



BEHOLD

HOIMA CITY STADIUM

Pg 26

Ultra-modern facility set for 2027 AFCON



Pg 30

Hotel owners seek sh130b to compete



HOIMA CITY STADIUM TO

By Wilson Asiimwe

The recent completion of Hoima City Stadium marks a major milestone for the community. This state-of-the-art sports complex is set to host matches for the 2027 Africa Cup of Nations (AFCON), co-hosted by Uganda, Kenya, and Tanzania.

The 18-month project was completed five months ahead of schedule by Turkish firm M/S SUMMA, contracted by the government in June 2024. The \$129m stadium, fully financed by Uganda's Petroleum Fund, sits on 34 acres of land and boasts a 20,000-seater capacity.

The stadium's completion is expected to boost sports tourism, create jobs, and inspire young Ugandans to pursue sports and athletics. President Yoweri Museveni is set to officially open the stadium, which features modern amenities like a semi-Olympic swimming pool, indoor arena, and outdoor courts for basketball, netball, and volleyball.

The facility has a hybrid turf, VVIP and VIP lounges, an indoor arena, swimming pool, Video



The complex is set to host matches for the 2027 Africa Cup of Nations



Project manager, Murat Altun, guides Gen Muhoozi Kainerugaba during his tour of the stadium

Assistant Referee (VAR) room, multiple dressing and referee rooms, FIFA/CAF offices, media conference room, media gallery, training grounds, volleyball and basketball courts, and parking for about 1,000 cars.

The Hoima City Stadium stands out as a world-class sports complex on the sprawling 34-acre site. Inside the stadium, the sleek indoor arena is ready to host top-notch events, its roof a marvel of modern engineering,

while the seating installation ensures every spectator has a comfortable view of the action. Beyond the pitch, the training grounds are primed for athletes to hone their skills, flanked by state-of-the-art facilities like

the VAR room, where officials will monitor every play, and conference facilities perfect for pre- and post-match press briefings. The stadium also boasts a semi-Olympic swimming pool, lounges for VIPs, and a

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HOIMA CITY STADIUM

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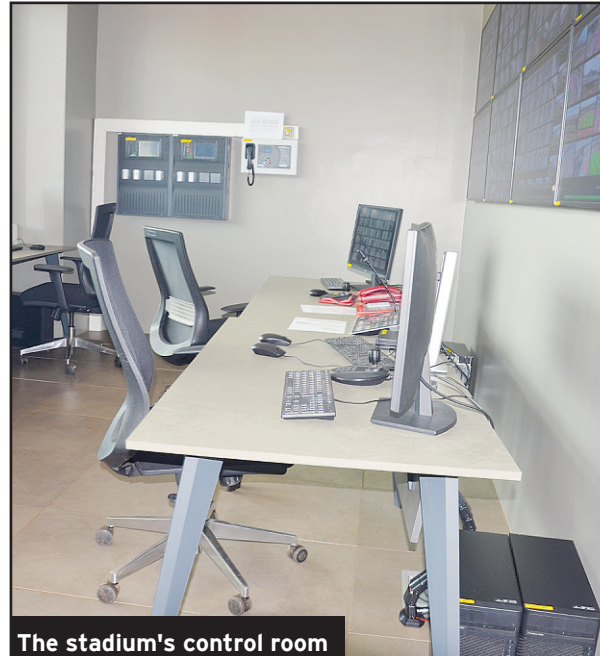
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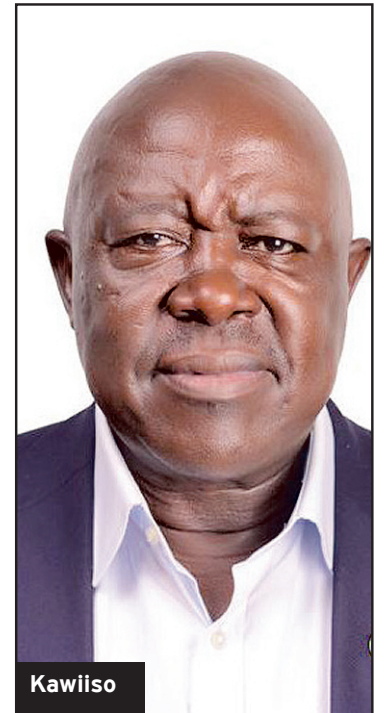
PHOTOS BY WILSON ASIIMWE



Gen Muhoozi Kainerugaba touring the stadium



The stadium's control room



Kawiiso

media gallery where journalists will cover Uganda's sporting triumphs.

The stadium's infrastructure is equally impressive, with roadworks already done, parking areas marked, and furniture is in

place, giving it a lived-in feel. As visitors approach, they will pass through the sleek gatehouse, its framing and glass installation adding a touch of modern elegance.

With electrical wiring and

lighting systems in place, the stadium is set to shine bright under the floodlights, hosting thrilling matches and memorable events for years to come. FIFA/CAF offices and a doping room underscore the stadium's

readiness for top-tier tournaments like the 2027 AFCON.

Salongo Julius Biingi Kawiiso, a Hoima-based businessman, said the construction of the stadium will open up several business opportunities in the area and

the nearby districts. "We are happy that the government has invested heavily in the construction of this stadium; it will help to open up investment opportunities in Hoima," Kawiiso said.

Brian Kaboyo, the Hoima City mayor, said people settling

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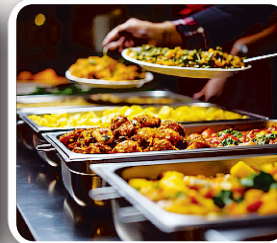


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HOIMA STADIUM A STRATEGIC

FROM PAGE 27

adjacent to the stadium are already benefiting significantly from its construction. He said the company has been working tirelessly to ensure they finish the construction on time, noting that they are on track to meet the deadline of December 2025. Kaboyo said the stadium will bring opportunities and urged residents to prepare and position themselves to benefit from these opportunities.

