

CONSERVING THE ENVIRONMENT

JESE NEWSLETTER JANUARY 2021 ISSUE.



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CONTENTS

January 2021 Issue.

Editor's note;

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the authors of articles published during the previous and current editions.

I acknowledge generous help obtained from Mr. BUSIINGE Christopher as the reviewer of all editions.

In this issue of conserving and protecting the environment, we are reminded that, a nation that destroys its soils destroys itself. It is important to note that forests are the lungs of our land, purifying the air and giving fresh strength to our people hence the need to protect them in order to save humanity.

The current misuse of the environment generates short and long term negative consequences that will greatly affect the future generation. Our role is to practice friendly environmental activities aiming at restoring the earth's treasure.

Nabakka Elizabeth



The shrinking Muhangi Forest - Kyenjojo District



Kitchen gardening creating financial growth in farmers.



Fight against open defecation in Kyaka II Refugee camp.

About us



Joint Effort to Save the Environment (JESE) is an indigenous non-government, service-providing organization registered as a company by guarantee NO 47579 and the NGO Bureau reg.No 55914/1019, and since its establishment in 1993, JESE, through her work in improved Agriculture Production and Natural Resources Management and long term development, has greatly contributed to improved livelihoods of target beneficiaries and provided opportunities for a better life especially for the rural poor households and communities adjacent to Natural Resources in the Rwenzori region of Uganda. Over the past two decades, the organization has grown substantially, in the number of programs, our staffing and budgets.

Our Vision

A community where people and nature flourish

Our Mission

To facilitate Innovative Actions for Sustainable Water and Natural Resources Management and Improved Livelihoods.

Our core Values

Respect for the environment, Gender equity, Integrity, Truth, Transparency, Team work, Voluntarism

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The Shrinking Muhangi Forest- in Kyenjojo District

By: BUSIINGE Christopher

In early 2000, Matiri Central Forest Reserve in Kyenjojo District was at a very high risk of disappearing but was saved through local advocacy by the community mobilized by JESE and several petitions by the elders of Tooro to the NFA leadership in Kampala, and some action was taken and encroachers were evicted. What remains are few loggers who continue to sneak in the forest allegedly with the knowledge of NFA Staff. Today it is Muhangi Central Forest Reserve in Kyenjojo district at high risk of disappearing. Unlike Matiri Central Forest reserve which is located on the main Kampala highway and illegal activities can easily be noticed, Muhangi Forest is hidden away from the main transit routes and therefore loggers can do what they want without being stopped.

NFA adamant

In October I and a team of local Forest Monitors and Journalists visited two forests, Itwara and Muhangi. We intended to monitor the extent of illegal activities taking place in these forests. I was however disturbed at the rate at which Muhangi Central Forest Reserve was shrinking at a very fast rate. In this forest, logging for timber and charcoal was taking place unabated. In Itwara, we found a truck loading timber under the supervision of NFA security personnel and they told us that they had just come across this illegal activity and they were taking the timber to the NFA station at Kagoora. In Muhangi, we found timber and charcoal activities in the village of Nyaruzigati taking place in broad daylight. In this particular case, we called in NFA and led them to a Fuso truck that was busy loading the timber in Kasaba trading center. In both cases, we

expected that NFA would cause the arrest of illegal loggers particularly one, Yusuf, an LCI chairman of Nyaruzigati village for involving himself in the illegal logging in Muhangi but no action was taken. Only to be told that Yusuf convinced the NFA supervisor, Muhesi Hezron that he had gotten the timber from private forests around Kasaba and Kigoyera, yet none of these villages still have private natural forests from which hardwood timber can be got. Never the less, we would expect NFA to demand a timber trading permit, which they never did.

This seemed like a game and a much bigger jigsaw puzzle for me. The immediate question that came to my mind was, why can't NFA apprehend these Loggers? I have since failed to answer this question. I'm certainly sure that, as you read this article, illegal activities are going on in these Central Forest Reserves without NFA doing something about it. In this region, NFA has sector offices in Fort-Portal, another in Kyenjojo-Nyantungo, another one at Kagoora in Katooke, and recently, they moved closer to Matiri Central Forest Reserve. The question is why are they not doing enough, to at least arrest the loggers since they have UPDF protecting them? According to Muhesi Hezron, NFA is not well facilitated to chase after the loggers. While this might be a good reason, how about the illegal loggers who are reported to them on the daily basis by ordinary citizens, why do they do nothing about it?

