UNDP and KOICA sign Shs 33 billion partnership to support refugees in Acholi and West Nile

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The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Government of the Republic of Korea, through the Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA), recently signed a $9 million (about Shs 33 billion) project to improve the well-being of refugees and host communities in Acholi and West Nile sub-regions. KOICA is contributing $7 million (about Shs 25.6 billion) while UNDP is co-funding with $2 million (about Shs 7.4 billion).

The main objective of the Uganda Host and Refugee Community Empowerment Project (2019-2022) is to improve the economic empowerment of women and youth in refugee-hosting communities in Acholi and West Nile sub-regions with a focus on Adjumani, Lamwo and Moyo districts. Through UNDP’s gender transformative programming, women’s economic empowerment and prevention of gender-based violence (GBV) will also be emphasised. The project will implement schemes for emergency employment, vocational training, value chain development and structured community mobilization and messaging to address the root causes of gender inequality and GBV. The project will be implemented as part of and is contributing to the current UNDP Emergency Response and Resilience Strategy for Refugees and Host Communities Project which is based on the UN Refugee and Host Population Empowerment (REHOPE) Framework.

The acting UNDP Resident Representative, Ms. Almaz Gebru, and the KOICA Country Director, Ms. Jun Young Suk, signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) that will guide the implementation of the project at the UNDP Country Office in Kampala on Tuesday February 27th, 2019.

Speaking during the signing ceremony, Ms. Gebru thanked KOICA and the Government of the Republic of Korea for the partnership and commitment to improving the wellbeing of refugees and to the empowerment of women. “Conflict and the subsequent displacement disrupt livelihoods of refugees especially women and children. While migrants leave behind their jobs and economic activities, they come along with various skills.” Ms. Gebru said, adding, “The successful implementation of this project will, therefore, not only help rebuild the lives of refugees but also support the host communities whose infrastructure and resources are strained. This, then, will help us achieve sustainable development that leaves no one behind.”

On her part, KOICA Country Director Ms. Jun Young Suk said the project is in line with national and global refugee and host communities’ strategic plans and frameworks. “KOICA expects the project to unlock the economic capacities of women in refugee and host communities through livelihood opportunities and building capacity of relevant stakeholders in gender transformative programming. We are also grateful to UNDP and the Government of Uganda for the continued cooperation and we are hopeful that this will be a sustainable and successful project,” Ms. Jun Young Suk remarked.

It is envisaged that the project will contribute to Uganda’s efforts to achieve Sustainable Development Goals
(SDGs); especially SDG 1 on poverty reduction, SDG 4 on quality education, SDG 5 on gender equality and women empowerment and SDG 8 on decent work and economic growth. Others are SDG 9 on industry innovation and infrastructure, SDG 13 on climate action, SDG 15 on life on land and SDG 17 on partnership for the goals.

Refugee situation in Uganda
Since the outbreak of the conflict in South Sudan, Uganda became the largest refugee-hosting country in Africa with an estimated 1.2 million refugees and asylum seekers by January 2019. The bulk of these – 794,387 – are from South Sudan. Over 80% of new refugees in Uganda are women and children who are exposed to protection risks such as abuse, neglect, violence and gender-based violence.