

Hydro project developers tipped on local content

By Benon Ojiambo

MPs on the natural resources committee have urged hydro power project developers to carry out corporate social responsibility activities in the host communities of their projects.

"It will be cheaper for them to hire and sustain the local people on these projects," Simon Oyet, the Nwoya county legislator, said.

This was during a four-day inspection of projects conducted by the committee in conjunction with the Electricity Regulatory Authority (ERA).

The inspection tour was aimed at assessing the physical progress of the projects and checking the project developers' adherence to their license terms that include corporate social responsibility.

Legislators inspected Rwimi (5.5), Nyamwamba (9.2mw) and Lubilia (5.4 MW) hydro projects in Kasese as well as Muvumbe hydro project in Kabale district and Kikagati-Murongo hydro project in Isingiro district.

Oyet urged the developers to pursue sustainable CSR activities that will make the communities relate well with the project.

"You must have people in the community who are proud of being part of the project," Oyet said.

"The community should feel that they own these projects," Olive Katwesigye, the Buhweju district



The Lubilia project that was completed recently. Photo by Benon Ojiambo

woman MP, said.

Eng. Ziria Waako, the ERA chief executive officer, explained that CSR is in their interest to ensure that the communities and affected persons benefit from the projects right from construction.

"We take keen interest in knowing how the developer is working with the community to ensure that their livelihood is not impacted negatively," she said.

"She explained that there are specific terms and conditions that developers come up with. CSR plans entailing the activities and the cost implications to be

submitted to the regulator.

"We then monitor it frequently during construction and operational stages. If they don't comply, we issue an order of non-compliance and at worst, we revoke the licence," she explained.

Progress

Waako said the progress of various projects inspected is impressive and they have progressed according to schedule, licence terms and conditions.

"They are designed as island mode facilities. The advantage of this mode is that in case of any

problem with the main grid, it can be isolated while the small projects feed the community," she said.

"This will ensure that the power supply is more reliable and reduce on technical losses that arise from transmitting power over long distances," Waako added.

Katwesigye described the inspection tour as timely as it furnished them with the information on the different small electricity generation projects in the country.

Dr. Kefa Kiwanuka, the vice chairperson of the committee, said

they were so impressed with the quality of work being done at the different projects.

Hydro project

Mvumbe project was commissioned in March 2017 while Nyamwamba, 9.2MW hydro project was commissioned at the end of last month. Lubilia HPP 5.4MW project has been completed.

"We have conducted all the necessary tests. We are only waiting for UETCL to synchronise the grid," Piyush Sainju, the project electrical engineer, said.

About the sector

Uganda has grid installed capacity of 929.6MW. Of these, renewable energy contribution to the grid includes hydro at 708.34MW (81%), bagasse co-generation 46MW (5.3%), and solar 20MW 2.3%, which adds up to 774.34MW.

The rest of the electricity supplied to the grid is from thermal (non-renewable energy) at 100MW (11.4%).

The country is also set to benefit from another 896.76MW that is expected from 12 projects that have been licensed by ERA.

These include 600MW and 183MW from the Karuma and Isimba projects respectively. Both projects are expected to be commissioned this year.