

Korea, UNICEF give sh37b for hygiene in 100 Karamoja schools

By Gerald Tenywa

Sometimes, change starts with one person. This has been the case with Dr Doreen Mulenga, the UNICEF representative who recently visited Karamoja region and encountered many school children walking long distances to fetch water.

"They would wake up very early in the morning and the water they were fetching was not for their personal use, but for the school," Mulenga said.

She added: "For 60% of all children in Uganda — around 12 million children — it takes at least 30 minutes to access the nearest source of safe water."

She was speaking yesterday during a ceremony organised at UNICEF offices in Kampala for the grant agreement between the Korea



KOICA country director Young Suk Jun, Kim You-Churl and Mulenga after signing the agreement at the UNICEF headquarters in Kampala yesterday. Photo by Mary Kansiime

International Co-operation Agency (KOICA) and UNICEF. The grant of \$10m (sh37b) will support improvement of access to water, sanitation

and hygiene facilities in order to enhance adolescent school environments in Karamoja region.

The programme will be

executed until 2022, benefiting 56,000 children from 100 schools in Karamoja districts — Abim, Amudat, Kaabong, Kotido, Moroto, Napak and Nakapiripirit.

The interventions will be implemented by UNICEF, together with the education ministry and the seven local governments of the Karamoja region.

Mulenga said she was driven by her encounter in Karamoja to come up with the programme in which UNICEF contributed \$2m (sh7.4b) and KOICA contributed \$8m (sh29.6b).

Mulenga said more children in Karamoja were dropping out of school than any other part of the country. She blamed it on lack of water and sanitation facilities.

At the same ceremony, the Korean Ambassador to Uganda, Kim You-Churl, said Korea had developed after change of mindset of its population and that the same could be replicated in Uganda.

"The Government of Korea is proud to partner with UNICEF and the Government of Uganda to provide safe water, adequate sanitation and effective hygiene services to tens of thousands of vulnerable school-going children in Karamoja," he said.

He added: "This grant will help to improve the school environment of all 100 schools targeted, thereby helping Uganda achieve many of its Sustainable Development Goals and National Development Plan 2 targets."

By the end of the programme, all selected schools will have

a comprehensive water, sanitation and hygiene services package, including school latrines, a solar-powered water system and hand washing facilities.

It will also reduce the distance that children have to cover to access safe water to within 500 metres, a significant reduction from the more than 30 minutes it presently takes the majority of children across Uganda to access safe water.

Other interventions of the programme include provision of life skills education for girls, including menstrual hygiene management, social mobilisation campaigns to accelerate positive behaviour change among individuals and broader social change among communities and district-level advocacy.