

Oxford and University of Nairobi to solve Water security Problem

Water security is a defining global challenge in the 21st Century. The enduring struggle to cope with water access could become a thing of the past as the partnership between the University of Nairobi and Oxford University takes shape. This was revealed when a team from Oxford University met the Vice-Chancellor, Prof. Peter M. F. Mbithi in his office on Thursday, June, 11, 2015.

Living in poverty has long been synonymous with precarious struggle for water security. Absent or unreliable water and sanitation services, unpredictable rainfall and runoff and extremes of flood and droughts, food and energy insecurity and degraded ecosystems threaten the lives and livelihoods of about half of the world's population. The good news is that with support from UK Department for International Development (DfID), the Oxford University consortium will work at increasing water security for 2.5 million people by 2021 through a program called 'REACH : Improving Water Security for the Poor'. The University of Nairobi is being roped into a partnership on this project. On his part, the Vice-Chancellor assured the team of the University's commitment and expressed his pleasure at meeting the Oxford team. He noted that most of the University professors are trained in Europe. He urged the team from Climate Change and Adaptation, led by Prof. Daniel Olago to ensure the project succeeds as it will solve the critical problem of water that affects many Kenyan households. Prof. Mbithi noted that Kenya has huge deposits of oil and water. We also have a lot of rain water that is never tapped. The REACH program will run over a period of 7 years with the lead researchers being Dr. Robert Hope of Oxford's Smith School of Enterprise and the Environment and Prof. Daniel Olago, from the Department of Geography and Institute of Climate Change and Adaptation. The resources required to deliver water to 2.5 million people through the REACH program is 15 million pounds. This money will support 88 international researchers, including 15 PhD students and 14 post-doctoral researchers. They will be working to improve water security for the poor in Africa and Asia. This is one of the many partnerships that the University has developed as it aims at being a world class university of excellence. This will go a long way in ensuring that the University contributes significantly in solving the problems that affect Kenyans.