



# RWANDA ENVIRONMENT MANAGEMENT AUTHORITY

Your Quarterly Newsletter

April - June 2024



## Rwanda Celebrates World Environment Day After Week of Restoration Efforts

We are pleased to share with you REMA quarterly newsletter which features key stories and photos of our work these past months. We hope you will find it interesting and informative. Follow us on social media for regular updates and contact the team at [communications@rema.gov.rw](mailto:communications@rema.gov.rw) for any enquiries.



Rwanda negotiators pushed for Climate finance in Bonn, Germany



REMA and Musanze District to establish Mukungwa Eco-tourism Park



Fish production surges following restoration of Cyohoha and Kibare

# Rwanda Celebrates World Environment Day After Week of Restoration Efforts



Participants at the World Environment Day Celebration in a group photo

**R**wanda joined the global community in marking World Environment Day on June 5, 2024, culminating a week of intensive land restoration activities and a youth expedition showcasing the country's environmental progress over the past three decades.

Themed around land restoration, desertification, and drought resilience, the week-long campaign saw thousands of Rwandans actively involved in reforestation efforts, soil conservation, and other environmental initiatives. A highlight of the celebrations was a

youth expedition that embarked on a journey to witness firsthand the transformative changes in Rwanda's landscape over the past 30 years.

Speaking at the official World Environment Day event, Minister of Environment Dr. Jeanne d'Arc Mujawamariya emphasized the significance of collective action in addressing environmental challenges. "Our journey towards a sustainable and prosperous future is intertwined with our commitment to land restoration, combating desertification,

and building resilience against drought," she said. "Through joint efforts, we can create a greener, healthier Rwanda for generations to come."

The Minister highlighted Rwanda's achievements in environmental protection and conservation, while also acknowledging the ongoing challenges. She called upon all stakeholders, including government agencies, civil society organizations, the private sector, and individuals, to intensify efforts in preserving and restoring the environment.



The World Environment Day celebrations provided a platform to showcase Rwanda's progress in environmental conservation and to inspire further action. As the country continues to prioritize sustainable development, the commitment to land restoration and climate resilience remains steadfast.

Throughout the week, various stakeholders, including government officials, environmental activists, and local communities,



**Juliet Kabera, Director General, REMA**

engaged in activities focused on sustainable agricultural practices, climate change adaptation, and biodiversity conservation.

The youth expedition was a highlight of the week's activities, offer-

ing young people a unique opportunity to witness the progress made in environmental restoration over the past three decades.

The expedition included visits to successfully restored landscapes, where participants learned about the techniques and strategies employed in reversing land degradation. This experience not only inspired the youth but also equipped them with the knowledge and motivation to contribute to Rwanda's environmental sustainability efforts.

REMA's Director General, Juliet Kabera emphasized the vital role of the younger generation in safeguarding the environment.

"The youth are the stewards of our future. Their active involvement in environmental restoration and conservation efforts is essential for sustaining the gains we have made and ensuring a healthy and resilient environment for gen-

erations to come," she stated.

Rwanda's dedication to environmental restoration aligns with global efforts to achieve the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly Goal 15, which focuses on life on land. The country's proactive approach in addressing environmental challenges serves as a model for other nations striving for sustainable development.

As Rwanda joins the global community in marking World Environment Day, the nation's achievements in land restoration and environmental conservation stand as a testament to the power of collective action and the importance of a long-term vision for a sustainable future.

The week-long celebrations not only highlighted Rwanda's environmental successes but also reinforced the need for continued efforts in preserving and protecting our planet.



*Youth got opportunities to explore success stories in environmental protection over the past 30 years*

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## Rwanda negotiators pushed for climate finance at the UN Climate Change Conference in Bonn



REMA's Deputy Director General (on right side) joined a panel discussion on Multilevel Partnership for Enhanced NDCs

**R**wanda's negotiators led by Mr. Faustin Munyazikwiye, Deputy Director General of the Rwanda Environment Management Authority (REMA) – went in Bonn, Germany for the June UN Climate Meetings, as 196 countries met to agree on the New Collective Quantified Goal (NCQG), the new amount of funding which developed nations must mobilize every year starting in 2025 to support climate action in developing countries as floods, extreme rains, and brutal heat waves continue to ravage nations across the world.

In 2009, developed countries promised to provide \$100 billion



every year to developing countries to help them mitigate and adapt to climate change effects. But delays in achieving this goal eroded trust between developed and developing nations and have been a continual source of contention during annual climate negotiations.

A new report by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) said developed countries met the long-standing \$100-billion-a-year promise in 2022.

However, 69 per cent of this was provided in the form of loans.

At COP21, in Paris, countries agreed to set a new collective quantified goal before 2025, taking into account the needs and priorities of developing countries.

