

Planting seeds of change: A young environmentalist's mission for a greener Gulu

Once devastated by decades of conflict during the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) insurgency, Gulu is now experiencing a transformation rooted in hope, resilience and sustainability.

While the scars of war remain, young leaders are emerging to rebuild northern Uganda, committed to restoring both the land and the spirit of its people.

As a Master's student of Environmental Science and Natural Resources Management at Gulu University, I have witnessed how climate change affects vulnerable communities, particularly children.

Rising temperatures, erratic rainfall, declining soil fertility, and growing food insecurity threaten livelihoods. Working closely with farmers, I've seen droughts and soil degradation reduce productivity and income. Yet these challenges also present an opportunity: to empower communities, especially children, to become conscious guardians of the environment and champions of sustainable practices.

This inspired me to establish a social enterprise dedicated to environmental education, sustainable agriculture and community empowerment. Our mission is simple yet transformative: equip children and local communities with the knowledge, skills and values needed to build a sustainable, green future.

By focusing on education, hands-on activities and community engagement, we aim to nurture a generation capable of addressing climate challenges with creativity, resilience and responsibility.

Through school visits and village outreach, we help children understand the connection between human activity and environmental health. Climate awareness campaigns, interactive lessons, and discussions demonstrate how deforestation, improper waste disposal, and unsustainable farming directly impact their lives. Teachers and administrators welcome these programs, recognizing their role in shaping responsible citizens who care for their communities.

Tree planting has become one of our most impactful initiatives. Beyond restoring degraded lands, it provides children with practical lessons in responsibility, patience and care.

Each tree is named, nurtured and monitored by students, creating a personal connection that extends beyond the classroom. For parents and community leaders, these young tree planters symbolize both environmental restoration and hope for renewal. Watching barren fields transform into thriving green spaces illustrates the power of collective action.

Children are among the most vulnerable to climate change, yet they hold the power to shape the future. Early environmental education equips them to make informed decisions about farming, water use, waste management, and community planning.

By teaching them today, we ensure that in 20 years, Gulu and Northern Uganda will be led by individuals who value and protect the environment. Caring for the earth also nurtures leadership, teamwork, and problem-solving skills, ensuring environmental consciousness becomes a lifelong habit.

Beyond schools and villages, I envision greening the city of Gulu with tree-lined streets, public parks and vibrant urban spaces. Achieving this requires collaboration among communities, local authorities, organizations, and institutions that share a belief in sustainability. Urban gardens, community tree nurseries, and public awareness campaigns can encourage everyone, from children to elders to take ownership of their environment and contribute to a greener, healthier city.

Rebuilding Northern Uganda sustainably is not only about planting trees, it is about responsible management of natural resources. Preserving forests, water, and fertile soil for future generations is critical. Every small action, from planting a seed to properly managing waste, contributes to a cleaner, healthier, and more resilient Gulu.

We are planting seeds of change—one child, one tree, and one lesson at a time. Together, we can nurture a greener, cleaner, and brighter future for Northern Uganda, proving that even the smallest efforts can grow into lasting impact.