



**WORLD
ENVIRONMENT
DAY**

Environment and Natural Resources Civil Society Organizations Network

ENR CSO Network Newsletter

Inspired by Nature. For Climate. For Our Future.

EDITORIAL

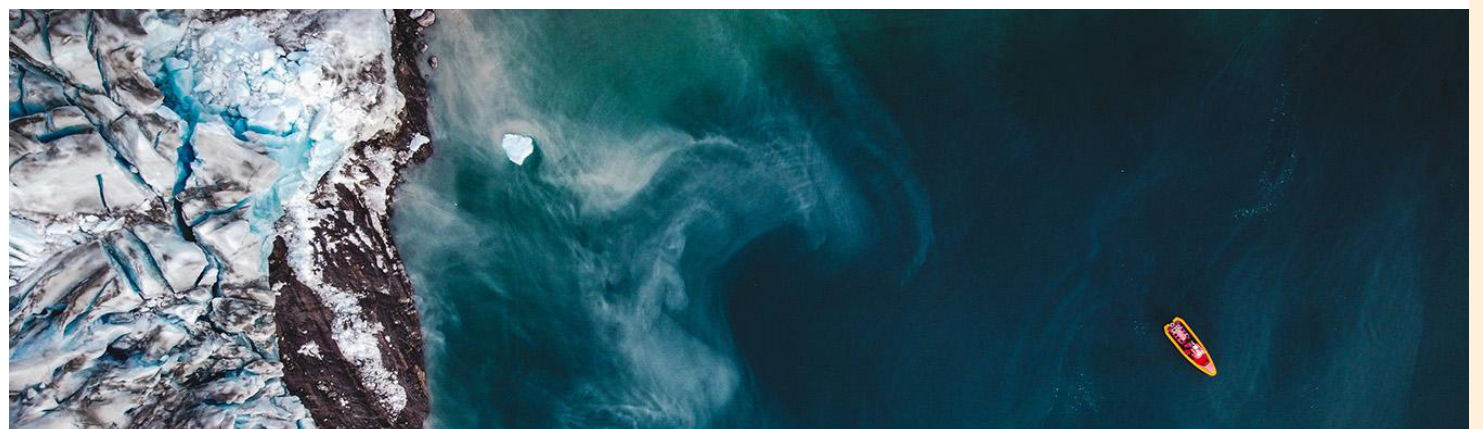
World Environment Day 2026

As we commemorate World Environment Day 2026, we are reminded that the fight against climate change starts with individual responsibility and collective action. The theme, “Climate Action Begins With You. Act Now,” calls upon every Ugandan to take practical steps toward protecting our environment and securing a sustainable future.

Across the country, communities are already experiencing the effects of climate change through prolonged droughts, floods, declining soil fertility, and loss of biodiversity. These challenges demand urgent action from all of us (government, civil society, private sector, cultural institutions, youth, and local communities).

At ENR-CSO Network, we believe that small actions can create lasting impact. Planting trees, reducing plastic waste, conserving wetlands, adopting clean energy, and promoting sustainable agriculture are all important contributions toward climate resilience.

This year’s celebration were affected by Ebola outbreak but inspired renewed commitment and stronger partnerships to safeguard Uganda’s natural resources for present and future generations. The time to act is now, because climate action truly begins with each one of us.



Every year on 5th June, the world comes together to celebrate World Environment Day, a platform for raising awareness and encouraging action to protect our environment. As we mark World Environment Day 2026, we are reminded that the solutions to many of the challenges facing Ugandans already exist in nature itself. The theme, “Inspired by Nature. For Climate. For Our Future,” calls upon governments, communities, businesses, and individuals to embrace nature-based solutions as a pathway toward climate resilience, sustainable development, and a secure future for generations to come.

Uganda continues to experience the effects of climate change through rising temperatures, prolonged droughts, floods, land degradation, biodiversity loss, and declining ecosystem services. These challenges are particularly severe for rural communities whose livelihoods depend directly on forests, wetlands, water resources, and productive

agricultural landscapes..

Within the Albertine Rift, including the Bugoma Forest landscape and its associated wetlands, these ecosystems continue to provide significant environmental and socio-economic benefits. However, they are increasingly threatened by deforestation, agricultural expansion, infrastructure development, unsustainable harvesting of natural resources, and the growing impacts of climate change..

Nature-based solutions offer practical and cost-effective approaches to addressing these challenges. Interventions such as forest landscape restoration, Farmer-Managed Natural Regeneration (FMNR), agroforestry, wetland restoration, watershed management, and sustainable land management have demonstrated their ability to restore degraded ecosystems while improving agricultural productivity, enhancing water security, conserving biodiversity, and strengthening

community resilience. Investing in these approaches contributes simultaneously to climate change mitigation, adaptation, and improved livelihoods.

The success of these interventions depends on empowered communities. Local people are the primary custodians of natural resources and possess valuable indigenous knowledge that complements scientific approaches to ecosystem management. Strengthening community participation, supporting local governance institutions, and promoting sustainable livelihood opportunities are essential for ensuring that conservation efforts are inclusive, locally owned, and sustainable.

As we celebrate World Environment Day 2026, let us reaffirm our commitment to protecting Uganda’s forests, wetlands, rivers, and biodiversity.

Happy World Environment Day 2026!
Gaster Kiyingi, Tree Talk Plus Chariman, ENRCSO Network

KCSON's Hub Approach to Restoring Forests and Empowering Communities

Article brought to you by Kitara Civil Society Organizations Network (KCSON)

Kitara Civil Society Organizations Network (KCSON) is a legally registered network of civil society organizations (CSOs) operating in the Bunyoro-Rwenzori sub-region. Its mission is to contribute to sustainable development by promoting a vibrant civil society, enhancing the participation of vulnerable groups, strengthening effective social service delivery, and encouraging the responsible use of natural resources.