"The construction of the facility is positively impacting their businesses as they tap into accruing opportunities," Kaboyo said. He added that the stadium's construction has attracted business operators to set up accommodation facilities in the area and boosted demand for foodstuffs. Shaban Kugonza, a resident from Kyarwiru cell who owns rental houses, says business is booming unlike before the stadium's construction. All his rental houses are currently booked by workers employed by the construction company.

The works and transport, alongside the Africa Cup of Nations sub-committee on



The indoor sports arena



Koboyo, Hoima city mayor

infrastructure, has overseen the giant project's construction.

MUHOOTI HAILS WORKS

Gen. Muhoozi Kainerugaba, the Chief of Defence Forces and

Senior Presidential Advisor on Special Operations, conducted an inspection tour of the newly constructed stadium recently. The tour comes ahead of its official commissioning

by President Yoweri Kaguta Museveni. Project manager, Murat Altun guided Muhoozi through the state-of-the-art facility, showcasing its VIP amenities, including a semi-Olympic-sized

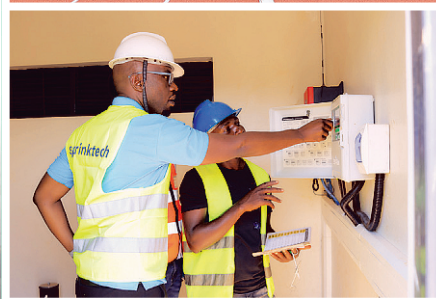
swimming pool, modern changing rooms, an external training pitch, and other facilities. The stadium also features a 2,000-seat arena with a basketball court. Key project and government



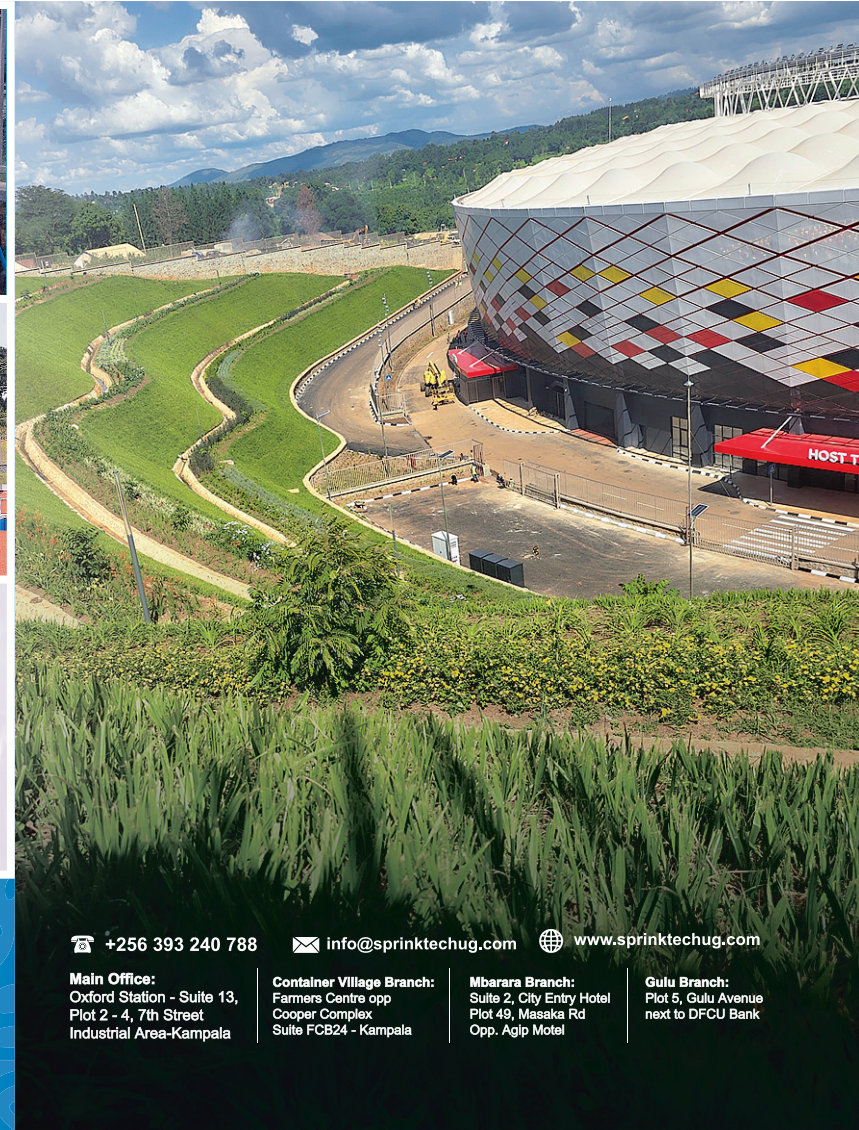
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INVESTMENT FOR SPORTS

PHOTOS BY WILSON ASIIMWE



The outdoor rugby pitch



The VVIP section of the stadium

officials attended the tour, including SUUMA Chairman Selim Bora, Envar Sayan, minister of state for sports, Peter Ogwang, the chairman of the National Council of Sports (NCS), and Brian Kaboyo, the

mayor of Hoima city. During the inspection, Muhoozi stressed the importance of maintaining the stadium's high standards. He urged Ogwang and the NCS to replicate the facility's world-class nature in

future projects. The 20,000-seat stadium is a key venue for Uganda's co-hosting of the 2027 Africa Cup of Nations (AFCON) alongside Kenya and Tanzania, and one of three stadiums designated for

tournament matches. Muhoozi reaffirmed his commitment to sports development, stating that top-tier facilities are crucial for nurturing Ugandan athletic talent and achieving international sporting success.

