

## **Kikandwa Environmental Association: protecting wetlands for bigger waters**

“It is never easy to reclaim a degraded wetland. But if wetlands are not protected then all water downstream will be contaminated”. These are words of John Kaganga from Kikandwa Environmental Association in Mityana district-Uganda; in an interview about sustainable farming in wetlands.

John’s yearning for environmental sustainability is not yet worn out simply because he knows that the failure to continuously advocate for sustainable environment means eventual roll out and death! Isn’t this a sterning reminder that we need to appreciate the environment because it is the back of farming.

Yes John works with local government leaders and other stakeholders in Mityana district to sensitize communities about saving wetlands. An achievement he has put to his sleeves is the sensitization of communities around River Mate, River Lwambula which have hold of the Nakawaya wetland and Kanyane wetland. Small as they may be, he says that these wetlands have served as water sieves to the one thousand five hundred people with in their catchment. Even may be beyond because River Mate flows down to River Kafu, Basin. <http://huntessential.com/en/hunting-and-fishing-lodges-in-africa/uganda/kafu-river-basin.html>

Kafu River Basin (5 Blocks) The huge Kafu River Basin stretches along Lake Kyoga, Kafu & Manyanja Rivers and covers the five districts of Luwero, Nakaseke, Nakasongola, Kiboga and Masindi with about 2,000,000 hectares. The landscape in Kafu is mainly dominated by Papyrus swamps and dense bush thickets.

Therefore it is a prime hunting ground for the East African Sitatunga, East African Bush Duiker, East African Bohor Reedbuck, Nile Bushbuck, Ugandan Defassa Waterbuck, Leopard, Common Oribi and Bush Pig. The river joins the River Nile on its way to Egypt. So is it not people living downstream around wetlands that support bigger water bodies?

## **How Kikandwa Environment Association KEA ups the act of protecting wetlands**

In 2003, John spear headed a campaign against pouring effluents in wetlands. These were mainly from locally brewed liquor (brewed from bananas and yeast, distilled through boiling and dregs poured in wetlands as effluent). Kikandwa Environment Association KEA worked with policy makers to sensitize communities about the dangers of brewing alcohol in wetlands and pouring effluent in wetlands. Had it not been for lack of funds, KEA would carry on with the campaign to other communities where such actions still take place.

To encourage utilization of wetland resources, John says that his association educates people on best practices of farming in wetlands. “Grow vegetables in wetlands because they are water friendly, yet some times the prolonged droughts discourage people from farming vegetables”, he says. The challenge is that some people use pesticides in the gardens near the wetlands, which John says is bad because chemicals drain to the water that I used by people and livestock.

KEA promotes a model known as “GOOD PRACTICE”, which they have done with in the catchments of Lake Wamala [http://www.globalnature.org/29791/LIVING-LAKES/National-Networks/Network-East-Africa/Wamala/02\\_vorlage.asp](http://www.globalnature.org/29791/LIVING-LAKES/National-Networks/Network-East-Africa/Wamala/02_vorlage.asp) .This involves sensitizing communities to plant trees around wetlands, especially indigenous trees pieces

so that there is a buffer that is not encroached as people expand farming land to the lake shores. This is done in degraded areas around the lake due to massive brick making and poor farming habits. He advises that livestock keepers should not take their animals to drink directly in water areas but have water taken to animals so as not to contaminate the wetlands.

Ever heard about the ½ by ½ 1000 project (half by half one thousand project)? Intriguing isn't it? This is an idea developed by John meant to conserve land where families are encouraged to save a half an acre of land and keep it fallowing for between 20 to 25 years ; which will be used in future when soil fertility of most land under use now will be depleted.

KEA also promotes bee keeping around wetlands, has an information resource center. The information resource center requires funding because the demand for information is high in the rural setting, yet there is no internet to provide some of the urgently needed information. John believes that wetlands should be collectively protected by communities because they all benefit from them.

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URL: <http://keauganda.ash.com/untitled-page-3.html>



***Right is John Kaganga sensitizing school children about environmental conservation***



***KEA Information Resource Center***



***A protected wetland***