On this World Environment Day 2026, KCSON highlights key lessons learned from its innovative hub approach, an initiative grounded in the understanding that ecosystems and community livelihoods are deeply interconnected.

Natural forests in the region have, over the years, faced increasing pressure from encroachment and unsustainable exploitation, underscoring the urgency for coordinated and community-led action. In response, KCSON pioneered a hub approach in 2018, initially bringing together eight CSOs adjacent to the Bugoma Central Forest Reserve to collaborate on conservation and sustainable livelihoods. Today, this approach has expanded to include 73 CSOs surrounding the Bugoma–Kagombe Central Forest Reserve (BCFR).

The hub comprises organizations drawn from Collaborative Forest Management (CFM) associations, women-led groups, and youth-led initiatives, representing more than 2,000 members. The initiative began with a targeted advocacy campaign to protect Bugoma Forest using ICT tools. Through SMS and voice reporting systems, community members identified and reported cases of forest encroachment to relevant authorities. This effort was later strengthened by supporting communities with climate-smart livelihood interventions, empowering them to take ownership of both environmental conservation and socio-economic development. Over the past five years, KCSON has strengthened the capacity of hub members through training in governance, enterprise selection, entrepreneurship, resource mobilization, compliance, financial literacy, and organizational management. Youth engagement has been prioritized through the establishment of education for sustainable development (ESD) clubs in schools, as well as skills training initiatives in different trades that promote green jobs for out-of-school youth.

These capacity-building efforts have been reinforced by direct investment in nature-based, climate-resilient enterprises. As a result, participating groups now manage livestock projects involving 45 cows and 215 goats. Additionally, 345 households have adopted improved energy-saving cookstoves, reducing pressure on forest resources. Beekeeping has flourished, with over 1,770 Kenyan Top Bar hives distributed to different groups across the region. Agroforestry and sustainable agriculture have also expanded significantly, including the growing of 191 acres of coffee, 367 acres of woodlots, 14 acres of bananas, and 2 acres of passion fruit. Mushroom farming has also been embraced by several CSOs as an innovative income-generating activity. These initiatives are integrated with financial literacy training and supported through Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLAs), enabling members to effectively manage their finances and reinvest in their livelihoods. As a result, household incomes have improved, allowing families to invest in education, access healthcare, and enhance their overall quality of life.

KCSON's hub approach demonstrates that restoration goes beyond planting trees. It is fundamentally about people. By linking environmental conservation with community empowerment, the initiative fosters resilient ecosystems and thriving livelihoods.

As the world reflects on environmental stewardship this year, the experience from Bunyoro offers a powerful reminder: when communities unite, forests flourish, and the future becomes brighter.



Community bee-hives



Women saving scheme attending a SACCO meetings



Woodlot establishment at community level



Passion fruit growing



Animal rearing at community level to enhance household

Climate Solutions Begin in the Coffee Garden: How Uganda's Coffee Farmers Are Turning Waste into Resilience. *By Kimbowa Richard, Uganda Coalition for Sustainable Development / Chairman, RECSO Network*

In Lwengo district, Sarah Namusoke begins her mornings inspecting her two-hectare robusta coffee garden, where unpredictable rainfall, prolonged dry spells, and soil erosion increasingly threaten productivity.

For smallholder coffee farmers like Sarah, climate change is not a distant global issue but a daily challenge affecting livelihoods and food security. Yet rather than waiting for outside solutions, many farmers are responding through practical climate-smart actions rooted within their own farms and communities.

Instead of burning coffee husks after processing, Sarah composts them or sells them to poultry farmers for brooder insulation. Coffee pulp, livestock manure, and household organic waste are converted into fertilizer, while banana residues are used as mulch to conserve soil moisture. Shade trees planted alongside coffee improve biodiversity, cool the farm environment, and store carbon. As Uganda marks World Environment Day 2026 under the theme "Climate Solutions Begin With You: Act Now," these everyday actions demonstrate how climate resilience can begin in a single coffee garden.

Coffee supports approximately 1.8 million farming households and over 8 million people across Uganda's value chain, yet the sector remains highly vulnerable to climate change. Circular farming practices that turn waste into value (such as composting, agroforestry, and biochar production) are helping farmers restore soils, diversify incomes, and strengthen resilience. However, scaling such solutions will require stronger extension services, affordable green financing, access to clean technologies, and incentives that support sustainable production.

Sarah pauses beside a young guava tree she planted three years ago. Its canopy now stretches over one side of the boundary of her coffee plot, and already provides fruits to her children and neighbours. It is a small act.

But multiplied across Uganda's millions of coffee farmers, small acts become restored soils, resilient livelihoods, and climate solutions grown from the ground up. This World Environment Day, Uganda's coffee farmers remind us that climate solutions do not begin somewhere else, they begin with you!

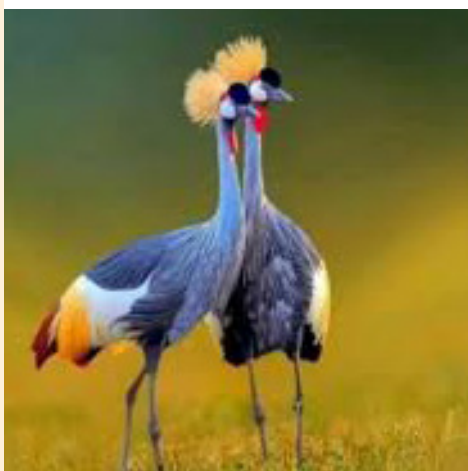
Biodiversity Funding for Uganda - *a saviour*

Unlocking Private Sector Funding for Biodiversity.

By Owen Atuhaire, Uganda Biodiversity Trust Fund

Biodiversity funding in Uganda remains a major challenge, yet the private sector is essential in bridging the gap for climate action and conservation. By investing in nature through carbon credits, ecotourism, and renewable energy, businesses gain resilience, reputation, and long-term financial returns while supporting measurable environmental restoration.