Now, developed countries are expected to raise more than \$100 billion, with developing countries demanding trillions of dollars to tackle climate change.

In Bonn, countries are still trying to

determine what should be counted as climate finance, how big the overall amount should be, who will pay for it and over how many years, and who will receive the money.

The ongoing discussions which end on June 13, in Bonn will lay the roadmap to what will be agreed later this year at the 29th UN Climate Change Conference known as COP29.

Faustin Munyazikwiye, Rwanda's lead negotiator in the UN Climate talks reminded that the discussions in Bonn are linked to the COP29 which will take place in Baku, Azerbaijan, in November 2024.

"The June UN meeting is like COP29 preparation. We are in discussions to draft proposals for COP29. We are also negotiating the goal of funding to replace the annual \$100 billion target needed to help developing countries cope with climate change effects. We have to agree on standards to help measure how countries are building resilience

to climate change effects. Countries must agree upon how to measure if we are really reducing greenhouse gases to limit global warming to 1.5-degree Celsius," Munyazikwiye explained.

Countries also discussed carbon market rules for developing countries. This market enables climate polluters to fund projects that reduce carbon emissions in other countries, and they can then include these emission reductions in their climate targets while still emitting greenhouse gases.

The new goal of funding to developing countries is expected to be agreed upon during COP29.

Marie Dalie Dukuze, a Rwandan negotiator explained that this is the reason why COP29 has been dubbed climate finance COP.

"As of now, developed countries and developing countries have not yet come up with a conclusion to the new goal in this Bonn conference. Developing countries want the money to come from developed countries while developed countries want to mobilise the funding from different sources such as rich nations, private sector, international organizations, and others," she said.

Grace Ineza Umuhiza, another negotiator said discussions are

also looking at proposals for the 'Loss and Damage Fund' to help developing countries recover from climate change effects such as floods and drought.

"The fund operations will be assessed during COP29 based on data and needs provided by each vulnerable country," she said. The fund was established during COP29 in Dubai, 2023.

Vulnerable and poor countries, which did little to cause the climate crisis, want to hold the biggest fossil fuel-polluting countries liable for the pain and suffering they are experiencing from climate breakdown.

## REMA and Musanze to establish Mukungwa urban eco-tourism park



*Mukungwa wetland is set to be turned into an ecotourism park.*

**R**wanda Environment Management Authority (REMA) in collaboration with Musanze District are set to establish the Mukungwa Urban Eco-tourism Park which is part of a newly approved land use and development master plan.

The government in May 2024 approved land use and development master plans for eight districts, including Musanze, which has allocated space for eco-tourism.

Mukungwa is a tributary of the Nyabarongo River that flows into

Lake Victoria, the Nile River, and the Mediterranean Sea.

The government has invited consultants to prequalify for a feasibility study to convert Mukungwa wetland into an urban wetland recreation and eco-tourism park.

The study will include baseline assessments, developing alternative concepts, preliminary designs for infrastructure, and investment plans.

"Musanze's land use master plan

will rejuvenate Mukungwa Leisure Park, offering visitors a delightful experience"

The eco-tourism park will be Rwanda's second, following Nyandungu Eco-Tourism Park in Kigali. Musanze District officials estimate the project to cost Rwf10 billion.

The Mukungwa Urban Eco-tourism Park will be part of the "Integrated Mukungwa Wetland and Landscape Restoration Project," financially supported by the German government through KfW and the

Lake Victoria Basin Commission (LVBC).

Communities affected by flooding along the Mukungwa River in the Northern and Western Provinces may find relief through a \$300 million initiative that will soon commence.

Proposed interventions include catchment restoration structures, expansion of road crossings, river-

bank fortifications, sediment management, large detention dykes, and protection of river buffer zones.

**Ecotourism in other districts with newly approved master plans**

The government has also approved master plans for Gakenke, Kirehe, Musanze, Ngoma, Nyaruguru, Rubavu, Rulindo, and Rwamagana, which include pro-

visions for eco-tourism. Ecotourism will cover 308.9 hectares in Rwamagana District, 36 hectares in Rulindo District, and 8.1 hectares in Gakenke District.

Urbanisation, agriculture, water bodies, forests, wetlands, and buffer zones are also prioritized in these plans to ensure balanced and sustainable development.

## Fish production surges following extensive restoration of Cyohoha and Kibare Lakes in Eastern Province



*Restoration efforts carried out on Lake Cyohoha and Kibare contributed to the increment in fish production*

**F**ish production in Lake Cyohoha in Mayange, Mareba, and Ngeruka sectors of Bugesera district, as well as Lake Kibare in Kayonza District, has significantly increased following extensive restoration efforts carried out by Rwanda Environment Management Authority (REMA).

Both lakes had started drying up due to encroachment activities and climate change.

