

Ignorance costs suppliers govt energy contracts

KAMPALA

By Prossy Nandudu

Suppliers of renewable energy products will not benefit from government procurement processes due to lack of knowledge regarding procurement and its requirements.

The observation was made by Itanda Gakatsikano, an independent procurement expert and lecturer at Makerere University Business School (MUBS).

He said people making renewable energy products such as institutional cooking stoves, domestic cooking stoves, briquettes and incinerators, lack information on bid submission and tendering processes.

"We have found out that they have no information on procurement or what they must do to win a bid, including interpreting bid documents," Itanda said.

He said for one to win a bid they must have met the demands of the processes at primary level, which include possession of a trading licence, income tax, evidence of registration or certification of registration, VAT if required and audited books of account, which many people do not have.

Itanda was speaking during training of suppliers of clean energy and cooking products in procurement processes and procedures.

The training that took place on Wednesday at Kati Kati in Kampala, was organised by the Uganda National Alliance in Clean Cooking (UNACC), supported by World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF), GIZ and the energy ministry.

"Until they get the knowledge, such suppliers will always suspect that they are being sidelined, hence the training for them to understand the requirements during procurement and what consumers require from them," Itanda said.

Alfred Kusiima, the national co-ordinator of UNACC, said the training was in response to demands from members to understand procurement processes so that they do not miss out whenever there are calls for proposals.

"For e-procurement, which requires online transactions, it was discovered that many members do not have email addresses or if they do, have never opened them. Some members cannot do online searches or respond to online calls for proposals, which leaves them in a tricky situation.

"Without the training, they would miss opportunities to capitalise their businesses and grow. The training has given them skills in e-procurement, gender issues, accounting and understanding the legal frameworks on procurement in line with Public Procurement and Disposal of Public Assets Authority so they can compete," Kusiima said.

To further help the sector, the commissioner for renewable energy in the energy ministry, John Tumuhimbise, said members have to improve the quality and standard of their products.

He added that this is being addressed through the formulation of a certification scheme, which will include the required benchmarks of a cooking stove or briquettes.