



Uganda, Germany partner for renewable energy

By Petrus Bwalya

To achieve the government's overall objective of providing access to power for 80% of the country's population by 2040, Uganda has partnered with the German Technical Cooperation (GIZ), the Cologne Chamber of Crafts and Small Enterprises (HWK), as well as local companies to develop skills of technicians, installers and operators in renewable energy sources, such as solar.

Up to 160 local participants have been trained at the Nakase Vocational Training Institute (NVTI) since HWE and GIZ started specialised vocational courses for solar technicians in 2015.

Cornelia Zapp, the technical advisor at the department of renewable energy at NVTI, explains that the institute is offering short-term courses for people with prior knowledge in electrical installation, but with an interest in honing their skills



The team and their trainer. The four-week module comes at sh160,000 per week, including lunch and training material

in solar installations and their management.

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material. Moreover, intensive electrician courses are set to start in the first half of 2019.

The two-semester (eight months) course will target

students who have completed A-level and are interested in joining the renewable energy sector.

"The curriculum and

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trainers are ready. We are just preparing space for them and we are almost done," Zapp says, noting that the course will cost sh500,000 per semester, also including meals and instructional material.

She explains that the renewable energy department at NVTI works in conjunction with the Uganda Small Scale Industries Association (USSIA), under the auspices of the Uganda Manufacturers

Association (UMA), to link both business and institutions to various industries.

This is meant to encourage them to harness the use of renewable energy in production.

"I learn how to size, I also use analysis the clients' power needs and recommend the right amount of solar energy they will need to meet them," says Richard Anyiga, an electrician, who was amongst the first people to receive specialised training in solar energy at NVTI under the German partnership and has since been retained as an instructor.

Anyiga notes that solar power has a lot of potential in Uganda due to the abundant sunshine.

Up to 10,000 villages in Uganda are not yet linked to the national grid.

The easiest and fastest way to get them powered is through mini grids, where a single solar power source can be used to generate and supply power to many households and enterprises in an area.

In the first phase, Germany is currently assisting in connecting 40 rural villages to solar mini grids.

Speaking against the common misconception that solar is weaker than hydro power, James Turagayenda, an NVTI solar trainer, says: "Solar energy can be used to run factories and industries. It is not weak."

"It only depends on the capacity of the panels installed."