



THE FOREST RESTORATION AND WETLAND PROMOTION PROGRAM



Plate 1: Eucalyptus growing in the wetland

ABOUT THE PROGRAM

The Forest Restoration and Wetland Promotion Program is a community-based environmental initiative focused on reversing land degradation while promoting the value and sustainable use of natural ecosystems. It's also a coordinated set of activities that do bring back trees and ecological health to degraded, deforested or bare land. Wetland Promotion – Protecting existing wetlands and restoring damaged ones, while educating people on why wetlands matter for water, climate, and livelihoods. Forests and wetlands work together as a water system.

Forests on hillsides slow rainwater, reduce erosion and recharge groundwater. Wetlands in valleys filter that water, store it and release it slowly into the aquifers. When you degrade one ecosystem, the other suffers. Restoring both means ecosystems alliance, more reliable springs, fewer or regulated floods, improved microclimate, high storage and sequestration of greenhouse gases and better farming. In short, it's a program that treats forests and wetlands not as "wild places to fence off," but as working parts of the community that need care to keep giving water, food and safety back for improved livelihoods.

MOTIVATION BEHIND THE FOREST PROTECTION AND WETLAND RESTORATION PROGRAM

Uganda loses approximately 122,000 hectares of forest land annually with forest cover decreasing from 24% in the 1990s to roughly 13% recently. This is largely caused by Unregulated Logging and Timber Demand, Urbanization and Infrastructure Expansion, Weak Governance & Land Tenure Issues, Biomass Energy Demand, High Population Growth & Poverty, Agricultural Expansion among others.

Wetlands are disappearing three times faster than forests with approximately 35% of global wetlands lost between 1970 and 2015. Driven by agricultural expansion, urbanization and climate change, this rapid degradation threatens biodiversity and reduces critical carbon sinks, with the highest rates of loss occurring in developing nations. Nearly a quarter of remaining wetlands are in poor ecological condition. In Uganda, wetland coverage declined from roughly 15.5% in 1994 to approximately 8.9%–9.3% in 2024–2025. The major trends and drivers include; Rapid Urban and Industrial growth, encroachment, Institutional and Legal Weaknesses. Wetlands and forests don't work in isolation. Their environmental services work in complementarity. Therefore, for effective deliverance of environmental services, the forests and wetlands must be protected and where degraded, should be restored.

NAPE, in a bid to seek and witness environmental justice in 2025 commissioned a baseline assessment to assess the underlying causes of Nabakazi wetland degradation in Mubende district. The assessment revealed that severe human-induced degradation—mainly from agricultural encroachment, deforestation of riparian buffers, overharvesting of papyrus and pollution—reduced wetland cover and biodiversity. Degradation had intensified sedimentation, reduced fish breeding grounds and destroyed habitats of important species including the Grey Crowned Crane (*Balearica regulorum*). These pressures threaten food security, water quality and climate resilience in the Nabakazi catchment and must be reversed to save future generations from the costs of climate change, related impacts and disasters.



Plate 2: Gardens stretching into the wetland

Worth noting is that, Nabakazi wetland connects four major catchments—Katonga, Kafu, Nkuse and Muzizi—forming part of the larger Nile Basin hydrological network. It provides critical ecosystem services including flood control, groundwater recharge, water purification, carbon sequestration, and support for agriculture and fisheries that sustain thousands of households. Some interventions were put in place which included; wetland demarcation, soil conservation trainings followed by practicing. Planting of Napier and elephant grass in the buffer zone, intercropping of coffee with banana plantations, removal of eucalyptus from wetland areas, outreach meetings and radio talk shows among others. This further warranted the properly planned programme that would stop destruction of wetlands and forests in this era of climate change. This is considered the right path to environmental justice or sanity through forests and wetlands conservation.

Therefore, the Forest Restoration & Wetland Promotion Program motivated by the pilot study on Nabakazi wetland will go a long way to ensure the wetlands beyond it in Mubende and neighboring districts are conserved using the approaches of the program.



Plate 3: Understanding the required distance between the wetland and the community gardens (30 meters)

THE MAIN OBJECTIVE OF THE PROGRAM:

The main objective of the program is to provide a platform to stakeholders to have continuous conversations on environment and nature conservation. The conversations are aimed at chatting out solutions to the ever increasing cases of environmental degradation, wetland reclamation and forests clearance among others and their associated effect of climate change. Climate change has far reaching adverse consequences of human life as it affects the supply of food vital for current and future generations. The program aims at forging ways on how leaders, experts and communities can ensure sustainable environmental and nature conservation for sustainable life that considers biodiversity.

