

Analysts say as Uganda continues to invest heavily in road infrastructure, it is crucial to address bottlenecks cited in several projects.

BY YAHUDUKITUNZI

Delays and abandoned works are stalling Uganda's multi-trillion shilling road projects, causing billions in losses and frustrating road users nationwide.

According to the Auditor General's report of 2025, a review of 67 major road projects valued at over Shs10.62 trillion shows nearly half of the projects are either behind schedule or suspended, highlighting gaps in contractor capacity, funding, and oversight.

The assessment found that 28 projects worth Shs3.554 trillion have experienced delays ranging from six months to over three years. Additionally, 13 projects have been abandoned or suspended by contractors.

The affected roads, per the report, include the Mityana-Mubende-Kyegegwa Road, Masindi-Biiso-Kabaale-Kizirankumbi Road, Busega-Mpigi Expressway, Najjanankumbi-Busabala Road.

Others include Munyonyo Spur Interchange and Service Roads, Ntungamo-Kabale-Katuna Road, and Olwiyi-Pakwach Road.

Loans were taken out to undertake the roadworks, with the report describing the roads as being crucial for trade, tourism, and regional connectivity. This makes the delays, Auditor General (AG) Edward Akol notes, particularly damaging.

The delays were mainly due to a lack of capacity by the contractors and delayed payments for completed works. The latter affected the cash flows of the contractors while triggering delays in granting the right-of-way, and stalled compensation of Project Affected Persons (PAPs).

The delays had resulted in the government paying at least \$17,695,527.17 (Shs63.15 billion) in commitment charges since the delays in works also affect the uptake of loans by the government. The delays of work also resulted in traffic inconveniences, loss of project time, and increased project costs.

Glaring oversights

The report urges the accounting officer of the Ministry of Works and Transport to strengthen coordination with Parliament and the Finance ministry to ensure timely funding for road projects. It also recommends stricter vetting of contractors, faster compensation of affected communities, and enhanced monitoring to prevent further delays.

AG Akol also reviewed the status of land compensations for selected government projects and noted that there were delays in compensation of PAPs, which delayed the acquisition of right of way. The report shows that 19,082 PAPs valued at Shs848.46 billion were assessed for four construction projects, namely Bukasa Port, SGR project, Tororo-Gulu Metre Gauge and Gulu Logistics Hub project.

"As at June 30, 2025, 11,315 (59 percent) PAPs valued at Shs315.22 billion had been paid off, leaving a balance of 7,767 (41 percent) PAPs worth Shs533.23 billion as unpaid. I also observed that 37,595 PAPs were assessed at a value of Shs1.16 billion for seven donor-funded projects. As at June 30, 2025, a total

Govt runs into speed bump after Shs10.6t projects stall



Government officials including Works and Transport minister Gen Katumba Wamala inspect works on Nakawuka-Kasanje-Mpigi Road in January. PHOTO/COURTESY OF MOWT X HANDLE

of 30,998 (82 percent) PAPs valued at Shs842.44 billion had been paid. The balance of 6,597 (18 percent) PAPs valued at Shs320.13 billion had not been compensated," AG Akol wrote in the report.

In addition to delayed compensation of PAPs, he also noted that "out of 1,908.9 acres acquired for the SGR project, a total of 506.9 acres remained without titles". He further noted that "8,263 land titles were secured from PAPs for projects implemented under the former UNRA." Of these, AG Akol noted that "4,055 (49 percent) titles were yet to be subdivided to acquire the land titles and returned to the owners (PAPs). The delay in compensation of PAPs was attributed to the inadequate budgets, while the delay in titling of acquired land was mainly due to lengthy and bureaucratic land expropriation and titling processes involving multiple MDAs."

Consequently, the projects are exposed to encroachment and land disputes, re-occupation of the land by already compensated PAPs, escalating compensation costs, delays in implementation, and possible financial loss to the government.

"Government allocated a Road Maintenance Development Grant of Shs1 billion to each of the 176 Local Govern-

ments (LGs), which included 135 districts, 10 cities, and 31 municipal councils, resulting into a total of Shs176 billion being transferred to LGs in the financial year 2024/25. The grant is specifically designed to support road maintenance within these LGs," part of the report reads.

Need to crack the whip

Saturday Monitor learnt that the Mityana-Mubende-Kyegegwa Road project works commenced last year and was expected to be completed in 18 months. The project was expected to cost Shs190 billion.

The Busega-Mpigi Expressway, which had earlier been projected to cost Shs547 billion, kicked off in May 2020. The road starts in Busega in Kampala and takes a South-Westerly direction to Mpigi Town through 21 villages, spread over two town councils (Kyengeru and Mpigi) and two sub-counties (Kiringete and Wakiso). Last year, the Ministry of Works and Transport (MoWT) said some additional €217m (Shs915.1 billion) had already been approved by the African Development Bank (AfDB) to facilitate the completion of the project.

