

Uganda gets Shs2.7bn from Sweden for solar energy

By The Independent Reporter

Uganda Electricity Generation Company Limited has secured Shs2.7bn grant from Sweden's Swedfund to conduct feasibility studies for floating solar development in the country.

UEGCL Chief Executive Officer, Harrison Mutikanga and the Sweden Ambassador to Uganda Maria Hakanson signed memorandum of understanding in Kampala on Oct.12.

"The grant has been secured and the process to hire a consultant for the studies is ongoing," Mutikanga said.

The study is envisaged to take approx.21 months starting in January 2022, with a focus on pioneering the floating solar development on either of the reservoirs at the hydropower plants of; Nalubaale, Kiira, Bujagali, Isimba or Karuma.

This is the first floating solar study being

conducted in sub-Saharan Africa, according to Mutikanga.

To date, close to 80% of Uganda's installed electricity capacity is from hydropower that is prone to climate change.

The other energy sources are from co-generation, thermal and solar PV.

Energy sector experts say, such moves are in order to improve the energy mix dilemma and ensure supply stability in line with demand.

Floating solar does not require land and thus, no displacement of people; it gives Uganda a chance to utilise the existing reservoirs for hydropower plants and shares the prevailing transmission infrastructure to evacuate the power from floating solar facilities. It also reduces evaporation on the hydropower reservoirs.

Mutikanga said, in times of severe dry seasons that could potentially cause reduction in water levels and instability in power

supply, this type of renewable energy comes in handy to stabilise supply.

Mutikanga said, 20 people are already undergoing training to acquire skills of operation and maintenance of this type of solar system.

On the other hand Hakanson said, renewable energy is a priority for Sweden because of the climate change benefits it offers. The new grant is in addition to previous and ongoing support previously extended to Uganda particularly through Rural Electrification Agency, United Nations Capital Development Fund and other areas of partnership.

Boosting generation capacity for power is key to meeting the growing demand and targets set in Uganda's Vision 2020. The country has 1, 177MW as generation capacity against demand estimated at 800MW at peak. 