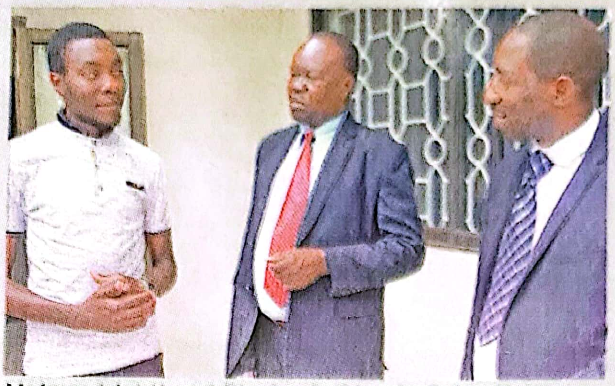

Matovu (right) and Ekodeu talking to Brian Kabenge (left) a youth beneficiary of the project. Kabenge processes and packs yoghurt

$19m skills development youth project launched

By Agnes Kyotalengerire

A total of 15,000 youth are set to benefit from $19m (Sh68.5b) employment skills development programme by Heifer International.

The programme, launched recently, is targeting youth aged between 15 and 24, in six districts of Kiboga, Wakiso, Luwero, Bugiiri, Ngora and Amuria.

The project codenamed East African Youth inclusion project (EAYIP), will benefit the youth by increasing their income through youth employment and enterprise development in the agricultural industry.

The five-year project will be implemented by Heifer International in partnership with MasterCard foundation.

"We considered the districts from central and eastern Uganda first, looking at the rate of youth unemployment in the regions. For instance, when we look at the 15,000 youth we are targeting in Uganda, you realise that about 50% of the unemployed youth reside around Wakiso district," William Matovu, the country director, Heifer Uganda, said.

He made the remarks during the launch of the project at their offices in Kampala on Thursday.

Youth unemployment

Uganda has the world's youngest population, with over 78% of its population below 30 years of age and more than 60% of those are aged between 15 and 24, with just under eight million youth aged 15 to 30.

The country also has a youth unemployment rate of 83%, one of the highest in Sub-Saharan Africa, despite its high population growth at 3.2% annually.

Investment

According to Matovu, the investment will help create employment and enterprise development for the youth in the dairy sector and other agricultural value chains by equipping them with the necessary skills to establish agribusiness.

Richard Ekodeu, the programme director EAYIP, noted that the employment programme will facilitate access to finance from financial institution for young entrepreneurs to start or expand their businesses.

"In most cases, the young people do not have the collateral to access resources from financial institutions," Ekodeu said.

He added that upon execution, the implementers of the programme will agree on interest rates for which the beneficiaries will borrow the money for their projects.