



## World Environment Day Celebrations, 5<sup>th</sup> June 2017: Beat Plastic Pollution

### Key Messages by Environmental Alert

On 5<sup>th</sup> June 2018, Uganda joins the rest of the **World to celebrate World Environment Day (WED)** under the theme “**Beat Plastic Pollution**”. If we are to achieve the theme, then it is only possible if we do things differently, and the following can be done:

- a) *Step-up regulation and enforcement of the policies and laws which guide sustainable management of waste including a ban on polythene bags (Kaveera) of less than 30 microns.*
- b) *Creation of collection centers to ease collection and transport of the plastics to recycling plants should be supported and up-scaled to other urban towns in the country.*
- c) *Community based initiatives and innovations for waste management must be promoted and supported, for they turn waste including plastic into valuable products which create employment and generate incomes while cleaning up the environment;*
- d) *Engaging the Government through providing alternative research based policy and practice recommendation to influence decision making and investments for sustainable waste management along the waste generation chain at levels; and*
- e) *Changing attitudes and practices of Ugandans in respect to waste management so that less waste is generated and managed responsibly.*

### Background

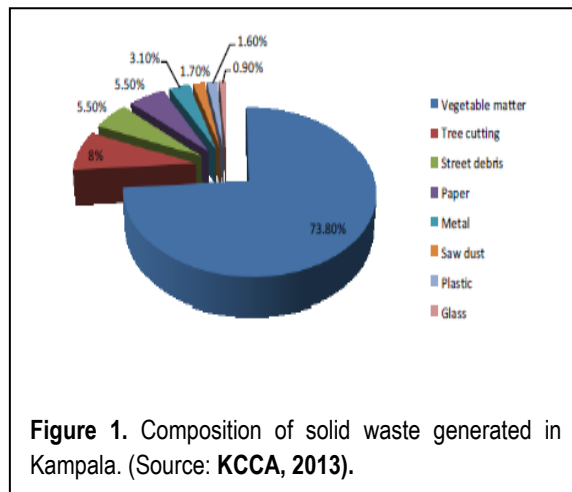
WED was formally designated by the United Nations Environment Programme on 5<sup>th</sup> June 1972, the opening day of the first World Environment Conference in Stockholm, and the first World Environment Day was held in 1974. Since then, nearly 150 countries have been involved every year, with activities that range from raising awareness for environmental protection to encouraging action for recycling, sustainable development and consumption, fighting global warming, cleaning up pollution and many other issues.

The theme for World Environment Day 2018 is “**Beat plastic pollution**”. The national celebrations in Uganda will be hosted by **Mbale district** on **June 5<sup>th</sup> at the Mbale Cricket Grounds**. According to National Environment Management Authority (NEMA), focus will be on raising awareness on the dangers of plastics, especially the use of the banned plastic carrier bags, also locally known as “**Kaveera**” and other issues affecting our Environment.

In Kampala City for instance, the daily per capita waste generation is estimated at 1 Kgs. This means that with an estimated day population of 4.5 million people, Kampala generates about 45,000 tons of waste per day! According to Kampala Capital City Authority (KCCA), about three quarters of the waste generated in the city is organic. The remaining proportion constitutes glass, paper, plastic, metals and other construction waste. Thus, with plastic waste constituting 1.6% (indicated in **Figure 1**). This waste is collected in these mixed proportions and transported to Kitezi landfill in Wakiso district. It represents only about 40% of the total waste generated in the City, while the remaining uncollected waste is normally burnt and/or dumped in

unauthorized sites, causing health and environmental problems (KCCA, 2017). At Kitezi landfill, it's common to see plastic waste pickers (usually women and youth – bboys & girls) collecting it from the landfill and transporting it to recycling plants where they earn 170/= per Kg.

Indiscriminate disposal of waste including plastics has serious implications on environment and public health. For instance: they block drainage channels leading to flooding; they collect stagnant water which becomes a breeding ground for mosquitos which result into disease burden to the people as they incur costs on treating malaria, which affects mainly the pregnant women at a rate of 27% country-wide (De Beaudrap et al., 2013), and children; poor disposal mechanisms like burning plastics leads to release of dangerous gases which pollute fresh air and contamination of foodstuffs; Plastics such as polythene bags take hundreds of years to decompose and as such pollute our soils, becoming a threat to agriculture which is the backbone of Uganda's economy and by proportion employs 72% of women; they pollute lakes and rivers endangering marine life; they have caused loss of livestock when ingested.



**Figure 1.** Composition of solid waste generated in Kampala. (Source: KCCA, 2013).

In the year 2009, Government banned the importation, manufacture and use of polythene bags of gauge below 30 microns. NEMA's efforts to enforce the ban have been applauded though frustrated by business interests and unfortunately, the Government has not done enough to enforce the ban perhaps due to the pressure from big businesses that contribute a lot to the tax base at the expense of health and the wellbeing of our environment. On the other hand, the Government has not explored other alternatives to the "Kaveera" brought on board by the civil society. Nevertheless, we applaud the Government of Uganda for its efforts towards waste management, and others to applaud are the civil society organizations and the private sector.

