



OPPORTUNITIES



STUDENTS SENSITISED ON OIL OPPORTUNITIES

BY MOSES KIGONGO

As Uganda's oil and gas sector moves steadily towards commercial production, industry experts are urging graduates and job seekers to rethink how they prepare for opportunities emerging from one of the country's fastest-growing industries.

The message echoed last week by employers, oil companies, government officials, and trainers during the third Oil and Gas Skills Expo 2026 hosted by Makerere University was clear: academic qualifications are not enough.

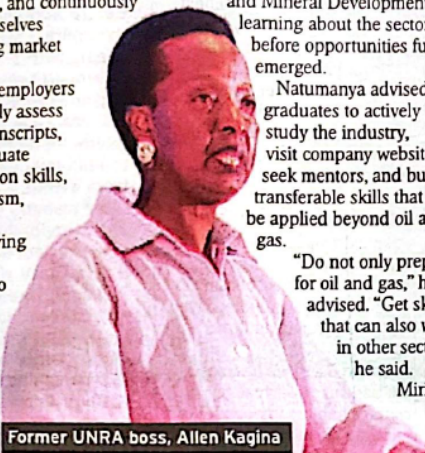
The experts suggested that young people hoping to tap into opportunities in Uganda's petroleum industry must focus on practical exposure, volunteering, continuous learning and soft skills such as adaptability, communication, teamwork, discipline, and problem-solving.

Moderating one of the key panel discussions at the expo, Douglas Opio, the chief executive officer at the Uganda Employers Federation, said employers today are increasingly looking for workers who are adaptable, reliable and capable of continuous improvement. Opio urged graduates and students to prepare early instead of waiting for vacancies to be announced.

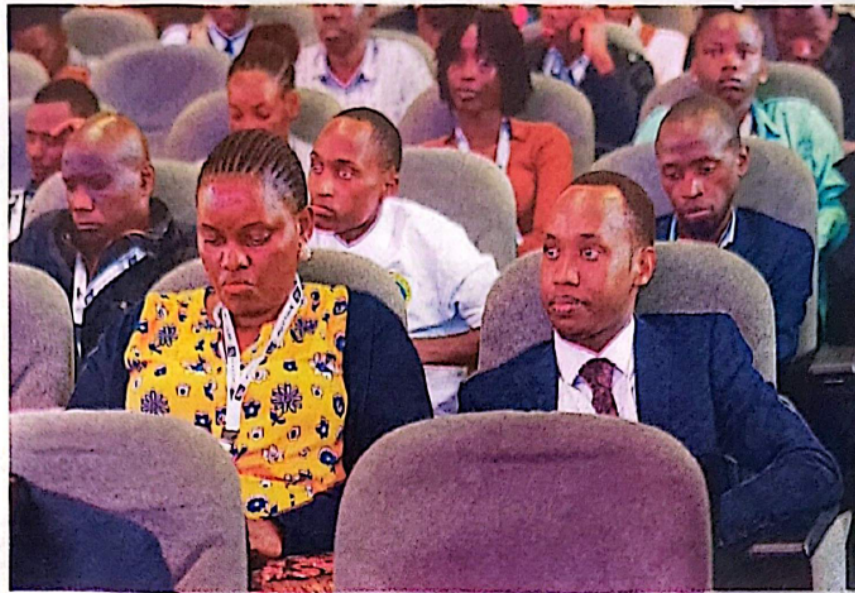
He encouraged young people to actively seek mentors, volunteer in relevant industries, pursue certifications, and continuously update themselves with evolving market demands.

Opio said employers no longer only assess academic transcripts, but also evaluate communication skills, professionalism, teamwork, problem-solving abilities, and willingness to learn.

The discussions brought together officials from



Former UNRA boss, Allen Kagina



Students attending the third Oil and Gas Skills Expo 2026 hosted by Makerere University last week

East African Crude Oil Pipeline, TotalEnergies EP Uganda, Uganda National Oil Company, Inspect Africa, COSL Uganda, and other contractors participating in Uganda's oil and gas projects.

Derek Natumanya, the chief operations officer at ICS Engineering and Environment, shared how he strategically prepared himself years earlier by seeking information directly from officials in the Ministry of Energy and Mineral Development and learning about the sector before opportunities fully emerged.

Natumanya advised graduates to actively study the industry, visit company websites, seek mentors, and build transferable skills that can be applied beyond oil and gas.

"Do not only prepare for oil and gas," he advised. "Get skills that can also work in other sectors," he said.

Miriam

WHEN INNOVATION MEETS PRACTICAL TRAINING

Opening the expo on behalf of Makerere University leadership, Prof. Juma Ssozi, the deputy principal at the College of Natural Sciences, conveyed a message from vice-chancellor Prof. Barnabas Nawangwe, emphasising the importance of innovation, training and industrial partnerships.

Nawangwe said Makerere University is reforming its curriculum to align training with industrial demands while reducing dependence on expatriate labour in Uganda's oil and gas sector.

The dean of physical science at Makerere University, Prof. Michael Owor, highlighted the department's achievements since petroleum-related programmes were introduced in 2009.

Owor said the department has graduated over 500 students who are already contributing to Uganda's oil and gas industry and national development.

He said partnerships with companies such as TotalEnergies have strengthened practical training through laboratories, computer workstations and "train-the-trainer" programmes.

Natera, the national content manager at Inspire Africa, said there are enormous emerging opportunities in electrical and mechanical engineering, non-destructive testing, lifting operations, site management and occupational safety.

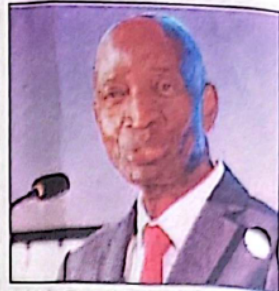
She emphasised that many operational jobs require internationally recognised certifications, particularly in installation, lifting systems and

technical inspections.

CREATED OPPORTUNITIES

The Petroleum Authority of Uganda (PAU), used the expo to showcase progress in national content development and workforce preparation.

Ernest Rubondo, the chief executive officer of PAU, explained that Uganda's oil and gas industry is transitioning from the development phase to commercial



PAU's Ernest Rubondo

production, requiring a workforce equipped with transferable and internationally competitive skills.

He explained that while only about 20% of jobs in the sector are highly professional roles, nearly 70% involve technicians who require internationally recognised certifications.

Rubondo added that Uganda currently has over 21,000 direct jobs linked to oil and gas, more than 50,000 indirect opportunities and approximately 150,000 induced jobs created across the wider economy.

He urged graduates to register on the National Oil and Gas Talent Register and the National Supplier Database to improve visibility for future opportunities.

On behalf of the Government, Grace Tusiime, the under secretary at the energy ministry, said Uganda has already attracted over \$15b (sh56 trillion) in investments into the petroleum sector.

She said the Government remains committed to strengthening local participation through policy reforms, technology transfer initiatives and the proposed Local Content Fund Bill.

"To the young people, embrace the available opportunities with discipline and professionalism," Tusiime said.

The former Uganda National Roads Authority executive director, Allen Kagina, also urged young people to continuously improve themselves if they hope to survive in an evolving labour market.

"The skills you have today may not be relevant tomorrow," Kagina warned. "Continuous improvement is very important if you want to stay competitive."