The stadium represents a strategic investment by the Ugandan government to boost sports infrastructure, stimulate regional development, and fulfill the nation's AFCON 2027 hosting commitments.



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HOTEL OWNERS SEEK SH130B TO TRANSFORM FACILITIES

By Wilson Asimwe

In a bid to match the grandeur of Hoima City Stadium, hotel owners in Bunyoro are turning to the government for a sh130b Kabagambe Kaliisa, the chairperson of Bunyoro Hotel Owners Association, the stakes are high with AFCON 2027 just around the corner, and they are determined to make a lasting impression.

"This isn't just about upgrading hotels; it's about transforming Bunyoro into a premier destination," Kaliisa says. The plan is to expand room capacity from 160-200 to at least 900, and inject modern amenities like gyms and conference facilities.

With Hoima City Stadium setting the bar high, hoteliers are feeling the pressure - and the opportunity. A proposal has already been submitted to the government via Prime Minister Robinah Nabbanja, and they are hopeful for a green light.



Kaliisa

The payoff? Upgraded hotels will serve Bunyoro's booming tourism industry, showcasing gems like Murchison Falls National Park and Kibiro Hot Springs. It's a win-win: hoteliers get a boost, and Bunyoro gets a tourism facelift.

"AFCON is our moment to shine," Kaliisa says with a smile. "We are not just upgrading hotels; we're investing in our region's future. We will repay the loan



Hotel owners seek to upgrade facilities

after the tournament, and these upgraded hotels will continue serving our growing tourism industry."

Currently, hotels in the sub-

region have 160-200 rooms, but AFCON demands necessitate expanding capacity to at least 900 rooms. Beyond room numbers, hotels need modern

upgrades like well-equipped gyms and standard conference facilities.

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The launch of the Hoima National Stadium represents a significant

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- Proof of recent financial capability (audited books, bank statements).
- Bank Comfort Letter.
- Three (3) recommendation letters.
- Powers of attorney of duly authorised person

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By Joseph Batte

Uganda's recent story cannot be told without first walking through its darker years. By the mid-1980s, the country was battered, bruised, and dangerously close to collapse. Years of brutal rule, broken institutions, and endless fighting had pushed the nation to the edge. So, when the National Resistance Movement (NRM) took power in 1986, it inherited not a functioning state, but a wounded one.

The promise it made was simple but bold: to pull Uganda back from the brink. What followed was a steady rebuilding that changed Uganda's image from a byword for chaos, violence, and runaway inflation into one of relative stability in East Africa.

According to Emmanuel Dombo, NRM's Director of Communications, before the NRM came to power, Uganda was widely seen as a classic example of a failed state. The years under Idi Amin (1971-1979) and Milton Obote's second administration (1980-1985) were marked by fear and bloodshed. Political repression and civil war claimed an estimated 500,000 lives, leaving families shattered and communities traumatised. The economy had all but collapsed.

COLLAPSE OF THE ECONOMY

By 1985, GDP per capita had fallen to about \$200, inflation was running at an eye-watering 240% a year, and the shilling had lost so much value that money itself became unreliable.

By the mid-1980s, more than 500,000 Ugandans had fled across borders, making the country the world's largest exporter of refugees at the time. They ran from ethnic violence, hunger, and a future that offered little hope.

Roads were impassable, electricity was a luxury, schools and hospitals were shells of their former selves, and the country had only one university. Diseases spread unchecked, claiming lives that could have been saved elsewhere. This was the country the NRM inherited in 1986.

"The rule of law has enabled many things, like democracy and accountability of leaders and what they do. It enabled the promulgation of the constitution, and what that constitution did was return power to the people," Dombo says.

THE TURNING POINT

A major turning point came with the 1995 Constitution, which reshaped governance by strengthening democratic institutions and devolving power through decentralisation.

The new legal framework strengthened accountability, empowering institutions such as the Inspectorate of Government. By the 2020s, the agency was

NRM PUT UGANDA ON PATH TO PROSPERITY



An ariel view of the Karuma hydro power project

investigating more than 1,000 corruption-related cases annually.

By October 2025, Uganda was hosting nearly 1.95 million refugees, mainly from South Sudan, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Somalia. This made it Africa's largest refugee-hosting country and the sixth largest globally. The reversal is striking. With years of stabilisation, the country is a place of refuge for others. This calm has drawn investors too, with foreign direct investment rising from almost nothing in 1986 to more than \$1.5b by 2024. Government revenue has grown alongside it, reaching sh25 trillion by 2023 and helping to fund roads, power projects, and other public services.

"The economic and social infrastructure has improved, enhancing the industrial growth in the country," he says. The contrast with the past is striking. Uganda's economy, valued at just \$3.9b in 1986, is projected to reach \$66b by 2025. For decades, growth has averaged between 6% and 7% a year.

EDUCATION AND HEALTH

The introduction of Universal Primary Education in 1997 transformed access to schooling. Enrollment rose from about 2.5 million pupils in 1986 to more than 8.5 million by 2024, while illiteracy fell from roughly 50% to under 20%.

Higher education also spread, growing from Makerere University alone to more than 50 public and private universities. Health care improved alongside education.



The just-completed Hoima Stadium

THIS CALM HAS DRAWN INVESTORS TOO, WITH FOREIGN DIRECT INVESTMENT RISING FROM ALMOST NOTHING IN 1986 TO MORE THAN \$1.5B BY 2024

"We have more hospitals and specialised personnel working in them. And because of that we have handled major epidemics like HIV, Ebola, Corona Virus, and Marburg," Dombo says. HIV prevalence dropped from 18% in the 1990s to 5.4% by 2024. Health facilities expanded to over 6,000 across the country, with the ability to manage

and Operation Wealth Creation have provided seeds, skills, and affordable credit, helping families start businesses and expand farms.