UBF is mobilising private sector investment by linking businesses to conservation markets, blending public and private finance to reduce risks, supporting payment for ecosystem services, and providing transparent data to track biodiversity and climate outcomes. These mechanisms are designed to scale investment into wetland restoration, forest protection, and emissions reduction projects.



Uganda's Grey Crowned Crane is a symbol of grace, a victim of wetland loss, and a reason to act now.

With support from TotalEnergies Uganda and East African Crude Oil Pipe, UBF and its partners have delivered tangible conservation results in key chimpanzee corridors in Budongo-Mukihani and Budongo-Kasongire. In the River Rwizi catchment, 400 hectares of wetlands have been restored, 300 households supported, and Grey crowned crane populations are recovering across seven districts.

The North Albertine Rift Chimpanzee Action Plan (NARCAP) provides a coordinated framework for protecting chimpanzees threatened by habitat loss and development pressures. It promotes biodiversity offsets, private landowner incentives, land-use integration, and multi-stakeholder governance involving government and conservation partners.

Investing in nature is not only a moral responsibility but also a strategic opportunity. Thriving ecosystems underpin stable economies, resilient supply chains, and sustainable communities. Climate action will succeed when government, business, and citizens act together—because it truly begins with each of us, and the time to act is now.

Why funding is the solution.

By Dr. Ivan Amanigaruhanza, ED, Uganda Biodiversity Trust Fund

Uganda's Environment and Natural Resources (ENR) sector continues to face persistent funding gaps that have limited effective environmental management and conservation efforts.

Recent reductions in donor funding, partly driven by global humanitarian crises, have further exposed the vulnerability of the sector and the urgent need for sustainable local financing mechanisms to support natural resource management.

The Uganda Biodiversity Fund (UBF), an independent Conservation Trust Fund, provides a promising solution through mobilizing and channeling resources toward biodiversity conservation initiatives. Biodiversity remains essential for human survival and development because healthy ecosystems provide food, clean water, clean air, livelihoods, and climate regulation. The increasing impacts of climate change being experienced today continue to demonstrate the importance of investing in environmental protection and sustainable natural resource management.

Over the past decade, UBF has supported conservation initiatives across regions such as the Albertine Rift, West Nile, and Karamoja through grants to government institutions, civil society organizations, community groups,

and private sector actors. However, despite these interventions, Uganda continues to experience environmental challenges including wetland and forest degradation, plastic pollution, and declining land productivity.

Conservation Trust Funds such as UBF offer a credible and sustainable financing mechanism for environmental conservation by promoting coordinated funding, stronger partnerships, and collective conservation impact. By centralizing resource mobilization and grant management, UBF helps reduce duplication, improve stakeholder coordination, and enable institutions to focus on implementing conservation actions effectively.

As Uganda seeks long-term solutions to environmental degradation and climate change, there is increasing need to strengthen locally driven and sustainable financing approaches. Through partnerships, local resource mobilization, and collective action, the Uganda Biodiversity Fund has the potential to play a transformative role in supporting biodiversity conservation, strengthening community resilience, and shaping a more sustainable environmental future for Uganda.



Tooro Civil Society
Organisations Network

Forest Crime Threatens the Future of Uganda's Forest Sector. *By Byakuyamba Peter*

As Uganda commemorates World Environment Day 2026 under the theme “Climate Action Begins with Youth,” the country continues to grapple with serious environmental challenges driven by increasing forest crime.

Illegal activities such as charcoal burning, timber harvesting, encroachment, and land grabbing continue to threaten critical forest ecosystems in the Albertine region, including Bugoma Forest Reserve, Budongo Forest Reserve, and Kasyoha–Kitomi Central Forest Reserve.

Forest crime is largely driven by rising demand for charcoal, fuel wood, timber, and land for agriculture and infrastructure development. These pressures are further exacerbated by weak law enforcement, corruption, unclear forest boundaries, and political interference, all of which contribute to the continued destruction and degradation of Uganda’s forest resources. The impacts of forest crime are increasingly being felt across ecosystems and communities. Forest destruction has resulted in loss of biodiversity, habitat degradation, soil erosion, and altered rainfall patterns. It also weakens the capacity of forests to provide essential ecosystem services such as clean air, water catchment protection, and climate regulation. Communities living near forests are facing fuel wood shortages and the loss of cultural practices traditionally linked to forests.

Uganda’s forest cover has declined significantly from 24% in 1990 to about 13% in 2025, underscoring the urgency for collective action. Addressing forest crime requires coordinated efforts from government, communities, civil society, and especially young people. Protecting forests is not only about conservation but also about safeguarding biodiversity, securing livelihoods, protecting water sources, and strengthening national climate resilience.

“Every tree saved is a step toward a sustainable future. Together, we can restore forests and protect the environment.

Community-Based Climate Actions to Embrace Mitigation and Adaptation

*By Moses Ogwal, Executive Director, MECPA Uganda and Regional Node
Chairperson ENR-CSO Network, Northern*

Climate change is no longer a distant threat but a reality affecting livelihoods, food security, health, and ecosystems through droughts, floods, rising temperatures, and environmental degradation. Vulnerable groups, especially women, children, and farmers, continue to bear the greatest burden, making climate action an urgent responsibility for everyone.

Climate action involves conserving natural resources, protecting ecosystems, reducing environmental degradation, and adapting to climate change through activities such as tree planting, sustainable farming, proper waste management, and clean energy use. These actions are essential for protecting biodiversity, improving livelihoods, and building resilient communities.

Addressing climate challenges requires collective and consistent action at the household and community level. By making sustainable choices and actively protecting the environment, individuals and communities can contribute to a healthier, safer, and more resilient future for present and future generations.

