



One of the transformers made by the Ugandan firm. Photo by Owen Wagabaza

# ECS opens transformer manufacturing facility

By Owen Wagabaza

**A**fter years of trading in Power Distribution Transformers, Electrical Controls & Switchgear Ltd (ECS) will this

week launch a transformer manufacturing facility. The company which started with manufacturing low voltage Switchgears 30 years ago, has grown over the years and is now venturing into distribution transformer manufacturing and eventually into Medium Voltage range.

"We have looked at the Government projections on economic development and we strongly believe that the energy sector is one of the key drivers of the economy and electricity is one of the things that we have to give priority," says Eng. James Kalibbala, the chairman and managing

director of ECS on his decision to start a transformer manufacturing facility. Kalibbala says Uganda is currently producing more electricity than the country can consume and this is because of the low levels of power distribution in the country. He says since we

do not maximally use our electricity, there is a lot of surplus energy. "We realised that if power is to reach the rural areas, it must go through a distribution network and a transformer is one of the key elements in this distribution network," Kalibbala says.

The \$2.5m facility which took three years to construct is expected to produce high quality transformers. One of the most complicated part in transformer manufacturing is the corrugated tank making, but the company mastered and excelled in metal works and fabrication for many years which ensures the robustness, quality and fine finish of the tank and radiators of the transformer.

The complete inhouse manufacturing process will help ECS to ensure optimum quality of the transformer. The company is equipped with a complete testing facility to test and check all major incoming raw-materials used in manufacturing the transformer.

The increasing urban power demand for industries and commercial buildings and the demand created by the government through the rural electrification programme are expected to provide the much-needed market for the young industry.

"We have three cluster groups that we expect to provide market to our transformers; these are Umeme, Rural Electrification Agency which reaches the

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Part of the factory



# ECS to manufacture transformers

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ground through contractors as well as the Uganda Electricity Distribution Company Ltd," Kalibbala says.

ECS also expects to tap into the market from individual buyers such as those setting up factories, commercial installations like hotels, malls, and hospitals.

He expects the demand for transformers to increase considerably. Before ECS, there was only one company producing distribution transformers locally, and most of the supply was through importation.

## Impact

The factory is expected to increase on the power distribution and stability in the country, thereby helping the Government achieve its goal of Vision 2020 and Vision 2040.

"We now have transformers readily available, unlike before when they were imported and would take days to arrive in the country. This will facilitate the rural electrification programme which looks at distributing power in rural areas," Kalibbala says.

The company also expects to play a role in the social economic development of the masses. Kalibbala explains that there is instant impact when an area is connected to the grid. Villages are transformed into mini-towns instantly, activities such as welding, carpentry, salons and food processing plants start sprouting up, henceforth producing labour opportunities, in turn improving on their household incomes.

The company also expects to reduce the losses that the *wananchi* have been registering whenever a transformer breaks down. Because Umeme has been



An engineer shows some of ECS finished products at the factory

**ACCORDING TO THE MAKERS OF THE TRANSFORMERS, UMEME WILL HAVE NO EXCUSE FOR DELAYS IN REPLACING SPOILED ONES AS HAS BEEN THE CASE WHERE POWER CONSUMERS HAVE TO WAIT FOR DAYS BEFORE NEW TRANSFORMERS ARE IMPORTED**

importing most of the transformers it uses, replacing a collapsed one has been taking days and in some cases months, majorly because there were no readily available transformers causing financial loss.

With the new factory, however, we will address this by offering very fast solutions. We can, for example, provide a transformer the very day it is needed, as well as giving them temporary solutions. In other words, if such a scenario

happens again, the problem will entirely be on Umeme, not the lack of transformer.

The factory is expected to reduce on the electricity tariffs. According to Kalibbala, power tariffs are high because Umeme makes losses as a result of using few transformers and low voltage lines. Yet if you used more transformers and high voltage lines, energy losses will be very low.

The factory will also help in improving on the available skilled labour for the industry. Because the industry is new, Kalibbala had to take a group of his employees for training in India because there was no skilled labour available.

To solve this crisis, they expect to train more professionals and work more with technical institutions to



Other ECS products. Photos by Owen Wagabaza

train them in these skills. This will help those intending to open such kind of factories to find readily available skilled labour.

## Let us buy Uganda

"All we can ask for now is for all stakeholders to support us. We ask especially Umeme to look at us, instead of them importing transformers, let

them come and support us. Our products are of very high quality and they meet all the international standards. "Unlike other products that cannot be verified, our products can be verified and we can confidently say they are of high quality. We give warranty on our products and we do repair and maintenance.

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