



Regional mechanical workshops to save districts repair burden

By Nelson Kiwa

Maintenance and rehabilitation of feeder roads is the mandate of the district local governments, legacy of the decentralization policy.

From 1986 to 2006, government with support from other partners had undertaken the maintenance and rehabilitation of some feeder roads directly with the target of improving the deteriorated status of road network in the country.

Machines were relocated to the district local governments to form road units. However the phasing out of feeder roads projects and distribution of equipment left behind several workshop tools and support equipment and highly experienced and qualified technical personnel.

Regional mechanical workshops

However, it was deemed necessary to consolidate the workshop tools, equipment or machines and the personnel into the formation of three regional mechanical workshops.

They included Gulu charged to offer mechanical services to all equipment, in Acholi, Lango and West Nile regions.

The others were Mbarara for units in Western and South Western regions, while Jinja handled those in Eastern and Central regions.

The equipment which were deployed include, Motor graders, Bulldozers, Wheel loaders, Vibro rollers, Pneumatic roller, Pedestrian rollers, Dump truck, Water bowser, Mobile Workshop, Hydraulic Crane,

Agricultural tractors with trailers, three tonne crane truck, 20 tonne mobile crane, Bitumen heaters and motorcycles.

Gulu Workshop

It has since achieved a lot and according to the Gulu mechanical workshop regional manager, Eng. Karan Hanning, most of the machines which were rotting off in the 32 districts have been repaired.

This was in fulfillment of one of their mandate to carry out major repairs of specialised heavy equipment which individual districts could not handle due to lack of and technical knowhow

"Districts are happy with the services we offer, with many of the grounded machines repaired and redeployed on the roads," he said.

Minor repairs are worked on at the site and for major repairs, Karan notes that they are done at the facility where by the faulty machine is parked on loaders and transported.

"The districts are also required to report the mechanical break downs to the facility on top of the teams from the regional mechanical workshop visiting for preventive mechanical undertakings on the machines.

Most times we repair per need which emerges and they are reported to us," Karan said.

The Workshop has also been able to provide equipment not part of the district road units or specialised support equipment such as Low loaders, crane trucks and mobile workshops.

It has also been able to provide on-job training to district mechanical staff and promoted the retention of

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Eng. Karan Hanning, the Gulu Mechanical Workshop Regional Manager

the trained staff.

According to Karan, in line with their mandate, which demands that they undertake monitoring and evaluation of equipment usage on behalf of the Ministry of works and transport and provide technical service where necessary, they have been able to monitor and evaluate

the road units across the 32 districts at least once in every quarter.

During evaluations, the technical teams dispatched from the workshop where by sometimes they have to transport heavy equipment long distances.

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Challenges

Covering a wider area, remained one of the challenges facing the workshop where by sometimes they have to transport heavy equipment long distances.

On top of having limited funds, districts lacked man power to effectively supervise equipment use and to ensure timely identification of mechanical faults.

"It would be proper for each and every district to recruit staff with technical knowhow on the road equipment to supplement our efforts," he said.

Limited funding is another challenge the workshops face. This year, the Government earmarked

sh16b for all the three regional workshops yet it required at least more.

District road units

On June 18 2012, President Yoweri Museveni officially launched a set of other road equipment Chinese made and each district was provided with a unit.

This prompted policy review on the urban and districts roads maintenance deciding to re-introduce Force Account mode of operation, recalling direct labour.

According to Susan Kataike, the spokesperson of the ministry of works and transport, they have developed a frame work of guidelines to operationalise the new government policy for roads maintenance for the districts and urban roads by local governments.

The districts ministry defined three district interventions of maintenance, namely routine mechanized maintenance, routine manual maintenance and periodic maintenance

The Government last year procured and deployed Japanese road equipment to the districts and the repaired old equipment have beefed up the new equipment according to Karan.

The equipment included wheel loaders, seven ton tipper Lorries, water bowsters and graders.

"There was a proposal that districts with surplus equipment should relocate some to the municipalities and town council. But it all lies in the mandate of the districts, they cannot be forced to do this since they are not bound by the law," Karan disclosed.