

## ENHANCING ECONOMIES AND SOCIAL WELFARE THROUGH ENVIRONMENTAL INITIATIVES

**C**onservation management and financing in Uganda continues to be a challenge and with communities getting larger due to growing population, there is a lot of competition for natural resources. Some areas suffer this more than others naturally, and this may be attributed to the circumstances surrounding them for instance the communities that host refugees in the mid-Albertine and Northern Regions of Uganda.

Uganda being the largest host of refugees on the African continent on a small land area of a little under 200,000 Sq. Km, according to the Uganda Bureau of Statistics, the land endures a heavy burden. The general land use comprises arable land at 25 percent, permanent pastures, and crops at an even 9 percent, and forests and woodlands at 28 percent. This indicates that there is need for major interventions to continue for there to be a positive change. There have been measures taken that involve assistance in the different sectors including the area of environment to aid development.

To increase environmental and natural resources protection by restoration and conservation of degraded natural resources including forests, wetlands, and woodlands for improved livelihoods of the displaced populations and host communities, the European Union (EU) designed an Action to fund a project addressing the impacts of displaced populations on the environment, natural resources, and the livelihoods of the host communities in the Refugee Hosting Districts of Uganda (RED). This Action contributes to



Entebbe Multipurpose nursery site under the tree before the training by UBF.

increasing environmental protection and restoration and improving sustainable livelihoods and rights among displaced populations and their host communities in refugee hosting areas.

This Action is implemented in close coordination with District Local Governments and the Office of the Prime Minister and is fully aligned with the Government of Uganda's Water/ Environment Sector Response Plan.

Uganda Biodiversity Fund (UBF) through a consortium composed of Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS), Nature Uganda (NU), and Ecological Christian Organization (ECO) is implementing the EU funded Action titled, "Restoring and Conserving Degraded and fragile ecosystems for improved livelihoods among the refugees and host communities of the Mid-Albertine Rift and West Nile Regions".

This four-year Action which started in December 2020 through to December 2024 is being implemented with a 15 kilometres of refugee settlements located in Refugee Hosting Districts of Kikuube, Kyegegwa, Kamwenge, Terego and Yumbe.



The new nursery site set up after the UBF training.

In strengthening capacity of local communities for service delivery and implementation of Sustainable Land Management (SLM), Climate Smart Action (CSA), Agroforestry and Woodlot establishment of landscapes, UBF is supporting existing nurseries with limited access to permanent water for management as model nurseries.

Training is being done to build the

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capacity of these practitioners and is to ultimately create a significant change in the approaches to environment conservation and improvement of livelihoods. Under this initiative, small-scale irrigation units, tools and agricultural inputs have been organised to ensure the supported nurseries thrive through good practice and can be a source of supply during planting season. Certification by a responsible body is also being considered to enhance the abilities of the farmers.

In both the Mid-Albertine and West Nile Regions, value chains for economic growth and conservation value have been identified. High value enterprises including shea nut and honey production which are tagged to conservation will be supported to enable farmers develop and improve livelihoods to reduce pressure on the environment.

These environment-friendly practices will give alternatives to some of the current cash crops like tobacco whose production has greatly contributed to destruction of forests in these areas.



Tobacco growing at the banks of Mvetri stream at the boarder of Yumbe and Terego districts in Yumbe Photo credit: Silver Ochom