IMPROVED SERVICES, GROWTH

Since the introduction of decentralisation in 1993, services have been pushed closer to the people, with local governments now handling about 80% of basic public needs. Economic growth has gone hand in hand with expanding markets and stronger regional ties. "The growth of the market has expanded and united Ugandans as one people. Consolidating regional cooperation through COMESA and East African federation," Dombo noted. Uganda's entry into the COMESA Free Trade Area in 2000 opened doors for traders, helping exports to member states grow by more than 300%.

Minister for the Presidency Milly Babirye Babalanda says a recent end-term validation of the NRM manifesto showed clear progress between the mid-term and end-term reviews. Out of 809 total commitments, implementation rose from 84% at mid-term to 87% by the end of the term. Fully achieved commitments increased from 281 to 434, while those not implemented dropped from 16% to 10%. Babalanda says.

Under President Yoweri Museveni's leadership, the NRM has delivered tangible results. The next five years will be about sustaining these gains in the face of growing youth expectations, economic pressure, and a changing world.



Dombo

epidemics that once swept through communities unchecked, Uganda's response to Ebola between 2022 and 2023 won international praise for its speed and effectiveness.

WEALTH CREATION

Dombo says a number of initiatives have pulled people out of poverty. Now 38% live below the poverty line, though more recent figures place the number at 20.3% in 2024, down from 56% in 1992. Government programmes such as the Parish Development Model, Emyooga,

HOTELS TO UPGRADE

FROM PAGE 30

Kaliisa, however, says hotel owners should spread out their funding sources, and not rely solely on government support. "Explore other avenues to improve facilities," he says, ensuring they are ready for AFCON and beyond.

On his part, state minister for sports, Patrick Ogwang wants hotel owners in the Bunyoro sub-region to upgrade their hotels ahead of AFCON to accommodate both local and international visitors. Ogwang says the improved hotels will not only accommodate AFCON visitors, but also serve international guests involved in the region's oil and gas sector.

As the stadium's floodlights illuminate the pitch, the surrounding landscape is abuzz with activity. Local businesses are springing up, entrepreneurs are seizing opportunities, and the community is coming together to host the world.

Hoima City Stadium is more than just a venue, it's the perfect example of progress, shining bright on Uganda's sports and tourism horizon.

This 34-acre complex is designed to meet international standards, boasting a 20,000-seater main stadium suitable for football and



Hotels in Hoima are teeming with business

athletics, a hybrid turf, VVIP and VIP lounges, an indoor arena, swimming pool, and multiple dressing and referee rooms.

The stadium's completion has already triggered a boom in business and tourism in Hoima, with many visitors flocking to take photos outside the magnificent facility. Brian Kaboyo, Mayor of Hoima City, notes that over 1,000 locals were employed during the construction phase, and many people set up food distribution centres, earning a living serving food and drinks.

"The facility is a tourist attraction in Hoima," Kaboyo says. "As council, we have been appealing to our people to position themselves and take up opportunities.

Over 1,000 people, both locals and foreigners, flock the facility daily, making it one of the most toured facilities."

Bughya MP, Pius Wakabi says the three training facilities being set up in Masindi and Hoima will improve local sports, providing international-standard facilities for volleyball and other sports.

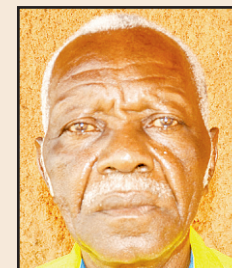
WHAT OTHERS SAY

Idd Magezi - Hoima city councillor: Many of our people have already started benefiting directly, businesses have started coming up around the places surrounding the facility. Some of the locals have been employed and they are earning money already.



Hanifa Tumuhaise - Hoima city youth councillor: We appreciate the Government for the good facility which has been constructed in Hoima. We approved the development plan for the area and people are now ready to put in place facilities like restaurants and others so that they can benefit.

Israel Kabyanga LCII chairperson
Central Word: "Hoima City Council has been engaging our local investors in Hoima to invest in the hotel industry and I am happy that most of them have complied and we are seeing some new hotels coming up while the old ones are being refurbished.



PETROLEUM AUTHORITY OF UGANDA



Congratulations

ON THE OFFICIAL OPENING OF HOIMA CITY STADIUM



The Petroleum Authority of Uganda congratulates Hoima City, the Ministry of Education and Sports, and all stakeholders upon the official opening of Hoima City Stadium.

This landmark facility stands as a testament to the transformative power of strategic national investments and the positive impact of Uganda's oil and gas resources on social and economic infrastructure. Beyond sports, the stadium symbolises opportunity, community pride, and inclusive development for the Bunyoro sub region and the country at large.

The Petroleum Authority of Uganda remains committed to ensuring that the development of Uganda's petroleum resources delivers lasting value through infrastructure, skills development, and sustainable growth for present and future generations.

Congratulations on this remarkable achievement.

MANAGEMENT,
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PHOTOS BY WILSON ASIMWE



HOIMA STADIUM GIVES LOCAL BUSINESSES A HUGE BOOST

By Wilson Asimwe

Completion of Hoima City Stadium has sparked a local economic boom, with residents reaping benefits left and right. With the stadium set to be commissioned, local businesses are already thriving.

"Many of us are benefiting," says Joyce Kamara, a restaurant owner in Mparo, whose daily clientele has jumped from 15 to 100. Justine Kansiime one of her customers say that currently they don't need to move a distance of one kilometer to Kinubi to look for food since they can get all the food in the area.

