed to poisoning.

The Albertine Rift Conservation Society (ARCOS) is actively combating plastic pollution and promoting ecosystem resilience. Through community-led waste management, education campaigns, and advocacy for sustainable alternatives, ARCOS supports efforts across the Albertine Rift, Great Lakes, and African Mountains regions. Its "Resilient Communities Programme" works with local communities around Lake Kivu to integrate plastic waste solutions into conservation and development goals, strengthening climate resilience, livelihoods, and biodiversity conservation.

ARCOS's efforts show that community action, supported by policy and regional partnerships, can effectively combat plastic pollution. Uganda's ban on polythene bags under 30 microns exists but is poorly enforced. Civil society continues to push for better implementation, while entrepreneurs are creating reusable products, eco-bricks, and small recycling initiatives. However, these efforts need more investment, support, and coordination. Uganda's journey towards the eradication of plastic pollution must start with the proper enforcement of existing laws and embracing of improved waste management procedures.

Uganda needs proper collection, sorting, and recycling facilities in both urban and rural areas. Public campaigns should focus on changing attitudes and behaviors around plastic use. Schools, markets, worship centers, and local authorities must help build a plastic-aware society. Beyond education and enforcement, investment in alternatives—like biodegradable packaging, reusable containers, and incentives for plastic-free practices—is essential. Regional cooperation is also vital, as plastic waste easily crosses borders through trade and waterways.

Plastic pollution is not an isolated issue; it is closely interlinked with water security, food sustainability, climate resilience, and public health. It must be addressed through collective action by government agencies, development partners, the private sector, and individual citizens. We all have a role to play. Whether using reusable stuff in place of disposable stuff, taking part in cleaning the neighborhood, or shopping at establishments that care for sustainability, we must act together.

Uganda is at a crossroads. If we keep on the course we are heading, the harm to the environment, economy, and society will simply continue to mount. But with commitment, courage, and collective action, we can create a cleaner, healthier, and more sustainable future. "Let us rise to the challenge and eliminate plastic pollution for our children, our planet, and our future."

At TEENS Uganda, we believe youth are key to effective plastic waste management. Through school campaigns, waste sorting, and plastic audits, we involve young people in advocacy and practical action. They turn waste into opportunity by converting biodegradable material into manure and promoting plastic recycling and reuse.

By empowering youth to lead, we spark behavior change, influence policy, and drive sustainable waste solutions. Their creativity is vital for cleaner, resilient communities. This World Environment Day, we call on government, civil society, and partners to invest in youth-led environmental programs. Together, we can restore our land and secure our future. www.teensug.org – Empowering Youth, Sustaining Tomorrow.

United Against Plastic Pollution: Eco-Schools Taking the Lead.

By Shanitah Nalukenge, A Rocha Uganda



This year's World Environment Day theme, "United Against Plastic Pollution," speaks directly to the heart of our work with Eco-Schools in Uganda. At A Rocha Uganda, we believe that the fight against plastic waste must begin with education, and what better place to start than in our schools?

Through our plastic recycling initiative in Eco-Schools, learners are not only taught the dangers of plastic pollution but are actively engaged in the solutions. From creating art and reusable materials, dustbins, school gates, drip irrigation from waste plastic and plastic bottles, our young environmental champions are turning trash into tools for change.



FIG 2 & 3 A school Child showcasing Dustbin made from plastic School gate made from plastic bottles

The impact goes beyond the classroom. These learners take what they've learned back to their homes and communities, inspiring others to think twice before using single-use plastics and encouraging responsible waste disposal.

By uniting students, teachers, and community members in this effort, A Rocha Uganda is building a culture of environmental stewardship—one that is practical, creative, and grounded in hope. Together, we can end plastic pollution. Together, we are united.

Ending Plastic Pollution: A Call for Collaborative Action Through Agroecology

By: Dr. Stella Namanji and Prof. Charles Ssekya
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World Environment Day 2025 emphasises the urgent need to address plastic pollution, a crisis that poses a significant threat to ecosystems, soil health, human health, and biodiversity.