Muhangi Central Forest Reserve shrinking away

We could easily see the shrinking of the Muhangi Forest from the aerial photos that we took of the forest. Muhangi is no longer the once compact forest but one with patches of encroachment, visible from the zigzagging boundaries as a result of

encroachment by farmers. We were told that some of these farmers and laborers who work for the loggers are imported into the areas from neighboring Rwanda.

In Muhangi- Nyaruzigati village, the boundary separating the forest and the community was not well known and the community was at liberty and freely extending their farms inside the forest. I concluded that NFA doesn't go to these villages, and if they did, Nyaruzigati would not be harboring loggers and encroachers on Muhangi the way it is currently happening. Otherwise, this rampant logging in Muhangi would have stopped a long time ago but it rages on. Local organizations like JESE estimate that over 197 hectares have been encroached upon in Muhangi Central Forest Reserve.



Photo: Showing a heavily encroached Muhangi Forest by Farmers and loggers

Effects of COVID-19

The problem of logging worsened during the COVID-19 Lockdown. During this time, the loggers had a good time as there was no one monitoring the illegal activities in the forests. Communities in Kyarusozzi, Kasaba, and Kigoyera testified that there were lots of logging activities during the lockdown because no one was stopping them as the attention was on COVID-19. They particularly mentioned several senior loggers like Yusuf and Gram.

Financing local politics

These loggers have a lot of money and we were told, they are involved in financing the elections so that they can get leaders who are on their side and protect their illegal logging businesses.

Chief loggers in Muhangi Central Forest Reserve

Chairman Yusuf in Nyaruzigati village neighboring Muhangi Central Forest Reserve is a very rich and powerful man who according to sources in Nyaruzigati village can compromise both the local leadership and NFA staff. The other loggers who are very famous for illegal logging activities in Kyarusozzi include; Gram and Sunday. We were told by one of the frustrated loggers the duo collaborates very closely with NFA staff who assist them in escape after they have paid them millions of money.



Loggers are targeting very old trees which are good at CO2 Sequestration

A future at stake

Muhangi, Itwara, and Matiri are among the few surviving natural forests in the Tooro region. These forests are responsible for modulating the area's natural climate and contributing to CO2 sequestration and thus contributing greatly to the mitigation of Climate Change. There is scientific evidence suggesting that older trees have higher efficiency in carbon sequestration and lower in new and younger vegetation or recently planted forest. However, with such forests with natural trees gone, a disaster waits for this pristine region of the world and this will not only affect local climate but income earned from Tourist activities. For example, Muhangi, Itwara, and Matiri Central Forest Reserves are part of the re-known elephant corridor in Western Uganda which attracts hundreds of tourists each year and neighbors the recently pronounced the Fort-Portal Tourism City of Uganda.

Kitchen Garden Easing the Financial Stress of Kabahinda Tinka

By: Kiiza Felix

After one and a half years of implementation of the She Feeds the World (SFtW) project by JESE doing a lot of intervention with beneficiary groups. We see various households from these groups realizing a positive change in their livelihood, income, and nutrition.

Kabahinda Tinka is a female aged 53 years and married to Tinka Rwabwogo all of Mabonwa Parish, Mabonwa LCI Nyantungo Sub County, Kyenjojo District. Kabahinda is a member of 11 household members. Since the start of the project, Kabahinda has participated in many activities including pieces of training in women leadership, climate-smart agriculture, nutrition, and kitchen gardening among others.

Last season, she was one of the members that were trained in kitchen gardening and were supported to establish a nursery of vegetable seedlings alongside their main demonstration site of potatoes. These seedlings were distributed among members of the group in which Kabahinda is a member as well.

She went ahead to establish a kitchen garden at home using the knowledge and skills acquired from the training at the demonstration site. She planted different types of vegetables like spinach, Biriganyi (*Solanum melongena*/ bringal), tomatoes, and amaran-

thus, and with more other local common vegetables.

Kabahinda says the establishment of a kitchen garden gave her so much relief because she could save the money that she was initially spending on buying vegetables from the market that used to take quite a large share of her budget. At times the family would go without the food stuffs in case there was no money and this would mean a poor diet for her family. However, this remained a story of the past as vegetables really grew well and abundantly enough for home consumption. With surplus production from her kitchen garden, she discovered that there was gold never mined in her neighborhood. In her home trading Centre, these vegetables have high demand, this market demand inspired her to scale up production and enter the market to quench the demand for vegetables.

