

## Hundreds of Youth to Benefit from Newly Launched Hub in Uganda



*Main photo: Inside the Apala One Stop Youth Hub. Insert: The local community turned up in numbers to witness the official launch*

About 400 young people are expected to benefit from services to be offered at the newly refurbished Apala One Stop Youth Center in Alebtong, in northern Uganda. Working in collaboration with the Government, COMESA Secretariat and partners namely Save the Children, Horn of Africa Youth Network and Epuka Ugaidi the Center was launched in Moroto County, about 450km from Kampala on Thursday 21 December 2023.

It has been equipped with ten high tech computers, one printer and a 55-inch television set. Renovation works included replacing roofing sheets and providing furniture at a combined cost of USD\$80,000. Through the partners, more than 3,000 books have been mobilized and stocked in the information center.

Speaking at the launch in Alebtong, Uganda's Minister of Gender, Labour and Social Development Hon. Betty Amongi commended COMESA and partners for the gesture which she said would greatly help the young people in the community.

She said her government would work with the local leaders to ensure that the renovated facility is supported and expanded to ensure that it offers more services to the young people in Alebtong and surrounding areas.

"The launch we are witnessing today is very important and will go a long way in keeping our young people engaged in various developmental skills which will help them become productive and contribute positively to society," said Hon. Amongi. She was represented by the National Youth Council Chairperson of Uganda Mr Jacob Eyeru.

Prior to the launch, the youth leadership from the county participated in a three-day training in governance and center management, procurement operations and strategy, communications, community engagement and social sustainability among other topics.

The Ugandan government, regional partners and the local community all agreed that the establishment of the Apala One Stop Youth Hub signified a pivotal milestone, providing youth with a tangible space for active engagement in peace-building efforts. COMESA Secretariat was represented by the incoming Head of the Governance, Peace and Security Unit Dr Oita Etyang who reiterated the organisation's commitment to working with young people.

"I would like to assure you that this is not the end of our support. As COMESA, we are committed to see this center thrive so that it can be replicated in other

countries to save young people," He added "Beyond collective impact, this hub fosters community, empowerment, skill-building, mentorship and leadership development and it will lay the groundwork for a resilient future."

Save the Children Thematic Head for Children Affected by Armed Conflict in Eastern and Southern Africa Programme Mr Anthony Njoroge called on the young people and community at large to guard the facility jealously and put it to good use. Kevin Waigwa – the Director at Epuka Ugaidi a youth-based civil-society organisation encouraged the young people to focus on building a better future for themselves by utilising the new facility and gaining the needed skills.

The launch event was attended by a diverse audience which included civic leaders, local youth, district policymakers, community representatives and the general public.

The Apala One Stop Youth Hub's launch heralds a new era of youth empowerment, promising a brighter, more harmonious future for Uganda. A few months back, the partners working with the National Youth Council of Uganda conducted training for the youth in Apala on Silencing the Guns Campaign.



Delegates at the validation workshop in Lusaka

## Zambia Validates Blue Economy Strategy

The Government of Zambia has developed and validated the national blue economy strategy which is expected to help increase the prospects for achieving sustainable, environmentally friendly and socially inclusive economic growth.

The strategy will guide the nation in advancing knowledge on biotechnology, environmental sustainability and ecosystem services. Other areas targeted include growth of inland water transport industry, management of fishing industry and better use of underwater mineral resources.

This was revealed in Lusaka on 16 January 2024 during the validation meeting held at COMESA Secretariat. The national strategy was developed with technical assistance from the African Union Commission's Department of Agriculture, Rural Development, Blue Economy, and Sustainable Environment (ARBE) and financial support from the French Development Agency.

Speaking at the opening of the meeting, Director of Agriculture and Industry at COMESA Secretariat Mrs Providence Mavubi commended the country for developing the strategy which she described is an important tool and mechanism for attaining sustainable economic growth.

"The validation of the national blue economy strategy hastens the state of play of regional integration and will help development of ways and means of strengthening and deepening mutually beneficial cooperation in the area of blue economy for the benefit of Zambian citizens in particular and COMESA in general."

She added that COMESA with the support of African Union Inter-African Bureau for Animal Resources has formulated the Regional Blue Economy Strategy (2022 - 2032) which covers aquatic and marine areas, including oceans, seas, coastlines, lakes, rivers and groundwater.

It emphasizes the importance of balancing between sustainable economic development and environmental protection, anchoring this to SDG 14 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The meeting was informed that COMESA has adopted a clear definition of the blue economy that encompasses a range of several productive sectors such as fisheries and aquaculture, tourism, energy, transport, ports and shipping, underwater extractive industries, environment, research and innovation, marine biotechnology and bioprospecting.

Currently, there is limited information on the blue economy as the focus has been primarily on land-based economic development or on conservation rather than on the sustainable use of the investment in ocean and inland water-based economy, for national benefit.

