

# Oil roads create opportunities for tourism, agriculture

By Pascal Kwesiga

The 238km Kigumba-Kyenjojo road has, for a couple of years, been on the list of roads Government planned to construct. The road which is an important link between the districts in the Albertine region from Tororo through Bunyoro to northern Uganda has been in a sorry state for a long time.

The delayed construction of the road has also been a subject of petitions to Parliament and demonstrations by the residents.

Many times, especially during the rainy season, segments of this road would be submerged hampering movement and causing loss to traders and farmers.

But now, the Government is moving on with the construction of this and other roads in the Albertine Graben, primarily to aid the extraction of oil from the Albertine basin.

The Uganda National Roads Authority (UNRA) has named at least 10 roads as critical oil roads that should be constructed by 2020 to aid the movement of equipment for oil facilities. The facilities to be constructed include the refinery, international airport and the pipeline among others.

Many of the oil roads will traverse parts of Bulisa, Masindi and Hoima districts in Bunyoro and other Albertine Graben areas outside Bunyoro. They will reach as far as Ntoroko to the Uganda-DR Congo border. The roads will pass through Ssembabule and Rakai districts in central Uganda and others connect to northern Uganda.

For the Masindi-Bulisa-Wanseko road, the authority has signed contracts with China's Communications Construction Company, China Chongqing International Construction Corporation (CICCO) will construct the Hoima-Butiaba-Wanseko road and China Wuyi will construct the Buhimba-Nalweyo-Kakumiro road.

UNRA will most likely issue commencement and possession of sites orders to the companies early this month. It has already secured the finance ministry 'no objection' to commence civil works and at least 30% of the right of way has been acquired to enable works commence.

## Roads under construction

However, for some stretches from Kyenjojo to the north through Bunyoro, construction has started. Construction will be done in three parts; the Kyenjojo-Kabwoya (120km), funded by the World Bank, Kabwoya-Bulima (66km) and Bulima-Bulima (52km), financed by the African Development Bank.

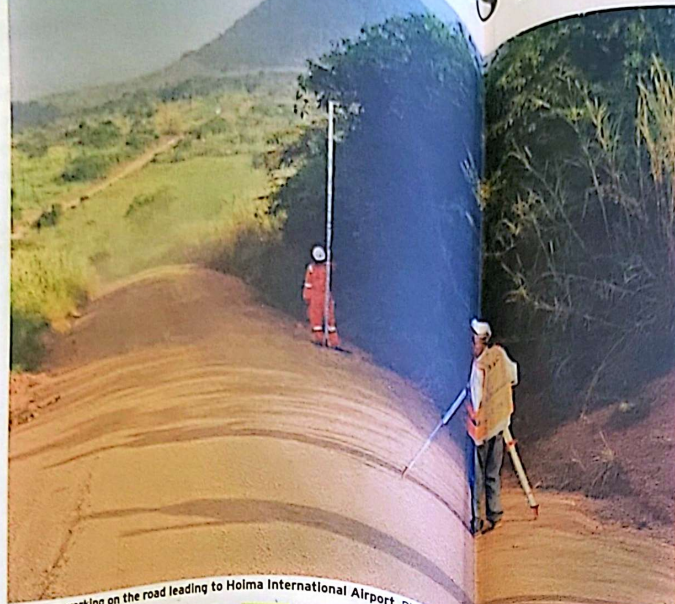
The Kyenjojo-Kabwoya stretch was launched in 2015 by President Yoweri Museveni. This joins Kyenjojo, Kagadi, Muhorro and Mabaale townships and a number of commercial centres in between. Then early last month, the Prime Minister, Dr Ruhakana Rugunda launched construction of the Kigumba-Bulima stretch.

The UNRA says 36% of the work on the Kyenjojo-Kabwoya and 57% on the Kabwoya-Bulima stretches is done.

