

World Environment Day Commemorations

Zimbabwe commemorated World Environment Day (WED) on the 6th of June under the theme “A clean, safe and healthy environment –Everyone’s responsibility, in Umguza.” The day is a United Nations’ principal vehicle for encouraging worldwide awareness and action for the environment. Over the years it has grown to be a broad, global platform for public outreach that is widely celebrated by stakeholders in over 100 countries including Zimbabwe. It also serves as the ‘people’s day’ for doing something positive for the environment, galvanizing individual actions into a collective power that generates an exponential positive impact on the planet.

This year’s commemoration comes in the wake of water pollution reports. The commemoration in Umguza was timely as it is one of the heavily polluted rivers in Bulawayo.

The World Environment Day celebration began in 1972 and has grown to become one of the main vehicles through which the United Nations stimulates worldwide awareness of the environment and encourages political attention and action.

Environmental pollution is defined as the undesirable change in physical, chemical and biological characteristics of our air, land and water. As a result of over-population, rapid industrializations, and other human activities like agriculture and deforestation etc., earth became loaded with diverse pollutants that were released as by-products. Environmental protection is everyone’s business, the minister in his speech urged everyone to be responsible and play their part in reducing all kinds of pollution, and these include land, water and air pollution.

Here are five things that you can do as a global citizen on World Environment Day:

1) Spread awareness: The major purpose of this year's theme is to start making changes from the household level. As an environment enthusiast, you can spread awareness on a small level by talking to children in your family, or at your office or in your locality. Inform everyone about this year's theme or spread awareness about the environment in general.

2) Build a small farm or garden: We know it's difficult to find space in a metropolitan city, but if you're blessed with one, make and maintain a small farm or garden. Grow fruits, vegetables. Learn about various seeds, plants and manure. Create a part of your garden where you grow edible plants and another where you can grow flowers.

This will help you interact with nature and will also give you an opportunity to do something new. For those who are not blessed with huge spaces, start with a sapling or potato in a bag or a small sprout garden in your windowsill.

3) Travel by public transport: Take public transportation on World Environment Day and vow to take it more often than you do. If you're already a public transport user, take a walk. Introduce the concept of public transport to your family or car-lover friends. Cycle. It's fun and a great way to exercise.

4) Refuse, Reduce, Reuse, Renew, Recycle: If you're not already into this habit, it's a good day of the year to start. These 5R's are magic mantras when it comes to environmental conservation and sustainable usage. The concept is already taught to students at school. The problem is that elders have forgotten about it. Take time on World Environment Day to learn about this concept. There are many things that you can do on a personal level, if you just keep these 5R's in your mind.

5) Publicise: Do something nice to protect the environment? Talk about it! Show off. Share pictures and posts on Facebook, Twitter and Pinterest. Let people know what you plan to do and do it this World Environment Day. You can use Facebook invites to invite your friends to participate. Use Twitter hashtags like #StayGreen or #WorldEnvDay to spread your message faster.

You can also involve yourself with various conservation, restoration, or local eco-community projects in your area.