

What will turn Kampala into a Smart City

Kampala is Uganda's national and commercial capital as well as the largest city with estimated metropolitan and city proper populations of 6.7 million and 1.7 million people respectively; and the population is growing rapidly.

The current road network under the Kampala Capital City Authority (KCCA) is 2,103km long, of which 650km are tarmac and 1,453km murrum/dusty roads. Most of Kampala's roads were designed and built in the colonial days and lack in various aspects to support Smart City status as evidenced by the chronic traffic congestion and flooding resulting from poor urban planning, and concentration of most economic activities in the city centre, etc.

A typical road user in Kampala loses between 8 and 23 hours a month in delays, with vehicle travel speeds falling from an average of 28km/h to 8km/h due to traffic jams.

In Kampala alone costs about \$100m per year is lost due to the time wasted in traffic jams.

A Smart City's road network should envisage and leverage integrated transport, information technology, underground infrastructure, climate resilience, robust maintenance systems/frameworks, environment, big data on roads and renewable energy among others. A well-planned road network

that is seamlessly linked to the greater metropolitan area is, therefore, a critical requirement for Kampala to achieve smart city status and as such should be at the heart of all strategic planning.

KCCA's Smart City Strategic Plan strives to holistically weave technology throughout the urban fabric as a means of improving and enhancing community quality of life. KCCA envisages information technology as a tool for the city's transformation and efficient public service delivery.

KCCA must adopt some of the strategies below to help transform Kampala into a Smart City:

MASS TRANSIT SYSTEMS

The use of buses and trains/trams will decrease the number of private vehicles and ease traffic congestion in the city, provide a good impact on the environment by reducing carbon emissions and enhance the accessibility of the road network. KCCA can furthermore improve mobility by incorporating dedicated bus lanes within the city road network by removing street parking on key roads.

MULTI-MODAL TRANSPORT SYSTEMS

Smart cities leverage all transport modes as opposed to relying solely on a single mode. Currently, Kampala mainly relies on road transport alone for mass mobility and this is no longer



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sustainable.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

KCCA should fully embrace and automate the city's transport management systems. Road user experience must be fully enhanced by leveraging the power of information communication technology.

For example, roundabouts should be phased out and be replaced with signalised intelligent junctions, road networks should incorporate parking guidance systems and vehicle management signs. Additionally, road users should have access to traffic flow information such as bottlenecks in real time.

DECENTRALISED SERVICES AND ZONING

To reduce city congestion, the metropolitan area physical plans should aim at building self-sustaining neighbourhoods/suburbs with the necessary social infrastructure such as schools, hospitals, and malls among others. This will reduce the need to frequent the city, hence decongestion. In addition, the Government should implement the proposals of moving some of the public offices out of the city in order to reduce the need for constant access to the city by people and public servants.

ROAD MAINTENANCE FINANCING

Kampala's annual road maintenance budget from the Road Fund is sh25b against annual requirements of sh103b.

Therefore, KCCA grapples with road network financing for all classes of roads. The entire Kampala road network ought to be tarmacked in the medium to long term to reduce the maintenance costs.

The Road Fund prioritises KCCA and is currently in the process of seeking additional resources

PARK AND RIDE SHARING SCHEMES

KCCA must aim to limit city access by private cars by imposing prohibitive parking charges for private cars whilst availing effective alternatives for group travel. For example, organisations/

institutions should encourage their staff to park vehicles at designated spots out of the city where they can hop onto mass transport to their workplaces.

PEDESTRIANS/CYCLISTS

Unfortunately, Kampala's road network is not cycle or pedestrian friendly and almost all road users in Uganda require urgent mindset change.

Nonetheless, adequate facilities for non-motorised users should be enhanced as we aim at inculcating mindset change.

BODABODAS

The Achilles heel in Kampala's transport problems! No smart city in the world has bodabodas roaming the streets like the case is when it comes to Kampala.

Moreover, bills are increasing in medical facilities' accident and emergency departments. Indeed there are longer term bills yet to come due to pollution.

The earlier the bodaboda problem is resolved the better for society. A well maintained and planned road network will translate into less congested streets, safe streets, improved road safety and extended connectivity infrastructure.

