



Time for Local Solutions to Re-establish Degraded Ecosystems in Uganda

World Environment Day 2021 will be commemorated on June 5, 2021 under the theme: 'Ecosystem Restoration' with focus on resetting our relation with nature. **It will also mark the formal launch of the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration 2021 – 2030' that runs from 2021 through 2030, which happens to be the deadline for the Sustainable Development Goals and the timeline scientists have identified as critical for avoiding the worst impacts of climate change.**

Africa's biodiversity is one of the key assets for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and can be sustainably and equitably used to reduce inequality and poverty on the continent. The alignment of African Union Agenda 2063 goals, the Sustainable Development Goals and Aichi Biodiversity Targets, linked to the conservation of biodiversity and the contribution of nature to human well-being in Africa, facilitates the development of interventions that can achieve multiple positive outcomes. Africa seeks to ensure that its environment and ecosystems are healthy and protected to support climate-resilient economies and communities' livelihoods

In Africa, ecosystems most affected by degradation include wetlands and rivers, forest ecosystems, marine and coastal ecosystems, savannah grasslands and rangelands, mountains as well as African dry lands and deserts.

Freshwater ecosystems for example, are experiencing an immense threat from various human-induced factors such as climate change, unsustainable tourism, agriculture, infrastructural development and urbanization; mining and many other inappropriate or improperly planned development activities, leading to loss of biodiversity and extensive damage to key ecosystems. A number of African rivers are under threat from large dams for hydropower and irrigation, pollution, erosion, human encroachment and invasive species.

Several lakes in Africa face unprecedented pressure from land-based pollution including eutrophication by fertilizers, and unsustainable use impeding their natural replenishment processes. The introduction of invasive species, such as the Nile Perch in Lake Victoria and the water hyacinth invasion in several lakes constitutes a major threat to endemic species. River ecosystems are also threatened by various activities including flow alteration (e.g. damming, irrigation) and poor catchment management (UNEP / CBD, 2018)

In Uganda, deforestation and forest degradation mainly due to conversion to agriculture has led to loss of large areas of forest cover and degradation of forest land in Uganda. Private forests are some of the most affected areas, as owners have gained more benefits from converting these areas to farmlands than retaining them as forests. Many forests in the central region, Masindi and Hoima districts have been turned to farm lands due to their perceived fertile soils and the lure of high returns from investments in agriculture, where forests have been converted mainly to sugarcane plantations in the districts of Atiak and Amuru districts (NEMA, 2019).



The above dire situation has been worsened by the presence of a huge refugee community (totaling 1,223,003 as at February 2019), who depend on fuelwood derived from cutting trees in forests or in the landscape, as a major source of energy for cooking (NEMA, 2019)

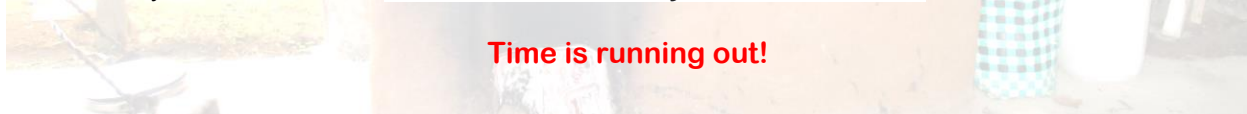
Why Scaling up Local Solutions should be part of Ecosystem Restoration (2021 – 2030)

Uganda Coalition for Sustainable Development (UCSD) and Joint Energy and Environment Projects (JEEP) as partners implementing the *East African Civil Society for Sustainable Energy and Climate Action (EASE CA) Project*, as well as members of INFORSE East Africa and the East African Sustainability Watch (EA SusWatch) Network to which they also belong, join the rest of Uganda and the World to **scale up information and knowledge sharing about local solutions to counter climate change and energy poverty in East Africa that can tangibly contribute to restoration of degraded ecosystems to fight the climate crisis, prevent further the loss of biodiversity and to enhance food security, steady water supply and sustained livelihoods at the community level to cushion Uganda's fast growing population.**

This is based on an online '**Catalogue of Local Sustainable Energy and Climate Solutions' (that can help bringing energy, water and others to people in Uganda and East Africa, in climate friendly and as much as possible in affordable ways).** Read more about this Catalogue from here: <http://localsolutions.inforse.org/>

This **bottom up intervention can best deliver results when relevant policies and laws work harmoniously, are fully enforced with widespread engagement of communities and stakeholders in planning and Implementation of related interventions**

In sum, scaling-up community actions through existing and future National strategies and Plans like the National Development Plan (NDPIII), the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP) and the Local Government Development Plans among others, is a sure way to cumulatively contribute to the **UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration.**



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The East African Civil Society for Sustainable Energy and Climate Action (EASE CA) Project partnership between JEEP, UCSD, SusWatch Kenya and TaTEDO (also part of INFORSE East Africa), in partnership with INFORSE secretariat and the Nordic Folkecenter for Renewable Energy is supported CISU (Denmark)