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

The program specific objective for the Community Green Radio Forest Restoration & Wetland Promotion are;

- To Educate, through Explaining why forests and wetlands matter for water, farming and climate
- To Mobilize and get communities to join tree planting, wetland clean-ups and contour digging
- To Showcase by Sharing local success stories to inspire action in the protection and restoration program
- To Connect and Link communities to gov't programs such as Parish Development Model (PDM), Emyoga, local government conditional grants allocations for community awareness and follow up as rights holders from the duty bearers (Note: it's through financial awareness that communities can demand for transparency and accountability) and the technical support. In this program awareness on funds allocation and participatory budgeting process will be key.



Plate 4: Fish ponds are one of the permissible activities in wetland areas with permission from authorities

WHY COMMUNITY GREEN RADIO (CGR)

The Community Green Radio(CGR): Community Green Radio is NAPE's and other conservation minded allays' main channel of communication for an estimated audience of more than 6 million people living the districts of Kiboga, Mubende, Mityana, Luwero, Wakiso, Nakasongola, Kibaale, Masindi, Kyenjojo, Ssembabule, Kagadi, Buliisa, Kiryandongo, Kakumiro, Kikuube, Kasanda, Hoima, Wakiso and some parts of Kampala. The radio is strategically positioned in the far central along Kampala-Kiboga-Hoima road an area known for oil resources in Uganda. The CGR is a key safe space for strategy building, information sharing, knowledge building and a platform for debate and under the current project "Sustainable Conservation of Nabakazi Wetland Ecosystem for Carbon Sequestration Enhanced Household Food Security and Improved Community Livelihoods in Coffee Producing District of Mubende"

THE NATURE OF COMMUNITY GREEN RADIO(CGR) BROADCAST

The program involves live studio interviews of community members, activists, experts and government officials. This is also followed by studio call-ins from the listeners. It also features pre-recorded interviews from community outreaches. This requires the presenter to do field interviews prior to the day of broadcast to pick voices of rural women, conservationists in communities and other members of the public. This is done through meeting members of the Community Green Radio listeners clubs.

CURRENT PROGRAM CONTENT

Introduction

Wetland restoration and Forest Protection efforts will continue to be featured in radio programs typically as news stories, interviews or part of a series on environmental conservation, pre-recorded voices educating the public about conservation and restoration. They will also involve joint learning, joint sharing talk shows and field based events targeting conservation pilots based in communities. The programme will borrow the tested examples such as:

- **“The Walker Swamp Story”** A live outdoor broadcast by ABC Ballarat in Australia celebrated the first time a fully restored wetland site reached capacity, featuring interviews with the restoration team from the Nature Glenelg Trust.
- **“Leitrim Farmers Pioneering Large-Scale Wetland Restoration”** An episode on RTE Radio 1 in Ireland discussed how local farmers are using techniques like coir logs and geotextile mats to slow water flow and stabilize soil in a large-scale restoration project.
- **Local Ugandan Programs Presenters** like Elly Katahinga at Radio Ankole disseminate early warning and climate information to communities as part of the broader effort to restore wetlands like Nyamuhizi. Community Green Radio specifically tags content related to wetland restoration, focusing on community benefits and climate change mitigation.
- **NPR Coverage Programs** on NPR have covered grassroots initiatives such as an artist installing a “pop-up wetland” in the LA River to rewild urban areas.
- **Lowa Public Radio** This station has featured segments on researchers tracking the progress of a unique wetland restoration project including data collection on vegetation and water quality.
- **Farm Radio International Scripts** This organization provides ready-to-use radio scripts on wetland topics including mangrove rehabilitation and the use of planted buffer zones to protect watercourses. These scripts help local stations in Africa and elsewhere produce relevant programming.