When I visited her in early June, I found her having established approximately 0.25 acres and planning to increase more. She hopes to see earning more income from the business she has started which will enable her to contribute to the needs of her family and boost its nutrition as well but more so being a role model to other women in the area that they can do something.

Kabahinda is very grateful to JESE and CARE for the great work being done in their community. Through series of training and guidance ranging from agronomy to women leadership and psychosocial support, many people have changed a lot in their homes

Kabahinda and other members of Mabonwa Farmers receiving Vegetable Seedlings from the Demo Site last season.



THE ILLEGAL RICHES FROM MUD FISH HARVESTING IN KYERENGA WETLAND.

By Flavia Kunihira Ahurra

Illegal Mud fish harvesting is the latest in a line of unlawful activities that have furthered the depletion of Kyerenga wetland in Kyenjojo District. A very popular activity among locals, mudfish harvesting is doing more harm to the environment albeit all its benefits to the surrounding communities.

The fish mongers destroy ant hills to collect white ants, red ants and mushrooms which are used as bait for the mudfish. This has led to scarcity of mushrooms in Kyenjonjo district.

The mongers set traps at 2am, 3pm to collect the fish at 6am. The fish is packed and sold in jerry canes which are kept in the stores. There are about five fish stores in Kilandameni LCI to Migongo LCI. The price of mud fish varies on the size kept in the jerry canes and on average a jerry cane costs about shs. 120,000 Ugx.



A photo of mudfish. Photo Credit: NEW VISION

For over four years, the mudfish business has been lucrative around Kyerenga wetland which is located in the eastern part of Kyenjonjo district and a border to Kyegegwa district. The wetland covers the sub-counties of Butunduzi and Kakabara in Kyenjonjo and Kyegegwa districts respectively. It has permanent water regimes and covers an esti-

mated area of 500 hectares. The mudfish harvesting is carried out by un identified business men who come from Kampala and Kasese to trap these delicious species. On average, 60 buckets of mudfish are collected every month and are used as bait in L. Victoria to trap larger amounts of fish. They employ fish mongers who use locally made fishing baskets, entukuru as they are locally known to capture the mudfish traditionally known as ensoonzi.

According to John Amanyire, the LCI Kakongorano, witness accounts point to mongers being the biggest threat to the wetland

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“These fish mongers are a threat not only to the wetland but also to the adjacent communities since they pass through their land while cutting trees and other plants to access the wetland.”

The natives forwarded reports to the sub-county about the misuse of the wetland by the mongers but have received no response to their query,”Amanyire said . As the Kyerenga wetland management plan is in the approval process, there is still great need for sensitization of all people on the benefits of wetlands, educating fishing communities about the dangers of wetland encroachment and indiscriminate fishing as well as improved government funding of wetland restoration activities in the country.

The plan suggests mitigation measures such as zoning of the wetland into fish breeding grounds, domestic water collection points, harvesting and protected zones. The plan has been prepared with close collaboration of the community to ensure that they are a party and involved in the management of the ecosystems.

There is need for a strong law that is restorative but also punitive for committing environmental crimes. Government agencies and community-based wetland user groups need to know where existing exploitative practices undermine productivity and threaten future supplies of wetland products and services. Briefing needs to be done on wise use methods of wetland protection so that they can live safely near wetlands and also feel empowered by their conservation. Sustainable use of a wetland is defined to mean utilization which ensures that the products or services derived from that use are available at the same level for the foreseeable future. Environmental Government organizations like NEMA and the Wetland Management Department need to make several changes in how policy is executed. They need to work together to implement policy in unison and make sure resources are not being over spent on one area but spread evenly. They also need to refine policy and make sure it can be applied to the community levels.

Wetlands function as essential environmental components and are vital resources, which provide ecological, economical, socio-cultural, scientific and recreation services to the country. Over the years, the country has lost about 570,000 hectares of wetlands and if wetland degra-

dation is not halted, several creatures that inhabit swamps and wetlands could vanish in a few decades. Wetlands do not only absorb and store excess water but also act as habitats for several creatures including various types of fish and birds. Uncontrolled fishing involving capturing of immature mudfish has contributed to destruction of wetlands which is a concern to everyone.

LIFE SKILLS TRAININGS EMPOWERING THE YOUTHS.

BY: ALEX NYESIGAMUKAMA

Green college initiative project trains all the youth on the program in life skills alongside technical skills training. Core life skills are critical part of training for vulnerable young adults due the many social challenge they interface daily lives. With support from Welthungerhilfe and BMZ, regular youth engagement in life skills session .I have contributed to improved individual confidence as observed through trainees' participation in most of the group activities and also communication. Moving forward, there is growing appreciation by individual youth of the skills development program since they have improved their livelihoods and become agents of change in the community.