A review of the LGs' status of road equipment in 148 LGs revealed that 19 LGs did not have road equipment

units. It was also discovered that 137 LGs had inadequate road equipment units. These included critical road equipment such as excavators, motor graders, vibratory rollers, dump trucks, bulldozers, chain loaders and wheel loaders among others. A total of 119 LGs had non-functional equipment to undertake road works during the financial year. Limited availability of the road equipment delays implementation of road works, thus affecting service delivery.

"Corruption is in the DNA of this government. President Museveni cannot fight corruption after 40 years in power. The only way to fight corruption in Uganda is to change the government," Mr Yusuf Serunkuma, an academic, told *Saturday Monitor*, adding, "In a government where Shs10 trillion is stolen, it is deeply disturbing."

Analysts insist that as Uganda continues to invest heavily in road infrastructure, addressing these bottlenecks is crucial. Without decisive action, the country risks escalating costs, frustrated communities, and delayed delivery of critical transport networks that underpin national development.

"By the time you award a contract, you should already have the funds secured. How do you engage contractors when there is no money? When work is abandoned or suspended, it shows the system is rotten. A contractor should only sign an agreement if (the) government has the capacity to pay and support the work," Mr Sultan Juma Kakuba, a senior lecturer at Kyambogo University, said in reference to the Mubende project that has been pending for a long time.

"Once you sign a contract, it should mean you have the capacity to deliver. But corruption has undermined this process. Projects stall for years, (the) government loses money, and nothing is done. If work fails to progress, something must be done immediately," he added.

Last year, the House approved Shs10 trillion to address major road challenges across the country. A field inspection of the implemented road maintenance works in 148 LGs carried out during the period between October and December 2025, however, revealed that 66 LGs—measuring 1,275 kilometers—were incomplete at the time of audit inspections.

It illuminated "broken culverts, drainage, and uneven carriage ways with water ponding among others. This affected timely service delivery," audit disclosed, adding that "affecting officers explained that maintenance of road works were affected by limited funding for road maintenance, heavy rains, inadequate road construction equipment and unregulated carriage load control on the LG roads."

The Auditor General asked the accounting officers of the LGs to ensure district engineers complete all unfinished road works, and all defective roads should be rectified.

Mr Timothy Chemonges, a researcher, observed that nearly half of major road projects stall or face suspension due to shared responsibility between contractors and government agencies.

"Most contracts already include penalty clauses for delays, performance guarantees, and liquidated damages. The real weakness lies in enforcement: when authorities fail to activate penalties, terminate non-performing contractors, and underperformance persists," he observed.

Mr Chemonges added: "When government payments lag, contractors slow down, scale back operations, or suspend activity altogether. This not only extends project timelines but also inflates costs through interest charges and commitment fees—ultimately burdening taxpayers."

To ensure timely completion, Chemonges urged the government to strengthen contract management, ring-fence project funds, enforce performance bonds, and publish transparent progress reports.

Mr Julius Byamukama, a civil engineer, argued that the situation reflects both governance weaknesses and political pressures. "Weak institutional oversight, poor project preparation, and inadequate monitoring all contribute to delays. At the same time, political incentives often prioritise announcing large projects over ensuring readiness and implementation capacity."

Mr Allan Ssempebwa, MoWT's senior communications officer, confirmed that contractors had suspended work due to financial constraints. He explained that the projects have since resumed: "It was known previously, but contractors have now restarted the work. The Government of Uganda committed to reviving all these projects, and as I speak, contractors are back on site. The suspension is now history."

Mr Ssempebwa noted that Gen Katumba Wamala, the MoWT minister, recently inspected projects such as the Mityana-Mubende and Masaka-Matukula roads. He added that the Minister of State for Works and Transport, Mr Musa Ecuweru, also inspected bridges at Greater Masaka and Mpigi, which have now picked up momentum.

AUDIT FINDINGS

In the 2025 report, the Auditor General said he reviewed a sample of 67 road projects with a total contract value of Shs10.62 trillion to assess the progress of works against the work programme. He made the following observations:

- 28 projects worth Shs3.55 trillion experienced significant delays ranging from six months to over three years.
- 13 road projects had been abandoned, or works had been suspended by the contractors at the time of writing his reports. These include; Busega - Mpigi Expressway, Najjanankumbi - Busabala, Ntungamo-Kabale-Katuna and Olwiyi - Pakwach, among other roads. The delays were mainly due to the lack of capacity by the contractors and delayed compensation of project affected persons.