While restoration ecology traditionally aims to recover degraded environments, addressing plastic pollution requires a systemic, collaborative and participatory approach that integrates scientific knowledge, environment-friendly practices and co-developed, viable community-driven solutions through Agroecology.

The Role of Collaboration in Environmental Restoration.

Environmental restoration requires more than technical skills—it needs strong partnerships among producers, processors, consumers, communities, researchers, and policymakers. A good example is the "Building Resilient Agroecological Food Systems" project in Uganda's Teso Sub-region, funded by the McKnight Foundation. Launched in 2024, the two-year project operates in Soroti, Bukedea, Pallisa, and Kumi districts, in partnership with CERD-Uganda and the Ateker Transformation and Sustainability Initiative. (ATSI), Popular Knowledge for Women Initiative (PKWI) and Uganda Martyrs University –Nkozi (UMU). Targeting Farmer Research Networks

(FRNs) in those districts, this initiative demonstrates how a systemic approach to collaboration can drive sustainable agricultural practices while tackling broader social-cultural, economic and environmental challenges.

Through co-learning sessions, we show how Agroecology—a holistic approach—combines ecological, social, and economic principles to build sustainable, resilient food systems. It fosters beneficial interactions among plants, animals, people, and the environment while promoting food sovereignty, biodiversity, and climate resilience.

While plastics serve many uses, they severely pollute agri-ecosystems by contaminating soil and water, disrupting food production, and harming biodiversity. A 2022 Dutch study found microplastics in the blood of 17 out of 22 healthy adults (The Guardian, March 24, 2022).

A follow-up study by Leonard et al. (2024) shows that microplastics are also found in human blood streams, with up to 24 polymers in 90% of participants. In Uganda, microplastics have been detected as choking agriculture, thus polluting farmland, groundwater, and the food chain, which raises concern about their eventual uptake into human bodies (See the Monitor- Saturday, March 19, 2022).

The Teso project emphasizes inclusive decision-making, co-learning, and co-creation to build resilient agroecological systems. By blending traditional knowledge with science, stakeholders promote plastic-free farming through biodegradable packaging, sustainable waste management, and vermiculture composting

On the other hand, there can be strengthening of local food systems by preserving traditional seeds, where communities reduce reliance on imported, plastic-packaged foods, fostering local food production and consumption with minimal environmental impact.

CERD-VERMICOMP
Seed your Live Compost

FIG 4. Showing turning of house hold waste into live soil



FIG 5 showing support of community-led seed banks to preserve traditional seed varieties and strengthen local food systems

In addition, we co-create self-assessment tools to help farmers evaluate their consistent reliance on farming systems, such as biofertilizers and

biopesticides packaged in recyclable containers, such as steel tin, paper-based and glass containers. Currently, farmers are challenged with finding alternative plastic-free containers, thus ending up storing seeds in plastic (Figure 2). By identifying plastic-free seed banks, alternatives like organic compost and natural pest control, farmers can significantly cut down plastic waste since many synthetic agricultural products are stored and transported in plastic containers. Where plastic is inevitably used, they are collected and put to other use, in a way of recycling.

Our self-assessment frameworks guide farmers in adopting biodegradable packaging, reusable containers, and bulk storage methods, hence reducing plastic dependency. Through the co-created self-assessment tools, farmers can track their plastic waste generation and implement recycling and proper disposal methods to ensure that plastic waste does not contaminate animals, soil and water sources.

Lessons for Uganda's action against plastic pollution

The success of the Teso project underscores the power of collective action in addressing environmental challenges. Key takeaways for reducing plastic pollution include empowering local communities to adopt plastic-free alternatives in agriculture and daily life, advocating for regulations that limit plastic use and promote sustainable materials, encouraging



FIG 6 shows staff training on co-create self-assessment tools

change through environmental education and public campaigns, developing circular economy solutions that repurpose plastic waste into useful products. Strong multi-actor networks, building trust among stakeholders, and restoration efforts can achieve long-term sustainability. As the

Uganda unites to combat plastic pollution, initiatives like the Teso project serve as a model for integrating ecological restoration with waste reduction strategies.

