

Greening schools takes root at St Kizito Primary in Kyotera

A small sack garden at St Kizito Primary School marks a much larger shift. Children are learning to green their community, reduce waste, and embrace sustainability. Through the Eacop-Rotary Green Schools Initiative, pupils are being equipped to become Uganda's next generation of climate-resilient citizens.

BY PROMISE TWINAMUKYE

When one goes through the gate of St Kizito Primary School, Kiteredde in Kyotera, after a winding road to the compound, what greets one is a fenced plot of what looks like a mini garden. With sacks that seemingly hold soil one cannot miss the sight of healthy cabbages growing on top of the sacks.

According to Rev Bro Patrick Mukhwana, the head teacher of the school, this urban farming was led by a one Rev Bro Opio, a teacher at the school, in a mission to green the area.

"I appreciate Brother Opio, who had already introduced urban farming, starting with simple vegetables such as cabbage and sukuma wiki," he says.

Greening does not deal with plastics, so getting it out of the way is crucial. The children use dustbins (though most of them are now old) as effort to manage waste in the environment.

"The restoration involved covering the bins properly so they could be used effectively and safely. After training these practices to the students, they are urged to take them back home so they can green both the school and community.

Pioneer beneficiary

St. Kizito is now among the first beneficiaries of the Green Schools Initiative, launched last week by the East African Crude Oil Pipeline (EACOP) in partnership with Rotary International. The programme targets schools and communities along the crude-oil pipeline route, aiming to promote environmental protection, sustainable energy, and healthy living.

John Bosco Habumugisha, managing director at EACOP, says

"We are doing a green schooling initiative to schools along the crude oil pipeline so that they understand the importance of greening. This includes building solar power, planting trees and work with the community."

"Our minimum target is to have at least one Green School in every district where EACOP passes. A model school where we can demonstrate these practices, train teachers,

and allow other schools to come and learn," says.

This represents commitment to protect Uganda and to build environmental responsibility into the petroleum infrastructure.

"We are working with communities and future generations to preserve the environment. Our work is guided by the understanding that true sustainability goes beyond buildings and pipelines. It is about people, especially young children, who will inherit and shape the future of the country and the planet," he says.

Apollo Mugume, the Kyotera Resident District Commissioner, adds that instilling values in children is a great start because they are the custodians of the planet in future.

The trees they plant, the gardens they care for, the lessons they learn about conservation, these small acts will one day shape a greener, better, and healthier Uganda.

"When you finish drinking a soda, do not throw the bottle anywhere. If you see your parents doing something harmful to the environment, remind them. Environment is life. Each one of you is an ambassador," he told the school children.

Resilient citizens

Agnes Gyaviira, LC5 chairperson of Kyotera District, says they are aiming at building climate-resilient citizens.

"We want to raise young people who have a strong sense of responsibility for their country. It is worrying that, as Africans, we have abundant water resources, rainwater, running water, and underground water, yet we make the least use of it. Africa is rich. Uganda, especially, is called the Pearl of Africa because of its natural resources," she says.

While many homes still struggle to access and store clean water, she believes that when children are taught what to do, they can go back home and teach their families how to collect rainwater and make use of simple, available resources.

It starts, she says, with small practices like using basins, jerrycans, and other basic tools to harvest and store water. While talking about resources, Gyaviira quickly deviates to health, talking about cancer, something that is on the rise and affecting many families.

Prevention, she says, begins with lifestyle and environmental choices. Sometimes, it only takes a five-minute walk,



Teachers, students, and greening schools initiators plant a fruit tree at St Kizito Primary School in Kyotera District last week. PHOTO/PROMISE TWINAMUKYE.

choosing natural foods, or stepping away from harmful habits to make a real difference.

"Unfortunately, the current generation is drifting away from natural and organic living. Many young people prefer junk food over traditional, healthy foods such as *nakati* (*Solanum Aethiopicum*), *ensuga* (African nightshade), *bbug-*

ga (red amaranth), *ejjobyo* (spider plant), and other vegetables. These foods made our grandparents stronger and healthier. We need to revive that culture of valuing what is organic and natural because it directly affects our health, our environment, and our resilience," Gyaviira says.

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