

STRONG FOUNDATION

As Uganda Electricity Generation Company Limited prepares to take over operation of maintenance of the country's hydropower plans, skills building is key

By Benon Ojiambo

The Uganda Electricity Generation Company Limited (UEGCL) has sent at least 20 of its technical staff to Zambia for practical training on operation and maintenance of hydropower plants.

The team was flagged off by the company chief executive officer, Eng. Harrison Mutikanga, at their head offices in Bukoto, Kampala last week.

The 20-member team consists of operation, maintenance, and shift engineers and is scheduled to undergo up to eight weeks training at the Kafue Gorge Training Centre in Zambia.

The programme, which is expected to cost sh792m, is part of a five-year 84 million Norwegian Krone (sh33b) grant from the Norwegian Government to UEGCL.

The grant expected to last between 2020 and 2024 is aimed at helping UEGCL build its internal capabilities to operate and maintain its assets that include Isimba and Karuma hydropower plants.

"We are building a strong foundation in the capacity of our staff. You cannot continuously improve on your systems and processes without training your employees," Mutikanga said.

Operating and maintaining the flagship projects of Karuma and Isimba was one of the targets Mutikanga set out to achieve after assuming UEGCL's helm in 2014.

Prior to that, operation of the Government-owned Nalubaale



UEGCL CEO Eng. Harrison Mutikanga (centre) flags off some of the staff to Kafue Gorge training centre in Zambia

CAPACITY BUILDING: UEGCL SENDS ENGINEERS TO ZAMBIA

and Kiira power plants had been outsourced to Eskom Uganda, a subsidiary of Eskom Holdings in South Africa.

"This will allow for operational independence, adoption of private sector tenets of management guided by clear targets and lower tariffs through efficiency gains. It will also help build a bankable conglomerate of hydropower projects capable of further mobilising and leveraging finance for new power plant developments," Mutikanga wrote in 2016.

UEGCL has since been building its internal capacity to operate and maintain hydropower plants.

Currently, the company is operating and maintaining Isimba and the workload shall increase with the expected commissioning of Karuma in



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Eng. Harrison Mutikanga

June this year, as well as other small projects like Muzizi and Nyagak.

The company is also gunning to take over the Namanve thermal plant, as well as Kiira and Nalubaale plants upon expiry of Eskom concession next year.

UEGCL currently consists of about 200 employees, 80% of whom are technical personnel that operate and maintain the generating facilities.

"Each of the 80% has had the opportunity for training and enhancing their skills in operation and maintenance. We are in a comfortable place," he stated.

However, he said their plans to increase their workforce have been hampered by the ongoing plans to rationalise agencies and return them to their parent ministries.

PHOTOS BY BENON OJIAMBO