Achievement of the NDPII targets for national roads. Is the Uganda National Roads Authority on track?

Overview

The Government of Uganda (GoU) is implementing the second National Development Plan (NDP II, FY2015/16 – FY2019/20). This plan recognises infrastructure as one of the development fundamentals required to attain middle income status target by 2040. The NDPII has four objectives but the one directly applicable to the roads sub-sector is: increasing the stock and quality of strategic infrastructure to accelerate the country's competitiveness.

As a result, a sizeable share of commitments are being directed to infrastructure investments with a focus on reducing travel times between regions, integrating the national market and connecting it to other markets in the East African Community.

This briefing paper assesses the extent to which Uganda National Roads Authority (UNRA) is achieving the national roads NDPII targets over time.

Key Issues

i) Budget allocation to the sector has persistently fallen short of the NDPII projections. Worse still, not all appropriated funds are released.

ii) More than 100 projects are earmarked under UNRA for implementation within the NDPII period, but over 60% of the these are still at either design and procurement stages, so UNRA is unlikely to achieve the NDPII targets.

iii) Allocations of resources between new road development projects and maintenance is at a ratio of 80:20% hence creating a maintenance backlog.

Introduction

The Uganda National Roads Authority (UNRA) aims to develop and maintain a national roads network that is responsive to the economic development needs of Uganda in an environmentally sustainable manner while ensuring road user safety. To do this, UNRA undertakes implementation of two programmes; the National Roads Construction (NRC) and the National Roads Maintenance (NRM) programme. The former is for development/upgrading of new roads while the latter keeps the national roads in a functional state.

Scope of the National Roads

National roads are those under the designation of the UNRA. The national roads network totals to 20,544km consisting of paved and unpaved roads. The network also comprises of 10 ferries located at strategic points that link national roads across major water bodies.

Modalities and Coordination of Implementation

The UNRA has over 100 projects earmarked for implementation within the NDPII period. About 30% of these projects commenced and are either at substantial completion or construction works are ongoing. Another 62% of the projects are either at preliminary and final design stage or are under procurement. Important to note is that currently all the projects being implemented by UNRA are those earmarked by the NDPII.

In terms of coordination there is consistent internal collaboration amongst the various sector stakeholders making planning and budgeting effective.

Sector Financing

The NDPII was to be financed by both the public (GoU- 57.8%) and private (42.2%) resources. The GoU projected actual budgets and releases to the Works and Transport sector since commencement of the NDPII are shown in table 1.1.

Table 1.1: GoU Financing within the NDP II Period

Financial Year	**2015/16**	**2016/17**	**2017/18**[1]
Projected Budget by NDP II (Billion, Ug shs)	3,328.8	5,044.8	5,019.7
Actual Budget (Billion, Ug shs)	3,158.176	3,455.593	4,499.44
Releases (Billion, Ug shs)	2,345.225	3,090.36	1,656.35

Source: NDPII, Annual Budget Monitoring Report FY2015/16 & FY2016/17 and UNRA, URF and MoWT Q2 Performance Reports for FY 2017/18

From table 1.1, financing to the sector has persistently been lower than the projected budget. The budget allocation to the sector has persistently fallen short by 5.1%, 31.5% and 10.4% for FY2015/16, 2016/17 and 2017/18 respectively. Moreover, not all the funds appropriated are released. This is an indication that there is inadequate financing to the sector from the GoU.

The non-public sources of financing would include; the Public Private Partnerships (PPP), direct private sector investments (domestic and foreign) and Civil Society Organisations (CSO) contributions. There has not been effective participation from the non-public players as far as financing the sector is concerned. No direct private sector investments and CSO contributions were achieved. Public Private Partnerships are starting to take shape as in the case of Jinja–Kampala Expressway, Kampala-Busunju Expressway, Kampala-Busega-Mpigi Expressway, Kampala Outerbelt and the Kampala-Bombo Expressway. These are still being formulated.

Achievements

Golden Indicator No. 1- Condition of the Roads Network: This indicator measures the percentage of the national roads network in fair to good condition. Between FY2015/16 and 2016/17, the condition of paved road network increased from 78.5% to 80%, while that of the unpaved road network dropped from 71% to 70%. This is against the NDP II target of 79% for paved roads and 66% for unpaved roads. The sector is on track regarding the NDP II target for the condition of national roads, despite a drop in the condition of the unpaved network due to inadequate maintenance arising from insufficient financing.

The performance of this indicator could also be analyzed from the perspective of compliance with axle load regulations. The condition of the road network is a function of axle loading on the road pavement. Progress in compliance with axle load limits on the national roads can be assessed based on the *percentage of heavy vehicles with over loaded axles* and *the number of heavy vehicles weighed*.

[1] FY2017/18 releases figures are up to half year

Between FY2010/11 – FY2014/15, the average percentage of vehicles with over loaded axles was 54%. This figure has since drastically dropped to within 2.1% and 3.7% for FY2015/16 and FY2016/17 respectively due to increased enforcement by UNRA. The number of vehicles weighed in a bid to enforce compliance with axle load limits generally increased from 169,477 to 575,211 between FY2010/11 and FY2016/17 respectively.

