

The most important environmental issue is one that is rarely mentioned, and that is the lack of a conservation ethic in our culture - Gaylord Nelson

NEWSLETTER



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Dear Friend,

We are glad to share with you the third issue of the Atacama Consulting Electronic Newsletter (e-Newsletter).

In this issue, we inform you about the game changer in the field of Environmental Assessment in Uganda, comment on the recent dry spell in Uganda, and update you on the event that was held to shine a light on the need for climate change action.

For queries and/or comments, contact us via our email address:

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You can also access our website at: **www.atacama.co.ug** to get an insight into any developments at Atacama Consulting.

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(Editor)

STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT IN UGANDA

Uganda held its First National Conference on **Strategic Environmental Assessment** (SEA) on 15th February, 2017 at Imperial Royale Hotel in Kampala under the theme “Integrating Environmental and Social Concerns into Policies, Plans and Programmes.” The conference that may become an annual event going forward focused on raising awareness on SEA, citing case studies of SEAs that have been done in Uganda to which Atacama Consulting contributed. The forum was also used to discuss the draft SEA Regulations and Guidelines for Uganda.

The meeting that attracted a number of participants such as; key government ministries, development partners, environmental practitioners, non-government organisations, and academia among others was organised by Ministry of Works and Transport (MWT), NIRAS – an international development consulting group, and National Environment Management Authority (NEMA). SEA is seen as a game changer in Uganda’s environmental assessment field since it integrates environmental and social concerns as part of the development process and therefore key to Uganda’s sustainable development. Additionally, SEAs guide high level decision making and help to scale up our national practice to international standards. It is worth noting that a well undertaken SEA informs an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) since SEA covers a wide geographical area as compared to an EIA and it (SEA) integrates a number of projects, while an EIA is project specific.



RECENT DRY SPELL – A LEARNING CURVE FOR UGANDA



Persistent dry conditions across the country late last year and early this year had its toll on Ugandans and their activities. The dry spell saw water levels of Uganda’s surface water bodies reduce, complete drying up of man-made water features mainly in the cattle corridor, and inflation of food prices as well as famine due to harsh environmental conditions that could not favour agriculture. According to the 2014 National Population and Housing Census Main Report - agriculture is the backbone to Uganda’s economy and 80% of households are involved in Agriculture

compared to 74% in 2002 which is evident that we are bound to suffer the consequences of climate change if action is not taken immediately. It is high time farmers start practicing sustainable livelihood and climate smart agriculture (*agriculture that sustainably increases productivity, enhances resilience (adaptation), and reduces greenhouse gas emissions (mitigation)*). As for the investment world – there has never been a right time to invest in green economy and biodiversity conservation like now since our economy is climate dependent. This was also emphasised by EJ Milner-Gulland, a Biodiversity Professor from University of Oxford during her lecture in Kampala in which she noted that it will be very challenging to keep profits up if businesses extract from the environment and disproportionately invest in it (www.monitor.co.ug/Business/Markets/Biodiversity-professor-tips-businesses-conservation/688606-3878862-view-asAMP-4pax9mz/index.html).

60+

EARTH HOUR

EARTH HOUR – SHINING A LIGHT ON THE NEED FOR CLIMATE ACTION

Initiated in March 2007 in Sydney-Australia, Earth Hour is a worldwide movement organised by World Wide Fund for nature (WWF) to encourage as many people to turn off their non-essential lights for an hour from 8:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. towards the end of March (*second to last and last weekend of March is around the time of the Spring and Autumn equinoxes in the Northern and Southern hemispheres respectively which allows for near coincidental sunset times in both hemispheres, thereby ensuring the greatest visual impact for a global lights out event*). The aim is to shine a light on the need for climate action, with hope that people will take action beyond the hour through the Earth Hour Blue (*activities that unite people to care for the Planet beyond the stipulated one hour*) – thus the logo 60+.

In Uganda, marking this day started in 2011 and on Saturday, 25th March, 2017, Uganda together with 186 countries and territories marked this year's Earth Hour during which, over 3100 landmarks and monuments switched off their lights and seven countries are aiming for climate policy outcomes among others (www.earthhour.org). In Uganda, a public sensitisation was held at Makerere University before lights off moment to which, Sheraton Kampala Hotel joined.

Through the past Earth Hour Blues, Uganda planted the world's first ever Earth Hour Forest and distributed solar kits for lighting and energy efficient stoves to families living around the forest (*to motivate them to be good custodians*) among others.

(wwf.panda.org/who_we_are/wwf_offices/uganda/earthhour_uganda/). Activities such as Earth Hour and Earth Hour Blues are simple yet powerful since they have ripple effects that contribute to climate change mitigation and adaptation. You too can be part of this global climate appeal movement; look out for this annual event (*Earth Hour*) towards the end of March.



Upcoming Events

1. Annual Africa Waste Management Business and Innovation Conference

Date: 15th – 16th May 2017

Venue: Nairobi Kenya

www.estmattbs.com/waste_management/

2. World Environmental Day

Date: 5th June 2017

Did You Know?

With the current extinction crisis, as many as 50% percent of all species are possibly heading towards extinction by mid-century (2050)!