

Mrs Museveni takes school feeding campaign to Karamoja

By Vision Reporter

The First Lady and Minister of Education and Sports, Mrs Janet Museveni, has reiterated that 'Karamoja can feed Karamoja' if the people got mobilised to open up land and produce enough food.

Mrs Museveni, who was in Karamoja on Wednesday last week, was hosted for a talk show by All Karamoja FM Radio Station to speak about her School Feeding and Nutrition Campaign.

She said Karamoja's children must also be treated like all the other children in Uganda and must be fed with nutritious food, at home and in school.

"I know it might not be possible for the Karimojong parents to pack food for their school-going children, but it is an obligation for the parents to engage in food production to ensure food security and get what to feed their children at home while the Government continues with its programme to feed the children while at school," she said.

The First Lady, while still Minister for Karamoja Affairs, initiated the 'Karamoja Feeds Karamoja' programme, where food for feeding Karamoja's children at school is grown at Namalu Prison Farm in Nakapiripirit district by the Karamoja affairs ministry, in partnership with Uganda Prisons Services and is distributed by World Food Programme (WFP) to schools in the region.

She informed the people of Karamoja that no other area in Uganda has government support for feeding children at school.

She implored the leaders in Karamoja to mobilise the people to take advantage of the current rains and the big chunks of the fertile land in the region to grow much food and store some in granaries for their families for a bad day. "Karamoja should start feeding itself," she said.

She requested Karimojong parents not to let their children go to school on empty stomachs, but feed them in the morning with a mixture of sorghum flour, which they grow, and milk from the cows they rear. She said it is sad that Karimojong children go to school only because they are induced by the food provided there and run away from home because of lack of food.

She said though the countrywide School Feeding and Nutrition Campaign is supposed to help her as the education minister to enable quality education, it is primarily the responsibility of parents to ensure that



Mrs Museveni (wearing a hat) flanked by Byabagambi and other leaders from Karamoja, plus the technical officers, after touring Moroto Technical Institute last week. PPU Photo

the children who go to school are fed to prevent them from falling sick and being often absent from school and to ensure that they perform well.

"I will keep my ear to the ground, to hear that the people of Karamoja have grown food crops, harvested a lot and kept some in the granaries. Please, do not let this rain go without you doing something to produce food," she said.

The First Lady was welcomed to Karamoja by the Minister for Karamoja Affairs, Eng. John Byabagambi; Woman MP Napak Stella Namoe Inyomera; Albert Lokoroi, the Tepeth MP; Hillary Lokwang, the Ik MP; the resident district commissioners and district chairpersons of Napak and Moroto, plus technical officers, led by the undersecretary in the pacification and development department of the Office of the Prime Minister.

Byabagambi pointed out that the school enrolment in Karamoja is still very low, with a high rate of absenteeism. Attendance is only significant in schools where children are enticed by the feeding programme running in those schools. He also said in Karamoja, it is the women who work; children graze cattle and the men spend their time drinking alcohol. He pledged that the Karamoja affairs ministry will continue with the Karamoja Feeds Karamoja programme at Namalu, which they plan to replicate

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at other prison farms in the region and, soon, irrigation will be introduced at Namalu Prison farm, to ensure good harvests, even in bad seasons.

The district leaders pledged to sensitise parents on their roles in the education of their children.

Moroto Technical Institute

The First Lady also took time off to monitor the status of some of the projects she initiated in the region during her tenure as Karamoja affairs minister. She visited Moroto Technical Institute that was taken over by the Government in 2012 and which she officially opened.

Flanked by Byabagambi and other leaders from Karamoja, plus the technical team, they were taken on a guided tour by the Moroto Institute's

principal, Hellen Grace Akite.

Mrs Museveni said Moroto Technical Institute is among the many learning centres that the Government plans to expand, equip and staff with instructors.

Byabagambi pledged that his ministry would fence off the institute's 20.48 hectares of land.

Commissioning dormitory

The First Lady also commissioned a dormitory at Kalonkengel Primary School and toured the infrastructure development at Kalokengel Health Centre III in Lotome sub-county, Napak district. The dormitory will accommodate 56 pupils. These are among the developments under the Government of Uganda-funded Dryland Development Project, initiated in Karamoja by the First Lady in 2014 and which will run to the end of 2019 in four sub-counties in the south Karamoja districts. The project serves 99,900 people.

The team leader for Dryland Integrated Development Project in Karamoja, Robert Ayesiga, reported that great strides had been made towards the project's goal of contributing to increased income and reducing poverty among the pastoral population in Uganda. Several completed projects under this programme have already been commissioned.