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## UGANDA: International university approved

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Uganda has approved the setting up of an international university that will partner with institutions from around the world to deliver accredited courses and degree programmes to students in Uganda and other East African countries as well as Southern Sudan and Nigeria.

The five member countries of the East African Community, **EAC**, are Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda.

On 13 January the chairman of Uganda's National Council for Higher Education announced that the government had licensed the International University of East Africa, **IUEA** to offer tertiary education, according to the local newspaper **New Vision**.

It quoted the university's council chairman, Dr Silim Nahdy, as saying fees would range between US\$1,000 and \$3,000, and its Scottish Vice-chancellor Professor Brian Smart as urging Ugandans to use the opportunity to acquire quality higher education.

IUEA is located on five hectares of land in Kampala, the Ugandan capital, and is supported by the Pearl of Africa Foundation and Trust. So far US\$20 million has been invested in the project, which New Vision said had attracted some 3,000 students.

The IUEA will focus on providing international quality higher education and training programmes aimed at developing a skilled labour force as well as carrying out research relevant to the needs and opportunities of Uganda and the region.

Its website reports that access programmes for management and mechanical engineering will be launched in April 2011. During the next five years, IUEA will also offer a wide range of courses from foundation to postgraduate level in subjects such as engineering, business and management, health sciences, petroleum engineering, energy and water management, agriculture, hospitality, education and entrepreneurship.

Eltayeb Mohamed Abdelgadir, a researcher at the Sudan-based Agricultural Research Corporation, welcomed the new development, telling University World News: "IUEA will provide good opportunities for pursuing higher education for Southern Sudanese students from the diaspora and within Sudan."

Indeed, higher education opportunities in Southern Sudan have improved rapidly in recent months. The December 2010 **relocation** of three Southern Sudan institutions - the universities of Juba, Bahr al-Ghazal and Upper Nile - that were transferred to Khartoum from the late 1980s due to the civil war in the south, brought home some 3,500 Southern Sudanese students, staff and their families.

The new institution in Uganda will benefit from the Inter-University Council of East Africa Bill, a **regional collaboration initiative** which will enable students to move freely across EAC country borders and institutions via a credit transfer arrangement.

Mouhamad Mpezamihigo, Vice Rector for academic affairs and chairman of the research coordination committee at the Islamic University in Uganda, told *University World News* there was a lot of ICT work to be done across East Africa to tackle the resource and facilities challenges faced by universities.

This would be assisted by the new under-sea cable that has arrived on East Africa's shores, and would include developing national and regional wireless and broadband internet and communication infrastructures.

Further, Mpezamihigo said, universities in the region needed to build capacity, integrate curricula with new technology, harmonise technologies among EAC universities and use ICTs for teacher training and to provide opportunities for distance and lifelong learning.

The new university, Mpezamihigo concluded, was a step along the EAC journey to develop a knowledge society, though its real impact on higher education remained to be seen.

\* A conference titled "**ICT In Higher Education for 2011**" will be held in Pretoria on 17-18 March. It is aimed at promoting the integration of ICT into African higher education, to facilitate easily accessible, affordable and high quality education.