

# Transporters embrace central corridor route

By Samuel Balagadde

**T**ransporters have begun using the central corridor route. The route from Dar es Salaam port through Mwanza port in Tanzania connects to the Port Bell pier in Luzira and onward to Kampala railway station.

The route that has just been revamped after a decade is under the ongoing infrastructure development for both water and railway transport.

The World Food Program (WFP) recently transported a 25,000 tonne consignment of humanitarian aid using the route. The consignment containing vegetable cooking oil was donated by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) to refugees in different settlement areas across the country. It was shipped in from the US via Dar es Salaam port.

Chris Asimwe, a WFP logistician while receiving the first batch of the consignment containing 720 tonnes of vegetable cooking oil. The consignment was transported by the Tanzanian Umoja wagon ferry at Port Bell Pier.

## Secure route

Asimwe said the Dar es Salaam route is secure. He added that WFP did not encounter any obstacles on the way.

He said this is the first time after a decade that they are transporting humanitarian aid through this route as it had been neglected by the Rift Valley Railways (RVR), the former concessionaire for Uganda Railways Corporation (URC).

The cargo which was accompanied by Tanzanian Ports Authority (TPA) officials was later transported from Port Bell through Kampala to WFP storage facilities at Nalukolongo a Kampala suburb.

The central corridor route covers transit cargo movement from Dar es Salaam port and Mwanza Port in Tanzania, Mutukula to Kampala and onward to neighbouring countries like DR Congo, Rwanda and Burundi.

The 25 year RVR concession that was to run up to 2030 starting in 2006 involved operation and management of the national wagon ferries at Port Bell pier was prematurely terminated early this year over poor performance.

Asimwe said with the new route they have managed to cut their transport costs by almost 50% in comparison to what they would have spent on roads transport. He said their choice would also help preserve the road infrastructure and protect it from rapid depreciation due to such a big consignment.

Robert Rwendeire, a URC port officer at Port Bell pier said the transportation of UN cargo from Dar es Salaam was also to be shared by *MV Kaawa*, Uganda's national wagon ferry that carries 22 wagons per trip. Rwendeire said *MV Kaawa* is slightly



**MV Kaawa docking at Port Bell pier resumes operations after inspection for seaworthiness.** Photos by Samuel balagadde



**Chris Asimwe**

... bigger than *MV Umoja*, which has a capacity of 18 wagons.

... He said wagon ferries take 18 hours between Port Bell and Mwanza in Tanzania to deliver goods. This means that the two vessels will deliver the entire 25,000 tonnes of consignment in less than a month.

## Port Bell dry dock

... "Ugandan *MV Kaawa* and the dry dock at Port Bell whose classification expired this year has successfully undergone inspection for conformity to seaworthiness as a requirement by International Maritime Organisation (IMO)," he added.

... Marine experts from the International Register of Shipping in India were in Uganda to conduct a comprehensive inspection of Uganda's only operational wagon ferry and its dry dock.

... The vessel and its dock were found to be in good condition along with all the generators and fire fighting systems.

... Renju Nara Yanan, a principal surveyor with international Register of Shipping, said the general structure of the vessel and its dock are in good condition.

... A dry dock is also a vessel that floats



**WFP official witnessing the arrival of humanitarian aid a Port Bell pier from Mwanza Port in Tanzania**

to allow a load to be floated in, then drained to allow that load to come to rest on a dry platform. It is also used in the construction, maintenance and repair of ships, boats and other water vessels.

... *MV Kaawa* with a gross weight of 1,560 tonnes was last inspected in 2013 after undergoing a comprehensive repairs and upgrades with support from the World Bank.

... Aggrey Ojiambo, a senior marine engineer with URC said this vessel was grounded in 2005 after an accident with its sister *MV Kabalega*. The repairs resumed in 2012 and were completed in 2013.

... He, however said due to operational challenges with Rift Valley Railways (RVR) they had not put the vessel to full use and this might be among others reasons why the inspectors

## THE WAGON FERRIES TAKE 18 HOURS BETWEEN PORT BELL AND MWANZA PORT IN TANZANIA TO DELIVER GOODS.

... have not identified any faults with it.

... "The vessel has to undergo the mandatory inspection every five years to ascertain its seaworthiness before being classified by IMO," Ojiambo said.

... All the three vessels including *MV Pamba*, which is still grounded at

Port Bell pending repairs and the submerged *MV Kabalega*, which is unlikely to be retrieved from the lake ever since it sunk in 2005. The ferries were assembled in the 1980s.

... The classification of *MV Kaawa* is in line with the ongoing revival of the Central Corridor route.

... David Muwanga, the central corridor representative in Uganda said revamping the route presents an opportunity for the business community in Uganda, as it will considerably cut down their transportation costs.

... He said the route that has been dormant for almost a decade has not only been a disservice to the business community, but also to the general economy since there exist volumes of tradable goods in both countries.