AUC Head of the Blue Economy Division Georges Mba Asseko called on other African countries to emulate Zambia and finalise their national strategies. "By validating these national instruments, we are not only downscaling and domesticating the African Blue Economy Strategy, we are providing ourselves with the needed tools to align and operationalise African blue value

chains on the fields." He added, "these instruments are for the government and intergovernmental institutions of course, but also for communities and development partners including private sector."

The team from Zambia was led by Mr Mbamwai Mbewe, a director in the Ministry of Fisheries and Livestock.

## CAF Fined for Breach of Regional Regulations

The COMESA Competition Commission has imposed a fine of USD\$300, 000 each on the Confederation of African Football (CAF) and BEIN Media Group LLC (beIN) for breach of the COMESA competition regulations.

This follows the findings of the Commission's Committee Responsible for Initial Determinations (the CID) that certain provisions of the beIN Agreements were in violation of Article 16 of the Regulations.

A Statement issued by CCC on 25 January 2024 states that, the lack of an open tender process for the award of the pay-TV broadcast rights for CAF competitions resulted in a significant prevention, restriction or distortion of competition within the Common Market.

In 2017, the Commission initiated an investigation against CAF in relation to agreements concluded with third parties for the commercialisation of rights pertaining to the CAF football competitions. In 2019, the Commission issued notices of investigation against Lagardere Sports S.A.S and beIN, in connection with two Memoranda of Understanding entered into between Lagardere Sports and beIN in 2014 and 2016 respectively for the commercialisation of media rights of football competitions organised by CAF.

On 22 December 2023, the Commission's CID stated that having regard to the fact that the CAF competitions were held annually or every two years, the duration of the exclusive beIN Agreements were disproportionately long and increased the likelihood of market foreclosure.





Trainees were awarded with certificates

## Push for Development of Small Hydropower Plant

COMESA working with partner Regional Economic Communities and the United Nations Industrial Development Organisation (UNIDO) have conducted a one-week training to boost the capacity of technical experts and small hydropower developers as a way of helping millions access affordable electricity.

The training conducted at COMESA Secretariat in Lusaka is seen as a crucial step towards building the capacities of the experts, standards bureaus and project developers for effective and efficient planning, management and operationalisation of Small Hydropower based on the technical guidelines.

Speaking at the opening ceremony of the training session on Monday 22 January 2024, Director of Infrastructure and Logistics at COMESA Secretariat Dr Bernard Dzawanda said access to energy remains a critical challenge in the region with many citizens lacking reliable and affordable electricity.

"The region has a population of around 600 million people, with a high demand for energy, particularly electricity. However, the energy sector in many of our member countries is still underdeveloped and underfunded, leading to low levels of electricity and unreliable energy supply," Dr Dzawanda said.

He added that the electricity access rate in the COMESA region is around 60%, meaning that almost half of the population do not have access to electricity.

The experts stated that the region has enormous unexploited natural resources required for the development of the power sector. The region's natural energy resources are plentiful and diverse,

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ranging from the vast solar and wind resources that are present in all Member States. In addition, the region has significant geothermal energy along the East African Rift countries namely Djibouti, Ethiopia and Kenya while abundant hydropower resources are available in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia and Zambia.

Dr Dzawanda revealed that the under-developed regulatory frameworks and the absence of a framework for monitoring progress complicates implementation modalities and inhibits decisions on electricity infrastructure projects.

In recognition of these challenges, COMESA has prioritised the development of regional energy infrastructure aimed at increasing energy access and ensuring reliable, affordable and sustainable modern energy services. A number of specialised institutions have been established such as the Regional Association of Energy Regulators for Eastern and Southern Africa (RAERESA) and the Eastern Africa Power Pool. COMESA has also

developed and adopted the COMESA Model Energy Policy Framework which has introduced reforms in the energy sector.

Acting Permanent Secretary in Zambia's Ministry of Energy Mr Mwape Chipala said hydropower projects can become important drivers of sustainable economic growth in Africa and it is also cleaner than some other technologies and more predictable than solar or wind and can be used for complimentary activities such as irrigation and flood control.

UNIDO Senior Technical Expert Mr LIU Heng pledged the UN's support for countries to transform the access to energy.

"UNIDO stands with you. UNIDO will be a platform for technology and knowledge transfer, innovation and investments for Small Hydropower. We work with Member States to help them realise their energy and climate ambitions".

Key partners to the international training included the International Centre on Small Hydro Power (ICSHP) and the Southern African Centre for Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency (SACREE).

### Secretariat Open after Festive Break

The COMESA Secretariat opened for operations on 8 January 2024. Most staff have reported for work and are actively engaged in implementing the 2024 work programme. #GrowingTogetherforProsperity #RegionalIntegration Happy 2024!



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