

France, European Union approve sh367b for Nalubaale dam rehabilitation

By Benon Ojiambo

At least €85m (about sh367b) funding has been approved by the Agence Française de Développement (AFD) and the European Union (EU) towards the rehabilitation of the Nalubaale hydropower plant in Jinja city.

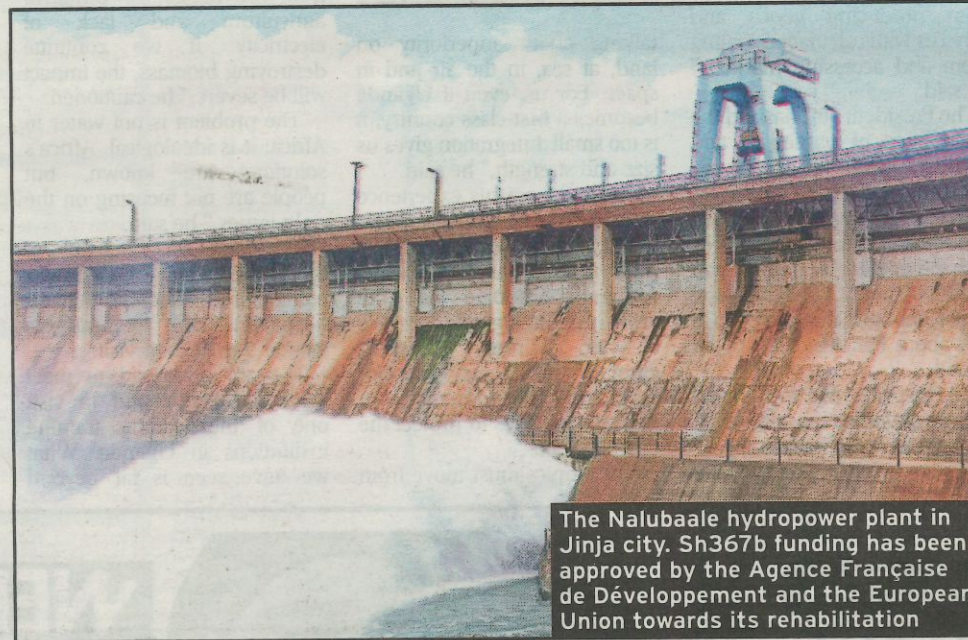
The development was revealed by the French Ambassador to Uganda, Virginie Leroy, during her visit to the 180MW power plant on Wednesday.

Leroy was accompanied by Jean-François Arnal, the AFD regional director for East Africa, EU representatives and other technical officials.

The approved financing includes a €73m (sh314b) loan and €2m (sh8.6b) grant from AFD, as well as €10m (about sh43b) grant from the EU Commission in Brussels.

This is part of a €170m (about sh735b) financing package that the Uganda Electricity Generation Company Limited (UEGCL) is seeking for rehabilitating Uganda's oldest electricity generation facility.

Nalubaale hydropower plant was the first electricity generation plant to be developed in Uganda. It was built by the British colonial government and commissioned



The Nalubaale hydropower plant in Jinja city. Sh367b funding has been approved by the Agence Française de Développement and the European Union towards its rehabilitation

in 1954 with an initial generation capacity of 150MW and an estimated lifespan of 50 years.

The generation units of the 72-year-old plant were upgraded in the 1990s, bringing its installed generation capacity to 180MW.

Officials have



Ambassador Leroy

described the plant as strategic; that needs to be maintained despite its old age given its location at the start of the cascade of the power plants on River Nile. This makes it crucial for flood control for other plants downstream.

The plant is the

first one downstream of the source of the Nile. There are several plants downstream of Nalubaale, including 200MW Kiira, 250MW Bujagali, 183MW Isimba and the 600MW Karuma.

"I'm not an engineer, but it's very easy to understand that if you put too much pressure on the first dam, then you lose the pressure for the following dams and the capacity of producing the electricity in a balanced

THE REHABILITATION PROCESS

George Mutetweka, the Uganda Electricity Generation Company Limited chief operations officer, said Nalubaale is expected to go through a two-phase rehabilitation. During the first phase, the plant will undergo overhaul and replacement of key equipment like monitoring systems and substation whose technology dates to the 1950s.

"We need to have a standard design because we are unable to get spare parts for items like isolators and the bus bars. All those have to be replaced with standard ones that can meet the safety codes that we have. That will improve the reliability of the substation," he said.

Additionally, Mutetweka said they expect to replace turbines and the generators that have since aged.

"At Nalubaale, we have a lot of old systems in the machines; different parts like pumps, motors and switches need to be renewed to improve the circulation of electrical power.

"But most importantly, we are going to work on the civil structure in the plant to address the cracks that were caused by the alkali silica reaction that began when the plant was commissioned in the 1950s. We are going to reinforce the structure and give it at least 30 years ahead to keep on supporting the power production," Mutetweka said.

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George Mutetweka, the UEGCL chief operations officer, said they are currently in the process of signing a contract with the owner's engineer.

"Once the owner's engineer is recruited, we shall start

working on the technical specifications and details that will go into the bidding documents for procurement of the contractor. We hope to complete that this year and source the contractor at the beginning of next year," he said.

The Nalubaale HPP control room.

(third right) with other UEGCL officials at Nalubaale HPP