Key community climate actions

Communities should participate in tree planting, forest protection, and the restoration of degraded land. Indigenous trees help absorb carbon dioxide,



Farmers should plant trees to enhance their livelihoods and income

improve air quality, and strengthen climate resilience.

Communities can adapt to climate change by fixing leaking taps, harvesting rainwater, and reducing water wastage. But also, farmers should adopt climate-smart practices such as agroforestry, mulching, soil conservation, organic farming, and drought-resistant crops to improve food security while protecting the environment.

Schools, community leaders, youth, women’s groups, and civil society organizations should promote environmental education and climate resilience awareness.

Young people can mobilize climate action through innovation, advocacy, and digital platforms. Women should contribute valuable indigenous knowledge in environmental conservation and sustainable resource management. Empowering women and youth strengthens community resilience and environmental protection efforts.

Collective actions such as community clean-ups, tree planting, wetland restoration, and environmental awareness campaigns create lasting change. Collaboration among schools, churches, local governments, and community organizations is essential for effective grassroots climate action.

Climate change affects everyone, and everyone has a role in addressing it. Simple actions such as planting trees, conserving water, reducing environmental degradation, and educating communities can contribute significantly to protecting the environment and building a more resilient future.



Farmers should adopt climate-smart practices as demonstrated in the picture

Local Action for Greener and Safer Kasese District.

By Greenwatch Uganda

The World Environment Day serves as an important reminder that protecting the environment is a shared responsibility that begins with individual and community action.

This commitment was demonstrated by Greenwatch in partnership with the Kenneth Kakuru Earth Reboot Initiative (KKERI) and other local stakeholders through the launch of the Restoration of the Riverbanks project in Kasese District, an initiative focused on rehabilitating degraded riverbanks along Rivers; Rwembya, Kajwenge, Kenyambarari and Nyamugasani. The project seeks to promote environmental conservation through tree planting, community sensitization, and strengthening local environmental governance systems.

For communities in Kasese, climate change is no longer a distant or abstract issue. Heavy floods continue to destroy homes, affect livelihoods, and leave families vulnerable. These disasters have been worsened by years of deforestation and encroachment on riverbanks, which have reduced the land's ability to absorb water during heavy rains. Trees that once protected the environment and stabilized the soil have gradually disappeared, exposing communities to greater risks.

Recognizing these growing environmental risks, Greenwatch and its partners organized the Run for the Rivers community marathon on 14th March 2026 as part of the broader riverbank restoration initiative. More than a sporting event, the marathon became a platform for raising awareness about the increasing environmental challenges facing the district. One of the key messages was that everyone has a role to play in addressing climate change. Protecting the environment begins with practical everyday actions such as planting trees, preserving riverbanks, and avoiding activities that degrade natural resources.

It also requires leaders to enact and enforce laws and ordinances that promote environmental conservation and sustainable land use. Additionally, communities received tree seedlings, were encouraged to plant and protect trees, and actively participate in restoration efforts.

The initiative also builds on earlier engagements, including the 2025 field-based Continuing Legal Education training on Environmental Conservation and Climate Justice, which enhanced legal advocacy and community involvement in environmental protection.

This continued commitment reflects Greenwatch's slogan, "If we all did a little, we would do much," small actions by individuals and communities can create lasting impact. A farmer choosing not to cultivate near a riverbank, a student planting a tree at school, or a local leader championing environmental protection are all contributing to climate action.

Kasese's experience demonstrates that environmental conservation is not only about protecting nature but also about safeguarding lives, livelihoods, and future generations. As the world celebrates World Environment Day, the message remains clear: meaningful climate action begins with each one of us.



Indigenous Tree Species at Risk

By: Mugooda Rogers, Director, Mabira Seed Supply
Eastern Uganda Regional Node Chairperson for ENR CSOs Network

A key underlying challenge is the negative economic perception of indigenous tree species among communities. Many people consider indigenous trees less attractive because of their slower growth rates compared to exotic species, which are seen as offering quicker financial returns. This mindset has contributed significantly to the continued decline of native tree species as economic considerations often outweigh ecological importance in land-use decisions.

To restore and protect indigenous tree species, there is a need to engage the public, especially youth and women, on the economic and ecological benefits of indigenous trees, including their role in employment creation, soil fertility improvement, and climate regulation. Strengthening collaboration between government institutions, the private sector, and civil society is essential in promoting conservation and shifting public perceptions. Furthermore, farmers should be supported with knowledge on sustainable practices such as Farmer Managed Natural Regeneration (FMNR) and improved soil and land management, while also benefiting from incentive mechanisms such as carbon credit programs to encourage the protection and restoration of indigenous tree species.



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From time immemorial, Africa has been blessed with a rich diversity of indigenous tree species across different ecological zones.

Uganda's forest cover, once highly acclaimed globally and contributing to its description as the "Pearl of Africa," has steadily declined over the years. This negative trend is largely driven by human activities such as farming and the expansion of large-scale monoculture practices, including sugarcane, tea, and tobacco cultivation, which often result in the clearing of indigenous vegetation and place native tree species at significant risk. In addition, industrialization has contributed to the loss of indigenous tree species through the clearing of vegetation for factory development, as well as pollution that stunts plant growth. Economic pressures further accelerate forest degradation, as industries such as construction, paper production, and pharmaceuticals rely heavily on forest resources for timber, raw materials, and medicinal products. The construction sector, in particular, drives high demand for timber used in building and furniture production, while the paper and pharmaceutical industries continue to depend on forest-derived materials, thereby increasing pressure on indigenous tree populations.