A call to action

World Environment Day 2025 is a reminder that ending plastic pollution requires purposeful collective responsibility. Governments, CSOs, private sector/businesses, communities, and individuals must work together to implement solutions that protect ecosystems and promote sustainable living. Through collaboration, innovation, and commitment, we can restore our planet and create a future free from plastic pollution.

United Against Plastic: A Call for Health, Climate, and Equity

By Peninah Atwine -Programs Officer, Environmental Alert

Why fighting plastic pollution is essential for public health, climate resilience, and environmental justice.

Plastic pollution is more than an environmental issue, but equally a growing public health threat. Microplastics have infiltrated our food systems, water supplies, and even the air we breathe. Recent studies have found microplastics in human blood, lungs, and placentas.

From food packaging to cosmetics, the overuse of plastic exposes people especially vulnerable communities to hazardous chemicals. These substances are known to disrupt hormonal systems, increase cancer risks, and impair child development (Yonsei Med J., 2023).

Most plastics come from fossil fuels, and their entire life cycle releases significant greenhouse gases. In 2023, Uganda emitted 53.371 million tonnes of CO2 equivalent (CEIC, 2023). These emissions drive global warming, worsening floods, droughts, and storms that hit vulnerable communities hardest.

Plastic pollution disproportionately affects low-income and marginalized communities living near production and disposal sites, exposing them to greater health risks (UNEP, 2021). Fighting plastic pollution is also a fight for environmental justice—protecting the health, dignity, and rights of those often excluded from decision-making.

Environmental Alert advises

that reducing plastic use is key to tackling climate and health crises by lowering emissions, saving energy, and promoting sustainable economies. EA has led community sensitization—especially in Kampala slums—engaged the private sector on alternatives, and advocated for best practices and policy reforms.

Currently, Environmental Alert, in partnership with Südwind and with funding from the Austrian Ministry of Social Affairs, is implementing a Resilient Communities to Health and Climate Change Hazards in Uganda (RCHCH-U) project in the



FIG 7 shows community sensitisation by Environmental Alert staff about the nexus between health and plastic pollution

advocacy. EA is concerned about rising plastic use for bottling local alcohol in rural areas lacking waste management, causing pollution, soil and water contamination, and blocked drainage. Through this project, EA supports clean-up programs, community outreach on waste, climate, and health links, and works with local authorities.

While ongoing initiatives such as RCHCH-U are essential,

climate disaster-prone and conflict affected districts of Kasese and Ntoroko in Uganda's Rwenzori region. The project aims to support health centers, schools, and communities, particularly women, children, and the elderly, to respond to climate-induced disasters such as mudslides, flooding, and riverbank overflow. This project will improve access to sustainable WASH and energy services by constructing and rehabilitating water points, sanitation facilities, and WASHaLots, alongside community mobilization, capacity building, and

it is imperative to recognize that no single entity can address this crisis in isolation. A collaborative approach involving multidisciplinary stakeholders is needed to ensure that the entire production-to-consumption chain prioritizes environmental sustainability. Key players in this effort include government entities, the private sector, civil society organizations (CSOs) or non-governmental organizations (NGOs), as well as citizens, who serve as the final consumers.

This is a call to action for government, private sector stakeholders, CSOs/NGOs, and citizens to unite in the fight against plastic pollution.

- We urge the Government of Uganda to enact and enforce robust policies limiting single-use plastics and promoting sustainable alternatives.
- We call on industries to develop biodegradable products and adopt circular economy principles, and support plastic collection programs.
- We call on CSOs to strengthen community outreach programs on proper waste management, targeted trainings, but also advocate for the promotion of best practices and policy changes that respond to the plastic problem
- We invite citizens to reduce,

reuse, and recycle making sustainable choices that support systemic change. Only through a united front across sectors, borders, and communities can we dismantle the structures that sustain plastic dependency. Plastic pollution must be part of Uganda's national climate adaptation agenda. Improved waste management, single-use plastic bans, and circular economy investments are vital to cut emissions and protect vulnerable communities. Now is the time for decisive, just action for the health of Uganda and the planet.

