Today, countries across the globe celebrate World Environment Day, an occasion that has grown in importance and is observed internationally to raise awareness about our environment and climate change. In Rwanda, the day was marked on Friday as part of National Environment Week, which promotes environmental stewardship by reducing resource use, land and forest degradation and pollution while improving quality of life.

Over the last week, a range of conservation activities have taken place, including a special Umuganda, public lectures and a campaign on the use of environmentally friendly bags. On 3 June, a walk from Kacyiru to the Motor Vehicle Inspection Centre in Remera highlighted the importance of clean air and reducing greenhouse gas emissions from our cars and trucks. Rwanda also launched its biennial State of the Environment Report, which focused on the role of agriculture in sustainable development.

This World Environment Day, Rwandans are called to join the race to increase resilience to climate change. The message is clear: we all have an important role to play in Rwanda’s low carbon and climate resilient development by addressing vulnerabilities to a warming planet – in our own communities and villages.

**RWANDA’S CLIMATE CHANGE VULNERABILITIES**

Rwanda has good reason to be concerned about climate change. The country is considered one of the twenty most vulnerable to a changing climate and the impacts are already being felt. An alarming increase in extreme weather related events and hazards has been recorded across the country: the eastern and south eastern parts of Rwanda have experienced long periods of severe droughts while the northern and western areas have been devastated by floods and landslides.

This year alone, dozens of people have tragically lost their lives due to floods and other hazards linked to intense rains. Just last month, landslides and flooding blocked numerous national roads that link Kigali to the north, south and much of the country. The impact was also economic with the cost estimated to be in the millions of francs.

The National Household Vulnerability Index (2015) indicates that vulnerability to climate change is not limited to just one part of the country, but that the overall level of exposure to climate change impacts is greatest in the Eastern Province. This is due to changes in temperature and heat episodes, shift in rainfall patterns and changes in the amount of rainfall.

**INCREASING RWANDA’S CLIMATE RESILIENCE**

In 2011, the Government of Rwanda launched its Green Growth and Climate Resilience Strategy – a ground breaking policy for climate change and low carbon development. The strategy outlines the country’s ambition and clear environmental vision. For Rwanda to be a developed climate-resilient, low-carbon economy by 2050.

Speaking at the recent signing of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change at the UN General Assembly in New York, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation, Louise Mushikiwabo, said that Rwanda is ready to play its part in tackling climate change, and that all countries must turn their commitments into action. She also called for collaboration between developed and developing nations.

“The goals set by the agreement, support to developing nations through increased levels of climate finance and technology transfer must be put in place. This will enable robust action in our countries. You can count on the commitment and support of Rwanda as we work together to limit global temperature increases to below 1.5 degrees Celsius,” Minister Mushikiwabo said.

Prior to last year’s UN Climate Talks in Paris, as countries submitted their climate action plans, Rwanda reiterated its full commitment to build resilience to climate change by drawing on local, regional and international expertise to ensure the country meets its green growth goals and builds climate resilience.

This year’s World Environment Day and the focus on climate resilience demonstrates the Government of Rwanda’s commitment to implement the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) – especially Goal 13 on climate action by signing and domestincating the newly adopted Paris Agreement.

Guided also by the country’s economic and poverty reduction strategy, Rwanda has numerous green development programmes, including the construction of Green Villages that reduce vulnerability to climate change by relocating families living in high risk zones. These Green Villages have already seen significant improvements in quality of life for the residents who call them home.

**GLOBAL RECOGNITION**

Rwanda’s sustainable development and green growth efforts are winning praise from around the world. Many countries, from both across Africa and further afield, are looking to the land of a thousand hills to draw inspiration as they seek to build green economies.

Indeed, Rwanda will host the 8th Africa Carbon Forum from 28-30 June 2016, which will attract close to 500 climate change experts, decision makers and development partners from Africa and across the world to discuss innovative projects, programmes and investment opportunities for low carbon and climate resilient development.

**GREEN ENERGY**

Delivering Rwanda’s National Statement at the UN Climate Change Conference in Paris, known as COP21, Minister of Natural Resources Vincent Biruta highlighted the need for countries to shift to renewable energy in order to achieve prosperity and ensure environmental sustainability.