Youths listening to a JESE skills trainer during a session.

KITCHEN GARDENING IMPROVING LIVELIHOODS AND BOOSTING FINANCES.

BY KIIZA FELIX



Olive in one of her kitchen gardens having irish potatoes.

Olive Kajumba is a female aged 40 years married with seven children (2 girls and 5 boys). Six of her children are going to school (one girl and 5 boys). She is a resident of Kabale village, Mabonwa Parish, Nyantungo Sub County, Kyenjojo District. She is a member of Mabonwa Farmer Field and Business School (FFBS). Like many other Ugandans, she derives her livelihood from agriculture i.e. she is a farmer who grows mainly maize, beans, potatoes. She supplements income from farming by selling second-hand clothes at her small shop in the Mabonwa trading center.

As a member of Mabonwa FFBS, the olive has had a chance to be taken through pieces of training in good agronomic practices and kitchen gardening. Her group has been able to host a demonstration garden demonstrating improved farming of potatoes where all members have learned different climate-smart agriculture techniques. She also got a chance to participate in the

kitchen garden training. A kitchen garden demonstration was also established whereby a very farmer was advised to go establish or prepare a plot at their homes as they waited for the seedling to mature for transplanting.

Olive admired the knowledge of kitchen gardening and started practicing at her home because she realized it as one source of food (vegetables). Olive has a big family of fifteen members where it's hard to buy vegetables from the market with limited rural income yet she has to pay school fees. Therefore, this would be a relief to the family by saving some money that would be used to buy such food.

After the training, olive was inspired to prepare beds. At the time of home visits, she had already established five beds with local vegetables that included Obugorra/ Nakati, omugobe, enyamusiri, and local amaranthus. She has added more beds of Biringanya and spinach using seedlings that were raised at the group level demonstration site.

Olive looks forward to expanding vegetable production which she can commercialize to raise more income for her household. She is grateful to JESE and CARE who have helped women through economic and psychosocial empowerment interventions.

Olive hand picking weed from growing irish potatoes



AGROFORESTRY RESTORING FARMER HOPES.

By: Mugisa Gabriel

Mr. Turyamureba Everest is one of the supported farmers by the JESE and FoW- project that is to Engage farmers in the restoration of Kibale- itwara matiri elephant corridors. Everest is a resident of Kajuma itwara zone, Katambale sub-county Kyenjojo district. Everest tells a story of how he suffered from planting and raising cocoa and coffee previously before the pieces of training in sustainable agroforestry and land use management practices. He tells that he had planted coffee but he used to suffer challenges of his coffee drying the same challenge used to affect his cocoa he says he had planted 3 acres of cocoa having 2000 seedlings but almost half of this cocoa dried up due to poor agronomic practices with pests and diseases

In August 2019 Everest met a team from JESE under a project of Forest of the world through the ToTs Julius Agaba and Hamidu Tulyatunga who trained him on good agronomic practices, sustainable agroforestry practices he got to know that coffee and cocoa-growing and their good performance depends on the provision of shade. He was also advised on integrating shade trees in his cocoa and coffee garden such tree species like caryopsis mini, Cordia, Terminalia, and other agroforestry shrubs like calliandra and sesbania-sesban, and planting of temporally shade plants like bananas and castor oil plant. He planted castor oil plant and banana as temporally shade on both cocoa had planted in late 2018 and the one newly planted in March 2020, he was also advised to cut off the affected cocoa or coffee plant part. And according to him, he says he has not encountered the drying of his cocoa and coffee than how it used to be before the introduction of shade trees



Everest using the banana as a temporal shade for his cocoa no longer faces a challenge of his cocoa drying

Mr. Turyamureba says he had limited knowledge on coffee planting space and other agronomic practices like pruning, stumping, digging of soil and water conservation trenches, fortunately after meeting the ToT Tulyatunga Hamidu and Agaba Julius who gave him pieces of training, They advised Everest about the right spacing of 10*10 feet they also advised him not to use hands and panga in pruning and stumping coffee or cocoa but to use secateurs and pruning saw because using hands and pangas injure the plant and leave a scar for the entry of disease-causing agents he is now preparing to use the advice given to the new coffee that he is planning to plant. He says he was also trained on agroforestry system and practices that he can plant more than one crop on the same piece of land this enabled him to plant banana and castor oil plant as temporal shade in a cocoa garden he says banana will give him food and his family as he waits for cocoa to provide him with more income he appreciates JESE and Forrest of the World that he was given free cocoa seedlings and shade trees at free cost.