Waste but not Wasted

By Judith Mirembe, Ecological Trends Alliance

Solid waste management is one of the biggest challenges facing the environment across the world as a result of population growth and Uganda has not been spared.

With the discovery of substantial amounts of oil in the Albertine Region in 2006, Uganda has since embarked on a journey to explore and exploit its oil.

As a result of the oil and gas activities, the districts of Masindi, Hoima, Kikuube and Buliisa have had an explosion in the population of people, which includes workers in both formal and informal sectors, thus leading to an increase in the generation of solid waste across the region. Notable among the waste generated is the non-biodegradable e.g plastic bottles from mineral water, carbonated drinks such as soda and energy drinks. This overwhelms the capacity of the environmental system to assimilate some of the wastes generated; therefore, a solution to

reuse and repurpose the plastic bottles comes in handy to reduce this waste. Plastic bottles have a life cycle of at least 450 years and would thus be detrimental to the environment.

Ecological Trends Alliance (ETA) has been operating in the Budongo-Bugoma landscape (Masindi, Buliisa, Hoima and Kikuube districts) since 2021. Under the Green Livelihood Alliance framework, whose goal is to protect Uganda's forest landscape from the effects of oil and gas, ETA has empowered youths in Kiziramfumbi sub-county, Kikuube at different levels as shown below.

Empowering the Itohya Forest Club with additional skills

The St. Joseph's Vocational Training Institute (SJVTI), under the management of the Hoima Diocese, operates in Itohya forest and carries out skilling of youths in areas of carpentry and woodwork, mechanics, welding, salon, brick and concrete practice, tailoring and housekeeping. At the institute, the Friends of Itohya Forest Club was

formed in 2023 with a major aim of inspiring young environmentalists within the institute. The club has 50 members, of which 21 are female and 29 are male environment champions. ETA trained students on the 4Rs (Reduce, Reuse, Recycle & Refuse). They were imparted with skills of repurposing waste such as plastic straws and bottles to make laundry baskets, shopping bags and tree shelters. The tree shelters are plastic bottles woven in circular frames by Club members. These are then used to protect the young trees from severe weather conditions and animals from feeding on them.



FIG 8 below shows Incinerator set up in Kaseeta Parish, in Kikuube District.

The more shelters made from such materials, the more plastic bottles are removed from the environment through repurposing. This is an additional skill the students can use in the future to earn an extra income by selling these items once turned into a business.

The local communities in Kaseeta Parish were educated on waste segregation at the point of generation. The biodegradable waste is used as manure while the non-biodegradable waste is incinerated. Incinerators were set up in crowded areas such as market areas to aid in the management of plastics and polythene materials.

INSPIRING THE NEXT GENERATION FOR A CLEANER ENVIRONMENT

A generational change in waste management begins at the grassroots by fostering responsibility among young people. At Kaseeta Primary School, pupils were trained in proper waste management and rewarded with scholastic materials for their efforts. ETA emphasizes that removing plastics requires collective action and that even small contributions

Rural Communities hit hardest by Plastic Pollution:

Kaganga John, Kikandwa Environmental Association.

Rural communities are almost always heavily dependent on natural resources, which are being irrevocably contaminated with plastic waste, the impact of which is often underestimated. Plastic pollution has become a global environmental crisis, and we must equip ourselves with knowledge and solutions to tackle it.

Capacity building of regulators, urban and rural development authorities, academia, private sector, civil society,

start-ups, researchers, consultants, and individual practitioners is critical to collectively move to circular systems where materials are kept in the loop to achieve a high means of service life. The magnitude of the plastic crisis creates space for every stakeholder to contribute to environmental sustainability.

Plastic pollution threatens rural areas by contaminating soil and water, harming agriculture and health. Improper waste disposal reduces soil productivity, damages crops, clogs waterways, and raises flooding and disease risks like malaria.

