Fast-track dry land project, says First Lady

The First Lady and Minister for Karuma Affairs, Mrs. Janet Museveni, has called on the the expeditious processes required for the declaration of effectiveness and launch of the Dry Lands Integrated Development Project in Karuma.

While meeting Dr. Belay Begashaw, the director of the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) Centre for East and Southern Africa, Mrs. Museveni said the project, which aims at ensuring that less privileged communities have opportunities to rid themselves of extreme poverty, will be good for Karuma.

The meeting took place at State House, Nakasero on Tuesday where Dr. Belay Begashaw had come to give the First Lady an update on the progress and outstanding actions for the implementation of the Dry Lands project.

Shs50b IDB loan

The Government negotiated a $20m (about shs50b) loan from the Islamic Development Bank (IDB) to fund a five-year Dry Lands Integrated Development Project in the Karamoja districts of Napak, Nakapiripirit and Moroto.

The project, already approved by both the Cabinet and Parliament, will be executed through the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM) and implemented by Millennium Promise Alliance Inc.

The holistic Integrated Development Project in Karamoja will use the same implementing model as that of the Ruhirwa Millennium Village in Ibanda.

Areas to be covered under this project include: agricultural production, access to basic healthcare, education, water and sanitation. Others are business development for income generation, infrastructure development such as opening community roads, access to solar energy and improved cooking stoves and environmental sustainability, among others.

The project will be implemented in the three villages of Lotome in Napak, Nadapet in Moroto and Lopengdwa in Nakapiripirit.

However, the First Lady observed the need to expand it to the other five districts in the sub-region.

Participants at the meeting included the undersecretary for pafication and development in the OPM, Betty Lamon; the NUSAF 2 director, Dr. Robert Limling; David Siriri of the Millennium Promise Alliance Uganda and senior staff of the Karamoja affairs ministry.

Project timelines

The meeting also discussed timelines for the completion of outstanding actions and commencement of the project.

The pending actions need to be expedited include the declaration of effectiveness of the project by the IDB, opening of a special account by OPM, the setting up of a project management unit and implementation arrangements between OPM and Millennium Promise Alliance.

Dr. Siriri informed the meeting about the rigorous computer-based monitoring and evaluation system that will be used to ensure efficiency. It can also be downloaded on smartphones and will enable one to tell in real time what is happening on the ground regarding the various interventions.

According to David Siriri of the Millennium Promise Alliance, the holistic integrated development interventions in the Ruhirwa Millennium Village in Ibanda district have increased the household's per capita income to $600 from $135 and have reduced the maternal and child mortality as well as the girl child school dropout rates.