The forest and wetland restoration program will focus on the following;

- Forests, wetlands and the different types
- Forest conservation methods
- Forest Protection Methods
- Indigenous tree growing and advantages
- Sustainable harvesting of forests
- Forests and their roles in the provision of Non Forest Timber Products

- Flood control in wetland and Forest communities
- Forests and Wetlands in protecting and improving Water Quality
- Forests, wetlands and International Public Goods
- Climate change mitigation through forest and wetland protection
- Main threats to Forests and Wetlands (Human Activity, weeds, Pests and Climate Change)
- Key threats to biodiversity (Climate change, pollution, habitat loss, over exploitation and invasive species)
- Wetland quality under The Clean Water Act
- The Wetlands Act of Uganda and its provisions
- The Forest and Tree Planting Act of Uganda
- Drivers of nature crises
- Human Impacts on biodiversity
- The Art and science of nurturing natural forests
- Indigenous knowledge systems for conserving natural forests
- Analog forestry practices

See tabulated programming below table 1.1 pages 8-12;

FORMATS USED

The programs often involve:

- Interviews with ecologists, local experts, farmers and community members involved in conservation, protection and restoration projects.
- Focus on community involvement, highlighting how local engagement leads to successful, sustainable restoration.
- Discussion of scientific methods used such as re-establishing original hydrological conditions and planting native species.
- Information on the benefits of wetlands, forests including biodiversity, water filtration and climate change mitigation including watching carefully conservation documentaries telecasted on various Televisions

TARGET AUDIENCE

The program targets the general public with emphasis on conservation communities and government for purposes of conservation and restoration of wetlands and forests which are basic environmental ecosystems.

PROGRAM IDENTITY

Name: Community Green Radio – Voice of the Forest & Wetlands

Tagline: Reclaiming Land, Restoring Water, Reviving Lives, restoring catchments, improving livelihoods.

Stakeholders: are farmers/herders, leaders, conservationists (women, girls and the marginalized) among others

Languages: Local dialect (Luganda, Kinyarwanda, Runyankore and Rutoro-Runyoro) plus English for broader reach will be used during broadcasting.

KEY CAMPAIGN THEMES

Why It Matters – Linking deforestation to floods, drought, lost springs, low yields or no yields at all to climate variability and its relationship with climate change.

How to Restore – through planting Native trees/ while balancing with alien species for energy balance, ensure contour trenches are dug for soil conservation, wetland buffer zones and river banks protection through putting wetland mark stones or buffer grass such as Napier bamboo, trees like ficus Natarensis, fruit trees for wildlife, home consumption and sale.

Incentives & Benefits – Payment for Ecosystem Services (PES) in case of those communities with naturally standing conserved areas/ community conserved areas (CCA) that improve Water security, honey production, firewood supply, carbon credits, micro climate enhancement and climate change mitigation and adaptation aspects.

The program implementation will also reward Community Champions – Profile households restoring land, wetlands and forests successfully. There will be regular visits to already existing pilot/ Demonstration Sites along Nabakazi wetland where restoration has been grounded.



Plate 5: Visit to already existing pilot/ Demonstration Sites along Nabakazi wetland in Kabweyakiza village where communities are practicing soil conservation

In addition, the radio outreach team will be visiting active pilot sites for live broadcasts for other communities to learn from.

Partnership: NEMA, MWE, district environment officers, environmental clubs in schools, faith leaders

Feedback Loop: SMS line plus WhatsApp for questions, reports of encroachment

PROGRAM FORMAT

Table 1.1, The program will be segmented as follows:

Segment	Time	Content
Green News	6 min twice a week	Local weather, conservation updates
Elder's Wisdom	30 min weekly	Elders share how land/water used to be/used vs how it is used now
Indigenous Science Corner	30 min weekly	Experts explain restoration, Forests, wetlands and the different types, tree species, wetland plants, soil tips, Forest Protection Methods, Forest conservation methods, Indigenous knowledge systems for conserving natural forests, Sustainable harvesting of forests and their roles in the provision of Non Forest Timber Products, Flood control in wetland and Forest communities, Indigenous tree growing and advantages, The Art and science of nurturing natural forests, precision farming, greenhouse gases, lethal and non-legal i.e. methane, particulate matter, carbon dioxide among others.
Community Voice	30 min Twice a weekly	Call-ins and recorded interviews with farmers, youth, women groups on their farm /home tailored conservation techniques.
Action Call to conservation	10 min Weekly	Announce upcoming tree planting, training or water project events, government climate related programming, wetland monitoring programmes, incentives for best environmental conservationists. Awards will be given to the best performers.
Green Songs/Drama	5 min daily	Edutainment skit or song with conservation messages on wetlands, riverine forests and catchments i.e. uphill should not be suffocated with alien species of pine and eucalyptus. This will be key in messaging and developing the skits.
Tree Talk Focus save "The Last Tree" in your vicinity.	15-min weekly	Native vs exotic trees, nursery care, planting techniques with forestry officer and farmer call-ins elaborating on consequences of forest degradation, Forests and Wetlands in protecting and improving Water Quality Forests, wetlands and International Public Goods Climate change mitigation through forest and wetland protection, Main threats to Forests and Wetlands (Human Activity, weeds, Pests and Climate Change) Key threats to biodiversity (Climate change, pollution, habitat loss, over exploitation and invasive species), deforestation and encroachment.

