

USMID programme gives

BY MARTIN KITUBI

A few years ago, Jinja could best be described as a ghost town. Literary everything in the former industrial town had broken down.

The ramshackled arcade buildings, potholes and open manholes on major roads were quite a sight. To crown it all, the town was filthy and stinking, especially during the rainy season.

As the dark smoke from factories covered the skies, sewage was running through major streets in the town. Save for the bars and night clubs, Jinja was nothing to write home about.

Major streets, including Kampala Road, also known as Nalufenya Road, was a no-go area.

Factories, which were once booming in the area, were relocated to Kampala, the capital.

One might say, the relocation left the town clean from pollution.

INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT

In just five years, the dark story of Jinja is gradually changing, thanks to Uganda Support to Municipal Infrastructure Development (USMID) programme. The programme is funded by the World Bank and government.

Under the project, Jinja town has benefited from expansion of streets, installation of street lights, rubbish cans, improvement of garbage collection and construction of drainage systems.

The above changes have given Jinja town a face-lift, the reason it is now among those considered to obtain city status.

Jinja is not alone, the USMID is also transforming other ghost towns, such as Hoima, Soroti, Mbale and Moroto.

Isaac Musumba, the Minister of State for Urban Development, said the first five years of USMID has enabled the country respond to the development challenges in these municipalities.

Musumba said the challenges associated with unprecedented urbanisation, such as slums, poor sanitation, land degradation and poor infrastructure, among others, created challenges for these municipalities.

Currently Uganda has 41 municipalities and many more town councils and town boards and the demand for urban infrastructure is enormous.

"We should not take USMID for granted. We should utilise it to improve our infrastructure and service delivery across all major towns," Musumba said.

USMID COVERAGE

Dorcus Okalanyi, the lands



Jinja Main Street during day



Fort Portal Municipality town



We should not take USMID for granted. We should utilise it to improve our infrastructure and service delivery across all major towns," Isaac Musumba, the Minister of State for Urban Development.

ministry Permanent Secretary, said the programme scope has been increased from 14 to 22 municipalities and eight refugee hosting districts.

The original 14 participating municipalities were Arua, Mbale, Gulu, Lira, Soroti, Moroto, Jinja, Tororo, Masaka, Hoima, Fort Portal, Mbarara, Kabale and Entebbe.

Eight more municipalities, including Ntungamo, Apac, Lugazi, Busia, Kitgum, Kamuli, Mubende and Kasere were

added to the programme.

"Funding increased significantly from \$150m to \$360m.

We thank our friends, the World Bank, for not only increasing the credit, but also for providing a grant that targets refugee hosting districts. These changes are welcome, however they come with increased responsibilities," Okalanyi, said.

BOOMING OWN-SOURCED REVENUE

The impact of the

programme has been felt across all beneficiary municipalities. It is not surprising that most of them are under consideration to obtain city status.

The December 2019 USMID report indicated that most of the beneficiaries have registered about 50% increase in revenue collection.

For Entebbe, the report said in the last financial year (2018/19), the municipality collected sh3.9b, up from sh2.2b in the 2017/2018 financial year.

Gulu, on the other hand, recorded 35% increase in

revenue, one of the lowest, with Pece Division, which hosts the central business district of Gulu Municipality, contributing the most.

The increase, according to the report, was attributed to collection and review of property rates, increasing operation licences in the municipalities and registration of businesses.

The municipalities have also reviewed and increased taxes on building plans, street parking, and hospitality services, such as hotels and bars, among others.

Jinja

In just five years, the story of Jinja is gradually changing, thanks to USMID

new life to ghost towns



A well-lit Jinja Main Street at night

In a recent interview with New Vision, Dr Isaac Mutenyo, the co-ordinator of USMID under the lands ministry, explained that the programme has prepared the municipalities as the attain city status.

"These traditional municipalities were struggling before USMID, but through capacity building, they are now capable of increasing their tax base," he said.

In addition, he noted that as the municipalities near obtaining city status, they will be in position to handle the challenges ahead of them.

However, Mutenyo noted that these municipalities could have generated more revenue if taxi and bus parks in the respective areas were taxed.

Initially, he said, municipalities were collecting routine taxes from transport operators, but this ceased following President Yoweri Museveni's directive.

"The directive on taxi parks has affected collections. We are hopeful that this will be reviewed by our political leaders," he said.

"Once municipalities become more self-reliant through own-sourced revenue, service delivery will be possible in these areas," Mutenyo added.

With increase in own-sourced revenue, Mutenyo explained that the municipalities will be in position to maintain their roads, improved sanitation through proper disposal of

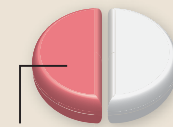
Municipalities support programme

Uganda Support to Municipal Infrastructure Development (USMID) programme is funded by the World Bank and government

The country has **41** Municipalities of which **22** are beneficiaries of the USMID programme

THE SUPPORT HAS ENABLED MUNICIPALITIES TO:

- Expand streets
- Install street lights
- Rubbish cans
- Improvement of garbage collection
- Construction of drainage systems



50% of the beneficiaries registered increase in revenue collection - December 2019 USMID report

waste.

According to Mutenyo, Under the USMID programme, Arua, Fort Portal, Gulu, Jinja and Fort Portal, which are to be elevated to city status in July 2020 have received about sh187b.

The fund, he said, has enabled the five municipalities realise infrastructure development and institutional capacity strengthening.

INFRASTRUCTURE

Since 2005, Mutenyo said there is visible

improvements in infrastructure, especially rehabilitation and expansion of roads, street lighting and urban greening under the USMID programme.

However, considering the geographical boundaries of the proposed cities, he said, resources of this magnitude are just a drop in the ocean.

With these resources, he said, hardly any municipality has managed to upgrade more than 10% of its road network.

"Even the highly resourced and performing ones like Gulu have managed to

improve less than 20km of roads," Mutenyo said.

He explained that the resources that will be required for cities' infrastructure development are enormous and, therefore, both proposed cities and central government must develop strategies of how to source for funding for infrastructure development.

However, Musumba, told New Vision that the programme has relieved government of the burden of looking after

MUNICIPALITY LEADERS SPEAK OUT

USMID is one of the best programmes in this country. Entebbe was a ghost town now see," Vincent Kayanja De' Paul, the Entebbe Municipality Mayor said pointing to clean streets.

We urge government to allow us collect taxes from taxi parks. We offer services to these people including garbage collection for free. This is failing the performance of the proposed cities," said George Aligeche, a representative of Gulu Municipality.

The USMID programme has prepared us for the oil and gas developments," said Grace Mary Mugasa, the Hoima Municipality mayor

municipalities.

"Gulu is a description of transformation, they have healed from the political instability and businesses are booming. Investors have come on board," he said.

Additionally, he said, Gulu has had several initiatives following the political instability, that have contributed to its current status.

Sh 187b

The funding Arua, Fort Portal, Gulu, Jinja and Fort Portal received

Gulu

Recorded 35% increase in revenue, one of the lowest, with Pece division