

30,000 to miss out on govt support over open defecation

Tradition. The Karimojong traditionally practice open defecation because of their cultural beliefs.

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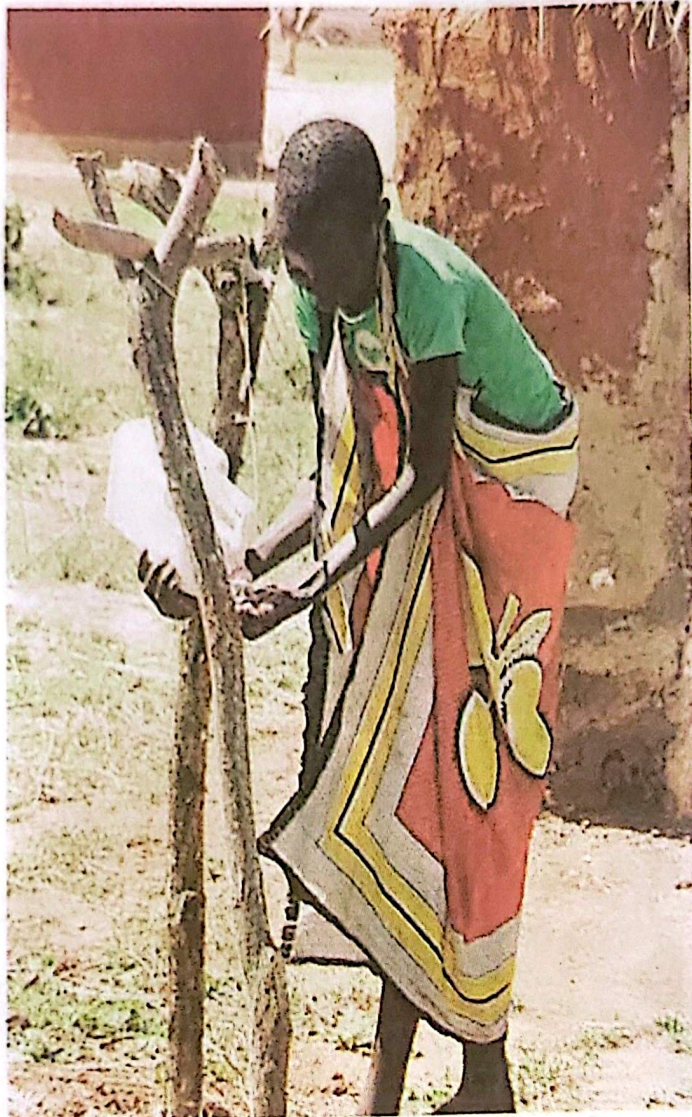
MOROTO. In a bid to eliminate the culture of open defecation in Karamoja Sub-region, Rupa Sub-county leaders in Moroto District have barred 33,000 residents from accessing government programmes until they embrace the use of pit-latrines.

The Karimojong practice open defecation because of their cultural beliefs, making the sub-region one of the poorest performers in sanitation and hygiene in the country.

However, Rupa Sub-county early this month passed a by-law, barring any household that does not have a pit latrine from benefitting from any government programme.

Some of the programmes include the Northern Uganda Social Action Fund, the Youth Livelihood Fund, the Women Empowerment Fund and the Social Assistance Grants for Empowerment.

Mr Godfrey Lotuk, the sub-county chief, says Rupa Sub-



"Since lack of offices has become an issue of security concern in district and is resulting in the loss of district records, we are appealing to the President to help us with Shs600m to complete the administrative block," ROSE NARI, RESIDENT OF PUPU VILLAGE

"I am not against the by-law but we need to be sensitised first," PETER LOKORU, RESIDENT

Hygiene. A girl washes hands after visiting a toilet in Amudat District. PHOTO BY STEVEN ARIONG

BACKGROUND

Cultural practice. The Karimojong practice open defecation because of the belief that it is bad omen to mix faecal content with in-laws and that expectant mothers miscarry when they use pit-latrines.

Other reasons. Others complain of rain and termites that destroy the pit-latrines while others are afraid of the snakes that are many in the area.

county has a population of 34,000 but only 1,000 use pit latrines, while the rest defecate in open places.

Mr Lotuk says denying those without pit latrines government services will force them to dig pit latrines.

He adds that the by-law was passed with support from Ecological Christian Organisation in a bid to protect the environment for sustainable livelihood.

Recent statistics from the dis-

trict health office indicate that only 1 per cent out of 108,456 residents wash hands after visiting latrines.

Mr Dan Apolo, the sub-county chairperson, says the low toilet coverage prompted them to institute the by-law.

"It's a challenge to make our people accept to use latrines but we shall do all it takes to compel them to do so," he says.

Dr Rews Andrew Ilukol, the district health director, says

more by-laws should be passed urgently to promote good hygiene in Karamoja.

"We shall begin arresting everyone, including the district officials, who go around to answer nature's call in the bush, and charge them," says Dr Ilukol.

"The situation in Moroto District is made worse by the absence of law enforcement officers to scale up the sanitation campaign in the district," he says.