COMMUNITY BASED TRAINERS: THE BACKBONE OF JESE



A demarcation exercise in Kakoni wetland in Kyegegwa District.

Joint Efforts to Save the Environment under the STRENPO program has embarked on a plan to sensitize and mobilize the people of Kyegegwa and Kyenjojo districts on the causes and dangers of climate change; how they can survive the stresses of climate change through resilience; natural resource governance and empowering marginalized groups of people to better their lives through financial literacy and creation of small businesses. JESE recognizes that the burden of teaching the masses can not be placed solely on their shoulders. For this reason, JESE trains and facilitates community-based trainers (CBTs) who are members of the community and speak the native languages to assist in the fight against climate change. They are trained in financial literacy, budgeting, farmer field business schools, village savings and loans association groups, etc. The CBTs are then

put to task to transfer the knowledge they have gained to the people from their communities. CBTs are also charged with the responsibility of following up and monitoring the progress of the programs that they have implemented within the different communities.

Wetland protection is one of the areas under the program; Natural resource governance. Wetlands in Uganda account for about 10% of the total geographic area and provide a wide variety of domestic and economic products. Wetlands are the only source of mudfish known as ensozi in the local dialect. They are also a source of domestic water, materials for making local crafts and are essential in the process of relief rainfall formation.

Uganda continues to experience a high refugee influx. The population increase is

beyond the established settlement capacities and thus puts a strain on the natural resources. This has led to a sharp rise in cases of wetland degradation in Kyaka II Refugee Settlement in Kyegegwa district. The settlement currently has a population of about 121,073 refugees. Long-term settlers in the settlement like Nyandwi Abdul, the general secretary for defense in Kakoni village confirms experiencing climate change in various ways among which include; prolonged dry spells, erratic rains, strong winds, and increased day temperature. In 2017, Kakoni experienced a drought which further increased the threat to agriculture and natural resources in the Kyaka II settlement. It's because of this change that STRENPO has engaged in sensitizing the people about the dangers of wetland degradation. Under the STRENPO Program, JESE embarked on sensitization meetings on wetland conservation emphasizing the uses of this wetland and the dangers of encroaching on it. The refugees were completely unaware that the activities they were carrying out in the wetland were illegal and could lead to imprisonment. JESE then moved from village to the village setting up demarcations marking wetland buffer zones. The residents of the different villages were receptive to the plan.

In September 2019, JESE formed a wetland management committee. The committee aims at raising awareness, solving wetland related problems, and mobilizing the communities to protect the wetland. Kunesha Bushake is a coordinator on this committee and ensures that harmful economic activities are not taking place in the wetland. He takes the initiative to stress the effects of encroachment and remind the community of the horrors they faced during the drought. With guidance from the CBTs, the committee can mobilize community members to attend sensitization meetings.

They also engage the community in tree planting activities.



“I am happy to protect the environment because it will protect me too,” Kesha

Kunesha ~~says~~ believes that VSLAs and FFBs have played a great role in wetland conservation because community members can participate in other activities and limit the use of the wetlands to fishing, collecting handcraft materials, and water for domestic use. He thanks JESE for empowering him and his fellow CBTs to take charge of their destiny and fight climate change.

There is much to do when it comes to rebuilding and protecting what's left of natural resources and the biodiversity within our ecosystems.

