

Incompetence. The roads, according to contract terms, should have been finished in 2014. However, municipal officials blame the contractor for the mess.

BY MONITOR TEAM
editorial@ug.nationmedia.com

SOROTI/MBALE. Soroti and Mbale municipalities, some of the beneficiaries of World Bank-funded projects, risk losing out on more support from the finance institution over delays, officials have said.

While assessing projects in Soroti municipality last week, a team from the World Bank noted delays on the seven-kilometre roads.

The World Bank team is in the country to assess the state of its funded projects channelled through Uganda Support to Municipal Infrastructural Development Project (USMID).

According to the initial contract terms, the Soroti projects were supposed to have been completed in 2014, but works on Central, Liverpool, Cemetery, Serere and Alanyu roads have stalled.

"All these delays cropped up because there is a parallel line between the political wing and stakeholders who seem not to work as a group. Hope you [leaders] are moving forward to address this," Mr Martin Onyach Olaa, a senior specialist with World Bank, said.

Plinth Technical Services that was contracted to do the work at a cost of Shs7.1 billion attributed the delays to locals who do not want to pave way for development.

The work included digging trenches, installing street lights and building walkways on the roads.

Mr Emmanuel Banya, the Town Clerk, however, blamed the contractor for the delays.

"We own some of our failures in these stalled projects, but to a greater extent, Plinth Technical Services must carry the blame," Mr Banya said.

Mr John Kasasira, the director Plinth construction company, said: "... we don't have any contract with Soroti municipal council that is running, we did the works that we ought to have done."

The Lands ministry has contracted Kagga Consultation Services to intervene so that the council can get another contractor on site to have the project finished before June 2018.

Threat

Mr Joseph Walter Pade, the commissioner for urban development at the Lands ministry, told stakeholders recently that the municipal council risks losing funds under USMID Phase II if the projects under the first one are not completed.

"Once the project fails to be finished before June 2018, you will have to look for other sources internally to work on these roads," he said.

"This project is for results and if things are not clear, they [World Bank] will not hesitate to exclude Soroti Municipality from the project," he added.

Mr Paul Omer, the municipal mayor, said such works need more supervision.

"I don't know whether there was any supervision before releasing such funds. We have acquired a new

World Bank cites delays in Mbale, Soroti municipality road projects



Construction. Road works on Republic Street Road in Mbale Municipality. World Bank officials accuse the municipality officials of delays.
FILE PHOTO

engineer who we hope will bring sanity to the projects," Mr Omer said.

He said as soon as the pending issues are addressed, the new contractor will be expected to finish the works within the limited timeframe.

The Resident District Commissioner, Mr Isaac Kawooya, said some municipal leaders were hood-winked in the project.

"It's evident some members within messed up this project. Heads have to roll over this," Mr Kawooya said.

In 2012, the municipality also failed to attract billions of Shillings from World Bank for the construction of a modern market. Other municipalities such as Lira, Gulu, Arua and Mbale benefitted.

This newspaper understands that Plinth Technical Services is locked in a dispute with the municipal council after the latter terminated the contract over the delays.

Shs10b

THE CONSTRUCTION COST OF ROADS IN MBALE TOWN.

World Bank officials also visited Mbale municipality and found that the situation is not any different.

The bank funded the construction of roads in Mbale town at a cost of Shs10.2 billion in 2014.

The roads that still need work include Republic Street, Nabuyoga Rise, Pallisa and Mugisu hill.

While meeting municipal leaders at the weekend, Mr Olaa said the officials have consistently failed to implement the projects under the USMID.



Shoddy. A section of Republic Street, one of the Mbale municipal roads that have been under construction since 2014. PHOTO BY LEONARD MUKOOLU

The municipal council was awarded the contract to tarmac the roads using Plinth Technical Services in June 2014. The company was expected to complete the work on the 3.14km roads by June 2015.

The municipal council kept extending the contract to allow the contractor finish the work but in vain.

"The council resolved to terminate their contract after extending it for more than four times," Mr James Kutosi, the municipal spokesperson, said.

But Plinth Technology told this newspaper yesterday that 92 per cent of the work had been done and that the delays were caused by the client (Municipal authorities) who kept on redrawing the plans.

The firm also said the money extended to it was not adequate to complete the project yet completion of the 8 per cent works has been allocated Shs7 billion.

Mr Akim Watenveri a resident

of Mbale Municipality, however, accused the municipal leaders of neglecting their work.

"They [Mbale municipal leaders] have failed to heed to our advice. We are going to have further discussions with government to consider whether Mbale should continue getting funding under the programme,"

MR MARTIN ONYACH OLAA, SENIOR SPECIALIST WITH WORLD BANK

"We raised an alarm over the capacity of the local contractor to handle this project, but our leaders ignored us. This is what you get when you have leaders who cannot listen," he said.

However, Mr Aziz Naswagi, the chairperson of the works in the municipal, said the public has contributed to unnecessary delays by demanding changes in

designs and filing complaints.

Mr Ayub Masaba, another resident, blames government for failing to effectively monitor the project.

Court battle

However, Mr Saviro Katsigaire, the director of physical planning and urban development in the ministry of Lands, refuted the claims, saying it is the municipal leaders to blame for their inconsistencies in implementing the project.

"The contractor was not engaged professionally and they didn't adhere to the advice of the ministry," Mr Katsigaire said.

He said the municipal council will face court battle with the contractor, who has already sued them following the termination of the contract.

Mr Katsigaire said he has directed the municipal council to write a report outlining when they will finish up the project.

"They should write to the World Bank and ministry explaining how these project will be done indicating the aligning the expenditures," he said.

Mr Kutosi said there was no need to panic since the council procured a new contractor to complete the works.

"We are in final stages finalising the roads. It's just few things remaining like the drainage and street lights," Mr Kutosi said.

Mbale municipal council has been incurring extra costs since the construction started.

For instance in March 2015, the council was forced to spend an extra Shs744 million on removing murrum from the Republic Street after silting.

Reported by Simon Peter Emwamu,