

Govt asked to equip technical institutions to offer oil courses

By Robert Atuhairwe

The Government, through the education ministry, has been urged to equip technical training institutions to train and prepare more locals for the oil and gas jobs.

Hoima municipality Member of Parliament Dr Lawrence Bategeka said the discovery of oil presents an opportunity for the people to get practical skills, such as welding, metal fabrication and electrical installation, among other fields, if they are to grab jobs that will be presented by the oil sector.

Bategeka made the remarks while presiding over the handover of an Information and Communication Technology (ICT) laboratory at St Simon Peter Vocational Training Institute in Hoima municipality, on Friday.

The laboratory was funded by the MTN Foundation, in partnership with a Belgian non-governmental organisation (NGO), Enabel.

The MTN Foundation, which is the corporate social responsibility arm of MTN Uganda and Enabel, funded the institute to support the Skilling Uganda national project in vocational institutes.

The donation included 10 computers and a free internet connection for one year.

The laboratory, whose equipment cost sh64m, will also support and provide educational services to refugees from the neighbouring South



Bategeka (second-right) with officials from MTN Uganda during the commissioning of an ICT Lab at St Simon Peter Vocational Training Centre in Hoima on Friday. Photo by Robert Atuhairwe

Sudan.

Bategeka said Bunyoro needs an affirmative action in funding vocational education to get internationally accredited courses to address unemployment and poverty.

Uganda has no international accreditation facility, the few institutions offering training in oil and gas, usually get external examiners from Kenya. Kenya is East Africa's headquarters for City and Guilds and American Welding Society Certificate.

Bategeka implored the youth to embrace vocational education, since it trains people

to use their hands and produce goods and services required by the population.

"There is need for the local leaders to change the mindset of the people, to embrace vocational skilling," he added.

Dorcas Muhwezi, the general manager, customer experience at MTN Uganda, said the donations will help skill students for the 21st century job market, by enabling them to access technical and vocational information online, through open education resources.

Muhwezi further noted

that the decision to support vocational institutions was based on the fact that vocational training is a sure way of addressing unemployment, which is a major issue for the youth in Uganda.

Richard Luna Alikira, the principal of the institute, said the laboratory will ease their learning as they will be able to download study material, which has been a huge challenge in the past.

Alikira emphasised the need for the Government to equip technical training institutions, since many of them are

struggling to acquire materials and programmes that can teach internationally accredited courses.

Harriet Kihumuro, a senior education officer with Hoima district local government and a board member of the institution, lauded MTN, saying the Government cannot reach everywhere because of limited financial resources.

"As we are all aware, today, the role of ICT in education cannot be underestimated. ICT plays a critical role in shaping the desirable 21st century work and life skills," she said.