



Installed. Solar street lights that have been installed on Edward Avenue in Masaka Municipality. PHOTO BY ALI MAMBULE

# Masaka residents demand probe into street lights project

**Issue.** They want authorities to explain why the hydro-powered street lights were replaced a few months after installation.

BY ALI MAMBULE  
editorial@ug.nationmedia.com

**MASAKA.** Masaka Town residents have called for investigations into the municipal multi-million street lights project, where new lights were replaced five months after installation.

The first set of lights were installed on all major streets within the municipality last August under the Electricity Sector Development Project (ESDP) and were to draw power from the national grid supplied by Umeme.

The project was funded by the World Bank at a tune of \$1.4m (about Sh3.5b).

However, the street lights were hastily replaced with solar-powered lights during the festive season, with

allegations that the authorities had failed to pay utility bills of Sh17m.

Mr Abas Ssonko, one of the residents, said though project implementers have assured them of constant power supply, leaders must explain why they wasted funds on the first set of street lights.

"We are not saying that solar-powered lights are bad, but we want to know how they arrived at that decision since they had already installed hydro street lights a few months ago," Mr Ssonko, said during an interview last Friday.

So far, more than 200 out of 650 hydro-powered street lights have been replaced.

Solar powered lights had been installed on Yellow Knife Road, which falls under the Uganda Support to Municipalities Infrastructure Development (USIMID) project Batch I.

Mr Swaibu Sulambaaya, also a resident, says switching to solar street lights could have been a result of poor planning by municipal leaders.

## LIGHTS

**Number.** Currently, Masaka Municipality has more than 700 electric lampposts, but Mr Afaayo is optimistic that they would all be replaced with solar within the next two years.

**Security.** He said the solar lights so far installed have not only attracted businesses, but also enhanced security in the town.

"With corruption in government projects it appears that some individuals targeted some kickbacks in the first street lighting project yet they knew that solar lights are efficient and suitable for a town like Masaka," Mr Sulambaaya said during a Baraza last week.

But to the contrary, Masaka Municipality mayor, Mr Godfrey Kayemba Afaayo, said the first set of electric street lights were part of a donation from government and since the town had spent many years in darkness, they had to embrace the project.

"There is nothing we are hiding. Whatever we are doing is aimed at changing the face of Masaka as we strive to attain a city status," Mr Afaayo said during an interview last Friday.

He added: "The Ministry of Energy not only delivered and installed the lights but also offered to pay the electricity bills for the first six months

## briefly

### Residents raise concern

**MPIGL.** Traders in Mpigi Town Council are living in fear of contracting diseases as a result of a stench emitted from dust bins and sewage pipes in the area. The traders say most of their clients have fled as a result of the choking smell, especially in the marketplace and taxi park. They say this is due to the authority's failure to ensure proper garbage collection in the area. They have tasked government to intervene before the situation worsens. [Sadat Mbogo]

### Youth task govt officials

**MASAKA.** Youth leaders in the Greater Masaka region have tasked officials of the National Agriculture Advisory Services (Naads) and Operation Wealth Creation (OWC) to deliver their heifers as ordered by President Museveni. Led by Mr Owen Peter Kazibwe, the Kalungu youth chairperson, the youth noted that the President ordered the Naads and OWC officials to give them heifers but since they assumed office in 2016, only 16 heifers have been delivered. "The 16 [heifers] were given out on the International Youth Day in Bundibugyo District and they were for only youth leaders in that district," Mr Kazibwe said. [Gertrude Mutyaba]

CONTINUES TO PAGE 10

## Residents demand probe into street light project

### Voices

"We are not saying that solar-powered lights are bad, but we want to know how they arrived at that decision since they had already installed hydro street lights a few months ago."

ABAS SSONKO,  
RESIDENT SENNYANGE  
VILLAGE

"There is nothing we are hiding. Whatever we are doing is aimed at changing the face of Masaka as we strive to attain a city status."

GODFREY KAYEMBA  
AFAAYO, MASAKA  
MUNICIPALITY MAYOR

"With corruption in government projects it appears some individuals targeted kickbacks in the first street lighting project yet they knew that solar lights are efficient and suitable for a town like Masaka."

SWAIBU SULAMBAAYA,  
RESIDENT

FROM PAGE 9

after installation."

About 10 streets in Masaka were lit by electric street lights courtesy of the donation.

Mr Afaayo said, the donation, however, came at a time when the council was also implementing the USMID project batch II, which is also funded by both the central government and the World Bank.

#### Second phase

Under USMID project, all roads within the municipality are supposed to be lit by solar powered-street lights, according to Mr Afaayo.

"The solar-powered system was considered as the most efficient way to curb darkness in the streets without accumulating additional power bills. We are spending more than Sh200m on electricity bills for street lights annually, and this is too much for the municipality which has a small revenue base," he said.

He said the solar-powered street lights, which are being used to replace the electric-powered ones are not purchased as many critics claim.

"The initial plan was to install solar lights on either sides of the streets covered under USMID project, but when we created median islands in the middle of all roads under construction, instead of using two poles, we opted for one and this enabled us to save many batteries and solar lamps which we are now using to lit other streets which were not considered in the USMID project," Mr Afaayo said.

In the process, the municipality saved more than half of the solar lights on Edward and Jerseyby streets, which are currently under construction.

Each of the solar-powered lights installed costs Sh12m, and more than 100 electric lampposts have so far been replaced.

He noted that the solar lights have a life span of five to 10 years.

He said the electric lamp that are being removed from the central business area will be re-installed on the outskirts of the municipality.



Upgrai

Bene  
expec  
econo  
Kalan

MAS  
Nyen  
conne  
langa  
sigh c  
indica  
cured  
mac i  
Gov  
two d  
tarma  
has re  
the r  
cance

How  
the M  
gests  
comm

The  
23 an  
Kasai  
ect wi  
from  
Devel  
and t  
tiona

Wh  
\$12m  
proje  
proje