"This project has greatly impacted on the lives of the people because at the construction peak the company had employed over 1,200 workers who would work day and night and 80% were the locals who used to buy food from our local markets," she said.

The influx of workers has hotels and lodges booked solid, and food joints bustling. Catherine Kusiima's bar in Kinubi cell is packed with workers in the evenings, while Shaban Kugonza's rental houses in Kyarwiru cell are fully booked. "Business is



Kansiime

booming," he says, grinning.

"The workers booked all my seven rentals and each room I would get sh200,000 per month and previously I would get sh100,000 from each room now that most of them have gone, I am planning to renovate them because we understand there are some other workers of the stadium who will be available," she said.

Mayor Brian Kaboyo is mobilising residents to invest in hotels, anticipating a tourism

The influx of workers has hotels and lodges booked solid, and food joints bustling. Catherine Kusiima's bar in Kinubi cell is packed with workers in the evenings, while Shaban Kugonza's rental houses in Kyarwiru cell are fully booked.

influx. "We will host many visitors," he says. A 6.7-acre plot at Booma grounds is being developed into a training facility, with sh13.2b earmarked for the project.

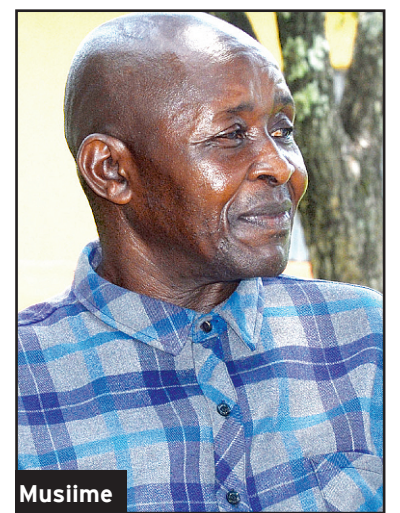
The stadium's impact extends beyond business, land prices near the site have skyrocketed, and new opportunities are emerging. "Even before it's operational, we are already benefiting," Kamara says.

The cost of land along the road has also shot up as people dash to buy property to set up business premises. Fred Mwesige, a

resident of Kyarwiru said the new stadium has attracted investors who have changed the face of most of the trading centres along the surrounding areas of Kicwamba, Mparo and Kyarwiru.

Fred Musiime, a resident of Kyarwiru, who is in his mid 60s, said he didn't expect to see such a good road opened in his area during his lifetime. Because of the stadium, a good road has been opened in Kyarwiru cell. He said it was in a sorry state, to the extent that school children could drown in swamps whenever it could rain.

Lilian Kansiime, a youth in



Musiime

Kyarwiru said the construction of petrol stations along the Hoima Masindi road a few kilometres from the stadium has enabled her and her four friends to get jobs. As more investors set up business along the road, they expect to get more. "The cost of a plot of land of 100*50 currently goes for about sh10m and previously it was about sh4m. Now, the price has more than doubled. We were also told that our road connecting to the stadium is going to be tarmacked," he said.

UPIK SET FOR OIL PRODUCTION

By Moses Kigongo

As Uganda prepares to transition into commercial oil production, the Uganda Petroleum Institute Kigumba (UPIK) says it is recalibrating its training model to remain relevant in a changing petroleum landscape while expanding into new strategic sectors of the economy.

Speaking in an interview, UPIK's principal, Bernard Ongodia, said the institute has, since its establishment, stayed true to its core mandate of building national capacity for Uganda's oil and gas sector, while steadily evolving to meet emerging industry needs.

Ongodia said Uganda's oil journey has been long and deliberate, beginning with early exploration efforts in the 1980s and culminating in the discovery of commercially viable oil deposits in 2006.

According to him, the discovery made it clear that the country required a specialised institution to train Ugandans to take up technical and operational roles in the petroleum industry.

It was against this background that UPIK was established as a national institution dedicated to oil and gas skills development. Ongodia explained that the National Resistance Movement (NRM) government, under the visionary leadership of President Yoweri Kaguta Museveni, allocated 200 acres of land in Kigumba, then largely forested and undeveloped, to give the institute a fresh start.

"When we arrived here, there was absolutely nothing. But for us, that empty land represented opportunity and rebirth," Ongodia said, noting that the official commissioning of the institute by President Yoweri Kaguta Museveni affirmed the UPIK's strategic importance to the country.

This act stands as a testament to the NRM government's foresight and dedication to national development.

He credited the people of Bunyoro for supporting the establishment of the institute, saying their cooperation ensured that the former cooperative college was not lost, but instead became home to two complementary institutions.

The UPIK's early years were marked by significant logistical challenges. Ongodia said the institute initially operated from the Uganda Cooperative College Kigumba (UCCCK), relying on shared lecture rooms and renovated facilities while practical training was conducted at sister institutions such as Uganda Technical College (UTC) Kyema and Nakawa Vocational Training College.

