

**Lucy Iyango-** Assistant Commissioner, Wetlands in charge of Wetland Assessment, Information and Management in Uganda. She shared her views about educating the public about wetlands during the Kigali Forum for Wetlands, 8 to 12 July 2013, which took place in Kigali Rwanda.

**UNEP-TEEB:** *Tell us about the strategies you have developed to raise awareness and educate the public about the value of wetlands?*

**Lucy Iyango:** In Uganda approximately 13 % of land surface area is covered by wetlands and therefore raising awareness and disseminating information that removes thinking that wetlands are wastelands is an important priority. One of the actions we have done is to produce materials that target the different stakeholder groups, such as posters for communities, policy briefs for policy makers and booklets for technical people. In addition we have produced guidelines for managing wetlands and widely distributed policies and resource use to different Local governments. We also collaborate closely with civil society organizations to ensure continuity of our communication activities. Educating the public about wetlands is important as it involves and empowers the communities and other stakeholders to be part of the management of wetlands.



**UNEP-TEEB:** *In Uganda how do you ensure that the values of wetlands are actually mainstreamed into the decision-making process?*

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**Lucy Iyango:** In 1998 we undertook a valuation exercise on the Nakivubo wetland, located in Kampala to demonstrate to policy makers and planners that this wetland was vital for water treatment and purification. The exercise was successful with the result that the government put in place a Conditional Grant for wetlands, because they recognized the monetary value of the regulating ecosystem services of Nakivubo. The cost of waste water treatment for Nakivubo was put at 1.7 million dollars, and that is the amount government is saved annually. We were able to disseminate the information from this valuation exercise to policy makers and complimented these actions by taking the policy makers on field trips, preparing a state of wetlands report and setting up a National Wetland Information System.

**UNEP-TEEB:** *What is the main take home message for you after attending this conference on wise use smart plans for wetlands?*

**Lucy Iyango:** Wise use smart plans present an ideal vision on how wetlands can be sustainably used and managed to meet the development needs while at the same time conserving our environment. It should however be appreciated that the wise use of wetlands is not the responsibility of a single institution but a consolidated effort that requires the work of all of us. It requires both top down and bottom up commitment and action. Finally, sensitization and awareness on wetland use and management is a must if we are to save these invaluable resources.