

Isimba Dam contractor fails to fix defects

By CAROL K. ADII

China International Water and Electric Corporation (CWE), the engineering, procurement, and construction (EPC) contractor for the Isimba Hydropower Dam, has not fixed critical defects and hitches on the plant, two years after it was commissioned, according to Uganda Electricity Generation Company Limited (UEGCL), the dam administrators.

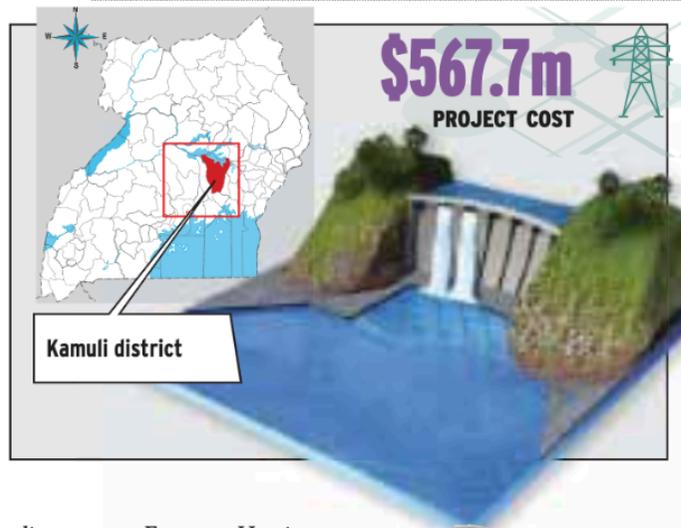
The Government awarded the Chinese firm the contract for the \$567.7m (about sh2 trillion) Isimba project, which started in April 2015.

The project was then commissioned in March 2019 and was expected to generate 183.2 megawatts of electricity a year once it achieved a substantial completion mark on March 31, 2019.

On April 12, 2019, the takeover certificate was issued to the EPC contractor, after the Government and contractor agreed that fixing the defects be completed by September 30, 2019.

However UEGCL executive

UEGCL: We can't take over facility



director, Eng. Harrison Mutikanga, is not happy with the contractor because of the delays and quality issues.

He asked the contractor to fix the defects, vowing that they cannot allow to take over a plant which has issues.

Eng. Mutikanga made the remarks on Friday during the UEGCL board of directors routine inspection at Isimba.



UEGCL board chairperson Njuki

“Right now, water is leaking in the concrete to the powerhouse, the contractor has not installed a floating boom, the generator circuit breaker has not been working for one month and because of that, one of the turbine units is not working,” Mutikanga said.

“The firefighting system automation is also not working, equipment frequently breaks down, the gate on one of the functioning units was designed to last for 10 years but only two years later, the paint is going off and the rubber that is supposed to control water is coming off,” Mutikanga said.

Without boom lines, the dam risks being affected by the water hyacinth and floating islands, which could translate into national blackouts.

Mutikanga said the delayed completion has caused the Government losses.

“We want a plant that is generating electricity reliably, safely and to also make sure that all systems are working.

We want all defects fixed with quality equipment so that we contribute to the Government objective of social transformation,” Mutikanga said.

He denied allegations that they had not paid the contractor. “We have paid them up to 93%. We have also started paying the interest on the loan to EXIM Bank (of China),” he said.

UEGCL Board chairperson Eng. Proscovia Njuki said: “The contractor has not been fast as we thought. At first, they were delayed by COVID-19, but we are here to find out the challenges they are facing so that we address them. An agreement was reached to extend the defects liability period by one year to allow for proper completion of all the snags till March 2021, but with the defects we have extended the contract till March 2022. If by then we find out that some gaps are missing, we shall not issue a final certificate of completion,” Njuki said.

The contractor declined to speak to the media.

5 THINGS ABOUT ISIMBA

- The Isimba project is the third-largest power plant in Uganda.

- The dam is located in Kamuli district.

- Of the contract value, 85% is a loan from the Export Import (EXIM) Bank of China and 15% is a direct contribution from the Government.

- The power station has four vertical Kaplan turbine generator units with a capacity of 45.8MW per unit thereby providing a combined installed capacity of 183.2MW. However, right now only three units are working.

- The construction and completion of the dam was to give confidence to investors that Uganda has adequate and reliable electricity.