In 1999 and 2000, Cyohoha Lake dried up completely, causing a massive fish die-off, Damien Habukize, a fish farmer from Mareba sector says.

"I used to harvest Tilapia, Mamba fish, catfish, and more, but they all vanished due to encroachment and the lake drying up," he said.

Before the restoration, residents faced severe water shortages. "We had to dig into the lakebed to access groundwater," Habukize added.

**Today, fish production has improved, and the lake now supports solar-powered irrigation.**

"We now harvest 10 kilograms of catfish, 40 kilograms of Mamba fish, and six kilograms of Tilapia per day," Habukize said. "The lake is open for fishing four days a week and closed for two months to allow for fish reproduction"

Residents have also formed a fishing cooperative with 350 members to ensure sustainable production. Phocas Ntiyamira, president of the Komeza Imihigo Cooperative, high-

lighted the benefits of restoration, including water for irrigation and soil erosion control. Bamboos were planted in buffer zones, and solar-powered irrigation is now in place.

Joseline Yamfashije, another farmer, noted that agroforestry trees have been planted to control soil erosion around the lake and wetland.

"We are working to prevent pollution to boost fish production," she said.

Sylvie Uwacu, a forestry official in Bugesera District, emphasised that deforestation and human activities had led to the drying up of lakes and rivers.

"We planted native tree species in buffer zones to restore these water bodies," she said.

The restoration of both lake was undertaken by REMA through the LDCF-II Project titled "Building resilience of communities living in degraded forests, savannahs and wetlands through an Ecosystem-based Adaptation (EbA) approach" in Rwanda.

Servand Niyitegeka, an environmentalist from REMA, noted that water levels have risen in both lakes and wetland post-rehabilitation.

"Rehabilitation covered 52 hectares of the wetland and 645 hectares of Cyohoha Lake. The fishing cooperative members have even bought a vehicle and built a commercial house due to increased fish production," he added.

Fish production has risen from 900

kg to 3,450 kg per month. Additionally, 115 hectares of aquatic weeds have been cleared from the lake. Murago Swamp has also been proposed as a Ramsar site, designated for international importance under the Ramsar Convention.

#### Saving Lake Kibare

The government of Rwanda through REMA has also restored Kibare Lake in Kayonza District. Covering 336 hectares, Lake Kibare is home to Nile Tilapia, African Catfish, and Haplochromis species. Before 2018, unsustainable agriculture severely degraded much of its riparian zone.

Through a project to build resilience in degraded wetlands, forests, and savannahs, REMA re-

stored the land and banned activities in the riparian zone. "The lake was drying up due to market activities and waste dumping," Niyitegeka explained. "Now, a proper market and waste management system have been established."

Bamboo and agroforestry plantations now cover 80 hectares of the restored lakeshores. The construction of Kibare Market and storage cost Rwf 103 million.

A recent REMA investigation found that construction, agriculture, and waste discharge continue to pollute major lakes in Rwanda. However, ongoing restoration efforts aim to mitigate these impacts and ensure the sustainability of these vital ecosystems.

## LDCF3 Project's Improved Cookstoves: A dual solution for climate change and human health



LDCF3 Project has distributed 5,000 improved cookstoves to beneficiaries in Gakenke and Kirehe Districts

**In a ground-breaking move towards sustainable living, the Rwanda Environment Management Authority (REMA) is making significant strides in the fight against climate change while simultaneously improving human health.**

The distribution of improved cookstoves through the Ecosystem/Landscape Approach to Climate Proof the Rural Settlement Pro-

gramme of Rwanda, also known as LDCF3 Project is proving to be a pivotal initiative with far-reaching benefits for both the environment and local communities.

Climate change and its associated impacts have posed a growing threat to communities worldwide, and Rwanda is no exception. One of the key contributors to environmental degradation has been the

traditional cooking methods involving open fires and inefficient stoves.

The LDCF3 Project – being implemented by REMA in partnership with Rwanda Housing Authority, Meteo Rwanda and the Districts of Gakenke and Kirehe with support from the Global Environment Facility (GEF) through the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) – seeks to address this challenge by provid-

ing households with technological-ly advanced cookstoves designed to reduce environmental impact.

The improved cookstoves distributed by REMA are equipped with enhanced combustion technology that significantly reduces the emission of greenhouse gases and pollutants.

"Receiving the improved cookstove through the LDCF3 Project has been a game-changer for our family. Not only does it cook our meals faster and with less fuel, but it has transformed the air we breathe. My children and I no longer inhale harmful smoke daily, and I feel a sense of relief knowing that our health is no longer compromised. Thanks to REMA and the LDCF3 Project for this positive change in our lives!" said Claudine Mukamisha, a resident in Kirehe District.

By promoting cleaner burning, these stoves contribute to a substantial decrease in carbon emissions, mitigating the adverse effects of climate change. The reduction in the demand for firewood or charcoal, a consequence of the improved efficiency

of these stoves, also plays a critical role in curbing deforestation and preserving precious ecosystems.

