

KAMPALA

By Ibrahim Ruhweza

The German government has committed sh250.1b to improve water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) facilities and teacher accommodation in schools across northern Uganda.

The move is expected to ease chronic infrastructure gaps that have undermined learning outcomes and staff retention in the region.

The funding, provided through Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau, will benefit 199 primary and secondary schools, targeting long-standing challenges such as lack of clean water, inadequate sanitation, overcrowded classrooms and the absence of staff housing in rural and hard-to-reach areas.

The support, which will be implemented under the Uganda Secondary Education Expansion Programme, also focuses on improving teachers' living conditions, boosting morale and ensuring learners have safe water and dignified sanitation, factors education officials say are critical to keeping children, especially girls, in school.

Jacqueline Basemera, who represented the permanent secretary of the Ministry of Education and Sports, Kedrace Turyagyenda, said the Government has been providing accommodation for teachers under the expansion programme, but progress has been constrained by limited funding.

"Now that we have such a project, more infrastructure will be developed," Basemera said after signing a memorandum

Uganda gets sh250b to boost school WASH, teacher housing

PHOTO BY BRIDGET AHURIRA



Gender for Development Uganda coordinator at the European Union Delegation Juliette Rubenstein (left) and Nassuna during a meeting held on Tuesday last week at the Ministry of Water and Environment headquarters in Luzira, Kampala

of understanding between the Ministry of Education and Sports and the Ministry of Water and Environment.

As part of the support, the education ministry received two new Toyota double-cabin vehicles, while the water ministry will get four vehicles to ease supervision and inspection of the project.

Catherine Angwec, the principal engineer and branch manager of the Water and Sanitation Development facility in northern Uganda, said the project targets 199 schools — 150 primary and 49 secondary.

STAFF HOUSES AND SANITATION

Angwec said by the end of the project, at least 130 new staff houses will have been constructed, while 72 will be renovated to reduce the burden on teachers who currently trek long distances to work.

She outlined a wide range of infrastructure investments planned under the programme, including the construction of 2,092 new sanitation facilities (latrine stances), 190 incinerators, and the renovation of 190 existing latrine stances.

The project will also deliver 301 new classroom blocks in

both primary and secondary schools, renovate 218 classrooms, and install 20,092 sanitation facilities.

In addition, schools will be connected to a steady water supply to strengthen hygiene practices, alongside the construction of one faecal sludge treatment plant.

Angwec added that the key outputs will enhance WASH infrastructure and strengthen knowledge and skills for improved sanitation and hygiene practices in primary schools and surrounding communities.

Catherine Nassuna, the

WHAT TEACHERS SAY

At the school level, headteachers say the intervention could be transformative. Sarah Afsa, the headteacher of Yumbe Secondary School in Yumbe district, said staff accommodation at the school is in a dire state.

"With 951 students and 50 teachers, only five teachers live in dilapidated staff quarters," she said.

Afsa said the school has adequate land and that its master plan was approved long ago, but construction has stalled due to lack of funds.

"Because of the long distances teachers and learners have to walk, performance is never good," she said.

Yumbe Secondary School is among the 199 schools selected to benefit from the programme.

Ratibu Abas Atiku, the headteacher of Aringa Secondary School in Yumbe town council, said the school has over 1,400 students, including refugees, taught by 58 teachers, only 28 of whom are on government payroll. He said the lack of staff housing has been a persistent challenge.

"This is the first staff house we shall have. For all these years, we never had any," Atiku said, welcoming government's intervention.

The school will also get new classrooms. Due to overcrowding, some students currently attend lessons under trees. Atiku said four more classrooms will be constructed, along with 12 toilet stances and one incinerator.

undersecretary for finance and administration, who represented Alfred Okidi, the permanent secretary of the Ministry of Water and Environment, said access to clean water will directly improve hygiene and school attendance.

Nassuna said the new investment will address

this challenge and improve retention rates.

"The biggest challenge we had was low completion rates. When we track the children who completed primary school and how far they have gone in secondary school, you find that dropout rates are high. Most children fail to join secondary," she said.