

## World Wetlands Day, 2007 Report

*By DEOs, Kisumu and Nyando*

The National World Wetlands Day, 2007 event for Kenya was held at Karanda Primary School at Ahero Town of Nyando District. The event was attended by the Director General, National Environment Management Authority (NEMA), Dr. Muusya Mwinzi. The guest of honour was Dr. Chris Gachau, representing the Area Resident Director of United Nation Development Programme (UNDP). Also present was Mr. Patrick Oloo the Chief Executive Officer of Water Resource Management Authority (WRMA), Mr. Nyaoro representing the Permanent Secretary Ministry of Water and Irrigation, the area Member of Parliament Eng. Erick Nyamunga and the District Commissioner for Nyando, John Egeza.



**The Guest of Honour, Dr. Christopher Gakahu of UNDP planting a tree.**



**Director General, NEMA, Dr. Muusya Mwinzi watering a tree he planted.**

The event was organized by NEMA Kisumu and Nyando Districts in collaboration with Victoria Institute for Research on Environment and Development (VIRED), UNDP, WRMA, Kenya Disaster Concern (KDC), Kenya Marine and Fisheries Research Institute (KEMFRI), SCC-ViAgro-forestry, Ministry of Livestock and Fisheries, the Provincial Administration amongst others. Special thanks to VIRED for their support. World Wetlands Day is celebrated each year on the 2 of February. It marks the anniversary of the signing of the Convention on Wetlands (Ramsar Convention) in Ramsar, Iran, on 2 February 1971. The theme was “Wetlands Supports Fisheries Keep them Healthy”.

Key issues that threaten wetlands in Kisumu and Nyando District include water pollution, brick making, macrophyte harvesting for the cottage industry, grazing and burning wetlands to reclaim them for agriculture, flood control and water conservation works, siltation, sand harvesting and hunting for game meat especially the Situnga. This year theme is relevant since it emphasizes on sustainable management of fish (and other marine species) populations, especially those that are commercially fished, supporting sustainable aquaculture practices, effectively managing wetlands and other important fish habitats to protect and conserve fish populations and increasing buyer awareness of fish species for consumption.



**Mr. Patrick Oloo, the CEO of WRMA watering a tree he planted.**

The celebrations were characterized by songs, dances, poems, drama and a tug of war. Prior to the event, the guests made a courtesy call at the District Commissioner Kisumu District. Later



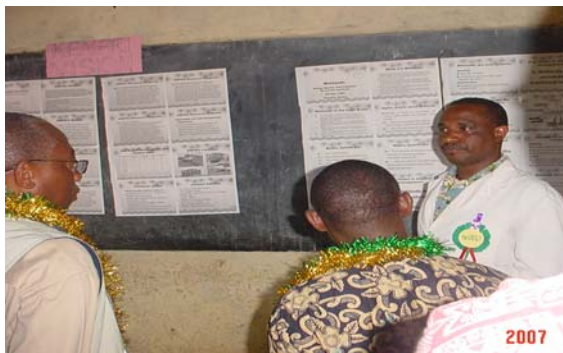
**The Walk Procession through Ahero Market.**

Immediately after arriving in Ahero, all guests and schools present assembled at Ahero Town and made a walk procession through the market to the venue of the event right behind the town. At the front of the procession a banner was displayed that conveyed the message of the event to the public. The guests were welcomed by the Schools Headmaster, after which they went through an exhibition where viewed wetlands products and got lectures on issues that affect them. Other groups also exhibited products covering different aspects of environment.



**D.G. NEMA and the M.P. Nyando Constituency during the walk procession.**

The guests then proceeded to the main dais where the event started officially with entertainment from various schools and community based organizations. These were followed by speeches. Key issues that emerged from the speeches included the need to control water pollution from both non and point sources that impacted negatively on aquatic life in wetlands while enhancing their growth, high poverty levels in the Lake region against the abundant natural resources, population growth and the need for more agricultural land coupled with unpredictable weather conditions has led to wetland encroachment and resultant biodiversity loss.



**Listening to a presenter at the exhibition.**

The MP for Nyando Constituency blamed the industries for destroying wetlands through pollution of rivers and asked for the matter to be addressed while appreciating their developmental roles. He regretted that Nyando District was endowed vast natural resources and challenged environment professionals to make this a reality as it was in other Countries like Egypt. The D.C. said that if the wetlands were utilized well, then Nyando District which critically deficient in food would turn into a granary. He urged for the protection of wetlands to ensure that fish breeding ground are not



**A poem by Rae Girls High School, an ECO School.**

destroyed. On pollution of River Nyando, he urged that the issue should be addressed holistically to tackle both point sources and non point of pollution instead of blaming Industries alone. He also added that the Government will not allow wetland encroachment. It would not allocated title deeds on riparian land.

WRMA CEO said that his Authority will ensure that water quality in the District in improvement. He said his Authority will start projects that target catchment protection that includes wetlands on the Nyando River Basin. The Director General NEMA, informed the public on the recently gazetted Water Quality and Waste Management regulations that would come in to effect starting 1<sup>st</sup> April, 07. He reiterated the commitment of NEMA to ensuring a clean and healthy environment for all. He added that the regulations will enhance water quality from all source is guranteed. The Provincial Environment Committees (PECs) and District Environment Committees (DECs) were also legal instruments that could be used to address environmental

challenges in the District and the Province at large. He added that NEMA is working with transportation industries to have litter bins in there vehicles. He expressed concern over the high poverty level within Nyanza Province yet it was endowed with plenty of natural resources.

The Guest of honour, Dr. Chris Gakayu said that more than 1 billion people globally relied on fish as their main source of proteins while 35% of them engaged directly in fishing activity. He promoted sustainable fishing method and protection of wetland against destruction of breeding

grounds, catchment area and poor land use in order this valuable resource is not lost. He also decried the high poverty level around the Lake region yet it was endowed a variety of resources. He urged the government to quickly formulate a wetland policy that would ensure the protection of wetlands and aquatic life it sustains.



**A Solar Cooker displayed during the exhibition.**



**A women's tug of war, one of the entertainment features.**