Gene edited Cocoa Seeds (Seedlings) and their Contribution in Uganda

By Bazira Henry Mugisha (PhD)

Introduction:

Cacao (*Theobroma cacao*) is one of the 26 tree species belonging to the genus *Theobroma* of the Malvaceae family. The generic name “*Theobroma*” is derived from the Greek for “food of the gods”. The fruit of the tree referred to as Cocoa is a source of seeds from which chocolate is made, and its pulp is used to produce juices, smoothies, jelly, alcoholic beverages, and cream or Cocoa butter. The tree is a 6-12metre tall perennial producer of Cocoa fruit. The tree has alternate, entire, unlobed leaves of 10-50cm long and 5-10cm broad.

The tree’s perennial and long-broad-leaved nature makes it a suitable plant for ameliorating climate and climate change impacts and, therefore, should be encouraged.

Cocoa trees mainly grow in a lowland rainforest ecosystem characterized by a hot and humid climate with temperatures ranging from 15-30 °C. Native species are found in the Amazon and Central America. West Africa (Ivory Coast & Ghana) and Uganda, historically, grow landraces. In Uganda, 11 districts were found to grow cocoa including: central (Mpigi, Kayunga, Mukono & Buikwe districts), mid-eastern region (Jinja, Kamuli, Luuka & Mayuge districts), and mid-western region (Bundibugyo, Kibaale and Hoima districts) (Kagezi, G.H, et-al, 2025). Other areas in Uganda found to be suitable for Cocoa growing include Kabarole, Kyenjojo, Ntoroko, Kibaale, Bulambuli, Bunyangadu, Kamwenge, Arua, Nwoya, Nakasongola, Masindi, Nebbi, Apac, Buliisa, and Pakwach (Alero, C., 2023).

The average cocoa crop yield in Uganda is only 550kg/ha of dry beans. Compared with Ivory Coast and Malaysia, which have yields of 800kg/ha and 1,700kg/ha, respectively. The low yields in Uganda are, among other factors, attributed to poor agronomic and management practices (Ibid). Despite this, Cocoa is one of the leading income earners in Uganda. It is projected to earn at least \$80million dollars per year.

Risks of Gene-Edited Varieties

Currently, there is an emerging gene-edited and patented Cocoa seeds/seedlings produced by international companies being promoted for the shorter and early maturing varieties that are considered to have higher yields and better-quality Cocoa seeds. These are taking over the Cocoa seed and seedling market and changing the genetic characteristics of existing native and landrace varieties. The new modified Cocoa varieties are gene-edited using the CRISPR gene editing technology. Such modifications can easily be viewed as progressive for productivity and income generation, if the associated risks are not interrogated.

The risks are associated with pollen exchange between the modified and native/landrace plants. For example, if a gene-modified and patented Cocoa plant pollen pollinates a neighboring plantation of native Cocoa crop, the resulting seeds/seedlings would automatically be claimed by the patent holder. Also, the fact that the native Cocoa crop was (is) pollinated by pollen from the nearby modified and patented Cocoa plantation, the native crop farmer risks losing his Cocoa tree inventory and gene pool to the patent holder, just because his crop was pollinated by the patented crop, i.e., the pollinated crop automatically becomes the intellectual property of the patent holder. It is important to note that Cocoa plants have low natural pollination success rates, but easily pollinate with modified crop pollen. It could be intentional by international companies that gene-edited and patented crops cross-pollinate as a strategy of capturing larger acreage of Cocoa plantations in Africa.

There is no evidence today that it is possible to integrate gene-fencing in modified Cocoa seeds/seedlings to guarantee no cross-pollination with native crops. Such a challenge suggests that native farmers need to be indemnified from cross-pollination from a nearby Cocoa plantation with modified plants. Just as it is in law that a Rancher whose gene-edited bull

jumps over the fence and impregnates a native cow at a neighbor's farm cannot sue or claim property rights, so should a farmer with a modified crop pollinating a neighboring native crop not sue or claim property rights.

There are more than 1000 CRISPR patents at the US Patent Office that have agricultural applications in the US and Canada. This means that if such a problem happens to a native crop farmer, the only place he/she can go for arbitration is the US or Canada. The law has been written in such a way that the physical ownership of the plant (crop), i.e., the crop being on one’s land, is no defense against patent rights claims – meaning that the farmer would lose his/her rights on the native crop on his/her land. The patent on the crop trumps the native farmer’s property rights.

Now apply that to West Africa (i.e., Ivory Coast & Ghana) with an estimated 2.0million smallholder Cocoa farmers and Uganda with an estimated 1,500 Cocoa smallholder farmers who earn US\$2.15 cents a day compared to about US\$55 billion earned annually from sales by the international company that owns the patent. If a patented gene holder chooses to sue for plant infringement by a neighboring Cocoa plantation, the costs associated with the case would outstrip the money the farmer(s) would ever make in their lifetime - even if they won the case in court, which is unlikely considering the location of the law and arbitration.

There is a need for clear regulatory rules because the above risks will continue to arise. A company that allows a gene-edited and patented product to reproduce with native plantations uncontrollably should be held responsible. Otherwise, it becomes legalized theft of other people’s gene pool and plantation inventories.

Recommendations

- Use native Cocoa plants as assets for climate change mitigation;
- Educate farmers on the risks of gene-edited Cocoa seeds or seedlings;
- Adequately separate native and modified Cocoa plantations to mitigate cross-pollination;
- Since there is no research evidence that it is possible to build genetic fencing within gene-edited Cocoa seeds/seedlings, companies producing gene-edited seeds/seedlings must be required to guarantee or indemnify native Cocoa farmers from natural cross-pollination with the modified crop.
- There is a need for clear legislation to govern the emerging Cocoa industry in Uganda.



Gene-editing helps cocoa plants gain disease resistance

Bugoma forest landscape communities driving Uganda's Climate Resilience through Agroforestry

By Denis Omondi, Project Officer, Ecological Trends Alliance



As Uganda joins the rest of the world in marking World Environment Day 2026 under the national theme, “Climate Action Begins with You: Act Now,” the call to transition from policy to impactful practices across landscapes has never been more urgent. While national frameworks rightly target large-scale challenges such as halting the illegal charcoal trade and restoring ecosystems like the, Bugoma forest landscape, the true pillar of sustainable climate action lies within our communities, writes Denis Omondi.

