



# JICA Finances Rusumo bridge construction

## Set to boost regional trade

BY SARAH KWIHANGANA

**T**he construction works of the new Rusumo International Bridge and One-Stop Border Post facilities have ensued with expectations of boosting trade between Rwanda and Tanzania once completed. Rusumo International Bridge, under construction across the Akagera River will replace the old one built 40 years ago to link Rwanda and Tanzania. The project is expected to have a positive impact on the economic development of both nations, by enhancing cross-border trade and regional integration.

Funded by Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), the project will cover the construction of a new dual carriage bridge, a two-kilometer road connecting two customs offices as well as equipping both sites with necessary facilities suitable for verifying merchandise, loading and offloading as well as providing ample parking space.

Japan provided \$24.4 million (about Rwf16 billion) grant for the project.

According to JICA'S Project Expert, Eng Kamada the grant is part of the East African Regional Development programme. He further adds that the bridge was in critical condition, prompting the governments of Japan, Rwanda and Tanzania to sign a Memorandum of Understanding where JICA granted to fund and oversee the implementation of the project.

"Am excited to be involved in the construction of the Rusumo Bridge. We hope to have completed the works by November 2014. Currently about 250 trucks go pass through this border post per day, but once the double lane is complete, there will be no limit on the number of trucks. Even the dwelling time at the border drastically reduced because the new bridge will have capacity of SADC standards; 56 tons and maximum length of 22 meters. This means it has the capacity of four trucks on each lane multiply by two to make it eight. So four trucks entering Rwanda and four trucks going to Tanzania; eight trucks by 56 tons is 424 tons; therefore no restriction will imposed on the transportation which will be of great benefit to the transporters on completion."

Kamada further said Rwanda is topographically a high land and thus transport is critical to facilitate trade and strengthen integration values, disclosing that one way of addressing the transport issue in this country is by building a railway line of which construction plans are underway. "The railway line, once in place will immensely reduce the costs of transporting goods from the ports to inland Rwanda and by extension benefit the consumers that will be buying products at lower prices," he noted.

The lifespan for the bridge can extend to



50 years depending on maintenance; if well maintained it can go for even 100 years

This bridge will be an 80meters span bridge which will be made of steel gutter beams which were launched early November 2014 and concrete decks slabs which vehicles and people will use. It will be completed by November 2013. Also provided is a sidewalk way for pedestrians to ensure their safety while crossing the bridge which is not the case with the existing bridge.

"As RTDA our major concern is to ensure safety of the bridge users. Being in the central corridor, this bridge is playing a big role in trade and movement of people," explains Eng. Honoré Munyashongore, of Rwanda Transport Development Agency.

Munyashongore said the bridge would increase the axle load restriction from the present eight tonnes to 20 tonnes and the speed limit from the present five kilometres per hour to 30 kilometres per hour.

"The new facility is installed with capacity to carry 180 tonnes. The old one was installed with capacity to carry 32 tonnes 40 years ago, although it now carries more than 60 tonnes due to huge transport volumes that have increased over the years," he said.

### ONE STOP BORDER POST

Meanwhile, the construction of One-Stop-Border Post has reached final stages, giving the area a new look and operations carried thereat.

Munyashongore said the border post would help to provide facilities that are needed to cope with expected increase of traffic volumes in the coming years.

"It will also eliminate the present traffic congestion. The introduction of One-Stop Border Post system will greatly improve the efficiency of cargo transportation, clearing and handling and eventually increase the physical distribution of volumes and reduce transportation costs," he said.

Protais Murayire, the mayor of Kirehe, is upbeat, saying the construction of the border post was timely.

"These trucks you see here would be parked in Nyakarambi town where there is no space for huge traffic. Managing the traffic was a big burden to us but now the place is becoming beautiful with good road network and businesses," he said.

The construction activities of Rusumo One-Stop Border Post are set to be completed by November 2014.