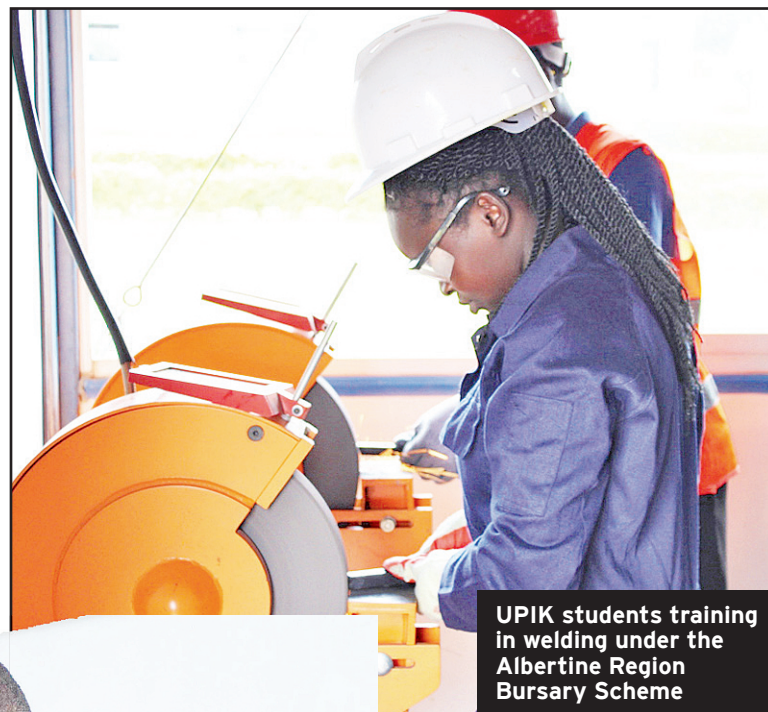
"At one point, we were effectively running three campuses," Ongodia said.

"It was demanding, but it laid a strong foundation for resilience and collaboration."

He acknowledged the role of the founding management team, led by Professor Charles Kwesiga,



President Museveni and First Lady Janet at UPIK for the commissioning ceremony of the institute's training facilities



UPIK students training in welding under the Albertine Region Bursary Scheme

THE UPIK MANAGEMENT REPORTS THAT CLOSE TO 4,000 INDIVIDUALS HAVE BEEN TRAINED SINCE INCEPTION, WITH TRACER STUDIES INDICATING THAT AT LEAST 70% ARE EMPLOYED IN THE OIL AND GAS SECTOR.

for developing a comprehensive master plan that continues to guide infrastructure development at Kigumba.

According to Ongodia and the UPIK management, the

transformation of the institute accelerated over the years through phased infrastructure development. From prefabricated structures and temporary accommodation, the UPIK gradually constructed modern classrooms, Information and Communication Technology (ICT) facilities, staff offices, and world-class student hostels.

A major boost came from the World Bank-supported Albertine Regional Sustainable Development Project, which funded the construction of advanced workshops, a multipurpose academic complex, internal road networks, and specialised training equipment. Ongodia noted that

although the support came as a government loan, it demonstrated the NRM government's unwavering commitment to investing in skills development for the youth.

The UPIK also partnered with Institut Français du Pétrole (IFP) Training of France, a globally recognised petroleum training institution.

Ongodia said IFP supported curriculum development, trained instructors, designed workshops, and enabled international accreditation.

"Today, our trainers are accredited to deliver internationally recognised programmes right here in Uganda," he said, adding that this reduced

reliance on costly overseas training.

One of the most significant shifts under Ongodia's leadership has been the realignment of academic programmes to match industry needs. He explained that the institute initially offered a broad Petroleum Studies course, which lacked clarity for employers.

"When I joined in 2017, one of my first tasks was to listen to the industry and restructure our programmes," Ongodia said.

The UPIK subsequently introduced sector-specific programmes in upstream and downstream petroleum operations, mechanical maintenance, electrical maintenance, welding and fabrication, health, safety and environment, and instrumentation, an area Ongodia said is unique in Uganda and the region.

The institute also introduced modular training programmes ranging from foundation to advanced levels, allowing flexibility for learners and employers.

In addition, the UPIK is now an approved centre for internationally recognised certifications such as the Offshore Petroleum Industry Training Organization (OPITO), City & Guilds, and the Engineering Construction Industry Training Board (ECITB).

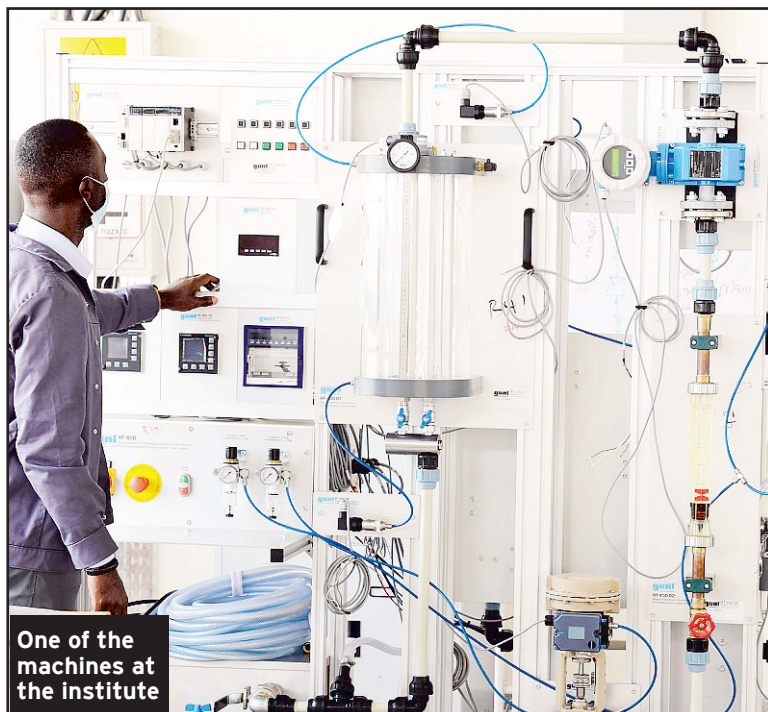
Ongodia said this has saved the country substantial resources that were previously spent sending trainees abroad.

The UPIK's growth has been strongly supported by partnerships with oil companies and service providers. According to Ongodia and the institutes's management, TotalEnergies, China National Offshore Oil Corporation (CNOOC), East African Crude Oil Pipeline (EACOP) Ltd, Sinopec, Schlumberger (SLB), and Vallourec have contributed through equipment donations, student sponsorships, curriculum input, and recruitment.



