82% OF ALL 6 TO 17 YEAR-OLDS IN KARAMOJA LIVE IN POVERTY AND ARE DEPRIVED OF BASIC SERVICES

EU to give Karamoja sh400b

By Abou Kisige

The European Union has earmarked Euros 75m (about 400b) to address the needs of the people of Karamoja sub-region come 2018.

Karamoja region has an estimated population of about 1.2 million people, with about 70% residing in rural areas.

According to the head of European Union delegation in Uganda, Attilio Pacifici, the funds will help to address issues of food security, acute malnutrition, climate change adaptation, health, education, behaviour change, water and sanitation as well as infrastructural development.

Other areas to be tackled include improving people's livelihoods through on and off farm vocational skills training, security, post conflicts and peace building in the region, among other needs.

Pacifici explained that more access roads and market infrastructure will also continue to be established under the same funding, to make the region easily accessible.

"Communities will also be exposed to new skills and knowledge to crop and livestock production," Pacifici said.

He said Karamoja has troublesome development indicators that need combined support in efforts towards making Karamoja communities resilient in all aspects of life.

Pacifici made the remarks yesterday in Moroto where he is leading a nine-member team of European Union heads of missions to Karamoja.

The ambassadors are Finbar O'Brien from Ireland, Guenter Engelits of Austria, Albrecht Conze from Germany, Mogens Pedersen from Denmark, Stephanie Rivoal of France, Domenico Fornara from Italy, Henk Jan Bakker from Netherlands, Attilio Pacifici of European Union and Per Lindegard from Sweden.

The three-day mission is to establish whether both government and donor-funded programmes have benefited the people of Karamoja and also identify needs to improve livelihoods in Karamoja.

The ambassadors interacted with religious, political and administrative leaders of all the seven districts that make Karamoja sub-region.



The nursing oficer in charge of Namalu Health Centre III, Lydia Akello, talking to some of the European Union heads of missions during their tour of Karamoja sub-region on Tuesday. Photo by Abou Kisige

BETWEEN THE LINES

According to the head of EU delegation Attilio Pacifici, the funds will address food security, acute malnutrition, climate change adaptation, health, education, behaviour change, water and sanitation as well as infrastructural development.

They also met officials from civil society organisations, visited Namalu Health Centre III in Nakapiripirit district and the climate change adaptation learning centre.

They discussed a range of issues affecting Karamoja and high on the agenda were issues of security, post conflict resolution and peace building and climate change adaptation.

The Ireland ambassador, Finbar O'Brien, in his submission explained that part of the euros 75m will help the United Nations Children's Fund, together with the Ministry of Education and Sports to improve quality education for the most vulnerable children and adolescent girls in Karamoja.

He said education is key to the region's development and "the support to be implemented by our partners UNICEF, will be part of our ongoing efforts to empower some of the most vulnerable communities in Uganda."

Approximately 82% of all 6 to 17-year-old children in Karamoja are living in poverty and are deprived of at least two or more basic services.

"The persistent challenges of low enrollment, poor quality education, teacher absenteeism and absence of flexible alternative education opportunities to meet needs means that dropout rates remain a problem in Karamoja," Finbar said.

He said in some communities, education is not given much value and children especially girls are subjected to child marriages, female genital mutilation and child labour.

Ambassador Albrecht Conze of Germany said through GIZ, they will continue to support the Ministry of Water and Environment to strengthen climate resilience through measures, such as improved water supply, improved agricultural practices, soil and water conservation and reforestation.

The Minister for Karamoja Affairs, Eng. John Byabagambi lauded the European Union member states for everlasting support to the Government of Uganda especially in areas of education, health, climate change, peace and conflict resolution, agriculture and livelihood support.

"As government, we continue to provide peace and security. Ensure transparency and accountability of the donor support," Byabagambi said.

Moroto district chairperson Andrew Napaje said the donation is a timely intervention, adding that most districts were lacking logistical support to tackle most issues affecting Karamoja. He, however, argued that the donor contributions should be channelled directly through local governments to avoid bureaucracy.

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