"The improved cookstove provided by the LDCF3 Project is a beacon of hope for our environment. Before, we relied heavily on firewood for cooking, contributing to deforestation. Now, with the efficient design of the new stove, we use significantly less wood, easing the pressure on our local forests. It's not just a kitchen appliance; it's a solution that helps us cook sustainably and protects the trees that are vital for our community and the planet!" said Liliane Nyiramana, a resident in Gakenke District.

In the beginning, 5,000 improved cookstoves (2,500 in Gakenke and the other 2,500 in Kirehe Districts) were distributed to 5,000 families.

The LDCF3 Project Manager, Charles Sindayigaya noted that beyond the environmental benefits, the positive impact on human health is becoming increasingly apparent.

"Traditional cooking methods often release harmful pollutants

into the air, contributing to respiratory diseases and indoor air pollution. The introduction of cleaner-burning cookstoves is a game-changer, creating healthier living environments for countless households" Sindayigaya said.

Improved indoor air quality is a direct result of the reduced emissions from these cookstoves. Families that once faced health hazards due to prolonged exposure to smoke and pollutants are now experiencing a welcome change. Respiratory issues, especially among women and children who are often the primary cooks in households, are expected to decrease, leading to an overall improvement in public health.

Local communities are commending REMA for its foresight and commitment to addressing both environmental and health challenges simultaneously. The improved cookstoves distributed under the LDCF3 Project exemplify how targeted interventions can bring about tangible and positive change in the lives of people and the ecosystems they inhabit.

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## Empowering Communities: Women and Youth find economic opportunities in the construction of model villages being established by LDCF3

**The construction of Integrated Development Program (IDP) model villages under the Rwanda Environment Management Authority (REMA)'s Landscape Restoration Approach to Climate Proof the Rural Settlement Project is not only building resilient communities but also providing economic opportunities for communities especially women and youth.**

The conference brought together over 1,200 participants in Kigali to advance climate resilience in the Global South through scientific research.

At least 160 research findings, aimed at enhancing climate resilience to extreme events, have been presented at the conference.

Some of the research focused on extreme weather events, climate projections, drought, environmental solutions, global warming, ocean warming, climate services and forecasts, heat waves, climate change impact on crop yields, water scarcity, urban overheating impacts on human life, AI use in the early warning system, and machine learning-based early warning system for drought, among others.

Extreme weather-related events are often short-lived and include heat waves, freezes, heavy downpours, tornadoes, tropical cyclones and floods.

The IDP model villages are being established in both Gakenke and Kirehe District – where the project is

being implemented – demonstrating how to integrate climate-proofing measures into rural development.

### Empowering Communities through Employment

The IDP model villages, part of a strategic initiative to relocate residents from high-risk areas to climate-proofed settlements, have opened up various job opportunities for local communities. These roles range from construction labor to more specialized tasks, providing much-needed income and skill development for many.

By employing local residents in the construction process, the project is empowering communities and contributing to their livelihoods.



**Women and youth are playing a crucial role in the construction of IDP model villages in Gakenke and Kirehe Districts**

Women, who often face limited employment opportunities, are playing a pivotal role in the construction of these model villages.

Through involvement in various tasks such as construction, and site cleaning, they are gaining valuable skills and generating income.

For many women and young people, the wages earned from these construction jobs represent more than just financial gain. They signify a step towards economic independence and self-reliance. The consistent income helps families improve their living conditions, access better healthcare, and invest in education, breaking the cycle of poverty.

"This project has changed my life," said Twizerimana Angelique, a resident of Muzo Sector in Gakenke District. "I used to struggle to provide for my family, but now I can

earn a living while contributing to the development of my community." She added.

Young people are also benefiting from the project, with many finding employment as construction workers and apprentices. These opportunities not only provide them with financial support but also equip them with valuable skills for future employment.

"Devota Mushimiyimana, a local resident, expressed her gratitude for the opportunity to work on the project. "This job has helped me to support my education and gain practical skills that will benefit me in the future," she said.

The project's emphasis on local employment aligns with Rwanda's broader development goals of poverty reduction and job creation. By investing in its people, the

government is not only building resilient communities but also empowering them to thrive.

The construction of IDP model villages is transforming not only landscapes but lives. Through the provision of employment opportunities, women and young people are gaining financial independence, building skills, and securing brighter futures.

The LDCF3 Project is a five-year initiative that aims to climate-proof the rural settlements in Gakenke and Kirehe Districts by building communities' resilience to climate change. It is implemented by REMA in partnership with Rwanda Housing Authority, Meteo Rwanda and the Districts of Gakenke and Kirehe with support from the Global Environment Facility (GEF) through the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)