However, mindset change is indeed required to resolve these problems and achieve a Smart City

The writer is the executive director of Uganda Road Fund

Russia-Uganda's time-tested friendship, partnership

You will be surprised, but in fact it was Moscow that played a key role in the formation of a sovereign Uganda and many other states in Africa, Asia and Latin America.

It was our country that initiated and consistently promoted the global anti-colonial movement for many years, until the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples was adopted in the early 1960s, and the colonies belonging to the Western countries finally began to break centuries-old shackles.

One cannot but agree with the President of Uganda Yoweri Museveni that the history of rapprochement between our countries began long before the formation of the Republic of Uganda.

It happened in November 1917, when a stronghold of the struggle against colonialism appeared in the world represented by the Soviet Union.

The USSR was obviously among the first countries to recognise the formation of the Republic of Uganda and establish diplomatic relations with Kampala. That happened just four days after Uganda gained its independence on October 13, 1962.

Our states have been traditionally maintaining ties of friendship based on the principles of mutual respect

and consideration of each other's interests and opinions.

We have been always carefully listening to the aspirations of the Ugandans, trying to be useful where our help was most needed.

One of the areas of our closest co-operation throughout 60 years has been the security sector.

As a result, the Uganda People's Defence Force is now mainly equipped with Russian modern military hardware. Many Ugandan military personnel are trained at specialised institutions in our country as it was in the Soviet times.

Since 1962, the Russian educational system has helped to reveal talents of about 4 000 Ugandans. Almost all of them returned to their country and contributed to the formation and development of its economy and other important sectors.

Some of them took up key positions in government agencies and private entities. We are very pleased to announce that this year the annual number of Russian governmental scholarships was doubled to 50.

Those interested are welcome to submit applications through the website www.education-in-russia.com.

Unfortunately, the project of organising training of specialists in Uganda itself was prevented by the collapse of the Soviet Union. However, this initiative was then taken up successfully by the Ugandan



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government that transformed the regional technical college we built into Busitema University.

In the 1980-1990s, groups of Russian doctors were sent here to work in public hospitals at request of the Ugandan partners. They helped Uganda get through the times of an acute shortage of national medical staff.

The main areas of co-operation at the present stage are identified on the basis of the agreements reached in principle between the President of the Russian Federation Vladimir Putin and the President of the Republic of Uganda Yoweri Museveni during their regular contacts. An extensive bilateral political dialogue at the highest level largely helps to intensify ties between business

communities of both states. The gradual increase in bilateral trade is the main result of this mutual attraction: last year the trade turnover exceeded \$430m.

We are placing greater emphasis on providing assistance in the development of infrastructure in Uganda taking into account the wishes of Kampala. Progress has been made in implementing joint projects in the oil, energy, transport, and agricultural sectors of the country. Co-operation opportunities in the healthcare, space, geological exploration, scientific, technical, information and communication areas are being discussed. There are also prospects for joining efforts in the fight against cybercrimes and epidemiological diseases.

The main efforts to promote bilateral economic, scientific and technical cooperation is being done through the Russian-Ugandan Intergovernmental Commission (IGC). Two sessions were held in the seven years of its existence.

The third one is currently under preparation. Two large Russian business missions that visited Kampala in 2017 and 2018 and the Uganda Expo held in Moscow in 2019 greatly contributed to the implementation of plans under the auspices of IGC.

Further strengthening of the Russian-Ugandan trade ties was given an extra boost last year by the opening of the Russian Centre for Entrepreneurship of the Russian Co-ordination Committee

for Economic Co-operation with Sub-Saharan African States located in the industrial zone of Kampala. Now it is a venue, where presentations of the industrial potential of Russian regions are regularly held.

Moscow and Kampala actively exchange government delegations at various levels. This year Russian Foreign Affairs Minister Sergey Lavrov visited Uganda, where he was hosted by the President Yoweri Museveni on 26th July. Contacts are intensifying in other areas as well. In June 2022, the All-Russian Political Party "United Russia" and the Ugandan "National Resistance Movement" Party signed the cooperation agreement.

As the saying goes, every memorable date is an occasion to look back into the past and assess the present in order to plan for the future.

Let's use the celebration of the 60th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations to outline new milestones, the achievement of which "meets the fundamental interests of our peoples and is in line with consolidating stability and security on the African continent", as Russian leader Vladimir Putin noted in his congratulatory message on the occasion of the diamond jubilee of the independence of the Republic of Uganda.

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