

Renewable energy way to go — expert

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Over 160 MW small hydro power projects are being developed, according to James Banaabe, the commissioner energy efficiency and conservation in the energy ministry.

As much as hydro-electric power dams are being touted as the source of power that will transform the economy, Ddamulira says dams have massive negative impact on the environment.

Low cost energy neglected

Uganda's population is still dependent on what is referred to as bio-energy (charcoal and firewood). "We have a situation where nine out ten people depend on charcoal for cooking," states Ddamulira.

While charcoal and firewood are widely referred to as a poor man's energy, biomass energy is also used in urban settings across the country. "The production of charcoal and its use is inefficient and is depleting the environment," says Ddamulira, adding that this is partly leading to massive destruction of the environment.

Ddamulira points out that the declining stock of



A customer buying a solar battery to power his solar system in Adjumani Town. Photo by Gerald Tenywa

trees for forests has social economic implications. For instance, the Uganda Human Development report points out that the distance people walk to get firewood increased 10 times between 1992 and 2002. The reporter points out that this is more common in rural

areas, particularly, northern Uganda.

Renewable policy

About a decade ago, Uganda developed a policy on renewable energy with a target of increasing the population with access from 4% to 61% by 2017. This was

undertaken after realising that reduced access to power was one of the factors that had increased the cost of doing business in the country.

The advantage with renewable energy is that it cannot be depleted and it is available across the country. In addition to solar, bio-

energy and production of hydro-electric power, Uganda also has the potential to produce wind energy in some parts of the country, as well as geo-thermal and biogas.

According to Onesmus Mugenyi, the deputy executive director of Advocates Coalition

for Development and Environment (ACODE), the policy on renewable energy is a good step but it is not being implemented.

The disadvantage is that renewable energy is not affordable to the local people and technologies to tap it are too expensive for poor people in less developed countries such as Uganda, to achieve. "We need subsidies and increased investment in order to harness renewable energy," says Mugenyi.

He adds, "There are schools across the country that have farms with huge raw materials for producing biogas, but all this is being wasted."

Uganda has discovered oil, but renewable energy is sustainable. "We need to invest some of the revenue from oil through bigger budgetary allocation to get renewable energy off the ground and also invest in sustainable environment management," Mugenyi says. The catchment of water bodies, particularly lakes and rivers needs to be protected in order to sustain the dams along the rivers with water.

As opposed to fossil fuels, renewable energy is cleaner, and is seen as one of the measures that could mitigate the negative impact of climate change.

Uganda losing climate change funding opportunities

By Gerald Tenywa

Uganda is losing funding opportunities created under the climate change framework because it does not have the capacity to generate proposals that could attract investments.

"We need to develop capacity within the Government in order to attract funding for initiatives under climate change," said Dr. Tom Okurut, the executive director of the National Environment Management Authority (NEMA).

Okurut pointed out that the Government could come up with concept papers in different sectors that could be used for mobilising funding to address climate change. He said the lack of capacity is a problem that has undermined chances of funding for investing in climate change.

He was speaking recently at the Climate Change Forum organised by the Climate Change



The deputy speaker of parliament of Uganda, Jacob Oulanyah touring one of the organic honey stall during the launch of climate change week at Boma grounds in Fort Portal Town, Kabarole district

Department in the Ministry of Water and Environment and UNDP, at the Golf Course Hotel in Kampala.

Climate change is caused by emissions such as carbon-dioxide that trap heat escaping into the atmosphere, resulting into warming of the earth. The concentration of waste gases has been increasing since the industrial revolution. This has resulted into disruption of rain patterns, increased frequency of drought and

floods and melting of the glaciers on mountains, such as the Rwenzori. Climate change threatens food security.

Two months ago, the Paris Agreement on Climate Change was a landmark and countries including Uganda were working round the clock to ensure action on its implementation.

"Climate change is not about water and environment as a sector, it is about the whole community," says a source

within the ministry of water and environment, adding that, collectively, as Ugandans and the global community there is need to pursue a low carbon economy that promotes environmental sustainability.

The Paris agreement aims at reduction of emissions to ensure that global temperature rise does not go beyond 20C of the pre-industrial revolution level. The countries have to mitigate (reduce emission of climate change and also



British Council Country Representative Araya Negusse plants a tree during the launch of the International Climate Change Generation project at St Kizito SS Bugolobi in Kampala

undertake adaption in order to support communities to become more resilient in the changing climate.

Samuel Cheptoris, the Minister of Environment said there was a Government directive to ensure that all ministries integrate climate change in their budgets in the coming financial year.

Capacity building is one of the thematic areas at the climate change meetings, and others include financing, mitigation, adaptation, gender and technology transfer.

Edith Kateme Kasajja, the deputy director at the National Planning Authority said the funding for climate change would be split half between mitigation and adaptation. The less developed countries, such as Uganda are more concerned with adaptation than mitigation.

Alex Byarugaba, the chairperson of the Natural Resources Committee of Parliament said Ugandans expect negotiations, which will benefit the country.