Bernard Ongodia, the principal of Uganda Petroleum Institute, Kigumba

PHASE AND BEYOND



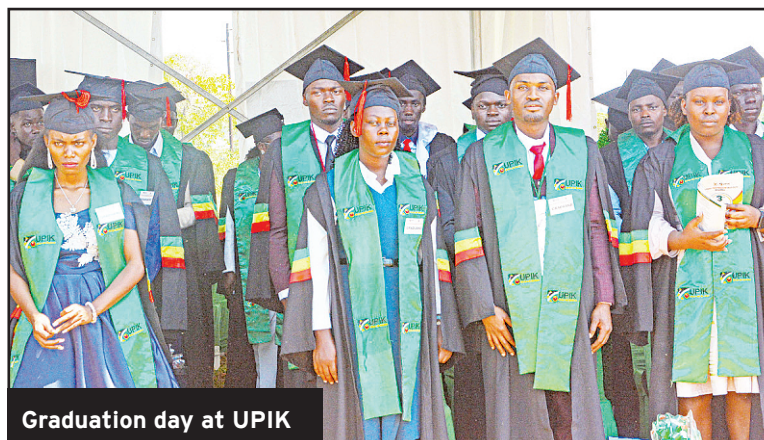
One of the machines at the institute



Dr Ernest Rubondo, the Executive Director of the Petroleum Authority of Uganda handing a certificate to a UPIK graduand



UPIK's growth has been strongly supported by partnerships with oil companies



Graduation day at UPIK



Ggoobi (second-right) visiting one of the workshops at UPIK



The Tilenga Academy training programme aims to equip 200 youth

One major milestone is the installation of the Eagle Drilling Rig at Kigumba. Ongodia said the rig, donated by Tullow Oil and transferred through China National Offshore Oil Corporation (CNOOC), is currently

being rigged up and is expected to be operational in 2026. "This will significantly enhance hands-on drilling training," he said. Through the EACOP, the Uganda Petroleum Institute Kigumba trained more than 140 East African

technicians, while Sinopec supported training for about 140 Ugandan students. TotalEnergies and EACOP have also donated specialised equipment to the institute's workshops. In a significant addition to these training initiatives, TotalEnergies Exploration and Production (EP) Uganda launched the Tilenga Academy training programme at UPIK. The initiative aims to equip 200 Ugandan youths with the skills and internationally recognised certifications needed to contribute to the Tilenga project during its production phase. The UPIK management reports that

close to 4,000 individuals have been trained since inception, with tracer studies indicating that at least 70% are employed in the oil and gas sector. "If you visit Tilenga, Kingfisher, or major service providers, you will find many UPIK alumni," Ongodia said. He added that the institute has fulfilled its original mandate of supplying skilled Ugandans for the oil and gas industry, particularly during the construction phase. The UPIK has also benefited from government-supported International Vocational Qualifications (IVQs), under which the government covers 80% of training costs. Ongodia said the program targets individuals with

prior knowledge, including university graduates seeking practical skills to improve employability. "These are real opportunities, and Ugandans should take advantage of them," he said. Looking ahead to 2026, Ongodia said the UPIK is repositioning itself as Uganda enters the production phase. He noted that labour demands will decline as construction winds down, requiring the institute to downsize intakes while focusing on targeted, short-term training packages. "We don't want to flood the industry with skills that cannot be absorbed," he said.

Beyond oil and gas, the UPIK plans to expand into mining, renewable energy, and instrumentation training. Draft programmes in mining engineering, renewable energy technologies, and instrumentation have already been developed. Regionally, Ongodia said the institute aims to serve emerging markets such as Tanzania, Mozambique, and Namibia, positioning the UPIK as a continental reference centre for technical training. Ongodia emphasised that the institute is a national institution serving all Ugandans, dismissing perceptions that it is regionally biased. "Admission depends on who applies and qualifies. This institution belongs to the whole country," he said.

He concluded by expressing profound gratitude to the National Resistance Movement (NRM) government and President Yoweri Kaguta Museveni for their exceptional foresight and leadership. He noted that the UPIK has enabled Uganda to localise training that would otherwise be done abroad at a high cost, a direct result of the supportive environment created by the current administration. As Uganda moves into oil production, Ongodia said the UPIK remains committed to supporting not only the petroleum sector, but also the broader industrial transformation of the country.



IMPROVING LIVELIHOODS WHILE

By Vision Reporter

When the CommonGround Project first arrived in Nyambigha community in Karugutu sub-county, Ntoroko district, in Uganda's Rwenzori region in 2023, it found an isolated and weary population. The only access route was a narrow, bushy footpath, impassable to vehicles and dangerous during the rains. Farming was rudimentary, harvests were meagre, and households struggled to meet their basic food needs, let alone supply markets.

Sanitation was poor due to the lack of latrines and clean water. Women and children walked several kilometres to fetch water from unsafe sources. According to local leader Joseph Busesi, children often missed or arrived late for school, while women spent long hours at water points, sometimes fuelling suspicion and domestic violence. The community was largely unorganised and depended on government to solve its problems.

TAKING RESPONSIBILITY

The arrival of CommonGround marked a turning point. Community members began to realise that they could take ownership of their own development, restoring hope and confidence.

The four-year project (2022-2026), funded by the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in Uganda, is led by Wageningen University & Research and implemented by Integrated Seed and Sector Development Uganda (ISSD Uganda) with partners across the Rwenzori, Kigezi and Elgon highlands.

It aims to strengthen the resilience of 150,000 smallholder farmer households and restore healthy agro-ecosystems through sustainable farming, watershed restoration and improved market access.