At the intersection of environmental restoration and community livelihood sits agro-forestry a powerful practice that proves everyday conservation can yield rewards.



Ecological Trends Alliance's work in agro-forestry with Bugoma Forest landscape communities is designed for inclusive climate action. We supported the Bugoma Forest-adjacent community, especially the Collaborative Forest Management associations (CFMs) of Kaseeta, Kyakatamba, and Kabwoya, with over 500,000 indigenous tree seedlings, plus coffee and cocoa seedlings.

Over 500 farmers involving women and youth, participated in and supported this action. When a farmer plants trees alongside their crops, they are not just farming, they are actively implementing national climate policy. They are turning the slogan “Climate Action Begins with You” into a living reality.

It is known that agriculture is one of the main drivers of deforestation and yet 68% to 70% of the Ugandan working population depends on this sector for their livelihood and employment. This therefore provides a difficult choice between protecting nature and sustaining human livelihoods.

However, agro-forestry, with all its different forms changes this narrative by integrating trees into agricultural landscapes which creating a resilient ecosystem that addresses both climate mitigation and livelihoods concurrently.

In the landscape, trees integrated with coffee and/or cocoa act as localized carbon sinks, improve on the tree cover and protect these crops from the increasingly harsh weather patterns.

Additionally, by planting indigenous fast growing, multi-purpose trees on farms, communities establish a sustainable source of firewood and construction materials. This directly reduces the pressure on natural forests like Bugoma, offering a viable alternative to the destructive illegal charcoal trade in Bugoma landscape.

Reversing environmental degradation requires us to scale up community-led approaches that offer both ecological benefits and economic independence of our communities. This World Environment Day, let us commit to putting more trees in the hands of our farmers. By scaling up agro-forestry, we don't just restore lost forest cover, we build a climate-resilient Uganda.



Pre- and Post-Planting Tree Seedling Care Enhances Survival Rates

Article by Dr. Acanackwo Eric – ICRAF Uganda

As Uganda marks World Environment Day 2026 under the theme “Climate Action Begins with You: Act Now,” there is renewed emphasis on turning climate commitments into practical, community-level actions.

Tree planting remains a key strategy for climate adaptation, mitigation, and ecosystem restoration, yet its success depends heavily on proper pre- and post-planting seedling care to ensure high survival rates.

Despite widespread tree planting efforts, survival rates in many landscape restoration initiatives remain low—often below 25%. This is largely due to inadequate knowledge and practice of seedling management. In ICRAF interventions within refugee settlements, increased

population pressure has intensified natural resource degradation, with poor understanding of seedling care identified as a major constraint to achieving restoration goals. As a result, training and demonstrations on proper seedling care have been

genetically superior parent trees to produce vigorous seedlings. Before transplanting, seedlings must be well hardened, disease-free, and of suitable size. Proper field preparation is also essential, with planting pits dug 2–3 weeks in

development and nutrient uptake.

After planting, seedlings require careful management to ensure survival and healthy growth. Farmers are encouraged to weed regularly to reduce competition, apply organic mulch to retain soil moisture, and irrigate where possible—using about 10 liters of water per seedling per week. Protection from fire, livestock browsing, and trampling is also critical during the early growth stages.

Tree seedlings require care for about 2–3 years until they are fully established and capable of self-maintenance. At this stage, they contribute to ecological restoration, climate resilience, and improved land productivity. Integrating trees with crops and livestock enhances farm value while delivering environmental, economic, and social benefits, making proper seedling care essential for successful climate action outcomes.



A well dug pit will enable seedling growth

introduced to improve outcomes. Successful tree establishment begins with quality planting materials. Seeds should be sourced from

advance. Recommended sizes include 1ft × 1ft pits for indigenous and timber species, and 2ft × 2ft pits for fruit trees to support root

Water, Sanitation and a Cleaner Future: Environmental Alert's Climate Response in Kasese and Ntoroko districts

By *Twinomuhangi Onem* | *Environmental Alert*

The Rwenzori region is a land of contrasts. Its mountains, rivers, and lakes are among Uganda's greatest natural endowments, yet the same landscape is increasingly experiencing some of the country's most severe climate shocks.

Floods, landslides, riverbank bursts, and prolonged dry spells have, over the past five years, repeatedly destroyed farmlands, water sources, schools, and health facilities in Kasese and Ntoroko. Combined with cross-border insecurity and refugee inflows from the Democratic Republic of Congo, these pressures have significantly strained basic services, particularly affecting women, children, and the elderly. This reality strongly reflects the urgency of World Environment Day 2026 under the theme "Climate Action Begins with You: Act Now," which calls for immediate, localized, and people-driven climate solutions.

In response, Environmental Alert, together with Südwind and with funding from the Austrian Federal Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection, is implementing the Resilient Communities to Health and Climate Change Hazards in Uganda (RCHCH-U) project. The initiative began with a baseline study to understand community needs and has since progressed into practical implementation, guided by the principle that climate resilience must be visible, usable, and locally owned. On the

ground, the project is strengthening water, sanitation, and energy systems in schools and health facilities through climate-resilient latrines, rainwater harvesting systems, solar energy installations, and handwashing facilities, while also promoting hygiene practices through School Health Clubs.

Alongside this infrastructure, the project promotes sustainable livelihood interventions aimed at reducing pressure on natural resources and discouraging unsustainable farming practices and deforestation. These efforts help communities build resilience while addressing the root causes of environmental degradation that worsen climate vulnerability in the region. What is emerging is a practical model of integrated climate action where health, education, water, sanitation, energy, and livelihoods are addressed together rather than in isolation.