Studies show rural plastic waste management is poor, yet daily plastic waste there is rising and may soon surpass urban levels, raising



Fig 9 Plastic pollution hit the rural areas in Kikandwa subcounty Mityana District

serious concerns. Rural plastic waste includes PET, HDPE, PVC, LDPE, PP, PS, EPS, and others. Common disposal methods are open burning, burying, reusing, backyard dumping, selling, and recycling. Most rural households still use traditional plastic waste methods despite recommendations to reuse and recycle. We must act together to reduce plastic pollution and

protect Uganda's environment in both urban and rural areas. Plastic waste threatens land-based plants, animals, and humans, yet only a small portion is recycled or converted to energy.

Much plastic ends up in landfills and soil, taking up to 1,000 years to degrade and leaking toxic substances. Improper disposal harms agriculture by polluting soil, reducing crop yields, and blocking plant growth and nutrient absorption.

Plastic waste often enters rivers, lakes, and oceans, harming aquatic life and ecosystems, and contaminating irrigation water that affects crops. I recommend conducting studies in rural areas to get accurate data on daily plastic waste and a national survey on rural perceptions of waste management practices like reusing and recycling.

Urban and Rural local Authorities need to invest in improving waste management practices equally. There is need to extend services to the rural population as is done in the urban area. This could include the establishment of waste collection services in rural areas, awareness raising on the problems of improper plastic disposal practices, as well as mobilising and teaching rural communities new and environmentally friendly plastic waste management practices recommended by the global community.

CPE Pilot Project Leading the fight against Plastic Pollution in Uganda.

By: Posiano Musiime, Uganda Biodiversity Trust Fund

As Uganda commemorates World Environment Day (WED) under the theme "Unite for Plastic Pollution", the Clean Products for the Environment (CPE) project emerges as a leading initiative demonstrating local solutions with global relevance.

Launched in March 2024 by the Uganda Biodiversity Trust Fund (UBF) with support from the Bridge Innovation Fund, the CPE project is piloting sustainable production methods, capacity building, and the adoption of biodegradable alternatives across Uganda's manufacturing sector.

In a significant milestone, held in November 2024, Mr. Peter Ssekajja of NEMA led a training session introducing manufacturers like Luuka Plastics, Rena Beverages, and Jakana Foods to cleaner



Figure 10 Training manufacturing firms in biodegradable plastic production and sustainable manufacturing practices.

production techniques. Topics included waste minimisation, toxic material reduction, energy-efficient technologies, and compliance

with environmental standards. One groundbreaking achievement is the delivery of one tonne of BioD, a biodegradable plastic masterbatch, to Luuka Plastics Limited by Green Wheel Africa Holdings Limited.



Figure 11 A sample of BioD pellets and boxes of BioD procured and delivered to Luuka Plastics

Luuka is now prototyping a new line of biodegradable products, demonstrating the scalability of eco-friendly materials within

Uganda's plastic industry.

The project is also testing market-based incentives such as premium pricing, eco-branding, and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) engagement to encourage private sector buy-in and conservation financing. Although still in its pilot phase, early results show promising shifts in industry behaviour, including waste segregation practices and carbon-neutral production trials. The CPE initiative is not only fostering cleaner industry practices but also laying the groundwork for national policy transformation toward a greener and more sustainable Uganda.

This World Environment Day, the CPE pilot stands as a bold example of innovation in action, proving that with the right mix of skills, materials, and commitment, Uganda can lead in the global fight against plastic pollution.

from indigenous trees.

KALIRO YOUTH "UNITED AGAINST PLASTIC POLLUTION"

MUGOODA ROGERS, Kaliro Environment Conservation Project

As we commemorate World Environment Day with the global theme of 2025 as "Ending plastic pollution," which requires immediate actions towards global plastic waste management.

In Uganda, the theme is domesticated as "United against plastic pollution," emphasizing the need to inspire individuals, institutions, organisations, and the general community to adopt sustainable practices to combat plastic pollution. At Namwiwa secondary school, one of the institutions found in Kaliro district, Kaliro Environment Conservation Project (KECP) supported students to be very innovative to the extent of making dustbins for the disposal of rubbish out of plastic bottles

This is done in such a way to encourage students to change their attitude and behavior towards waste, using the slogan "don't waste the waste".