The damaging effect of the heavy vehicles on the national roads network has reduced in the recent past compared to what it was between FY2010/11 – FY2014/15. A lot of progress was achieved in the area of axle loads compliance. In as much as the percentage of over loaded vehicles traversing the country's roads has reduced, the interest as a sector is to have close to zero overloaded trucks.

Golden Indicator No. 2 - Paved Roads Stock: The stock of paved roads refers to roads having bituminous surface. The stock is measured by computing the number of completed kilometres of gravel roads upgraded to bituminous standard or new roads tarmacked. For the NDP II period, a number of roads were upgraded to tarmac.

As a result, the stock of paved roads has increased from 4,157km in 2015/16 to 4,257km (representing 20.7% of the national roads network) in 2016/17 against the NDP II target of 4,536km for FY 2016/17. Some of the roads that were tarmacked are: Vurra-Arua-Koboko (92km), Mbarara-Kikagati-Murongo (74km), Ntungamo-Mirama Hills (37km), Ishaka-Kagamba (35.4km), Mbarara Bypass (41km), Kampala-Entebbe Expressway (51km), Nyakahita-Kazo (68km), Kazo-Kamwenge(75km) Fort Portal-Kamwenge (66km), Gulu-Atiak (74km), Atiak-Bibia/Nimule (35km), Hoima-Kaiso-Tonya (85km), Fort Portal-Bundibugyo (104km), among others.

The sector fell short of the NDP II target for this indicator by the end of FY2016/17 and is short of the 2020 NDP II target of 6,000km by 1,743km. The average annual increase in the stock of paved roads between FY2012/13 to FY2016/17 is about 188km implying that within the remaining time to the end of the NDPII period, a total of about 600km will be added to the network. This slow pace in achievement has been on account of inadequate financing and delays in finalization of procurement of development projects. This implies that UNRA is unlikely to meet the NDP II target by 2020.

Golden Indicator No. 3 – Road Safety: A total of 14,474 road traffic crashes were recorded in FY2016/17 by Uganda Police, which was a decrease (22%) from 18,495 crashes recorded in 2015. However, the number of persons dying in these accidents increased from 3,224 to 3,503 persons over the same period. These figures represent on average a total of 10 deaths per day.

It should be noted that 40% of these deaths were pedestrians, an indication that the Non-Motorised Transport (NMT) is not well structured in the designs. The trend has not changed for the better yet. In terms of demographic representation, 14% were children while the majority (33%) were aged 25-34 years. More males than females were victims of accidents. These statistics are a reflection that there are key Gender and Equity (G&E) issues such as: provision of zebra crossings; motor cycle and bicycle lanes at strategic points; and continuous sensitization of the general public about road safety. Whereas the NMT policy is in place, its operationalization is lacking.

Golden Indicator No. 4 – Maintenance Needs Met: Maintenance of national roads is still a challenge with the sector meeting[2] only

[2] According the Budget Monitoring and Accountability Unit (BMAU) monitoring findings

50% and 70.5% of the annual targets for FY2015/16 and FY2016/17 respectively. Failure to meet the targets was attributed to inadequate funds and delays in procurement.

In terms of financing, road maintenance presently is allocated Ug shs 417 billion, against the Ug shs 3 trillion sector budget and this allocation has been constant for the last three financial years. The bigger chunk of funding is focused on road development rather than maintenance with the allocations of resources between new road development projects and maintenance being at a ratio of 80:20%. This budget allocation for road maintenance works from the Uganda Road Fund (URF) is indeed below the optimum of Ug shs 800 billion – Ug shs 1,000 billion required annually to achieve minimum standards of maintenance.

Additionally, the Ug shs 417 billion could only meet 69% of the expressed needs of the agencies, comprised of normal maintenance and backlog removal. There has been an increase in the network maintenance needs driven by growth in traffic volumes, traffic loading, maintenance backlog due to delayed interventions, as well as inclement weather. Delays in procurement have affected commencement of both periodic and term maintenance contract interventions; and force account operations at the UNRA stations. In some cases, the procurement of contractors for such simple contracts has taken more than a year to be finalized.

Conclusion

Progress has been registered towards the achievement of the NDPII targets on most (75%) of the national roads indicators, although the pace is still low and so the performance has fallen short of the NDPII target. A few projects (about 30%) earmarked under the NDP II are either at substantial completion or still in progress. With more than 100 projects earmarked under UNRA for implementation within the NDPII period, 60% of these are still either at design or procurement stages. This dents UNRA's hope of achieving the NDPII targets by 2020.

What needs to be done?

i) Government should promote efficient methods of road construction and maintenance with a view to achieve the NDP II targets under a constrained resource envelope.

ii) At implementation level, the URF and UNRA should prioritize reduction of the road maintenance backlog on the upcountry network.

iii) The MoWT should expedite the dissemination and implementation of the NMT guidelines for the implementation of the NMT Policy.

iv) The UNRA/MoWT should increase awareness to all persons involved in the road transportation of goods, road pavement design and law enforcement about the multifaceted impacts of road freight transport and overloading.

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