

Renewable energy is our hope

Uganda continues to register success in its quest to harness renewable energy. With just over 900MW of power-generation capacity, 17 per cent is made up of small renewables consisting of small hydro projects and biomass co-generation at sugar manufacturing plants. This share will grow considerably, as 157MW of feed-in-tariff supported projects are expected to be commissioned by 2018.

The bulk of the country's generation comes from large hydro plants owned by the State-run Uganda Electricity Generation Company (UEGCL) and Bujagali Energy Limited, an independent power producer. Under its 2007 Renewable Energy Policy, Uganda has a target to increase its renewables capacity, including large hydro, to 1,420MW by 2017 – in 2015 it stood at 786MW. Solar energy is being used for socio-economic purposes like refrigeration, lighting, telecommunications, in households, offices, hotels, schools and other organisations.

Although, the scale at which solar energy is being harnessed in Uganda is still very low, biomass such as firewood and charcoal also offers attractive opportunities, if used in bagasse-based co-generation of electricity. More so, a number of in-



novative low-cost renewable energy technologies (e.g. energy saving stoves, etc.), have been developed that reduce emissions and the demand for wood.

These low-cost renewable technologies are suitable for the rural and urban poor and are increasingly becoming successful and effective, especially now when there is an increasing scarcity of firewood and trees for charcoal. (MEMD, 2001). National Biomass Energy Demand strategy 2001-2010. (MEMD).

The country has been consuming more than 550,000m³ of fossil

oil annually in the form of petrol, diesel, Kerosene, aviation fuel and lubricant oils (MEMD, 2004), which are imported. In an effort to address this need, Uganda started in 2004 exploration exercises for oil in the western Rift Valley that have proved promising ever-since. Despite this development, use of fossil fuels have negatively affected the environment through air pollution which is caused due to the emission of greenhouse gases like carbon dioxide, and methane as a result of economic activities including industry, transport and land use causing health complications such as chronic asthma, low lung functioning, chronic bronchitis and cardiovascular diseases which in most cases lead to death.

The overall goal of Uganda's Energy Policy 2002 is, "to meet the energy needs of Uganda's population for social and economic development in an environmentally sustainable manner". And according to the Uganda National Climate Change policy, the adaptation policy priority for the energy sector is, "to promote sustainable energy access and utilisation as means of sustainable development in face of uncertainties related to climate change".

--Flavia Namuli,
namulifla@gmail.com