

Government calls for timely completion of Kikagati dam

By John Odyek

The energy ministry has urged the contractors and private sector developers of the \$50m (sh180b) 16MW Kikagati Hydro Power Project to ensure it is completed on time to provide power for the development of the region.

Energy minister Eng. Irene Muloni, who was represented by the acting director of energy resources development, James Baanabe Isingoma, asked Kikagati Power Co. Ltd (KPCL) to involve the local community during the three-year construction of the project and also ensure professionalism.

The minister said this while commissioning the refurbishment of a computer laboratory at Kikagati Primary School, in Isingiro district recently.

SBI International Holdings AG (Uganda), the contractors of the power station, have equipped the school's computer laboratory with 15 computers and work stations.

They also connected electricity to the laboratory

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and sponsored an ICT teacher to train pupils for one year at the school.

Dotan Hameiri, the administration manager, SBI Uganda, said the gesture helps to touch lives and improve the community's wellbeing.

Eng. Ami Cohen, the project manager of the SBI Uganda, added that the good relationship with the community was critical for the

success of the project.

"The computers will improve life choices for the pupils. We hope the next generation of engineers, who can handle hydro projects like Kikagati, come from the school," he said.

Kikagati is located on River Kagera, on Uganda's border with Tanzania.

The project will promote renewable energy generation in Uganda which has abundant potential.

However, less than 20% of Uganda's population have access to grid electricity, with rural access standing at less than 7%.

The project will help balance the supply and demand for power generation in Uganda and Tanzania.

Adequate power supply is critical for development.

"It is more challenging when the energy comes from far. When power generation is nearby, it enhances quality and reliability of supply," Isingoma said.

Alex Byarugaba Bakunda, the resident district commissioner of Hoima, said



Isingoma and officials of KPCL and SBI Uganda touring the Kikagati Hydro Power Project site in Isingiro district recently. Photo by John Odyek

Kikagati had been a booming border town in the 1970s.

The area was being revived with the ongoing power project and the construction of a dam to supply water for domestic use and production in the region.

He added that a cross-border market would be constructed in the area.

"I urge farmers to prepare products to sell to the project and the international cross-border market," Bakunda said.

He noted that the new power station will be built at a smaller power station that was destroyed in 1979 during the war that removed Idi Amin from power.

Niel Theron, the project manager of KPCL, explained

that preliminary works and mobilisation of manpower and materials were ongoing at the site ahead of construction, which will begin in the next three months.

He said 100 workers were being employed directly at the site and during peak period, they expect to employ over 300 workers.

"With this construction going on, disposable income in the area will rise."

"Over three years, there will be general employment of the community. When electricity generation starts, it will enable people improve their businesses," Theron said.

"If the farmers can use electricity to irrigate their land, the business will become

lucrative. Industries will grow around it. There will be progress in education, health, social uplifting and wealth creation over five to 10 years," he added.

KPCL is part of the Global Energy Transfer Feed in Tariffs (GET FiT) programme, supporting private investment in renewable energy.

In 2010, the Advisory Group on Energy and Climate Change of the secretary general of the United Nations asked the private sector financiers to present new concepts for promoting renewable energy investments in developing regions and what is needed to facilitate stronger private sector involvement.