Dear Dr KCCA, can you cure obesity by buying elastic clothes?



Maid: The jam is still bad, the prices are high, now with the vendors evicted from the city, whom shall we blame for the general mess?

Mzee: You thought the vendors would leave today and tomorrow everyone starts living happily ever after?

Maid: So when do we start living well ever after?

Mzee: When we start physical planning for the physical space and use is properly.

Maid: That is being done, with all the high-rise apartment buildings coming up everywhere and the roads being constructed!

Mzee: The evicted vendors will not sell their tomatoes and *mivumba* from high-rise apartments and the bigger roads may not lead to smooth flow of traffic.

Maid: As more apartments are built the rent will go down.

Mzee: Oh great! Until all the Ugandans are living in high-rise apartment blocks?

Maid: What?

Mzee: You heard. It is simple, if you keep overeating and under exercising, you will grow fat and fatter and your clothes will stop fitting you. But buying elastic clothes will not cure your obesity.

Maid: What do you mean?

Mzee: That you can fit in elastic clothes that stretch as far as your stomach extends but you won't become healthier or look nicer. So even if they build ten, twenty or a hundred floors of apartments, the city won't become smarter or better to live in without wholesome physical planning. People will still do the wrong things in the wrong places. Drainages will be blocked – if they exist in the first place – and flooding will intensify, just like the body of an undisciplined person who buys elastic clothes without changing his diet and lifestyle.

Maid: But bigger roads will not be congested with stagnant cars.

Mzee: Will unruly drivers and riders become law abiding? You can add an extra lane to every existing road and see if traffic congestion will reduce. What happens to the roads that get expanded? Don't the new lanes become parking spaces for taxis and shop owners? Imagine the billions borrowed to build roads, only for them to become parking spaces?

Maid: But where are people supposed to park?

Mzee: In car parks, not on roads.

Maid: Where are the car parks?

Mzee: Each building should have its parking space designated, preferably in its premises, those are the things the city authorities are supposed to check on the planned building before they allow construction and to confirm before they allow occupation. We are supposed to plan before we build.

Maid: Oh damn, who is responsible for those plans you are talking about?

Mzee: I said the city authorities, and the city planner or whatever title they give the person.

Maid: Does it mean our city is doomed without effective physical planning?

Mzee: Even if it is doomed, we have ten new cities that are supposed to be planned before they are messed up. All the Ugandans cannot and should not work and live in Kampala. The ten or soon to be fifteen new cities will enable the majority in our country to operate and live in sanity. And I think each of them has at least a hundred square miles to plan with. Even if their existing centres may be messed up, they have a lot of space to plan with and gradually they can correct the messed up places, since they have the authority.

Maid: But the new cities have been operational for five years. Have they got their sane plans in place?

Mzee: Presumably, because they were debated, demarcated and enacted by sane people, not mad men. They actually have land boards that determine what should be done, where, and by who.

Maid: It would be interesting to see what the planning authorities and the land management committees have been doing in the ten cities over the past five years.

Mzee: That is why elections are held every five years. The voters in those city areas must have seen what their cities whose creation they celebrated have become and either renewed the mandate of the incumbents or if they were disappointed, voted in new ones who must be knowing why the others were voted out.

Maid: And back here in Kampala?

Mzee: Kampala is even easier to fix because the KCCA bosses are appointed by the central government, to do their work technically and competently without worrying about votes.

They know you don't cure obesity by buying elastic clothes.