

MRS MUSEVENI ADVISES GIRLS TO STUDY SCIENCE

BY EDDIE SSEJJOBA

First Lady and Minister of Education and Sports, Janet Museveni has urged the country to encourage girls from an early age to explore their interest in science.

She said participation of girls in science and technology education was extremely important because 'it has been a long-standing trend, even in developed nations, that men far out-number women in the field of science, technology, engineering and mathematics'. According to Mrs. Museveni, girls and women have traditionally been encouraged to go into the humanities, while boys are encouraged to pursue engineering and mathematics.

She said the stigma was a worldwide issue, making the gender ratio in science unbalanced.

"The science industry being thus skewed towards men restricts chances of women ever holding a reasonable percentage of jobs in this area. Through opening up science education to girls, we can begin to see a more equal

statistic become a reality," she said.

"So we need to do more and quickly, to re-direct women to science-based careers. We begin by encouraging girls, from an early age, to explore their interest in the science subjects," she said.

This was contained in her speech read by foreign affairs minister Sam Kutesa, who represented her at a fundraising dinner for the construction of a science laboratory for North Ankore Girls Secondary School at the Serena Hotel on Thursday.

NORTH ANKORE GIRLS SCHOOL

"I am happy that North Ankore Girls Secondary School is getting a science laboratory. I believe many of you here know that I have supported the development of this school for some time now, so I am glad that we are now gathered here to support a very important addition to the school, a science laboratory," Mrs. Museveni said.

She explained that 'science education is very important to the development of any nation,

and so we must take it very seriously in all our institutions of learning'.

According to Mrs. Museveni, the advanced technology in the developed countries is a result of a tradition of science education, adding that 'such a level of science and technology in Uganda will not be possible without serious attention to science education in our schools'.

The minister, who said she was grateful to the youth of Kiruhura district for spearheading the fundraising efforts, expounded that a laboratory was an important means of instruction in science because it provides training in observation; it arouses the students' interest, and encourages inquiry, investigative and communication skills.

"It also encourages critical thinking, problem-solving, application and synthesis, among many other educational objectives," she stated.

CONTRIBUTIONS

The minister contributed sh50m, which Kutesa handed



PHOTO BY EDDIE SSEJJOBA

Kutesa auctions a portrait of the first lady during the fundraising dinner. Left is Gen. Tumwine

over to the organising committee of youth from North Ankore diocese, chaired by Jotham Taremwa, the spokesperson of the electoral commission.

Kutesa also handed in a cheque of sh10m as a personal contribution and declared sh20m he obtained from businessman, Alam Abid and sh10m from Shukla Mukesh alias Shumuk.

Kutesa later auctioned Janet Museveni's portrait, which raised a total of sh35m and handed over the portrait

to Gen. Elly Tumwine who contributed sh10m during the auctioning.

Former legislator, Elly Karuhanga also contributed sh10m after auctioning the diocesan bishop, the right Rev. Stephen Namanja's portrait while the state minister for finance, David Bahati contributed sh4.6m.

At least sh275m was raised in cash and pledges at a function attended by several legislators who hail from the diocese.

Kutesa said he fathered four daughters and believes that

educating a girl child was an important aspect in society.

"In the world, women constitute 52% of the total population and if you want to develop society, you cannot leave behind the biggest percentage," he said.

Bishop Namanja said that the diocese had so far raised sh800m for the construction of the science laboratory. President Yoweri Museveni contributed sh230m.

Namanja said they had budgeted for sh203m for the laboratory.