



A raised pedestrian crossing along Buganda Rd Primary School in Kampala. The facility is used mostly by pupils from the school when crossing the road to and from school. PHOTO/ROLAND NASASIRA

Kampala City making strides in curbing speed

Uganda adopted the WHO recommended speed limits under the 50km/hr mark in urban cities, and under 30km/hr in high-risk zones such as school zones such as Lugogo Bypass, hospitals, trading centres, churches and markets.

ROLAND D NASASIRA

During school time, Lugogo Bypass in Kampala is decorated with white. Not because there are white buildings or flowers along the approximately three-kilometre road; it is due to the bright white colour of Kololo Secondary School student's uniform.

A few meters from Kololo SS, there's City High School, Hungry Caterpillar and the International French School, Kampala, with all schools just meters apart. This makes Lugogo Bypass one of the busiest school zones in Kampala. Despite being a busy road, when out of school, students mix with speeding vehicles whose drivers are sometimes reckless and careless to pedestrians, on top of having disregard for road signs such as speed limits and zebra crossings.

The World Bank reports that speeding claims 600,000 people each year, half of the 1.19 million traffic-related deaths worldwide. Similarly, the World Health Organisation (WHO) warns that increases in speed increases the probability of serious injury and death during a crash. Back home, recent Uganda police annual

crime reports indicate that Uganda loses between 10 to 14 people per day due to road crashes, with the most vulnerable categories being pedestrians and motorcyclists and their passengers.

Curbing speed

In 2024, the government, through the Ministry of Works and Transport and its stakeholders especially civil society organisations under their umbrella Road Safety Advocacy Coalition Uganda (ROSACU), reviewed and amended the traffic and road safety prescribed speed limit regulations and instituted a 30km/hr speed limit in school zones, hospitals and markets. Implementing this range of strategies was aimed at reducing dangerous speeding, including enforcement of the speed limit to protect the vulnerable groups especially school children and other pedestrians. This was followed by redesigning of some intersections in Kampala City such as the signalising of the Mulago roundabout, construction of a pedestrian bridge at the Clock Tower along Entebbe Road, and safeguarding many other junctions where vehicle traffic mixes with human traffic to increase safety.

Prior to 2024, the ministry of works and transport had last updated speed limit regulations in 2004 (20 years since 2004), with maximum speed limit of 50km/hr for urban areas, yet Kampala City and Uganda experienced reasonable infrastructural upgrades and developments including the introduction of the Northern by-pass and the Entebbe Expressway, which

required speed limit provisions. Some road sections, especially highways had maximum speed limits of 100km/hr compared to 70km/hr per global best practice of single carriageways.

It is one the reasons why Uganda adopted the WHO recommended speed limits under the 50km/hr mark in urban cities, and under 30km/hr in high-risk zones such as school zones such as Lugogo Bypass, hospitals, trading centres, churches and markets.

"The 30km/hr speed limit has been implemented near 20 school zones and urban roads in the city and installing raised pedestrian crossings. It is also acknowledgement of synergies and collective effort built between different government agencies, government,

civil society organisations, increased media awareness about the dangers of speeding and the private sector as

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Despite the improvements registered overtime, there's need for multi-model transport modes to ease the challenge of congestion in Kampala. Currently, the commuter train from Kampala to Mukono has reduced congestion but it only plies one route out of the over 50 roads that lead in and out of the City centre, leaving Kampala choking on many 14-seater commuter taxis, most of which are older than the people operating them, and mushrooming reckless motorcyclists.

Boda boda cyclists are the leading cause of accidents on Kampala's streets. PHOTO /FILE



agreed in the national road safety action plan 2021/2022 to 2025/2026 to reduce speed limits in areas where high human traffic volumes mix with vehicles," says a Commissioner for Transport Regulation and Safety at the Ministry of Works and Transport.

Efforts paying off

It is for these road safety interventions that Kampala was recently recognised as one of the leading cities in Africa by the Bloomberg Philanthropies for global road safety (BIGRS) and awarded with \$50,000 (approximately Shs175m) in recognition of its effective strategies to reduce speeding, a vital step in preventing speed-related crashes, injuries, and fatalities. The award was aimed at supporting Kampala sustain and expand its life-saving road safety work.

Jemima Nalumansi, the Kampala project Coordinator for the BIGRS says the recognition and award means recognition of the existing efforts, but also funding for more road safety activities to make the city safer for the vulnerable road user categories especially pedestrians such as school children.

"It means the city can expand speed management efforts to areas in the City that have not had any road safety interventions, validation of the city's work towards speed management and potential for increased impact," Nalumansi says.

The award demonstrates that with effective and functional policies, enforcement and infrastructure designing, road safety outcomes can be improved significantly.

Challenges

The biggest challenge towards Kampala's road safety efforts has been getting public trust in measures undertaken by the government. There has also been high motorization growth over the years, with Uganda's vehicle fleet growing by an estimated 12 percent annually, without considering motorcyclists whose numbers grow by the day.

This leads to traffic congestion with its associated risks, yet the size of the City has remained the same over the years. Apart from public resistance and funding gaps for road safety infrastructure projects, with funding most times relying on donor support, there's also a huge challenge of limited enforcement capacity.

Micheal Kananura, the Spokesperson of the traffic directorate says there is a meagre 1,000 traffic officers deployed and manning traffic in Kampala, against an average swarm of 500,000 motorcyclists in the City. This means that one traffic officer has to control an average of 500 motorcyclists, and an unknown number of vehicles, something that's next to impossible.

There is also a lack of public awareness. For example, pedestrians are not using foot bridges especially along speed roads such as the Clock Tower along Entebbe Road.

The public should appreciate that the government is trying to put up interventions to address areas of safer roads. For instance, the non-motorised transport corridor along Luwum Street to Namirembe Road is abused by motorcyclists, motorists and traders, meaning the public hasn't appreciated it as a pedestrian facility.

When it comes to physical planning, congestion is more pronounced with vehicles yet infrastructure is broad to include not only roads but also buildings.