

Magufuli Bridge: A Game Changer for the Lake Zone Region

“An Engineering Landmark That Redefines Tanzania’s Infrastructure Landscape”

June 19, 2025, marked a monumental milestone in Tanzania’s infrastructure development as the Tanzanian community watched the inauguration of the John Pombe Magufuli Bridge. As a construction professional, I could not help but feel a spark of pride witnessing the successful delivery of the longest bridge in East and Central Africa, 3.2 km across Lake Victoria in Mwanza, which is both inspiring and instructive.

An Engineering Marvel: Rooted in Technical Excellence

From its inception in 2019, the Kigongo Busisi Bridge project has exemplified precision in engineering, ingenuity, project management, and local capacity building.

Why so?, the bridge features...

- Four-lane dual carriageway accommodates 1600 vehicles at one end and 12,000 vehicles daily, including pedestrian walkways. This highlights its ability to handle high traffic volumes.
- Designed loading capacity of 180 tonnes to accommodate heavy loads and regional logistics needs.
- Resilient foundation and superstructure engineering suitable for lakebed geology and seismic activity.

The project was delivered through a design and build contract, fully funded by the Government of Tanzania at a whopping cost of TZS 716 billion. This is a testament to growing national competence in delivering large-scale infrastructure without external loans.

Construction Impact & Local Content

Over 34,000 Tanzanians (skilled and unskilled) were directly involved, deliberately sourcing local materials and subcontractors wherever feasible. The project became a platform for skills transfer in:

- Bridge deck launching and precast segmental construction.
- Marine construction logistics and safety management.
- Environmental protection around sensitive aquatic ecosystems.

It’s rare for a single project to integrate such technical complexity, logistical challenges, and socioeconomic benefits.

Catalyst for business growth

The bridge is expected to:

- **Facilitate trade** and reduce transportation costs for the agricultural, fishery, and mining sectors.

- **Stimulate tourism and investment** in the Lake Zone regions.
- **Improve access** to social services such as hospitals and schools.
- **Enhance road safety and logistics efficiency.**

Ferry services will now be redeployed to serve isolated islands around Lake Victoria, improving connectivity for remote communities.

President Samia Suluhu Hassan, during the launch ceremony, hailed the project as “a Bridge of Opportunity.” Close quote

The bridge launch prompted me to share in this article “A woman’s tale,” a hypothetical story on Inclusive Infrastructure, the tale I shared in two international conferences; the first was ‘The International Conference on Development and Investment in Infrastructure (DII-10)’, second, was The 23rd Africa Real Estate Society International conference, both happened in 2024.

Keynote Address on
INCLUSIVE INFRASTRUCTURE
‘A Tale of an African Woman’

Meet Khadija Mulenga, a 35-year-old woman from Mpulungu, a village that lies 1074 kilometers from Lusaka, Zambia, and 1073 kilometers away from Lake Tanganyika, bordering Tanzania. She dreamed of being a Systems Administrator as her first job, with a diploma in IT. She lives alone with her single mother, raising her two kids in Mpulungu.

Khadija looks forward to success and progression in life and is strong-willed to win.

The best-paying jobs are in Lusaka, and the nearest bordering village is on the shores of Lake Tanganyika, Kigoma, which has a similar situation to Mpulungu; it is far from the central city and has no better-paying jobs.

Khadija travels long distances by rough roads to access basic amenities; the buses are not as comfortable and hygienic, even when she can access good roads. There are no railways in Mpulungu. With her current economic status, Khadija uses firewood and charcoal as energy sources; she cannot afford gas or electricity. Moreover, there is no infrastructure for electricity or gas where she lives. With her basic IT training, she can work remotely. However, the internet is another hurdle to overcome in Mpulungu.

Khadija believes that her future lies in her hands and that she will surely make it in life, but currently, a bright future is nowhere in sight. For here and now, Khadija is just another jobless young woman trying to make ends meet.

She has no idea, however, how her predicament started, if it will be resolved, what caused it, and if it will ever end.

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Quoting Her Excellency Dr Amani Abou Zeid, African Union Commissioner for Infrastructure and Energy, **“Infrastructure is the foundation upon which we will build The Africa We Want. If we summon the collective will and perseverance to transform ambitious plans into concrete realities,**

the coming decade will be remembered as the era we turned words into action". Close quote

Magufuli Bridge: beyond the Engineering Structure ~ A Strategic Jewel Asset

Functionally, the bridge eliminates reliance on ferry transport and reduces travel time from over 30 minutes to under 5, increasing transport reliability along the **corridor**, connecting Uganda, Rwanda, and the DRC. It opens trade routes, reduces vehicle maintenance costs, and promotes regional integration.

Therefore, the Magufuli Bridge stands as a symbol of Tanzanian engineering potential. It demonstrates what is possible when vision matches investment, policy alignment, and professional execution.

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