

Wakiso seeks Shs50b for roads

Shortage. In the 2017/18 Budget, government cut the usual 100 per cent funding to district road funds to 83 per cent, indicating a 17 per cent reduction.

BY JAMES KABENGWA
editorial@ug.nationmedia.com

WAKISO. Wakiso District local leadership is seeking Shs50b to revamp the poor road network to facilitate trade and movement of people in the area.

Mr Samuel Mwesigwa, the Wakiso District director of engineering, said the 536km murram roads need to be upgraded to bitumen standards to stimulate development as well as decongest the main roads that connect to the city.

"If we can get at least Shs50b for roads annually, we can be able to construct 25 kilometres of tarmac," he said during a recent interview with *Daily Monitor*.

Currently, the district has tarmacked about 20 kilometres of the 536kms.

"The government should look at us [Wakiso] strategically as a unique district. We surround the entire capital and we must therefore have good roads to ease traffic pressure on the [Kampala] City roads."

SAMUEL MWESIGWA, WAKISO DISTRICT DIRECTOR OF ENGINEERING

Although upgrading one kilometre gravel road to bitumen standard (tarmac) costs at about Shs1billion, overall, the district is allocated Shs9.5 billion annually for road works, according to Mr Mwesigwa.

"You can compare the 536km of road against what is available from the government. We will never tarmac our roads at that pace. With the available funds, it means it would take us over 50 years to tarmac all the roads," Mr Mwesigwa said.

"The government should look at us strategically as a unique district. We surround the entire capital and we must therefore have good roads to ease traffic pressure on the city roads," he explained.

Although the district recently

acquired new road equipment from government, including two tipper trucks, a grader, roller, water browser and a wheel loader, he said they are sceptical whether they will receive money for fuel and maintenance.

"We have signed for them (new road equipment), but are not yet assured of fuel," he said.

Priority

Wakiso District chairperson Matia Lwanga Bwanika said infrastructure development should be prioritised to enable the district fully use the new road equipment.

"Road maintenance has always been a challenge to the district due to lack of enough funds and this sometimes makes it impossible for them to offer support to town councils and sub-counties to fix bad roads," he said.

According to Mr Bwanika, being close to Kampala, the district road network carry heavy high traffic volumes at all times since Wakiso is the biggest supplier of construction materials to Kampala and other neighbouring districts such as Mukono.

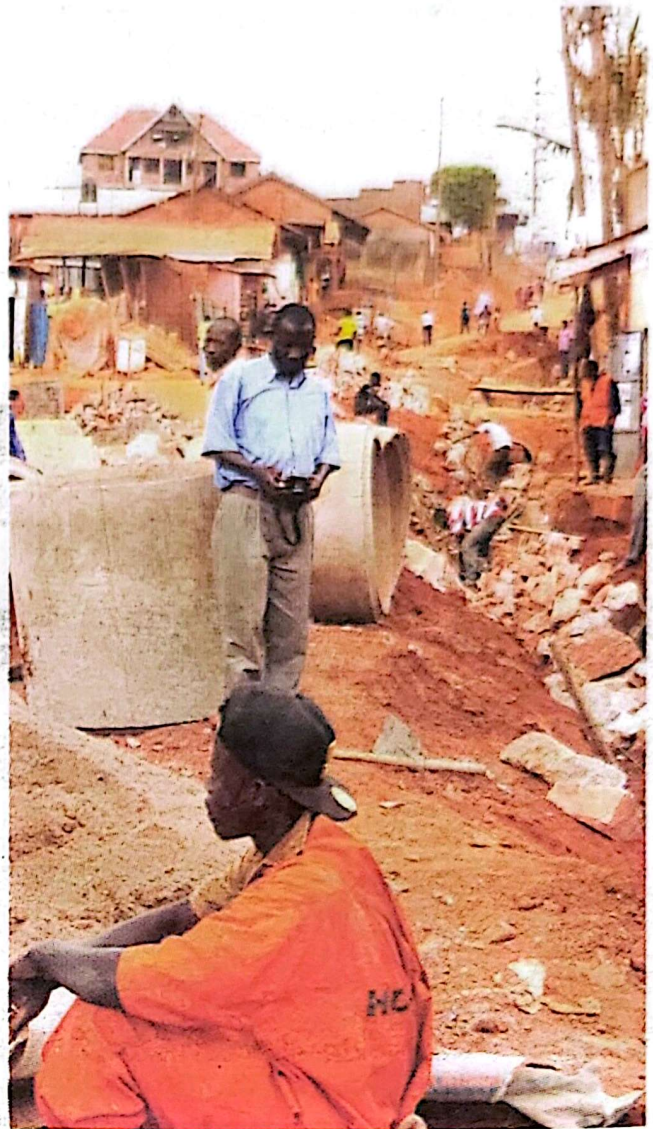
"Such heavy loading and high volumes coupled with high cost road construction materials, cannot be sustained on our gravel roads unless quality is improved," Mr Bwanika said.

Private developers

Mr Bwanika said the district is also faced with a challenge of private developers who encroached on road reserves. He said the development has hampered the district plans of expanding the roads.

Strategies of improvement

Mr Mwesigwa said engagements have been made at various levels with various stakeholders such as KCCA, Unra, the Uganda Road Fund, ministry of Finance, urban councils in Wakiso District.



Funding gaps. Contractors work on one of the roads in Wakiso District recently. PHOTO BY JAMES KABENGWA

Mr Luke Lukoda, the Wakiso District chief administrative officer, said the district is also lobbying the Ministry of Works and Transport to consider Wakiso as a zonal centre for other road equipment that will back up the central region.

Regular maintenance

"We are also engaging the Prime Minister and other key notable ministers to discuss modalities of financing road rehabilitation in this rapidly growing district," he said.

Available data from the dis-

trict's engineering department reveals that only 10 per cent of the roads are in good state while 90 per cent require regular maintenance and rehabilitation.

Recently, Works minister Monica Azuba said the ministry will work closely with Uganda Road Fund officials to ensure districts get substantive funding for road works.

Funding

Currently, district road fund ranges from Shs400m to Shs800m.