

Kasese gets project to mitigate disasters

KASESE

By John Thawite

Uganda and Japan have commissioned several projects aimed at addressing disaster vulnerabilities in Kasese district.

The projects were last week commissioned by the Minister of State for Disaster Preparedness, Musa Eweru and the Japanese envoy to Uganda, Kazuaki Kameda, under the theme, *communities at risk are central to resilience building.*

The commissioned projects include a newly constructed community irrigation scheme at Nyabubare worth sh107m, Kabarodi Arch Bridge valued at sh109m and the first ever integrated district disaster management plan, all supported by Save the Children Japan.

The irrigation scheme has about 100 beneficiaries who grow onions, tomatoes and watermelons using water tapped from River Nkoko. It is funded under the Save the Children project called Climate Change Adaptation and Disaster Risk Reduction programme.

The Rwenzori Save the Children regional manager, Samuel Mukirania, said the project has been running for the last three years at about \$330,000 a year. He said the project was implemented in Karusandara sub-county in partnership with Kasese district local government.

While the project emphasised capacity building for community disaster risk reduction (DRR) structures such as village disaster management committee and school DRR clubs, the different DRR activities such as preparedness, mitigation and adaptation have been implemented at community level.

Ecweru salutes Japan

Addressing a big gathering at Kabuga Primary School after the commissioning of the irrigation scheme and bridge, Ecweru saluted Save the Children Japan for implementing the two projects using minimal funds.

He said the district had budgeted sh500m for the bridge, which was instead delivered at only sh109m.

Ecweru lashed out at government officials for inflating the bills of quantities for their projects.

"There is no doubt that most of the projects that some of our technical people undertake are inflated," Ecweru said.

He said the mistake the Government makes is to allow technical people to come up with their own costing.

"From what I have seen, the prices could be 10 times lower. Technical people should have minimum costings for projects in places with similar geographical and geological



Kameda (second-left), Ecweru (wearing gumboots) and Kasese district leaders join Save the Children Japan CEO Kunio Senga in commissioning the irrigation scheme recently. Photo by John Thawite

BETWEEN THE LINES:

■ The irrigation scheme, comprising about 100 beneficiaries, grows onions, tomatoes and watermelons using water tapped from River Nkoko.

elements," he said.

Ecweru hailed the Japanese government for helping the district to tame killer rivers such as Mubuku, which have been previously flooding and killing people, as well as destroying property.

Calls for peace

Ecweru urged the people of Kasese to cherish peace. He told them in times of conflicts, such projects become useless.

He said the violence in DR Congo has made it vulnerable and it is now negatively impacting Uganda as thousands of Congolese nationals run here for safety.

"For us to move on from where we are now, the people of Kasese must resolve to settle their differences peacefully," he said.

Mukirania said the people of Karusandara participated in the construction of the irrigation scheme and bridge.

The Japanese envoy commended the residents for being supportive towards the implementation of the projects.

Kameda unveiled a grant of \$920,000 (about sh3,358b) to minimise the impact of disasters on vulnerable communities in Kasese district for the next two years.

He said through a Japanese official development assistance scheme called the Grant Assistance for Japanese NGO projects, the grant would be disbursed in two batches of \$460,000 per year.

Signing the grant agreement, the Japanese ambassador said

his government was impressed by the results of the first phase of the project.

"I would like to commend those who led and completed the irrigation scheme and bridge projects. This is not an easy task for any community," he said.

Kameda also congratulated the Karusandara community, Save the Children Japan and Kasese district local government officials for the job well done.

"This is exemplary work which, I hope, will be shared with other communities in Uganda so that they can follow your example," he said.

Kameda said the new phase will build on the successes of Karusandara sub-county and support two additional sub-counties in the district

Disaster management

He said Japan, which is disaster-prone, had incorporated the strong lessons learned from the country into the programming of the Karusandara disaster risk reduction practices, citing inclusiveness and action-oriented preparedness.

"In this project, school children play the central role of sharing with the communities the knowledge and practices of disaster management they have acquired through workshops held at school," Kameda said.

He encouraged the involvement of school children in disaster risk management because when disaster strikes, they are the major victims.

"As we have seen today, the people of Karusandara proactively engaged in the project and left tangible results," Kameda said.

"Our efforts in Uganda will continue together with save the Children Japan," he said and called on all stakeholders in the country to join forces to tackle climate change and natural disasters.