

Going neutral on carbon footprint

Today, we are aware of the negative effects of pollution to our environment more than we were a decade ago. In addition, climate change arguably now tops the debate on the international agenda because of its devastating effects on the environment.

One such impact is global warming, which refers to the expansion of the earth's normal surface temperature due to the effect of greenhouse gases such as carbon dioxide outflows from smoldering fossil fuels or from deforestation which trap heat that would naturally have escaped from earth.

Realising this, the world came together last year to ratify and sign the Paris Agreement, an accord within the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) dealing with greenhouse gas emissions, mitigation, adaptation, loss and damage, capacity building and finance.

In line with the spirit of the Paris Agreement, the Irish Embassy in Uganda is committed to mitigation of greenhouse gases through various initiatives including how, as an organisation, it can reduce its own carbon footprint.

Going Neutral

According to Tracy Kajumba, the regional climate change advisor with Irish Aid, Ireland's foreign policy for a sustainable world recognises the impact of climate change on weather, ecosystems and the adverse effects on the poorest people in least developed countries.

"Climate change targets set out in the Paris Agreement are global, but the actions are local. The Embassy of Ireland is engaging in the carbon neutral programme to contribute to the Government of Uganda's commitments on emission reductions while also contributing to the social economic development for the most vulnerable communities," she says.

The embassy participates in the Uganda Carbon Bureau's (UCB) Carbon Neutral programme. According to the Uganda Carbon Bureau, its "Going Neutral" service helps organisations to measure their carbon footprints (which is the amount of greenhouse gas they emit), and then supplies advice on steps to reduce this footprint by adopting energy use reduction measures, improving transport efficiency, and the cutting down on wasteful practices.





"Any existing emissions

The Uganda Carbon Bureau

Certifies that

the Embassy of Ireland in Uganda is Carbon Neutral for the period October 2016 to September 2017.

Achieved by the purchase of 215 tonnes of Plan Vivo carbon offset credits from the Trees for Global Benefits project in Bushenyi, Uganda managed by ECOTRUST.

The certificate awarded to the Embassy of Ireland by Uganda Carbon Bureau

that an organisation cannot easily reduce are then offset by purchasing emission carbon credits from Ugandan projects, equivalent to the organisation's carbon footprint," Bill Farmer, the head of the bureau, states.

Carbon offset schemes

Carbon offset schemes allow individuals and companies to support environmental projects around the world from which they then purchase carbon credits to offset their own carbon footprints.

In Uganda, these carbon credits are often purchased from the ECOTRUST Plan Vivo project known as Trees for Global Benefits.

"This gives the money from the sale of these credits to farmers planting trees

in western Uganda, which in turn prevents landslides and soil erosion while storing atmospheric carbon in the trees. This improves the farmers' incomes and incentivises the growing of indigenous trees by more and more farmers," Farmer explains.

The Irish Embassy's participation in the Carbon Neutral programme entailed an assessment of its various sources of carbon emissions by UCB in accordance with the World Business Council for Sustainable Development/World Resources Institute's Greenhouse Gas Protocol.

These were calculated to be so many tonnes of carbon dioxide. The embassy then purchased a matching number of carbon credits from a local, NGO (ECOTRUST), working

with smallholder tree farmers, and UCB then certified the embassy as being "Carbon Neutral".

"UCB assesses each year's carbon dioxide emissions of the embassy, using the Greenhouse Gas Protocol, and

advises the embassy on how many carbon credits it must buy from ECOTRUST to be Carbon Neutral," Farmer says.

Over a two years period, the Embassy of Ireland paid ECOTRUST \$4,305 for 615 tonnes of carbon credits at \$7

per tonne to offset the carbon footprint of its activities.

"What this means is that the farmers' trees are in effect absorbing and storing the carbon dioxide emissions of the Irish Embassy, and are thereby reducing the amount of atmospheric carbon," Farmer explains.

ECOTRUST report that the farmers who supply the carbon credit are able to receive the money through a local SACCO. Some of the farmers use the money from their carbon credits as security to acquire loans from the SACCO. As a result farmers report that they are able to build permanent houses and cater for other needs like health and the education of their children.

"We are doing this to demonstrate to the Ugandan public that we all have a role to play in reducing our carbon emissions whether as individuals, households, workplaces and communities. Only when we all play our part no matter how small can we reduce and mitigate carbon dioxide emissions as well as contribute to sustainable development," Kajumba explains.

As told to Jacqueline Emodok



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How to reduce carbon footprint

Each of us can reduce our carbon footprint, not only on St Patrick's Day, but also in our daily lives!

■ Take public transport or carpool to come to St Patrick's Day events and every day.

■ Each car emits its own weight in carbon dioxide. One car uses less gas than two and much less than three! Using public transport helps to reduce the number of cars on the road.

■ Plant a tree on St Patrick's Day - it is a way of giving back to the environment and one of the most efficient ways of cutting your carbon

footprint. Trees provide shade and oxygen while consuming carbon dioxide. One tree absorbs 13 pounds of carbon dioxide each year. That amount will increase to 48 pounds annually as trees mature. Just one 10-year-old tree releases enough oxygen into the air to support two human beings!

■ Change your light bulbs; one lighting bulb can reduce up to 1,300 pounds of carbon dioxide pollution during its lifetime.

■ Encourage and support greenhouse reduction practises in your community.

Fire | Motor Vehicle | Marine | Bonds | Accidents
Worker's Compensation | Travel Insurance | Plus others



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