

BIG THE CITY

By Billy Rwuhungye

When Kampala City Council became the Kampala Capital City Authority (KCCA) in 2010, many dared to dream that a city some people describe as "one big slum" would be transformed into a modern, smart metropolis.

Indeed, a few projects gave people hope. One such project was the reconstruction of a section of Jinja Road, from Kilgum House to Katalina Road in Nakawa in 2013. When the works were completed, Jinja Road was all lit up with streetlights and neat pedestrian walkways.

First forward to 2017, the streetlights are no more and a section of the walkway, near the Wampewo Avenue roundabout, were decimated by the people who dig up roads to lay fibre optic cables. The site was never fully restored to its previous state, before KCCA handed the site over to another utility company, the National Water and Sewerage Corporation for the Lake Victoria II project works.

Blueprint for smart African cities
At the recent Transform Africa Summit held in Kigali, Rwanda, a blueprint for sustainable smart cities for Africa was launched. A smart city, according to the blueprint, is one that has inclusive data-led management and planning, efficient community-based infrastructure and services. It also has localised and shared innovation as well as economic development.

For a city to be smart, it should have the following:

Synchronised services

As per the blueprint, smart cities are supposed to have synchronised registration systems for events such as birth, marriage, graduation, employment, home ownership, hospitalisation, age and death. All personal registration data is centrally managed using a single identity across a centralised platform.

Online business services

Why should one walk to KCCA division office to get a trading licence in this Internet age? The blueprint says a smart city should have online services for payment and transaction and one-stop shop government service centres should be expanded to enable business transactions.

Healthcare management

Smart cities have smart healthcare system where healthcare workers use ICT to increase their ability to diagnose and treat diseases, provide preventive care and reduce costs of healthcare for the residents. Smart cities are supposed to have smart emergency response platforms, which help to improve security management by predicting, detecting and responding to crimes, accidents and fires.

Education

Smart cities should have centres fitted with Internet-connected computers. These centres should have smart learning management systems not only to enable teachers to personalise

A smart city is described as having inclusive data-led management and planning, community-based infrastructure, shared innovation and economic development



Jinja Road in Kampala. Many roads are destroyed when they dig them up to lay fibre cables

WHAT IS REQUIRED

To attain smart city status, at the summit, ICT minister Frank Tumwebaze, who is also former Kampala minister, said for Kampala to become a smart city, it needs to adopt an integrated way of doing things.

"Why should telecom companies dig up a newly refurbished road to lay cables? Why can't the road contractor leave room for cables to pass on the side of the road?" he asked.

"We need integrated planning of the entire metropolis, bearing in mind the physical infrastructure and IT infrastructure. If we do not do this, we shall pay highly for either of them. For example, if you are building the backbone, you will have to do some earthworks, just as the roads people are doing," he said.

With authorities working together, Tumwebaze said costs that overlap for some of the projects will be offset by the same financing.

One of the hallmarks of a smart city is Internet access to its dwellers. The Government last launched free Internet access in some parts of Kampala and Entebbe. Most of these Wi-Fi hotspots are no more. Meanwhile, in Kigali, the birth city of the Smart Africa movement, passengers in public service vehicles have access to 4G Wi-Fi.

Will Kampala ever be a smart city?



Frank Tumwebaze

Smart cities must have synchronised registration systems

content to individual students, but also enable them to continuously review performance and deliver assessment to enhance learning outcomes.

"Some cities are already implementing the one-laptop per child and smart classroom programme, which puts connected devices and personalised learning within reach of students and teachers. Smart education will complement traditional board and chalk method by using mobile devices to deliver academic content to



KCCA executive director Jennifer Musisi (centre) at a city carnival

students," reads the blueprint.

Smart city finances

In a smart city, one should be able to pay for a parking ticket online. This is possible because of technology-led financial services that facilitate the exchange and monetisation of services. Examples include discount cards, multimodal transport payment solutions, mobile or electronic commerce (e-wallet) solutions for parking and online rates payment and solutions to secure merchant tax compliance.

During the leaders' summit, which was attended by eight heads of

state, Frank Tumwebaze, the former minister for Kampala cited some of the problems that afflict Kampala.

"Our Internet infrastructure is still not adequate, although we have seen growth in the number of Internet users. We are also not innovative enough to make internet a raw material in our production," he said.

Tumwebaze set the ball rolling during the summit by asking about the role of planning in transforming a city.

"When we talk about smart cities, not much is talked about physical planning. We are saying we must go smart. How do we influence the old school planners? The old school

architects?" Tumwebaze asked.

Rwanda's president Paul Kagame, in what could have been interpreted as a slight dig at Kampala, responded to his question, making an allusion to the much praised Kigali.

"The city we have, Kigali, initially, must have happened by accident. There was no planning and I guess there were city planners, architects resident in this city," he said, before going on to say city planners can be re-oriented.

"There must be people who demand that cities be planned properly. We had to redo some of the things we had in our city. We had to remove some of the slums in certain areas," Kagame said.

KCCA strategy

KCCA has adopted some smart measures such as automated payment methods.

In a presentation at a United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) session in Geneva in May last year, Martin Ssekajja, the head of ICT at KCCA, elaborated on the challenges KCCA faces in regards to becoming a smart city.

The authority says conflicting priorities is a major challenge in transforming Kampala into a smart city as funds are inadequate.

Because of these competing priorities, inadequate access to equipment to roll out the implementing of e-Learning successfully is a major challenge.