



**World
Wetlands Day**
2 February 2017

Wetlands for Disaster Risk Reduction

MINISTRY OF WATER AND ENVIRONMENT

Wetlands Management Department

P.O. Box 9629, Kampala.

WETLANDS: A NATURAL SAFEGUARD AGAINST DISASTERS.

Today Thursday 2nd February, 2017, Uganda once again joins the rest of the world community to commemorate world wetlands day to be held at Bulakati Grounds, Lukaya T/C, Kalungu District.

Wetlands play an important role in providing communities with resilience to natural hazards such as flooding caused by storms, cyclones, storm surges, drought and tsunamis. Under projected climate change scenarios, extreme climatic events, including floods, droughts and storms are expected to increase in frequency and intensity. The intergovernmental panel on climate change (ipcc) predicts even more of these extreme events escalating.

Unfortunately, wetlands are often viewed as wasteland, and more than 64% of the world's wetlands have disappeared since 1900. World Wetlands Day is an annual opportunity to raise public awareness and promote the value of wetlands in order to solicit public participation.

USING WETLAND ECOSYSTEMS TO MANAGE DISASTERS.

Wetlands can slow, absorb and lessen damage from floods, waves, erosion and climate change. Wetlands are natural capital that safeguard-man from natural disasters and provide livelihoods. Wetlands degradation has been sanctioned through agricultural expansion, infilling for industrial and infrastructural developments, waste disposal. The unwise-use of wetlands has led to reduction in wetland coverage, reoccurring of flooding, silting of water bodies, increased incidences of water borne diseases (cholera, typhoid) and pollution of water bodies contributing to deterioration of the environment, and sometimes leads to loss of lives. Wetlands helped avoid more than \$625 million in damages from hurricane in 2012 (undp report, 2012)."

Experts warn of water scarcity as wetland encroachment escalates



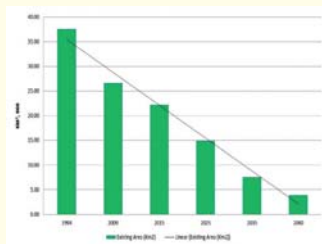
WHY COMMEMORATE WORLD WETLANDS DAY 2017?

It is commemorated to make the public aware, discuss the value of wetlands, its beneficial aspects as well as to promote its conservation and wise use for enhancing the overall level of the human health, growth and development. The commemoration plays a great role in highlighting the prime role of having healthy wetlands for better ecosystem services realization. It furthermore explains the need to meet the demands of water required for growing crops, energy supply and various needs of the industries.

STATUS OF WETLANDS IN UGANDA:

Uganda is experiencing rapid loss of wetlands cover at the rate of 752.1Km² (2-2.5%) @ year. By 2040 the country will have lost 17,284.5 Km² (44%) of wetland and remain with only 3,744.7Km² (1.6%) if no drastic measures are undertaken.

Graph1: Wetland coverage projections from 1994-2040 if no action is taken



WHAT THE MOWE IS UNDERTAKING TO CONSERVE WETLANDS.

Protecting wetlands:

Demarcating wetlands has a positive impact on their protection, reducing loss and degradation. The length of wetland boundaries demarcated with pillars, mark stones and live markers is at 1,345.5Kms and more 2980km of wetland boundary are planned under NDP11 5 years.

RESTORING WETLANDS COVER

The target of restoring wetlands to 12% of land area by 2019/20 requires approximately 1837Km² to be restored annually. The budget for restoration would need to be increased by 3,176% to achieve the 12% target with more emphasis all LGs participation. So far 6474.8ha of wetland restored over the last 4 years and more 8,680Ha targeted for NDP11 under the current funding level.

Knowledge of Environment and Natural Resources

This was achieved through community policing which targeted reducing encroachment and degradation. The National Wetlands Information System has continued to support decision making in the through production of fact sheets.

ECONOMIC VALUE OF WETLAND

The total economic value of the degraded portion of wetlands in **Kampala, Mukono and Wakiso** districts alone is estimated at 16.4 billion dollars every year according to the scientific study undertaken by the Ministry and UNDP in 2015.

A CALL FOR PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN WETLAND CONSERVATION Communities.

Adopt practices that ensure long term sustainability of the local wetlands for everyone through measures such as regulating the type of activities by season, clear rubbish from wetlands, and unblock streams and river

Policy Makers:

Government can include wetlands in their strategy for coping with disasters. Possible measures;

Designate wetlands in flood and;

Individuals:

- Use water more sparingly and avoid toxic products that drain into wetlands;
 - Become a wetland ambassador advocate for wetlands;
 - Participate in actions to conserve and restore wetlands;
 - Organize or join a wetland clean up etc Private Sector
- They should join in the call for conservation of wetlands through supporting restoration and demarcation efforts.

MAPPED WETLANDS RESTORATION HIGHLIGHTS BEFORE JULY, 2017

1. A section of Mayanja wetland system at Kabuuma, Busabala Ward, Masajja division, Ssabagabo-Makindye Municipality, Wakiso District.
2. A section of Mayanja wetland system along Salama Road Munyonyo, Makindye Division, Kampala District.

3. A section of Lwajjali wetland indicated as Plot 41 block 108 Kigunga, Goma division, Mukono Municipality.

4. A section of Nalubaga wetland, Mayanja wetland system in Tuba village, Kulambiro Parish, Nakawa Division, Kampala district.

5. A section of Kondi wetland, Mayanja wetland system in Namere, Kawempe Division, Kampala District.

6. section of Lubigi wetland system in Nakuwadde-Bbira village, Nakabugo parish, Wakiso District.

TAKE HOME MESSAGE:

Make a commitment to conserve and use wetlands wisely.



Wetlands need to be protected for water conservation

MESSAGE FROM HON. CHEPTORIS SAM, MINISTER FOR WATER AND ENVIRONMENT



**Hon. Cheptoris Sam,
Minister for Water and Environment**

The theme for this year is how healthy Wetlands help us cope with extreme weather events. It is appropriate given the extreme weather conditions being experienced across the country and the drying up of some of our major water sources.

Statistics show that we have lost over 30% of our wetlands. We cannot sit back anymore and watch this go on. Action to save these invaluable resources must take place now! At least 5 million Ugandans depend on water stored and released by wetlands to maintain the flow to streams, pools, boreholes and springs.

Studies confirm that Uganda is vulnerable

to climate change, which is expected to result in more extreme and frequent periods of intense rainfall, erratic onset and cessation of the rainy season, as well as more frequent episodes of drought and famine. Mean annual temperatures have increased by 1.3oC since 1960. The temperature rise has significant impacts on health as well as agriculture.

Wetlands aid rain formation through evapotranspiration, maintaining both surface and underground water supply. Wetlands contain peak storm flows, reducing their velocity and absorbing their volume, preventing floods, erosion and accidents to people and livestock.

The pivotal role of Local Governments in conservation needs to be fully embraced. I appeal to Local Governments to ensure that wetlands and other natural resources are used judiciously and to ensure legal provisions are enforced. I also call on Ministries, Departments and Agencies, and the Civil Society to be mindful of the negative impacts they may inflict on these fragile resources as they undertake their activities.

I therefore urge you as we celebrate World Wetlands Day today, to reflect on what each of us has done either individually or collectively to avert Climate Change. Let us all make a commitment to conserve and use wetlands wisely for the betterment of this great country Uganda.

I wish you happy World Wetlands Day celebrations.