

BUSOGA GRAPPLES TO RESTORE TREE COVER

PHOTOS BY GEORGE BITA

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The uncontrolled felling of trees that led to severe deforestation in Busoga has led to several drives to restore green cover in the sub-region.

In 2023, the Kyabazinga William Nadiope IV received 30 million tree seedlings under his *Greening Busoga Initiative* targeting restoration of the environment and conservation. These trees were duly dispatched to the 11 chiefdoms that comprise the kingdom so as to beef up efforts to rejuvenate the dwindling forest cover.

ROLES OF TREES

Aware of the significance of trees to nature, Semei Kakungulu, the president of Busoga imposed by British colonialists in 1906 led a crusade to plant numerous trees that still exist in some parts of the region. Kakungulu forced the Basoga to plant trees, especially mangoes and mvule mainly along roadsides to create beautiful avenues.

According to Musa Lubanga, the Mayuge district natural resources officer, trees act as purifiers of air removing carbon dioxide to use in making their own food while releasing oxygen



Jinja locals receiving donated eucalyptus and mango plantings from Yagelniski (second-left) in Igombe village



Mayuge woman MP Lukia Nakadama plants a tree at Buwaya trading centre

WHAT WENT WRONG?

- Ronald Sanya, the Namayingo district chairperson, attributes the status quo to continued use of firewood as the major source of fuel for domestic cooking needs.
- Moses Batwala, the Jinja district chairperson, said that: "By 2011, an estimated 11, 500 Mvule trees still stood at the 11 district headquarters grounds that make up Busoga kingdom. But, overtime some trees have been felled [for timber used in roofing houses] despite opposition from environmentalists."
- Brandy Yagelniski, a Canadian citizen, decries the charcoal making practice as well as furniture assembly workshops all over the Jinja countryside, which may lead to extinction of numerous tree species. She argues that the environment police seem not to be doing much to apprehend errant locals out to destroy nature.

animals breathe in. "The carbondioxide is a greenhouse gas responsible for global warming which leads to unbearably hot temperatures. Once trees are cut, there would be an accumulation of

carbondioxide that destroys the ozone layer shield protecting earth resulting in extreme heat conditions," he explained. The result would be melting of polar ice, increased water body levels globally hence floods

disastrous to livelihoods. **CHURCH EFFORTS** The Rev. Can. Robinah Bamuleseeyo, the dean of All Saints Cathedral in Central Busoga Diocese, Iganga district explains that

parishioners have been given free local tree seedlings to plant at home.

The out-going bishop of Busoga Diocese, Samson Naimanhye says the church is ensuring the restoration of the environment with age-old practices like laying wreaths on the dead now replaced with planting a memorial tree.

AUTHORITIES' ADVICE

Lukia Isanga Nakadama, the Mayuge district woman MP implores residents to plant more fruit trees in their compounds to restore the environment.

"These trees would not only improve the surroundings

but also boost household incomes. The mangoes, oranges and avocados can be put on market during the fruiting season to earn some cash," Nakadama advises.

Lubanga urges the populace to plant at least three trees for any species that is chopped so as to ensure restoration of the natural green cover.

"At times the cutting may be for a reason that the tree is about to collapse on a school building or it is very old and leaning over a busy roadway. In such a scenario, a replacement with other plantings enables the environment to remain unscathed," he suggests.

Sam Cheptoris, the water and environment minister, calls upon the Busoga residents to respect the environment as it has a way of fighting back, usually with dire consequences for mankind.

"You have seen the rising Lake Victoria water levels affecting lakeshore settlements in Mayuge and Namayingo recently. There is also the extremely hot weather and so on which is just showing us that the destroyed nature is hitting back with a vengeance," Cheptoris warns.