KECP has supported the youth at Namwiwa Secondary School to exploit the untapped self-employment opportunities from the

littered plastic bottles, which have been poorly managed by the general public. Such plastics are a blessing in disguise to this group of young people, as the students are able to access free raw materials for their products, hence enabling them to incur low costs of inputs.

There are various youth employment opportunities that can be tapped from plastic waste disposal being mismanaged and not utilised widely across the country, except for the few recycling plants or factories,



FIG 12 showing the youth of Namwiwa S.S with a dust bin made from plastics.

which at the end have negative effects on nature and contribute to environmental degradation

On another hand Kaliro Environment Conservation Project as a community based organization has gone an extra mile to support the young people to tap other opportunities which can create employment for the youth in the sector of environment which have no negative effects for example tree seeds collection where much emphasis is being put on harvesting

Tree nurseries are another area creating market opportunities for the youth, as many nursery operators buy from them disposed plastic materials to serve as potting bags for seedling propagation, hence creating a market for what has been considered useless.

In my own opinion there is need for government relevant bodies and non-government organizations to design interventions in form of sensitization aiming at giving information to the youth on how they can exploit existing economic opportunities from plastic wastes without causing any harm, Here the focus should be on sustainability part of it despite the fact that there is no way we can eliminate the public from utilizing plastic materials and products.

To motivate and bring the youth on board regarding the campaign to end plastic pollution, there is a need for them to get informed about the existing related opportunities from proper plastic waste management, like the making of table mats and fuel, so that they get motivated by appreciating its importance to their well-being.

Cleaner Markets, Healthier Communities: How Kulika Uganda's One Health Project is Transforming Lives in West Nile

By Gillian Avako and Fenahasi Ejua, edited by Harriet Ndagire Sempebwa, Kulika Uganda.

In the districts of Terego and Madi Okollo, Kulika Uganda is leading a quiet revolution in market hygiene and public health through the One Health project.

By focusing on the deep interconnection between human, animal, and environmental health, Kulika is transforming Ocea and Kublala markets into cleaner,



FIG 13 of waste bins usage in Kubala and Ocea Market for keeping the markets clean.

safer, and more organized spaces for vendors, consumers, nearby schools, and households.

The project engages local District One Health Teams to train market committees on sanitation, waste disposal, and disease prevention. Previously, poor hygiene led to diarrhea, cholera, typhoid, and other infections, worsened by uncollected garbage, flies, and uninspected meat.



FIG 14 Showing a green waste bin placed to collect decomposable biodegradable waste, which is later converted to fertilizers,

Dilapidated slaughter spaces, sometimes used for open defecation, caused severe contamination. The project engages local District One Health Teams to train market committees on sanitation, waste disposal, and disease prevention. Previously, poor hygiene led to diarrhea, cholera, typhoid, and other infections, worsened by uncollected garbage, flies, and uninspected meat. Dilapidated slaughter spaces, sometimes used for open defecation, caused severe contamination.

Thanks to One Health interventions, hygiene has improved significantly.

Market committees now promote handwashing, waste segregation, and safe food handling. The project provided tools like dustbins, gloves, and wheelbarrows, enabling better waste management. Separated into green and blue bins, waste is composted or repurposed into items like bags and doormats, creating cleaner markets and new income sources. Meat vendors have been trained in food safety, with modern slaughter slabs and waste facilities underway. Health screenings are being introduced to prevent diseases like hepatitis B, TB, and skin infections.

A Kublala committee member shared, "Before Kulika, rubbish was everywhere. Now we have dustbins, recycle, and a cleaner market we're proud of."

Kulika Uganda's One Health approach is transforming markets and mindsets by integrating hygiene, environmental health, and disease prevention. Ocea and Kublala now model how community-led action, backed by tools and partnerships, builds healthier, resilient communities.

Tree-Based Approaches to Wetland Protection against Pollutants. By Gaster Kiyangi, Tree Talk Plus

Wetlands are vital ecosystems that support biodiversity, regulate water cycles, and provide livelihoods through agriculture, fishing, and eco-tourism.