Forest Guardians Focus	10 min 2 times a month	Share stories of community members protecting forests Documentary-style profiles, highlight benefits they see, highlight Drivers of nature in their community, crises that arise, Human Impacts on biodiversity, analog forestry conservation approach
Green Livelihoods Focus	15 minutes Twice a month	Beekeeping, fruit trees, agroforestry, eco-tourism income testimonies physical or online with farmers already earning from wetland/ forest-friendly practices
School Forest Hour Focus	45 min Monthly	Environmental clubs, essay contests, tree planting challenges Youth-led segment with songs, poems, quiz on trees in English and local languages.
Water Source Stories	30 min twice a month	This will focus on How wetlands feed springs, wells, and rivers the community uses. The Elders compare past vs present water availability and predictable causes of scarcity based on indigenous meteorology knowledge.
Action Call to conservation	30 min three times a month	River banks and Buffer zones, approved crops, papyrus and other wetland species harvesting rules with local leadership and district leadership with NEMA/district environmental or production officer explaining laws in simple understandable terms and tone. I.e. <u>Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA)</u> Wetland quality under the clean water Act, The Wetlands Act of Uganda and provisions The Forest and Tree Planting Act of Uganda, <u>National Environment (Wetlands, River Banks And Lake Shores) Regulations</u>
Wetland Champions	30 minutes bimonthly	Farmers who restored degraded swamp edges successfully are visited for Field interviews recorded at the wetland site for replication to other communities
Women & Water Focus	10 minutes three times a month	Looking at Time saved, health gains when wetlands are protected Women groups discuss before/after restoration of water points
Avoided Degradation due to community Detectives	Direct call in at any time and SMS and Whatsapping	Listeners report illegal activity via SMS, radio for follows up and CGR reports to district officials and the ministry that is the Uganda national forestry monitoring system.
Children's Eco Corner	Every Saturday end of month	Riddles, songs and facts about birds, trees, wetlands Policy to People – Breaks down environment bylaws so locals know rights and duties and this will involve school leaders on environmental programme in their schools.

EXPECTED RESULTS – 60 MONTHS

Awareness: 70%+ of target households understand wetland buffer rules

Action: 5,000+ indigenous trees planted, more than 3 degraded wetlands mapped for restoration

Behavior: Reduced charcoal burning, adoption of energy-saving stoves

Policy: Bylaws on forest/wetland protection passed with community input

Sustainability

- The Local Presenters will be trained inclusive of youth and women as well as community volunteer broadcasters
- Beyond this program some like-minded CSOs with campaign adverts or announcements will be charged a small contribution towards contribution to the smoothing of the radio. In other words, airtime will be sold to green businesses, run sponsored conservation messages.
- Since the owner of the radio is NAPE, then there is an assurance that the radio will cease broadcasting hard hitting messages on underlying causes of environmental degradation and mitigation and suggested aspects for climate justice which other radios tactfully refuse to air.
- There will be institution of a community environmental committee working closely with the radio team and the team at NAPE to move conservation messages borderless as well as fundraising in the due course.
- The program will be run by NAPE Community Green Radio (CGR) staff in close collaboration with NAPE staff at headquarters in Kampala with experts from government, civil society organisations among others.

List of Green Radio Journalists

- Mugabe Samuel
- Nyamahunge Oliver
- Nsamba Peter
- Nakibuule Winnie Sanyu
- Diana Mabejo
- Joan Nanteza
- Ssenkoomi Gerald
- Serugo Mohamadi
- Salongo Ssemakamatte Kitikyamuwogo
- Edson Ssemanda
- Asuman Musisi
- Abdul Kyakonyi

A Program Developed by the National Association of Professional Environmentalists (NAPE)



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