

# Kampala might finally look like a modern city if KCCA persists

Kampala is, by reputation, a chaotic, crowded, disorganised, dusty, dirty and — by extension — user-unfriendly city. It has lived up to this reputation every day. Nothing here is exaggerated. Kampalans themselves know they have a barely liveable city. And those who have been to clean cities are no strangers to this problem.

Before the Kampala Capital City Authority (KCCA) took charge, mayors ran the show. But from Fred Ssemaganda (Kampala's mayor during Milton Obote's second administration) to Lord Mayor Erias Lukwago, none banished this reputation. Ask yourself: What did Christopher Iga, John Ssebaana Kizito or Nasser Ntege Ssebaggala do to make Kampala look great?

The short answer is nothing. But if the current KCCA executive director, Sharifah Buzeki, continues doing what she embarked on weeks ago — organising and decongesting the city — there is a good chance we may start to see a Kampala that looks refreshingly different.

I am stating the obvious, but it is impossible to have an organised, user-friendly city when walking in the evening, for example, is almost impossible because men are busy frying Nile Perch on pavements.

Women have spread *nakati* and *ebbuga* (veggies) all over the pavements, and the parking space for cars is occupied by boda bodas who are quick to insult you if you ask them to move over.

A certain laxity caused this chaos, and it should not be tolerated again. People did everything they wanted and continued in the knowledge that nothing was going to

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Musaazi Namiti  
Brutally Frank



happen to them.

Of course, what KCCA is doing is not new. Vendors have been previously forced off the streets and returned as soon as they were chased away. In fact, some people have said on social media that there is nothing to suggest they will not return anytime soon.

But just because others tried and failed does not mean the KCCA will fail. Law enforcement officers should deal firmly, even harshly, with those who are resisting change.

The price people pay for returning to the streets should be stiff enough that even thinking about it makes them immediately reconsider their decision.

Clean, well-organised cities are known to have zero laxity in enforcing laws meant to promote cleanliness and orderliness. People are fined for littering, and the offenders cannot bribe their way out of fines.

There are no big people to call to get you out of trouble. KCCA should walk the same path.

Those of you who are on social media have

probably seen the viral video in which Kamwempe North MP Elias Nalukoola gets out of his car in the evening traffic jam, picks up litter thrown right in the middle of the road by a motorist and hands it back to them. KCCA should impose high fines for such behaviour.

No one should be under the illusion that it will all be smooth sailing for KCCA once the street vendors are gone. Kampala will only look slightly better without street vendors, but not like a modern city.

The city still faces serious problems. Construction of residential houses remains annoyingly haphazard.

Urban planning exists in theory, not in practice. A bungalow facing east sits next to a mansion facing north. A couple of yards away, a church overlooking tin-roof shacks makes enough noise to wake the dead. Noise pollution is everywhere.

Many roads are impassable. Traffic lights on some streets work part-time. The city lacks proper public toilets. Those currently being used would never be used in cities with high hygiene standards.

Emergency services still do not work. If a stray bullet hits you on Kampala streets, chances are that you will be bundled onto the back of a police pick-up truck.

But there is a way to begin, and Ms Buzeki has started with street vendors and boda bodas. When she is done, she should move on to the most pressing problems, such as poor urban planning.

Mr Namiti is a journalist and former Al Jazeera digital editor in charge of the Africa desk

[musaazinamiti@gmail.com](mailto:musaazinamiti@gmail.com)