MAK partners with UNICEF in WASH project

Makerere University has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with UNICEF to collaborate in the area of Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) at an event held on 9th May 2014. The event also involved a launch of a three year project code-named Unicef-Academia-Private Sector Partnership (UNAPP) WASH Innovations Project, at the College of Engineering, Design, Art and Technology (CEDAT). The project partners include CEDAT, UNICEF Finland, UNICEF Uganda, Aalto University, Helsinki University and Biolan Oy. At Makerere University, CEDAT will collaborate with the College of Health Sciences (CHS) and the College of Humanities and Social Sciences (CHUSS). The project will be implemented in Acholi sub-region, Northern Uganda.

Poor sanitation and contaminated water are linked to transmission of diseases like cholera, diarrhea and dysentery among others. Mrs. Aida Girma, the UNICEF-Finland representative emphasized that the need for such projects is dire. “I thank the Government of Finland for supporting the initiative. Access to safe water and adequate sanitation facilities is both critical to children’s learning as it contributes to improved enrollment; as well as child survival. The pupil latrine ratio in Uganda is 69:1, compared to the national standard of 40:1 and access to hand washing with soap is as low as 33%,” she said.

TheVice Chancellor of Makerere University, Prof. John Ddumba-Ssentamu, who was represented by the Principal of the College of Natural Sciences, Prof. J.Y.T Mugisha, was grateful for the project. “We are glad that the partners will work together with schools in Acholi-land to come up with innovative ways to solve local water, sanitation and hygiene issues among primary school children. This gives us an opportunity to contribute to the wellbeing of the people in Acholi,” he said. “It will further support the objectives of the Uganda National Development Plan that encourages innovations and adaptable technologies to address societal needs and social transformation,”” he added.

Eng. Nyeko from the Ministry of Water and environment was equally grateful for the project, which he referred to as a remarkable example of multi-stakeholder cooperation. He pledged full cooperation and support from the Ministry.

According to the Project Coordinator, Dr. Richard Kabiito, “The planning process for this 1.2m Euro project started in September 2012. The main activity of the pilot phase were ideas and products developed by student teams.”

In her presentation, Dr. Venny Nakazibwe, the Dean of the Margaret Trowell School of Fine Art (MTSIFA) explained that the project will have three components of Capacity building, Innovations and Distribution of lessons learned. “This project is going to impact on the local community and it has been developed with the interests and cultural inheritances of the Acholi community in mind. We are going to start small, but are hopeful that this will be rolled out to the rest of the country, in consultation with our other partners, she added.

Dr. Moses Musinguzi of the School of Build Environment, who represented the Principle, Dr. Henry Alinaitwe, pledged that the College will ensure maximum utilization of the funds and is happy to be associated with the project.

Aalto University was represented by Prof. Mikko Koria. Helsinki University was represented by Pekka Tuominen.

By Marion Alina