Private sector players like the Coca-Cola Beverages Africa Uganda is applauded for its efforts to venture in Plastics Recycling Industry (PRI) in Nakawa Industrial Area, with the aim to not only collect and recycle their own plastics, but also other plastic waste dumped. The plastics are recovered and converted into economical and commercial use. Efforts by Lake Victoria Environmental Management Project (LVEMP) are also applauded for supporting KCCA in the: Maintenance of Nakivubo channel; increasing public awareness on proper solid waste management and popularization of the solid waste management ordinance; Construction and equipping a model garbage recycling center which employs youths in recycling plastics and making manure and fertilizers from waste (Sector performance Report-MWE, 2017). The Environment and Natural Resources Civil Society Organizations (ENR-SCOs) Network in their sector performance report FY 2016/2017, compiled their achievements in the Environment thematic area, among



**Figure 2: Indiscriminate waste disposal in drainage channel in Kiroombe Village, Makindye 1 Parish, Makindye Division, Kampala. Photo by Environmental Alert.**

which they were able to train 520 households in solid waste management, with emphasis on recycling waste to make crafts.

## **Key Recommendations**

However, all is not lost. Thus, there are various initiatives being implemented at different scales to address the challenges associated with plastic management. Moreover, the experiences in this respect in terms of best practices and lessons learnt must be up-scaled of Uganda as a country is to beat plastic pollution. This requires concerted and coordinated efforts by both State and Non-state actors including the Development Partners, Private Sector and the Civil Society Organizations (CSOs). The following recommendations should be stepped-up:

- a) *The Government through the line Ministries, City and Urban Authorities should step-up regulation and enforcement of the policies and laws, which guide sustainable management of waste including plastic. Strategies for effective waste management through application of the 3R's should be applied at all scales;*
- b) *KCCA's new strategy for plastic waste management in this respect, that involves creation of collection centers to ease collection and transport of the plastics to recycling plants such as the Coca-Cola Beverages Africa plastic waste recycling plant in Nakawa should be supported and up-scaled to other urban towns in the country.*
- c) *Community based initiatives and innovations for waste management must be promoted and supported, for they turn waste including plastic into valuable products which create employment and generate incomes while cleaning up the environment;*
- d) *CSOs and networks should continuously engage the Government through providing alternative research based policy and practice recommendation to influence decision making and investments for sustainable waste management along the waste generation chain at levels; and*
- e) *All Ugandans are encouraged to change their attitudes and practices in respect to waste management so that they can generate less waste and also take responsibility in its management and disposal at the source were its generated through waste sorting, recycling and re-using. This requires more targeted awareness and education of all stakeholders.*

## **References**

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### **Box 1. About Environmental Alert**

Environmental Alert (EA) was founded in **1988 and this year (2018) marks 30 years** of contribution to improved livelihoods and development in Uganda through several interventions in sustainable agriculture, environment and natural resources management. EA is officially registered with the NGO Board as a Ugandan non-governmental organization, incorporated as a company limited by guarantee. EA is governed by an independent Board that is responsible for providing strategic oversight of the organization including ensuring its integrity as a voluntary service organization.

EA is a **1<sup>st</sup> prize winner of the Energy globe award for environmental sustainability-2005 under the category, earth.**

EA is a member of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and a Member of The IUCN National Committee for Uganda.

EA envisions, *'Resilient and dignified communities, managing their environment and natural resources sustainably.'*

**EA's mission is to,** *'Contribute to improved livelihoods of vulnerable communities by enhancing agricultural productivity and sustainable natural resources management'*

#### **Program and institutional Components:**

1. Environment and Natural resources management;
2. Food security and Nutrition;
3. Water, Sanitation and Hygiene;
4. Finance and Administration;
5. Resource mobilization and Investment.

#### **Scale of Implementation:**

EA operates in selected districts for generation of evidence to inform policy engagements on agriculture, environment and natural resources at National and International levels. Currently EA's operations are in 20 districts across the country. EA undertakes area wide targeted awareness on selected issues in agriculture, environment and natural resources engagements

#### **EA is a Secretariat for following networks:**

- a) The Network for Civil Society Organizations in Environment & Natural Resources Sector (ENR-CSO Network) - <http://enr-cso.org/>;
- b) Uganda Forestry Working Group - <http://ufwg.entalert.org/>;
- c) The Standards Development Group (for promotion of Sustainable Forest Management in Uganda); and
- d) Promoting Local Innovation in ecologically oriented agriculture and natural resources management (PROLINNOVA-Uganda Network) - <http://www.prolinnova.net/uganda>.

**Further information about Environmental Alert** is available at: <http://entalert.org/>

Plot 475/523 Sonko Lane, Kabalagala behind Kirabo kya Maria building.  
P.O. Box 11259, Kampala - Uganda | Tel: +256 (0) 414 510 547, 414 510 215.  
Email: [entalert@entalert.org](mailto:entalert@entalert.org) | Website: [www.entalert.org](http://www.entalert.org)

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