Though often less visible, these interventions are essential for enabling children to remain in school, supporting safe maternal health services, and strengthening community resilience in the face of recurring climate shocks. Guided by the spirit of "Climate Action Begins with You: Act Now," Environmental Alert calls for strengthened collaboration among government, development partners, private sector actors, research institutions, and communities to build a safer, cleaner, and more resilient future.

ROOTs Campaign 2025: Reviving Uganda's Forests Through Collective Climate Action

By *Vanessa Nakito*, *Environmental Alert*

Uganda continues to face severe environmental degradation, having lost over 23% of its tree cover between 2000 and 2020 due to unsustainable land use, urbanization, population pressure, and reliance on wood fuel. This has intensified climate-related impacts such as floods, droughts, landslides, biodiversity loss, and declining agricultural productivity.

In response, the Government of Uganda and partners are advancing restoration through the nationwide Running Out of Trees (ROOTs) – 40 Million Trees per Year campaign, coordinated by Environmental Alert as Secretariat of the Uganda Forest Working Group.

The 2025 ROOTs campaign, themed "Revive, Restore, Sustain: Indigenous Species for Uganda's Future," promoted restoration of degraded landscapes using indigenous tree species and strengthened climate resilience and livelihoods. Implemented through the Ministry of Water and Environment and a broad coalition of civil society, private sector, development partners, schools, cultural institutions, and local communities, the campaign significantly boosted national awareness and participation in restoration efforts.

Key activities included the Run4Climate mini-marathon, which engaged over 800 participants and supported the planting and mapping of 5,000 trees in partnership with the Uganda People's Defense Force, as well as the ROOTs Partners Meeting that strengthened multi-stakeholder coordination. The National Tree Planting Day at Busoga College Mwiri further mobilized over 900 participants through tree planting and climate awareness activities, reinforcing community involvement in forest restoration.

In 2025, more than 11.5 million trees were planted across Uganda through agroforestry, afforestation, reforestation, commercial forestry, and Farmer Managed Natural Regeneration (FMNR). Despite challenges such as limited mapping, inadequate aftercare, logistical constraints, and

unpredictable weather, the campaign demonstrated strong public support, growing momentum for indigenous tree restoration as well as significant opportunities for scaling up partnerships, strengthening environmental education, improving digital reporting systems and integrating restoration with community livelihoods.

As Uganda marks World Environment Day 2026 under the theme "Climate Action Begins with You: Act Now," the ROOTs campaign stands as a clear example of how collective action can restore ecosystems and build climate resilience.

Running Out Of Trees (ROOTS) is an initiative established by the Ministry of Water and Environment together with public and private partners to restore Uganda's tree cover by 200 Million trees over a 5 year period till 2026, planting 40 Million trees each year, symbolizing a tree by every Ugandan.



'ACT NOW WITH ONE VOICE FOR A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE'

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Commemorating World Environment Day is timely, as current actions align with the global theme of “Now for Climate Action,” emphasizing localized solutions. Grassroots communities are the most affected by climate change, particularly in agriculture and livelihoods, making their participation central to adaptation and mitigation efforts.

Climate change continues to impact human life, biodiversity, and the entire agricultural value chain, underscoring the need for practical and inclusive responses. While strategic policies and political will are important in driving environmental action, there is a strong need to localize implementation. Communities should be empowered to design and implement practical adaptation measures that enhance food security, strengthen early warning systems, and reduce disaster risks. Everyday actions such as clean-up campaigns, tree planting, and community gardening should be encouraged to shift from awareness to practical environmental engagement.

At the community level, people directly interact with natural resources and must be supported to undertake actions such as wetland conservation, disaster management, tree planting, clean energy adoption, smart agriculture, and general environmental protection. This requires tailored messaging on sustainable farming practices and improved waste management to address specific local realities and environmental challenges.

Initiatives such as the Environment and Natural Resources Civil Society Organizations Network and its partners, including the Community Restoration Initiative project, have played a key role in advancing climate education and awareness. These efforts empower communities with knowledge and promote eco-conscious behaviors that support climate action. As we commemorate this year's event, there is need to renew commitment to collaborative, targeted, and community-driven solutions for lasting environmental impact.

Let's Stand Together and Fight Climate Change

By Andrew Mafundo, Executive Director – Citizens Concern Africa (CICOA)

As Uganda joins the rest of the world in commemorating World Environment Day 2026 under the theme “Climate Action Begins With You. Act Now!”, we are reminded that the climate crisis is no longer a distant threat.

Its effects are already being felt across our communities through prolonged droughts, floods, declining water sources, crop failures, and the degradation of vital ecosystems.

Across Uganda, climate change is affecting livelihoods, food security, public health, and economic development. Communities that depend on natural resources for farming, fishing, and livestock keeping are among the most vulnerable. Rivers, wetlands, forests, and other ecosystems that once protected communities from climate shocks are increasingly under pressure from human activities and changing weather patterns.

In western Uganda, particularly around the River Rwizi catchment and surrounding wetlands, communities are witnessing declining water levels, loss of biodiversity, and increasing environmental degradation. Wetlands that once regulated water flows and supported livelihoods are being encroached upon, reducing their capacity to buffer communities against floods and droughts. These challenges highlight the urgent need for climate

action at all levels. While governments and international institutions have an important role to play, meaningful climate action starts with each one of us. Every individual can contribute by planting and nurturing trees, protecting wetlands, reducing waste, adopting sustainable farming practices, conserving water and using natural resources responsibly. Small actions taken consistently by millions of people can create lasting change.

At Citizens Concern Africa (CICOA), we work alongside communities in Bunyoro and Greater Ankole to promote environmental conservation, ecosystem restoration and climate resilience. Through community engagement, radio programs, cultural platforms, storytelling and environmental education, we empower citizens to become active stewards of their environment and champions of climate action.