However, they face increasing threats from human activities such as settlement, agriculture, brick-making, and sand mining, to mention but a few. Protecting these wetlands requires integrated conservation strategies, and one of the most effective tools in this effort is tree planting and forest conservation. Wetlands recharge groundwater, regulate stream flow, and mitigate floods. They filter pollutants and sediments from surface runoff, improving water quality. They are home to fish, birds, amphibians, and plant species crucial to ecological balance. Communities depend on wetlands for water, fuel wood, food, and construction materials. Trees play a significant role in safeguarding wetlands and water

systems through several ecological functions. Trees improve soil structure, allowing better infiltration



FIG 15 showing Farmers in Kassanda district train to establish an FMNR site

of rainwater and reducing surface runoff. Root systems of trees act like sponges, storing water and releasing it slowly into wetlands and streams. Forested landscapes influence local climate by regulating temperature and humidity, supporting more consistent rainfall that feeds wetland systems.

Trees act as buffer zones that trap and filter agrochemicals, heavy metals, and waste before they reach wetland waters. Riparian forests (trees along rivers and wetlands) are especially crucial in intercepting pollutants. Several tree-based approaches have

proven effective in protecting and restoring wetlands, particularly in mitigating the threats posed by deforestation, overgrazing, agricultural expansion, and unsustainable fuel wood harvesting. These approaches not only enhance ecological resilience but also strengthen the water cycle and improve community livelihoods. Key interventions include the following:

For example, in riparian tree planting, native or indigenous tree species are planted along the banks of wetlands, rivers, and streams to create green buffer zones. Commonly used species include *Khaya* spp (Mahogany), *Cordia africana*, *Markhamia lutea* (Musambya), *Melia volkensii*, and *Albizia chinensis* (Omugavu omuzungu), among others. These species are well adapted to local conditions and offer multiple ecological benefits. Agroforestry, which is the integration of trees with crops and/or livestock on the same land, plays a vital role in reducing pressure on wetland ecosystems. In central Uganda, farmers are incorporating species such as *Grevillea*, *Calliandra*, *Gliricidia*, and *Sesbania* into farmlands to enhance soil and water conservation, reduce deforestation, and enhance resilience to climate change. We are currently undertaking Farmer-Managed Natural Regeneration (FMNR), which is a low-cost, community-led land restoration technique that involves protecting and managing natural tree regrowth from existing rootstocks, stumps, or seeds. FMNR

is gaining traction in the entire country, particularly in districts like Lyantonde, Nakasongola, Kiboga, Sembabule, Kasanda, Bugiri, Kapchorwa, Karamoja districts, and districts of Northern Uganda, especially along the cattle corridor, where land degradation, especially due to charcoal burning, is severe.

FMNR is restoring soil fertility, boosting vegetation, enhancing groundwater recharge, and reducing dependence on wetlands by promoting on-farm trees. Communities and institutions are establishing woodlots and

plantations, especially on degraded lands near wetlands and buffer zones. These are often composed of fast-growing species like Eucalyptus, Pine, Gravellia, and Terminalia spp, which serve multiple purposes.

Tree planting creates cleaner, more regulated environments. When areas are reforested or lined with trees (in schools, roadsides, wetlands, and trading centres), people tend to value and respect them more, reducing the tendency to litter or dump plastics. Riparian tree belts and woodlots along roads and waterways help trap plastic



FIG 16 A woodlot established in Bujjuko, Mpigi district

waste that would otherwise be carried by wind or water into rivers, wetlands, and lakes.

Trees planted along drainage channels and near wetlands filter pollutants, including plastics and micro plastics, before they reach fragile ecosystems. Tree planting and tree-based enterprises provide income and jobs, reducing reliance on single-use plastics. They promote eco-entrepreneurship, with many farmers and youth combining tree planting with waste collection or recycling for added income.

It also provides biomass packaging options, tree planting for bamboo used to manufacture eco-friendly alternatives to plastic bags.

National Plastic 'Line of Attack' Calls Upon CSOs to Join the Action

By Kimbowa Richard, UCSO (Chairman- RECSO Network)

The 2024 Uganda National Population and Housing Census collected data on household solid waste disposal practices, categorising them into proper and improper methods.