AGRONOMY PRACTICES IMPROVING LIVELIHOODS

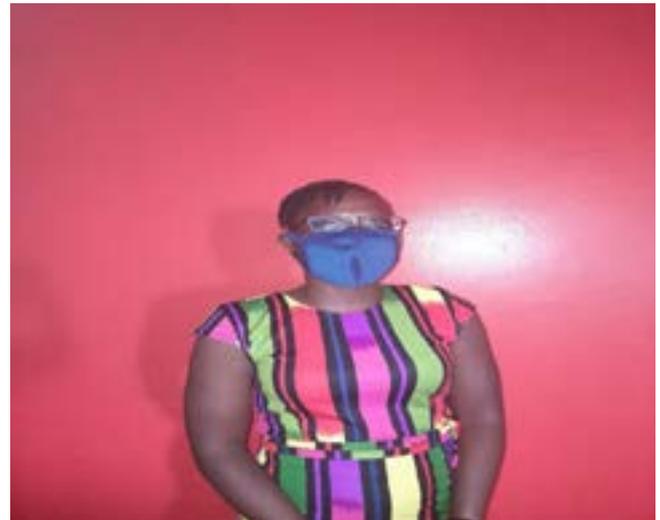


A photo of Topister in her banana plantation

By: Mwebembezi Alex

Maniriho Topister 48 years old, is a farmer, and a resident of Bwera village. For all the years I have lived in Kabambiro, maize and beans have been our dependant foods supplemented with cassava. These were grown by almost every household season after season for home consumption and surplus for sale. With this background, I thought it's only maize and beans, that can grow in Kabambiro and the neighboring communities. I used to buy bananas to change my meals which we used to get from Kabarole. In 2017 we started to work with JESE and through the field, exchange conducted I learned that banana can be grown in Kamwenge as long as it is well managed and with more extension service from JESE staff, I established my banana plantation in 2018, and continue managing it following the agronomy practices taught by JESE staff. These include; making trenches, pruning, and mulching. Last year, I started harvesting bunches of matooke from my plantation. From a healthy point of view, I no longer depend on eating posho, Monday to Sunday. Economically, my finances are being boosted since I earn from the plantation since I sell each bunch at 10,000 shillings. This has encouraged me to save some money which is enabling me to plan for the future with new business plans all emerging from the plantation savings. I am also part of our village saving and loan association. More importantly, my balanced diet has changed since I established my banana plantation. I am looking forward to expanding my plantation. I am humbled to thank the JESE team for the good work done in improving our standards of living.

HEALTH WORKERS TRAINED ON COVID-19 .



A photo of a clinical officer for Ntoroko health center III

By: Angume Rebecca

Linda Lillian Phionah, aged 28 a clinical officer for Ntoroko health center III, head of case management committee and infection prevention and control committees for Ntoroko district task force.

I do extend my gratitude to JESE and its donors for touching the lives of the Ntoroko community basically with the noble cause of health aspect because "health is wealth". Through the district health office, JESE facilitated the training of health center staff to improve their outreach and strengthen their capacity to handle screening and treatment of Covid-19 victims/contacts at Ntoroko HC III.

With the skills acquired, the staff currently ably practice proper donning and doffing of PPE's, identification and screening of covid 19 patients, treating of patients with mild signs/symptoms, mixing of chlorine for bare hands, and PPE's handling. We are now more vigilant on face mask-wearing among ourselves and patients. We took up the action of integrating Covid 19 across our outreaches and public health education for the inpatients.

This training revitalized health workers' minds because we had relapsed much on handling Covid 19 victims/ contacts since the training from the ministry of health in April 2020. We are currently alert of the pandemic and confidently ready to screen, treat and disseminate information of Covid- 19.

FIGHTING OPEN DEFECATION IN KYAKA II REFUGEE CAMP.



Photos showing a toilet facility that Bahati used before and the newly constructed pit latrine by JESE.

By: Nabakka Elizabeth

Inadequate sanitation remains one of the biggest health concerns in Kyaka II refugee camp. Disease outbreak is imminent. Without toilets and sanitation services that properly dispose off waste and safely treat it, the lives of refugees remain at risk.

Joint Effort to Save the Environment (JESE) with support from Oxfam, is helping to improve hygiene and sanitation conditions for hundreds of refugees through construction of pit latrines for different households around the refugee camp.

This is to ensure support for families with access to hygiene and sanitation facilities. Additional facilities have been installed with the help of JESE such as rubbish bins, among others.

“Toilets play a crucial part in ensuring the communities in the settlement remain healthy,” says Enid Naikoba, PHE Oxfam. “These have helped to ensure human waste is not spread and water sources remain uncontaminated.”

Instead of sharing a communal latrine with many others, common to many refugee settlements, JESE is ensuring each family

of the selected persons with special needs is provided with their own household pit latrine.

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The significance of sanitation to safeguard human health is irrefutable and has important public health dimensions. Access to sanitation has been essential for human dignity, health and well-being.

For refugees like Bahati Fulenimo, putting up a latrine had become a daunting task, particularly without the tools or resources. However, with the help of JESE, he received construction tools, material and the labour to build the latrine he and his family needed.

“JESE gave me construction tools and in addition to that built me a pit latrine. We now have a latrine,” says Bahati

“They have also been checking on us and teaching us many things like keeping the latrines clean and washing our hands. We have learnt a lot and so has our children. We won’t fall sick easily. The JESE team have done their part.”

JESE FUN TIME

WEDDING OF JESE STAFF: BYARUHANGA BENON

