



ENROOTING RESTORATION IN THE HIGHLY DEGRADED AREAS OF NABAKAZI WETLAND ECOSYSTEM.

Following the awareness meetings on Nabakazi wetland in the sub counties of Madudu, Kalonga, Kitenga, Kayebe and Kigando, the National Association of professional environmentalists (NAPE) with support from the Partner für Klima und Natur gGmbH (PKN) gave restoration tools to communities to immediately start restoration;



Plate 1. distribution of tools in Madudu S/C



Plate 2: Kureeba David the NAPE programme officer in the field distributing tools to communities in Kitenga S/C for restoration of Nabakazi degraded wetland.

- a) Harvest yams and sweet potatoes from the degraded wetland and leave the wetland vegetation to re-generate.
- b) Cut eucalyptus planted near the wetland and in the wetland



Plate3. Sweet potatoes planted in the buffer zone which the owner agreed to abandon for wetland regeneration when they are harvested.



Plate 4. Yams planted in the buffer zone which will not be planted after the harvest to allow the wetland to regenerate

- c) Dig terraces and embark on soil mulching for soil conservation to stop water run off with nutrients into the wetland. This would check and demystify the wetland community dwellers belief that the wetland is ever expanding thus shrinking /eating away the acreage of their farmlands/crop gardens



Plate 5. Soil conservation through digging of terraces to control the runoff water in the coffee plantation for community livelihoods improvement.



Plate 6. Digging terraces in a banana plantation for improved water and nutrients retention, as well as soil conservation.



Plate 7. Napier grass and wetland species used for mulching the banana plantation to stop moisture loss and retention of nutrients.

- d) Cutting Eucalyptus and other invasive trees from the wetland and replacing them with coffee as a conservation and household income security tree in community lands neighboring the Nabakazi wetland buffers.



Plate 8. Eucalyptus planted in the wetland aimed at expanding farmland acreage by draining the Nabakazi wetland



Plate 9. Planting coffee in the periphery of Nabakazi wetland buffer zone for improved income generation



Plate10. Introduction of coffee growing in the banana plantation for income boosting.

- e) Grow elephant grass/Napier grass and lemon grass in wetland buffer zone periphery, around homes of cattle keepers to be used as extra rich protein and fibre cow feeds especially during the dry spells. In addition, this would gradually check the rampant practice among cattle farmers of expanding their farmlands into the wetland in search for more acreage for their cattle farms. Napier Grass promotion was preferred by NAPE for this pilot project because of the following scientifically proven supper attributes;



Plate 11. The director of NAPE standing with the beneficiary who planted elephant grass near home to reduce pressure on the wetland as well providing fodder for the animals especially in the dry spells.

Below are some of the reasons why the technical team of the Project together with communities decided to grow elephant grass

- A. Fast Regrowth: It is a perennial plant that can be harvested 6–8 times per year, with the first cut ready in 75–90 days, and subsequent cuts every 45–60 days
- B. High Protein Content: Super Napier contains 16-18% crude protein (CP), and in some cases, up to 24%, making it ideal for lactating dairy cows to increase milk production.
- C. High Digestibility & Energy: It has high water-soluble carbohydrates (18-23 MJ/Kg), allowing it to be easily digested by cattle.
- D. Excellent Palatability: The grass is "sweet" and juicy, often lacking the fine, itchy hairs found in traditional Napier varieties, which means cattle consume more of it.
- E. Mineral-Rich: It contains essential minerals, including Calcium, Phosphorus, Potassium, and Magnesium.
- F. High Yield: A well-managed acre can produce 180–250 tons of green matter annually, which is sufficient to feed 10–15 dairy cows, according to some reports.
- G. Milk Boosting: A well fed cow with rich nutrient Napier grass has a potential of doubling daily milk yield from 10 to 20 litres per day)

Given the above facts, the cattle keepers and plantation farmers are into growing the elephant grass next to their homes to lessen on the buffer zone degradation as well as labor reduction by reducing on the distance of growing it in the buffer zone for easy access into their kraals.



Plate12 Napier grass being promoted in Kitenga cultivators and cattle keeping landscape

- f) Respect the buffer zone and only put plants that are compatible with the wetland as well perennial income generating species like fruit trees.
- g) Avoid using a wetland as a waste dump site.
- h) Involve the youth and women in the restoration programme.
- i) Plant pollens generating tree species so as to start on apiary projects as alternative livelihood house hold based initiatives.

The meetings were organized in Kitenga and Madudu sub county communities hosting the Nabakazi wetland where communities involved in restoration got together to further get enlightened on the conservation objective and how conservation in their areas could lead to the benefit in other communities. This also brought out the concept of conservation up stream which should be directly proportional to conservation downstream. Degradation upstream directly affects ecosystem downstream and the reverse is most times true. After the discussions collectively, target beneficiary community households were given tools like hoes, wheel barrows, spades, barbed wires, gloves and boots to begin on the restoration process.



Photo 13: The meeting where people met to harmonize and synergies with their fellow communities as well as picking tools for use in restoration agenda of Nabakazi. Tools distributed included Farm wheel barrows, barbed wires, spades, hoes, boots and gloves) and agreed to start restoration of the degraded Nabakazi wetland.



Plate 14: Communities receiving wheel barrows spades, pagers boots, hoes, gloves and hoe sticks.

The communities pledged to start restoration as the equipment was the hindering factor in their planning but Nabakazi must be reinstated.



Plate 15. NAPEs community green radio Journalist interacting with the chairperson of the community water user committee at the recently finished spring water that was built and protected for 6 community of Kansambya parish in Madudu sub-county



Plate 16. Buffer zones/wetlands along the Nabakazi wetland ecosystem that are breeding, feeding areas for the crowned cranes



Plate 17. Buffer zone recovery prioritizing degraded breeding sites for the Grey Crested Crane by marking the buffers with Stone Marks/Concrete poles



Plate 18 Communities receiving bee hives for piloting bee hives colonization in the identified areas of Rwabagoma.

As an incentive, the conservation pilot project is also supporting communities on issues of clean water and sanitation. NAPE has so far constructed a community water well in Kabweyakiza village enabling more than 1000 community households from the villages of Nabakazi, Kabweyakiza, Kagunguri, Ruraka, Bwiginiro and Kitto including women and children to access clean water.



Plate 19 Children fetching water from the spring which NAPE constructed and protected.

Moving forward,

Currently, the pilot is more grounded in mainly sub counties of Kitenga, Madudu and Kalonga in Mubende district and this conservation work will go on till December 2026 with a hope to expand

and replicate this restoration and conservation project across the entire landscape of Nabakazi wetland ecosystem in 2027/2031 if more funding is secured.