

quote of the day

Presiden
when you

EDITORIAL

Put more thought in
supporting innovations

The 2017 Global Innovation Index, a report by Cornell University, INSEAD and the World Intellectual Property Organisation ranks Uganda among the least innovative countries in the world. Uganda currently ranks 102nd out of 127 countries in the world that innovate in institutions, business, marketing, infrastructure, knowledge and technology.

This poor ranking prompted an institution to allocate Shs400 million to boost innovation in Uganda. The move is expected to close the innovation gap in the country by inspiring business owners to invent and seek new solutions to their challenges and those of their customers.

The issue:Supporting
innovations.**Our view:**Government should
create information,
communication
and technology
parks plus model
regional incubation
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innovation and
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content.

Currently, Ugandan businesses struggle to get their products to meet international standards in terms of quality and packaging. This is partly why few Ugandan products make it to supermarket shelves which are largely flooded with imports. The government should support innovation in Uganda to boost the economy's competitiveness. But innovation starts with government support for the research laboratories and universities working on new insights which entrepreneurs can turn into companies that change the world.

First, when a country innovates, it creates jobs, builds companies that can lead the world, its population is healthier, and people become more productive. Such benefits cross borders and eventually transform global economies.

So what steps can the government take to boost and empower such innovations in the country?

Some countries have created innovation funds to support innovation. For instance, Rwanda in its quest to become Africa's ICT hub, last year created a \$100m (Shs339b) fund to address funding challenges by Rwandese technology entrepreneurs. Such resources can enable local innovators to create conducive hubs to empower them, nurture ideas and develop programmes, applications and software to transform the information technology sector. In the Budget for 2017/18 financial year, the government allocated Shs43b to the Innovation Fund. Much as this is a good start, the missing link is in commercialising ideas.

The government should also create information, communication and technology parks plus model regional incubation centres/hubs to encourage innovation and creation of local content. Now, we realise that a number of these ideas have been thrown about for a while now, with government promising that they will take off. But beyond the rhetoric, very little is ever actually put into practice.

Some of the initiatives that the government has hyped so much recently, like the Kiira EV project to make vehicles, are clearly very difficult to take off the ground given our current situation. It is therefore important that serious thought and work is put into attempts to bring to life workable innovations.

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