

CHAPTER 1

Chapter 1 Background of the Project

Since independence in 1963, Kenya endeavored to improve the national living standard, achieving high economic growth through the utilization of high educational standards and geographical features. In the 1980s, however, economic difficulties surfaced because of a growing trade deficit caused by declining export prices of core export products including coffee, tea, etc. Besides, economic and industrial growth, the national target, was slowed down. Seven national development plans have been implemented since independence, but economic growth could not be achieved. Past plans were reviewed and the eighth national development plan was newly established for the period from 1997 to 2001.

Kenya depends mostly on roads for land transport (96% for passengers and 87% for freight transport). Roads in Kenya can be divided into classified and unclassified roads, with the total length of road network being 151,000 km as of 1999. Of the total length, 63,300 km, including 3,760 km is for international trunk roads while 2,800 km is for domestic trunk roads, are classified road. Though the road network is relatively well developed, the ratio of paved road is only about 14% of the total length. Except for sections of classified road, lagging maintenance of road drainage facilities or lack of proper implementation of road maintenance have not only led to poor road surfaces, but also traffic accidents.

The eighth national development plan highlighted an effective and organized road network as extremely essential for achievement of socioeconomic targets of the plan, and the road network rehabilitation plan was established and implemented based upon this. In the field of roads, the Roads 2000 regional road network rehabilitation plan was developed for each county, which aimed at the provision of fundamental transport conditions, implementation of road projects and their impact for increase in employment, promotion of investment and development through improvement of road conditions, and securing improvement of administrative efficiency.

Under these circumstances, abnormal rainfall possibly due to “El Nino” caused destruction of many more small and medium bridges in the coastal area of the Indian Sea in 1997. In January 1998, many small and medium bridges were washed away in the central and western parts of Kenya, causing new difficulties for development of the road network. Kenya found it difficult to cope with these damages within the scope of

the road improvement plan that it had pushed forward. Therefore, in 1998, Kenya requested Japan to grant aid concerning reconstruction of bridges damaged by flooding, specifically, a total of five bridges including Athi and Ikutha bridges in Eastern Province and Marere, Eshueshu, and Mwache bridges in Coast Province.

The two bridges of Athi and Ikutha in the East Province are located on the domestic trunk road, B-class Road B7. Of three bridges in the Coast Province, Marere and Eshueshu bridges are on a major C-class road while Mwache bridge is on a secondary D-class road. For Athi and Marere bridges, the Ministry of Roads and Public Works has proceeded with ad-hoc measures, such as installation of Bailey bridges, etc. with the assistance of foreign countries. Though tentative passages could be established, many locations are not provided with sufficient corrective measures and these continue to be hindrances to road traffic.

This project will be implemented for two bridges of Athi and Ikutha that are considered to be highly preferable and beneficial among the five bridges covered by the request. In order to implement improvement of these bridges under Japanese grant aid, their positioning, effects, and technical/economical feasibilities were reviewed and the optimum project content and scale were determined.