

Promise Tracker

UNRA lives up to its word, delivers Aswa Bridge and several others

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THE PROMISE:

One of the areas that the ruling National Resistance Movement (NRM) party committed itself to channel its energy to in the period between 2016 and 2021 was the improvement of infrastructure and facilities under the water transport.

On the morning of Monday, April 18, 2016, the acting station manager of the Uganda National Roads Authority (UNRA) in Lira, Ms Prancy Harriet Ogam, appeared before the district leadership where she promised that Aswa Bridge would be constructed within a record 12 months.

"The contract is 12 months. So these are effective and efficient people, they will deliver the project within the 12 months. I'm very sure because they have already mobilised (equipment and funds)," Ms Ogam said.

She was speaking a few days after a contract for the reconstruction work had been awarded to the Chinese firm, Chongqing International Construction Corporation (CICO), a subsidiary of

Chongqing Foreign Trade and Economic Cooperation Group Company Limited (CFTEC).

CICO is also the contractor working on the \$350 million Entebbe-Kampala Express highway.

The contract was awarded several months after the bridge, which is located in Paranga on the Lira-Kitgum Road and connects several districts in northern Uganda, including Abim, Agago, Pader, Kitgum and Lamwo districts and also helps to connect Uganda to South Sudan, collapsed on the night of October 20, 2015.

By the time it caved in, the bridge had clocked 65 years of existence. It had been constructed by the colonialists at a time when flow of traffic and tonnage of commodity goods between the Acholi and Lango sub-regions were minimal.

A drastic increase in the population and

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Price. The cost of constructing the new Aswa Bridge.

New special report. The **Promise Tracker** is *Daily Monitor's* weekly special feature that will track the promises made by leaders of all categories as well as public agencies to the people. The aim is to cause accountability, show status and analyse whether it was a realistic, unrealistic or empty promise.

economy activity led to an increase in the volumes of traffic and cargo passing through the bridge, but there was little activity in the form of maintenance service.

The only time it received some attention during the post-independence era was between June 2010 and 2011 when it was given a facelift and work was commissioned in the middle of 2011.

It was not possible to establish what the scope of work entailed, but it would appear that what was done did not do much to help it cope with the upsurge in volumes of

traffic and sizes of cargo moving across it, especially with the boom in trade between Uganda and South Sudan. That perhaps explains why it buckled under the weight of a truck that had reportedly been carrying more than 600 bags of cement.

Following the accident, UNRA was forced to deploy boats to help people make the crossing. Traffic was also diverted to Agweng-Arom-Aweng road.

In February 2016, the Executive Director of UNRA, Ms Allen Kagina, was forced to make the journey to Paranga to examine and assess the extent of the damage caused.

Shortly afterwards, Mr Allan Ssempebwa Kyobe, the UNRA media relations manager, issued another statement in Kampala in which he said the bridge would be wider and longer than the one which had caved in.

Mr Kyobe said the new structure would be 24.9 metres longer and would have three spans, two more than the one span that the damaged one had.

"The new bridge will have two lanes of

MONITOR'S POSITION

UNRA deserves a commendation for having delivered on this project within the shortest time possible.

While it is true that the project was completed a few months after the one year period within which it had been promised, the extension to the date of completion was not as long as what the nation has seen with other projects.

UNRA also deserves a commendation for delivering on other bridges that have so far been worked on.

One of the biggest challenges has been the failure to work on bridges, many of which had been constructed prior to independence. We now need a comprehensive plan to upgrade the bridges. The nation does not need to wait until a bridge caves in before it is fixed.

Development. The new Aswa Bridge (below) has two lanes of 3.5 metres each, and a 1.5-metre walkway on either side for non-motorised traffic. PHOTO COURTESY OF UNRA