The project began by mobilising communities through awareness meetings to analyse social, environmental and economic challenges. Using the Participatory Integrated Planning (PIP) approach, households and communities envisioned realistic futures, developed action plans and began implementing locally driven solutions.

To date, 65,301 households (29,585 men and 35,716 women) have developed PIPs, supported by 15,178 trained PIP facilitators and 702 crop management trainers.

A total of 117 community action plans have been created, fostering ownership, collaboration and proactive leadership. To reach the next generation, 59 schools have been supported to



Farmers have been trained in sustainable land management practices to control soil erosion

RESILIENT COMMUNITIES

Nyambigha and many other communities are steadily transforming into self-reliant, organised and resilient societies. By addressing challenges at household, community, environmental and market levels, they are better equipped to withstand future shocks and stresses, driven by collective action and local ownership.

deliver environmental education using the PIP curriculum.

In Nyambigha, communities identified their key challenges as poor road access, lack of clean water, weak farming systems, erosion, limited markets and, above all, poor collaboration.

IMPROVING MARKET ACCESS

Once priorities were clear, Nyambigha residents acted together, starting with road construction. Eva Masika recalls how community members mobilised hoes, pickaxes and spades to open a 2km road linking Nyambigha to the Bundibugyo-Fort Portal road.

"Every Thursday was set aside for community work. Working together opened our community to the rest of the world," she said.

Parish chief Afswa Kengonzi noted that the road now serves over 1,124 people across two parishes. Traders can easily buy cocoa, beans and coffee, and the improved access has attracted



Communities have been supported to establish tree nursery beds to ease access to seedlings

services, including a new clinic.

Across the three regions, 97km of roads have been constructed out of the 140km prioritised, benefiting at least 14,000 people. In some areas, heavy machinery was provided through collaboration with key stakeholders. In Kyatwa community, Bunyangabu district, a new 3km road has halved transport costs. Banana farmer Patrick Ishoza recalls paying up to sh20,000 per trip during the rainy season. "Now costs are down to sh10,000, and vehicles can reach us easily," he said.

IMPROVING FARMING SYSTEMS

According to Karugutu sub-

county agricultural officer, Matayo Kighuliro, farming systems were previously poor, with severe soil erosion leaving hillsides unproductive. Limited transport also prevented extension workers from reaching farmers.

Through CommonGround, farmers have been trained in good agronomic practices, including soil conservation trenches, composting, banana desuckering and rejuvenating old coffee. "Production has improved, erosion is controlled and soil fertility is returning," Kighuliro said.

The project has supported 65,301 households to establish

Integrated Plot Plans (IPPs) to optimise land productivity sustainably. To support adoption, 702 community-based integrated farming trainers have been trained, with around six per community.

To improve nutrition, households in Nyambigha were encouraged to establish kitchen gardens. Each household now grows vegetables for consumption and sale, strengthening both nutrition and incomes.

DEFORESTATION EFFORTS

Ntoroko district environment officer, Herbert Kamuhanda said deforestation had led to landslides, flooding and erosion,

RESTORING UGANDA'S HIGHLANDS

compounded by limited access to indigenous tree seedlings.

Community-managed tree nurseries, supported by the project are reversing this trend. In Ntoroko alone, 11 nursery beds have produced 38,000 trees planted on farms and restoration sites.

Overall, the project has established 98 nurseries, propagating over 1.1 million indigenous seedlings, with nearly half a million already planted. Communities have received tools, seedlings and grasses to strengthen nursery management.

LAND RESTORATION

Restoration of degraded land has been a major priority. In Bukalasi sub-county, Bududa district, residents have planted over 6,112 trees, alongside trenches and grasses that stabilise soil and provide fodder.

Similar efforts are under way in Nyambigha, where grasses are also used for mulching. In Nyakitokori community, Kabale district, residents are restoring the degraded Ryabinegu and Rwebinegu hills. Severe erosion had forced farmers to abandon upper slopes, but coordinated restoration has transformed the



Bukalasi Cooperative Group now adds value to coffee, thanks to trainings from CommonGround Project

landscape.

With project support, communities constructed at least 60 retention ditches per hill, significantly reducing runoff and capturing up to 2,160 cubic metres of water. More than 11,249 tree seedlings have been transplanted onto these sites.

In total, 528 restoration sites have been selected, supported by 22 sub-watershed committees with clear leadership and action plans. Some 7,725 hectares are now under conservation practices,

with an additional 3,090 hectares of steep slopes stabilised against erosion.

ACCESS TO CLEAN WATER

Clean water was another pressing need in Nyambigha. The project provided three 10,000-litre water tanks, now serving over 110 households. According to Kamuhanda, children now attend school on time and domestic conflicts linked to water collection have reduced.

Across project areas, 360

community investments have been made, including water systems and market structures, all based on priorities identified through community PIPs.

ENTREPRENEURSHIP, CAPITAL

Limited markets and access to finance remain major constraints. The project, therefore, supports Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLAs), income-generating groups and farmer organisations to become sustainable and market-oriented.

In Nyambigha, three farmer groups received in-kind support worth sh1m each to invest in livestock and poultry. They were also supported to form VSLAs, receiving kits and training in governance, accountability and record-keeping.

Across the project, 150 farmer groups are developing business plans, while 57 have received targeted training in production management and financial literacy.

Market linkages with input and output actors address challenges such as counterfeit inputs and poor supply chains.

Through partnerships with financial institutions, Shs750 million has been mobilised. This has enabled 159 farmers to access sh189.6m for on-farm investments, while strengthening cooperative capacity.

A notable success is the Abiniki Bomugusha Kwetungura Group in Kabale district, formed by 15 women in 2023 to process fermented sorghum, which fetches more than triple the price of raw grain. With project support, the group improved business planning, record-keeping and access to finance, positioning it for growth.

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