Improper methods include disposal in gardens, burning, pits, unsupervised local dumps, water bodies (rivers, seas, streams, ponds), bushes, and other unregulated means. The findings reveal that a significant majority, 92% of households (approximately 9.8 million), are engaged in improper solid waste disposal. A major challenge in improper solid waste management lies in the discarding of plastic waste, which is non-biodegradable and does not decompose over extended periods. This issue forms part of the worldwide polycrisis, alongside climate change and biodiversity loss, highlighting the pressing need for coordinated action. The Census Report further indicates that improper waste disposal is more widespread in rural areas (98.3%) than in urban areas (81.8%). Regionally, the Madi sub-region (Adjumani, Moyo, and Obongi) recorded the highest occurrence of improper disposal at 99.4%, while Kampala Capital City had the lowest at 41.8%. According to NEMA Uganda, plastics, which constitute around 4% of total waste, are particularly challenging. Of this plastic waste, 42% is improperly disposed of, with approximately 10% entering water bodies and 20% being dumped on land or incinerated. These figures underscore the urgent need for all-inclusive policy reform and a transition from unsustainable waste management methods such as landfilling with its high environmental impacts, i.e. potential groundwater pollution, methane emissions, and aftercare periods of hundreds of years. Instead, embracing prevention, reuse and recycling first (for example, composting the huge organic fraction), followed by recovery and disposal, should guide Uganda's

future waste management strategy, given the fast-growing population, competing land uses and the global environmental commitments. NEMA Uganda (2023) attributes plastic waste pollution to several systemic issues: weak regulatory frameworks, lack of enforcement, and widespread use of single-use plastics (e.g., plastic bags, bottles, and packaging). Furthermore, insufficient recycling infrastructure worsens the accumulation of plastics in dumpsites and the broader environment. Uganda's rapidly growing population (now at close to 45 million) intensifies demand, consumption, and waste generation, placing a vast strain on existing waste management systems. This situation should serve as a wake-up call for Uganda's 15 newly established cities (created by Parliamentary decision in 2020), which must consider alternative waste management strategies beyond landfilling. Current experiences in cities like Kampala, Jinja, and Mbale highlight the limitations of this conventional approach. To address this (imminent) crisis, NEMA Uganda has developed the National Strategy for Management of Plastic Pollution (2023–2028). This medium-term strategy aims to transform Uganda's plastic management systems to deliver economic, environmental, and public health benefits. The Strategy promotes the "Three Rs" approach: Reuse, Recycle, and Reorient and Diversify, each targeting the legacy and future of plastic pollution.

The National Strategy for Management of Plastic Pollution (2023–2028) prioritizes waste prevention as the most desirable action, with uncontrolled dumping as the least. It highlights the importance of effective consumer engagement and extended producer responsibility to drive behavioral change and improve product life cycles. Civil Society Organizations, especially in the ENR sector, are identified as key players in policy advocacy, public awareness, and coordination efforts to combat plastic pollution in Uganda.

Read more about the National Strategy For Management Of Plastic Pollution (2023-2028) from: https://www.nema.go.ug/new_site/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/Plastic_circularity_Report-2023-1.pdf

As we conclude this edition, we take pride in the collective efforts of our members and partners in their role in protecting and restoring Uganda's environment. Your grassroots efforts, advocacy, and education are key in linking global goals to local action. While challenges like climate change, biodiversity loss, and plastic pollution persist, our collective choices and innovations can drive lasting change. This year's World Environment Day reminds us of our shared duty to protect our planet. The theme calls for collective action from government, private sector, CSOs, and citizens to safeguard natural resources and promote sustainability. We thank the Editorial Board, Network Steering Committee, Südwind and the Austrian Ministry of Social Affairs, for their generous support in producing this newsletter. We also appreciate our members for contributing valuable articles to this publication.

Sincerely,
Jacinta Nekesa Nangabo, ED-Environmental Alert, On behalf of the Secretariat.

This issue is an initiative by the Environment and Natural Resources Civil Society Organization Network.
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