“Climate action is not about sacrificing growth, but rather making sure that development gains can be sustained for generations to come,” Minister Biruta said, adding, “Climate action will succeed when countries no longer face trade-offs between attaining prosperity and going green.”

**Hundres joined a Clean Air Walk on Friday to highlight the importance of air quality for our environment and our health.**

Prime Minister Anastase Murekezi joined residents of Gashaki Sector, Musanze District last week in a special Umuganda to launch National Environment Week.
For a country to achieve sustainable development and build an economy that support Rwanda's commitment to building a green economy. The fund has mobilised around $100 million to provide strategic financing that accelerates Rwanda’s transformation to a green economy. Funding proposals are approved based on careful evaluation to ensure their return on investment contributes to Rwanda’s sustainable development, climate resilience and green growth. You can get involved by applying for funding or contributing to the fund.

**GREEN POLITICS**

For a country to achieve sustainable development, environmental sustainability must be a political priority. This applies to policies, legislation and programmes alike. Over many years, the government has ensured that environmental protection is at the heart of national development. Thanks to these efforts, the country’s Ministry of Natural Resources was recently accredited by the international Green Climate Fund. This will help the country attract significant climate finance, and to enable it to maintain rapid economic growth on a resource-efficient, low-carbon and climate-resilient path.

The first Green Climate Fund project Rwanda will benefit from is an off-grid solar project that will drive solar use in East Africa through a new investment fund, KavSafi – which provides equity to clean energy companies with expertise in household solar power.

**GREEN AND CLIMATE RESILIENT VILLAGES**

Rwanda’s Environment Management Authority is leading the country’s efforts to build green and climate resilient villages. Today, six green villages made of 374 houses have been constructed. These include:

- Riveru Green Village (64 houses) in Bugesera District
- Gashaki Green Village (50 houses) in Musanze District
- Rugarama Green Village (76 houses) in Burera District
- Bugarama Green Village (34 houses) in Rusizi District
- Rubaybe Green Village (45 houses) in Gicumbi District
- Muyebe Green Village (105 houses) in Muhanga District

The six green villages have been constructed for families who were relocated from disaster prone areas. A set of green housing components ranging from rainwater harvesting systems, biogas systems and waste disposal facilities to terracing and tree planting have been integrated in the Green Villages.

Increased agricultural productivity, resulting from rainwater harvesting, the use of biogas residue as a fertilizer, tree planting and terracing, has increased food security for these communities. Having water closer to hand and biogas for cooking has saved time, and women and children can now spend their time on more productive activities including schoolwork.

Rwanda’s Green Villages are demonstrating how integrated sustainable natural resource management can help reduce poverty, enhance environmental sustainability, empower communities and improve quality of life.

**WHY EVERYBODY SHOULD JOIN THE RACE TO INCREASE CLIMATE CHANGE RESILIENCE**

Climate risks cannot be eliminated, but negative impacts on people and economies can be reduced or managed. Climate change will have an impact on human health, agriculture, urban development, and many other sectors. Building resilience to climate change is therefore everybody’s business.

**RWANDA’S INNOVATIVE CLIMATE CHANGE MITIGATION EFFORTS**

- The relocation of people living in high-risk zones and the creation of climate resilient Green Villages that improve lives.
- An Early Warning System to help predict weather changes and climate-related disasters (flooding, landslides, droughts) before they happen so that people are properly prepared.
- The Rwanda Environment Management Authority has put in place 22 automatic weather stations, which are managed by the Rwanda Meteorological Agency. These stations provide climate data and help in predicting weather changes and their related disasters. The system is being developed by the Rwanda Environment Management Authority in partnership with the Ministry of Disaster Management and Refugee Affairs and the Rwanda Meteorological Agency.
- The promotion of irrigation in drought prone regions and radical terraces in hilly and mountainous zones, as well as promoting water harvesting systems to prevent erosion and help people access water in the dry season.
- Building the capacity of Rwandans to adapt to climate change through trainings and other approaches.

**LEARN MORE**

Visit the Rwanda Environment Management Authority website at [wwwrema.gov.rw](http://wwwrema.gov.rw) to learn more about the country’s climate resilience efforts and how you can be part of building a green Rwanda.