Residents here say even though the roads are not yet complete, the work done was already unlocking opportunities for the populations there. For example, more businesses, including agricultural value addition facilities such as maize mills, are being established in a number of trading centres on the road.

More commuter taxis are plying the roads, which have already considerably reduced travel periods.

**Construction of the roads that traverse the Albertine Graben areas have made the residents in these areas realise the potential it carries especially in boosting agriculture and tourism**



Surveyors working on the road leading to Hoima International Airport. Photo by Richard Sanya

"Before construction started, it would take one to two hours or more to travel from Hoima one to Masindi in a taxi, (a distance of 57km). There were lots of potholes on the road. Now, it takes one about 40 minutes," Ketgan Businge, a taxi stout, said.

## Impact already felt

The areas through which these roads traverse are, like most of Uganda, agricultural. The area, like most of Uganda, is mainly grown include maize, rice, coffee, cocoa, horticultural crops, beans, ground nuts and bananas.

Some of these areas have started putting up makeshift storage facilities, especially for maize and value addition facilities.

The Kigumba-Bulima stretch is a critical link between Masindi and Kiryandongo districts and parts of northern Uganda.

But Zachaeus Meteya, a resident of Pakanyi observes that "roads can only boost people's incomes if those living in these areas purposed to work harder. They need to be mobilised into production activities," he said.

He pointed out that the Masindi-Kafu road which was constructed some years ago has not necessarily translated into increased incomes for the people in areas on the road.

## Unlocking potential

The Hoima district production officer, Charles Kajura, said Hoima had been a food basket for many parts of Uganda and beyond, even before the construction of the oil roads started.

"Hoima is producing a lot of food. When famine paralysed many parts of Uganda last year, trucks from various parts of Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania collected food from here," he added.

However, the trucks could not get to some parts of the district owing to the poor road network, and middlemen were employed to get agricultural produce in small vehicles to



Farmers in the region have opened up under-utilised land for farming

Once the roads have been tarmacked, Kajura said, the trucks will be able to get eliminated. He is optimistic that the new roads will stimulate production to levels never witnessed before.

"Some areas have been producing complete, production is going to shoot up significantly. People are already growing roads are bad, and we have noted people want to grow crops on large scale," he said. Over ten years ago, there were chunks of under utilised land in Hoima, Enyanga

and value addition facilities set up.

Kajura is also optimistic that a good road infrastructure will encourage investors to set up value addition facilities. But the ever tumbling prices of maize crop sometimes demoralise farmers.

Kajura said a kilogramme of maize grain is currently sold at sh600, while rice is at about sh2,000 for a kilogramme.

"Improved road infrastructure is part of agricultural modernisation. Farmers are losing a lot of money by selling maize grain to middlemen. A kilogramme of maize flour is selling at about sh1,500. Farmers sell maize grains because there are no value addition facilities in their areas," Kajura said.

He noted that there is an investor who has established facilities in Kiziranzumbi sub-county, and is exporting horticulture products from Hoima to Europe.

"He will go to more sub-counties as the roads get better. The people

in Kiziranzumbi now have a huge market for horticulture products. More investors will come because many areas where the roads will be constructed are also getting electricity," Kajura stated.

The mayor of Hoima town, Mary Mugasa, is equally optimistic about the development.

"We are mobilising people to engage in commercial agriculture. Many of them are taking heed, but they have to be assisted, especially to have their land properly demarcated and titled. This would help them access financial assistance from banks to improve their farms and turn commercial," Mugasa said.

## Tourism

Tourism is another sector in Bunyoro that will be boosted by the road construction.

