



Mrs Museveni (centre) with heads of government universities and researchers under the Makerere-Swedish Bilateral Research Co-operation after opening its annual planning meeting for research support to Uganda at Makerere University yesterday. Third from left is Kyambogo University vice-chancellor Prof Elly Katunguka while Lindgarde is fourth-left. Second-right is Dr Gity Behravan while Nawangwe is fourth-right. Photo by Eddie Ssejjoba

Sweden gives MAK sh360b for research

By Apollo Mubiru

The Swedish government has injected \$100m (about sh360b) for research and innovation into Makerere University in the last 18 years.

The move is to increase Makerere's research capacity and position the 96-year-old institution of higher learning as a centre of excellence in the region.

Out of the 716 PhD holders at Makerere University, 226 have been trained under the Swedish International Development Co-operation Agency (Sida) bilateral research programme, the vice-chancellor, Prof Barnabas Nawangwe, said yesterday.

The Swedish research collaboration with Uganda was initiated in 2000. The objective was to promote research and training and to develop sustainable institutional capacity in an effort to strengthen higher education and an autonomous university system within the framework of national policies and plans.

The current co-operation agreement period (2015-2020) is being implemented by five partner Ugandan public universities including Makerere, Kyambogo, Busitema, Gulu and Mbarara University of Science and Technology.

Topics for research under the Sida-Makerere programme were picked based on Uganda's Vision 2040 of becoming a middle-income economy.

The topics have addressed issues of great importance to the country, including: HIV/AIDS, malaria, TB, infant mortality,

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conflict resolution, climate change, food security, gender and equity.

Nawangwe said in the Makerere-Sweden bilateral research co-operation annual planning meeting that more than 200 members of staff have benefited from the programme.

Under the co-operation, researchers at Makerere University and their counterparts in Swedish universities collaborate on research projects and jointly supervise students.

Nawangwe credited the Sida bi-lateral research programme for the major transformation in the College of Health Sciences, where PhD training was formerly not considered important.

"Currently, the College of Health Sciences has one of the largest research output, not only at Makerere, but throughout the East African region," Nawangwe said.

Presiding over the meeting whose theme was "Harnessing

the power of research and innovations for social transformation", the First Lady and education minister, Janet Museveni, hailed the Swedish government for its unique friendship and support to Uganda.

The First Lady said progress in various sectors of the country was heavily dependent on research and innovations. She commended the Swedish government for complementing her ministry's role of delivering quality education through research to better the lives of Ugandans.

"I thank the Swedish government for the research support it gives our public universities. The Royal Swedish government has been a partner in the development of our country. We recognise the support the Swedish government and Swedish non-governmental organisations have extended to the country over the years in various sectors," Mrs Museveni said.

She urged public universities to exercise transparency and proper accountability for the funds, adding that the Government would be waiting for positive reports.

Citing the Presidential Initiative on Research and Innovations, Mrs Museveni said the Government would continue supporting enterprises that were geared towards research and innovations.

The education minister warned university students against using strikes as an avenue for solving grievances at higher institutions of learning.

"I appeal to Makerere University students and those at other institutions of higher learning not to engage in strikes. Strikes can never be the best way of solving problems. I am hoping that students will co-operate. Let us use peaceful means of conflict resolution whenever misunderstandings arise," Mrs Museveni said.

The First Lady's caution comes barely a week after a two-day strike at Makerere University that paralysed business. The students were protesting against proposals to scrap meals in halls and evening lectures.

The Royal Swedish ambassador to Uganda, Per Lindgarde, said the Swedish government was proud of the research that has come out of the collaboration.

"Use this research to influence policies and to direct decisions for the country's development," he said.

The envoy asked the Government to implement recommendations of the Makerere Visitation Committee report that looked into the problems of the university to find lasting solutions.

Key among the recommendations was the decongestion of Makerere University by transferring undergraduate programmes in the College of Education and External Studies to Kyambogo University, those in the College of Humanities and Social Sciences to Nsamizi Training Institute of Social Development and College of Business and Management Sciences to the Nakawa-based Makerere University Business School.