

By Martin Kitubi

It has been years of struggle at Uganda Technical College Kichwamba in Kabalore district, where the institute relied on old, abandoned vehicles for practicals.

As technology in engineering-related courses evolved, the 72-year-old college hardly attracted students like it used to.

However, as the country moves towards transforming the college into a centre of excellence, it has been equipped with modern machinery.

The college was among the five institutions selected to benefit from the \$27.9m (sh103b) Uganda National Education Support (UNES) project, funded by the Islamic Development Bank (IDB).

With the funds, the education ministry has set up six laboratories and three workshops for practicals at the UTC-Kichwamba.

These include materials analysis laboratory for civil engineers, water analysis laboratory for water engineers and two other laboratories. There are also electrical, welding and fabrication workshops.

According to the ministry plan, the workshops will not only be used for practicals, but will also enable the students provide services to the community.

The equipment is part of the requirements set for Kichwamba to get international certification and accreditation.

Alex Kakooza, the education ministry permanent secretary,

UTC-Kichwamba ready for international accreditation



A new hostel complex at UTC-Kichwamba in Kabalore district. Once complete, the facility will accommodate over 200 students. Photo by Martin Kitubi

said the move to revamp technical colleges will transform the institutions into centres of excellence. The transformation will also respond to human resources gaps for the oil and gas sector.

"The business technical

vocational education and training (BTJET) reform process is aimed at expanding access to relevant skills training for our national development," Kakooza said in a statement read by Dr Jane Egau, the Commissioner for Teacher

Instructor Education and Training (TIET).

This was during the handover of a hostel and teaching facilities at the UTC-Kichwamba in Kabalore district on Friday.

"With the coming of oil and gas opportunities, the education

In 2008, the first phase of the Islamic Development Bank project worth \$13.8m long-term loan, covered UTC-Elgon and UTC-Lira as well as the National Teachers College (NTC) Unyama in Gulu. The focus of the project was on improving the quality of science teachers at NTC Unyama.

The first phase was completed and all the above colleges are operating in the new teaching facilities with training equipment and other instructional material.

Under phase two, \$14.1m covered UTC Kichwamba, UTC Bushenyi and UTC Kyema. Major works at all the three colleges is complete and the facilities are expected to be launched in June 2019.

PROJECT STATUS

ministry is required to avail the required manpower. Part of it is to equip our colleges to address the challenges," Egau said.

Currently, the education ministry is reviewing the curriculum for technical colleges in the country.

The colleges were selected to support Uganda Petroleum Institute-Kigumba (UPIK) and UTC-Kichwamba, which will focus on oil and gas courses.

Under the new arrangement, Ugandans who will be trained at these institutions will acquire internationally certified and

accredited certificates.

This implies that learners from the above institutions will be ready to work not only in Uganda, but also globally.

Stakeholders respond

Joseph Nyakoojo, the deputy principal UTC-Kichwamba, said: "We are delighted to have the equipment. It will have impact on how we teach."

Samuel Murungi, a student of mechanical engineering said: "With the new equipment, I can handle anything on the vehicle."