

Makerere gets energy centre of excellence

By John Odyek

The East African Community has launched the East African Centre for Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency (EACREE) at Makerere University College of Engineering, Design Art and Technology (CEDAT).

EACREE is intended to combat energy, poverty, climate change, improve access to energy and reduce political, regulatory, institutional, as well as the social barriers to access to clean energy.

During the launch that took place at CEDAT on Saturday, Prof. Dr. Barnabas Nawangwe, the deputy vice-chancellor in charge of finance and administration Makerere University, said the location of the centre at Makerere was the best because the university was one of the best in Africa, especially in terms of research and innovation.

"Without energy the dream of achieving middle-income status will not be achieved. Uganda's solar bus innovation was based on solar energy and such innovations will be done at the centre," Nawangwe, who represented the vice-chancellor of Makerere, said.

Prof. Henry Arinaitwe, the principal of CEDAT, said students and staff of Makerere will benefit through hands-on experience. He said they expect many institutions and people to visit the centre, which teaches about renewable energy and energy efficiency.

Arinaitwe said the beneficiaries include market players, small and medium-size enterprises, equipment manufacturers, entrepreneurs, regulators, power producers, finance institutions and policy makers.



Scholtes, Muloni, Arinaitwe and Ariyo during the launch of EACREE. Photo by Godiver Asege

BETWEEN THE LINES:

■ Dr. Barnabas Nawangwe said the location of Makerere University was the best because of its leading position in research and innovation in Africa.

"The centre will focus on gender issues in the energy sector. The region will benefit from increased market penetration of renewable technologies and systems and energy efficiency technologies and services," Arinaitwe said.

Prof. Mackay Okure, a lecturer at CEDAT, said the centre would be functional within 18 months, with various programmes.

Launching the centre, Eng. Irene Muloni, the energy and mineral development minister designate, noted that without increasing access to electricity and modern energy

consumption in the region, it would be difficult to achieve industrialisation and middle-income status.

She added that the EAC secretariat had set up targets to scale up access to modern energy services. Muloni said access to electricity in Uganda stands at 20.4%, while that of Kenya stands at 28%, Tanzania 14% and Burundi 3%.

During the function, an agreement between Makerere University, the EAC, United Nations Industrial Development Organisation (UNIDO) and the Austrian Development Co-operation to set up the centre at CEDAT was signed.

Jesca Eriyo, the deputy secretary general in charge of productive and social sectors at EAC, said the region was stagnating in development because there was low access to energy and climate change seen by droughts, heat and landslides is another hazard.

The head of the Austrian Development Co-operation in Uganda, Günter Engelits, said to make better use of sustainable energy sources, the EAC needs to build capacities in technical, financial, institutional and human resource.

Engelits said the centre should expect challenges in its infancy, but should play a key role in regionally influencing energy policies that will help improve people's life in the long term.

Philippe R. Scholtes, the managing director for programme development and technical co-operation division at UNIDO, said they want inclusive industrial development.

"There cannot be sustainable energy development without sustainable energy sources. Industry and energy are important to achieve the sustainable development goals," Scholtes said.