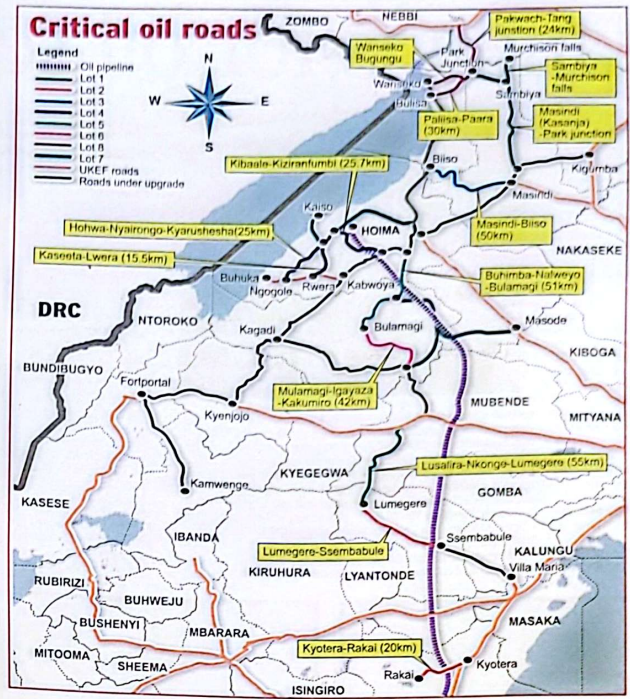
Collin Kakiza, the head of product development and international marketing at the Uganda Tourism Board said the sector will improve access to the tourism sites thus

increasing the number of visitors. He was speaking at the dialogue of the Association of Uganda Oil and Gas Service Providers at Hotel Africana recently.

He said many tour and travel agencies will open up offices in the region while accommodation facilities and other related services will also improve. Kakiza said innovations in the industry would have to be improved to attract more people to the region.

"With the construction of Hoima International Airport and maybe an international convention centre many sectors will grow in the region. We need to look at the sustainability of tourism in the region because it will be an important source of revenue," Kakiza said.

Apollo Rwamparo, a founder member of the Bunyoro Tourism Board, said people in the region need to be organised and trained to exploit the opportunities being created, especially in tourism and agriculture by the road construction.



## Albertine road network under construction

During the launch of the construction of Kigumba-Bulima section in Masindi, the prime Minister Dr Ruhakana Rugunda said the link will connect northern Uganda and mid-western region.

"Kigumba-Bulima is the beginning section of the road from Kyenjojo to Kigumba. The construction of the road from Kyenjojo to Bulima is already going on with support from development partners. The construction of the last section from Bulima to Kigumba will complete this important link," he said.

Yet the Kigumba-Kyenjojo road is not the only one under construction in Bunyoro and the entire Albertine Graben. Kigumba-Kyenjojo, Mubende-Kagadi-Kakumiro and Villa Maria-Ssembabule roads are not part of the over 10 critical oil roads, but they are under construction, and are important links to the Albertine graben.

The roads include: Hoima-Butiaba-Wanseko (111km), Masindi-Biiso (54km), Masindi-Bugungu through Murchison Falls National Park (80km), Kaseta-Rwera via Bugoma central forest reserve (16km), Hohwa-Nyaiorong-Kyarusesa (25km), Wanseko-Bugungu (23km), through Paraa to Tangi gate in Pakwach, Buhimba-Nalweyo-Kakindo-Kakumiro-Mubende (93km) and Lusailira-Nkongwe-Ssembabule (97km).

Others are; Kyotera-Rakai (20km), Bugungu-Bulisa (29km), Kabaale-Kiziranzumbi (30km), Kabwoya-Buhuka (43km), Karugutu-Ntoroko through Semliki National Park (55km). The network will also include Tangi junction in Paraa and Tangi gate and Emmi bridges (22km).

The Uganda National Roads Authority (UNRA) media relations manager, Allan Ssempebwa, said the roads authority has signed contracts with companies to construct the Buhimba-Nalweyo-Kakumiro, Hoima-Butiaba-Wanseko and Masindi (including Murchison Park Junction) Bulisa and Wanseko-Bugungu and Paraa Tangi gate in Pakwach roads.



Infrastructure

**57%**  
Kabwoya-Bulima works on the road have been done

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