

Weather authority gets international accreditation

Uganda National Meteorological Authority recently acquired the ISO 9000:2008 certification in aeronautical meteorology; **OWEN WAGABAZA** spoke to the executive director, Festus Luboyera, on what the ISO certification means to the authority

Q What is ISO certification and why is it an important achievement?

We attained the ISO 9000:2008 and this is a quality management system that can be integrated into any business. It is focused on ensuring that companies, organisations or businesses deliver a consistent level of quality to its customers by having well defined and regularly reviewed processes and procedures.

In other words, when a company is ISO certified, it means that they are doing their work according to the internationally accepted procedures.

The International Organisation of Standardization (ISO) has representatives in every country world over and in Uganda, it is represented by the Uganda National Bureau of Standards.

The certification we got as Uganda National Meteorological Authority (UNMA) is the ISO 9000:2008 Aeronautical Meteorology certification. It is aimed at ensuring that the meteorological services for aviation are up to standards set by the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO), under the 1944 Chicago convention. ICAO is the body that governs civil aviation.

It is important for every country to have an efficient, regular and safe aviation system and in order to achieve this, a country must have proper standards and procedures.

What did it take UNMA to attain the ISO certification?

Aside from purchasing the necessary equipment, we also had to make sure that our staff including management embraces the standards set in the Chicago Convention. Though we had qualified forecasters or meteorologists, we had to train them so that they understand and follow the procedures in the Chicago convention.

In other words, you cannot bring a forecaster from Mbarara and take them straight to Entebbe to work in the aeronautical meteorology department. They have to be



A car wades through a flooded road. UNMA is responsible for weather forecast in the country

trained and learn how aeronautical meteorology works. Training of staff is, therefore, a very important aspect before one gets this ISO certification.

With trained staff, we are able to operate by the set standards and procedures and if we fail, it becomes a non-conformity and this can be detrimental to the country. This is because when international auditors realise that we are non-conforming, then an airport such as Entebbe can be closed to reduce the risk arising from an organisation's non conformity.

Why has it taken this long for UNMA to attain the ISO certification?

Until one-and-half years ago, UNMA was a department of Meteorology under the Ministry of Water and Environment and we did not have resources, we not only lacked the finances but even the human resource; we had staffing gaps, and this critical.

But we are currently operating as semi-independent, with our own vote and we are an authority. Because of the improved funding, we have been able to acquire the necessary equipment and staff, which is well trained.

What does the ISO certification mean to UNMA?

It means that UNMA has fulfilled the aeronautical meteorological

flights are as safe as possible.

What else would you want to tell the readers?

But also, this is a partial certificate, aeronautical meteorology.

9001:2008 we are striving to have ISO 9001:2015, but we want it to cover the entire budget. And we plan to have this by next year.

An organisation attaining the ISO certification shows seriousness in

whatever work they are doing, people have trust in the products and services from such companies because they are authentic if not fabricated. We are, therefore, excited to be ISO certified, we are looking forward to preparing forecasts that are accurate and reliable.

Even then, we sell a variety of products in different categories, and this will improve on the trust people have in our products. I also believe that this certification will encourage our staff to work in a very committed and dedicated manner.

I also call on all everyone in whatever kind of business to attain this certification, because it is not a certification, but in the process of striving to attain it, you improve on your machinery or equipment, train staff and expose them to the internationally recognised ways of working and many others.

I would therefore encourage organisations to submit themselves to this kind of standardisation so that their operations, procedures and processes are robust and their integrity is not questioned.

requirements for Entebbe Airport, but just like a driver's licence, it can be withdrawn if on auditing, ISO realises that we are not conforming to the set regulations; we, therefore, have to keep up. To avoid such a scenario, we have set up an internal audit team that will regularly audit our work to make sure that everything is in place.

How will the ordinary Ugandan benefit from the ISO certification?

The efficiency and safety of their flights is hinged on this certification. They are assured of safety, though they may not actually know, because they expect it, but to us now, we have to critically ensure that

