

# MAK commissions construction of sh2.4b facility

By Agnes Nantambi

Makerere University has started the construction of a sh2.4b lecture theatre for plant breeders.

The facility, funded by the World Bank, is being constructed under the University Regional Centre for Crop Improvement (MaRCCI) project. The project trains masters and doctoral students in plant breeding through use of scientific assessment and manipulation to produce better crop varieties, which are high-yielding and respond well to climate and disease challenges and improve nutritional content.

The vice-chancellor, Prof. Barnabas Nawangwe, while officiating at the breaking-of-the-ground ceremony at the University Agriculture Research Institute Kabanyoro (MUARIK), advised the researchers to refocus their minds on things which can impact the country.

Nawangwe, who also unveiled a new generator worth sh73m, procured by the same project, applauded the college of agriculture for maintaining a high standard in research, saying it was the second most research-intensive college in Makerere.

"As a college, you have a huge responsibility to ensure that a lot of innovations are embraced to realise sustainable supply of food to the African continent," he said.

Makerere University is among the beneficiaries of the World Bank loan extended to the Government under the ACE II Project, aimed at promoting regional specialisation among participating universities to deliver high quality training and research.

Nawangwe applauded the MaRCCI project director for applying for funds from the World Bank, saying it has helped Makerere remain a research-intensive university.

He urged the parliamentary committee on research to visit the different research projects in the university, rather than sitting in Parliament and allocate funds for research on the basis of no work done.

Nawangwe also challenged the media to desist from focusing on only negative reporting.

"Makerere is your premier university, the best black university in the world; you should understand that and protect it. Do not always look out for news that destroys it, we are just serving this great university for a time, but we want to leave it better than we found it," he said.

The agriculture college principal, Prof. Bernard Bashaasha, applauded Nawangwe for being supportive of the college.

He said MaRCCI is moving the university forward in training, research, publications, innovations and outreach.

"MaRCCI contributes to internationalisation, with 40% of the students enrolled being foreigners. This has boosted visibility, teaching capacity and infrastructure of the university," Bashaasha said.

The dean of the School of Agricultural Sciences, Dr Blasio Sentumba Mukasa, reiterated that out of the 14 graduate programmes offered at the school, two regional programmes (MSc plant breeding and seed systems and PhD plant breeding and biotechnology, are associated with MaRCCI project).

The centre director, Dr Richard Edema, said it has recorded a number of achievements by investing in infrastructure, training and research.