We also call upon leaders at all levels to strengthen environmental governance, enforce existing environmental laws, invest in ecosystem restoration, and support community-led climate adaptation initiatives. Building climate resilience requires partnerships among government, civil society, the private sector and local communities. As we commemorate World Environment Day 2026, let us remember that the fight against climate change is everyone's responsibility. The choices we make today will determine the future we leave for generations to come. Climate action does not begin tomorrow or somewhere else it begins with each one of us, here and now.

Harnessing Biodiversity for Agroecology Transformation in Uganda

By Stella Namanji (PhD), Centre for Ecosystems Research and Development-(CERD-UGANDA)

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As the world marks World Environment Day 2026, the call to action is clear: climate resilience starts with the choices we make every day. In Uganda, lessons from Bugala Island in Kalangala District show how biodiversity is central to transforming agriculture and securing our future.

For decades, mono-cropping has threatened ecosystems, eroded soil health, and reduced crop diversity. Yet, community voices and emerging policies highlight a different path: agro-ecology. Practices such as intercropping, crop rotation, agroforestry, and composting restore soil fertility, conserve water, and strengthen resilience against climate shocks. The challenge is uptake. While 71% of farmers have been trained in mono-cropping, only 9%

have received guidance on biodiversity friendly techniques. This imbalance underscores the urgency of farmer co learning, inclusive extension services, and embedding biodiversity into national agricultural frameworks.

But climate action is not only about policies—it begins with you.

- Plant diverse crops in your garden or farm to mimic natural ecosystems.
- Integrate trees into landscapes to enrich biodiversity and provide shade.
- Recycle organic matter through composting to nourish soils.
- Conserve water with efficient irrigation and harvesting techniques.

Each small step strengthens our collective resilience. By embracing biodiversity, we not only safeguard food security but also contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals and a healthier planet. This World Environment Day, let us remember: climate action begins with you. Act now, for your community, for Uganda, and for the Earth.

Climate Action Begins with Me: Act Now with AFR100 Project.

By Kikandwa Environmental Association

As we mark and reflect on World Environment Day June 2026 with the Theme: Climate Action Begins with You: Act Now.

Kikandwa Environmental Association (KEA) is implementing the Climate Smart Innovative-Agro Ecological Project funded by TerraMatch Fund /AFR100, Restore Fund /IAFN and Promoting Local Innovation (PROLINNOVA) in four parishes of Kikandwa Sub County in Mityana district. The four parishes are: Nakwaya, Kikandwa, Bbambula and Namwene and some other parts of Kikandwa sub county. The implementation started in May 2022. The project is ending this year in December 2026. Some of the main project objectives were to Restore degraded land, Increase on the biodiversity, Combat Climate Change, Improve Food and Nutritional Security, and Livelihood and Job creation through Trainings, Seminar, Workshops, Dialogue and Sensitization Meetings, Established Nurseries, Raised seedling and distributed it to Agro-forestry targeted farmers, Monitored and Evaluated, and Captured GPS Coordinates and made Polygons for each farmer garden planted with trees which were uploaded at TerraMatch Site after quality assurance were done by one of the TerraMatch staff, KEA has almost accomplished the work, KEA planted 95,000 trees in 402 hectares which was greater than the number of trees and hectares in the contract, in the contract KEA was supposed to plant 80,000 trees in 300 hectares which made KEA score more marks in project implementation. More than 400 jobs were created directly and indirectly. The fund helped KEA to improve on the management and governance of the organization and made its impacts felt on the ground. The Fund helped the members to support each other and to learn from each other, and to critically advocate for



The Community grows Amaranths to improve nutrition

gender just action aiming at leaving no one behind and to create more economic opportunities to a good number of community members.

Climate Smart Innovative Agro-ecology Project has responded to local community priorities in Kikandwa Sub County since its inception by improving on people's income, livelihood, and food security, and ecosystem restoration. The project has directly and indirectly provided people with employment, increased purchasing power, advocated for women's rights on land and Climate Justice, Soil and Water conservation, and Agro-ecology farming.

A variety of Fruit and Indigenous Trees are growing and increasing on the biodiversity in the area of operation. Farmers have been cooperative and ready to learn more from the project. The project has managed to attract a company known as SOLIDAD with interest in coffee buying, carbon trade, empowering farmers in Climate Smart Agriculture, Agro-forestry, and Organic fertilizer production which will be complimenting and sustaining some of the project activities.

The most important changes for

the community and the landscape since this project was initiated in the community, and the benefits the project has been able to provide to the ecosystem changes is observed through soil erosion reduction, environmental protection, increased biodiversity, improved food production and livelihood.

As a result of -this restoration work during the project implementation, there is increased interest for people to demand for tree seedling to plant in their farms as means to increase on agro- biodiversity, soil fertility, improve on their livelihood, income, food and nutrition security and the deepening of peoples understanding of Climate Smart Innovative Agro-ecology and its importance in the community. The farmer has become so cooperative, and those who were

hostile to the project are no longer hostile, they are now the lead in demanding for tree seedlings.

This restoration project encountered challenges like any other projects in relation to socioeconomic, environmental, climate, operational and financial challenges that were faced which impacted the project's progress and outcomes. There were some local leaders and farmers who were not cooperative during the project implementation. Some local leaders failed to participate in the monitoring exercise, some farmers were not taking much care about the trees they planted. Unpredictable weather changes which was common during the project implementation, rain fall were on and off which led to some of the seedlings supplied to dry up. There were a problem of roaming domestic animals, and pests and diseases which kept on destroying trees planted.

The inclusion of women, men and youth in the project implementation holistically Reduce inequalities and any barrier that women and youth tend to face in influencing restoration in different aspects like division of labor at home and at the farm; sharing benefits; making decisions; and ownership of assets, therefore bringing gender equality in all project interventions helped us to incentivize and promote the gender equity, equality and women's rights.

Below: the community visits their nursery



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