

National News

The relocation exercise is part of a broader strategy to restore order and create a structured trading system in Kampala City.

BY MONITOR TEAM

When voters in Kampala chose last month to cast their lots with Mr Ronald Balimwezo over Mr Erias Lukwago, the incumbent, the central government sensed an opportunity to make sweeping overhauls. For three elective terms, dating back to 2011, Mr Lukwago was an implacable enemy who, according to government officials, prioritised politics over the development of Uganda's capital.

The power struggles the two parties were involved in were, probably, most pronounced in their contrasting takes on street vending.

While Mr Lukwago continues to believe that an inclusive growth approach does not entirely frown upon street vendors, technocrats at City Hall who are pursuing a clean and smart city think otherwise. For the better part of a decade, the clash in visions resulted in a painfully topical cat-and-mouse drama.

In the gathering dusk of Friday morning, Kampala Capital City Authority (KCCA)'s enforcement teams got hard at work in Downtown Kampala. Make-shift stalls were ruthlessly ripped apart. Mr Lukwago, counting down the final months in the Lord Mayor's parlour, could only speak about inclusion in an almost gingerly manner after the dust raised by the enforcement teams—both literally and metaphorically—had settled. Markets have to be constructed in all five divisions of Kampala to enable traders to relocate from the streets in a manner that will not render them homeless.

Mr Balimwezo, the Lord Mayor-elect, not quite in a position to cause government officials sleepless nights, was unstinting in his criticism of Mr John Kabanda, the Federation of Uganda Traders' Association (FUTA) president.

In Mr Balimwezo's book, Mr Kabanda stands accused of evicting the street vendors without providing any alternatives. The Lord Mayor-elect reckons that the much-maligned group of vendors should be accommodated in places such as Namirembe Road for Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) as well as Kafumbe Mukasa, Eren, and Ssebaana roads. He has also hinted at evening and Sunday markets as more than just a stopgap measure.

Scramble for market stalls kicks in following evictions



Some of the destroyed property of street vendors after the Friday enforcement. PHOTO/IBRAHIM KAVUMA

Mad rush

The direction is one that technocrats at City Hall are not comfortable with. They sense that there is a window to push street vendors to the precipice to the point of them accepting plans that will birth a clean and smart city. After all, Mr Lukwago is deflated and Mr Balimwezo is powerless. The street vendors, keen to keep the lights on, have already started exploring their options, if any.

Little wonder, by yesterday market masters across the capital reported a sharp increase in the number of street vendors scrambling to secure stalls. The roads and pavements are no longer available, and there is no one to plead their case.

Following weeks of warnings and public notices, KCCA enforcement teams, backed by security personnel, have moved to clear vendors from the central business district (CBD), prompting many traders to rush to designated markets in search of space. Busega Market Master Adam Waiswa said the registration desk has been busy.

"We have so far registered more than 200 vendors out of the 500 available stalls, and the number keeps increasing. Many traders who had hesitated before are now coming to secure space after the eviction exercise," he said.

AVAILABLE STALLS IN KAMPALA

MARKET	NUMBER OF STALLS
Usafi Market	1,000
Busega Market	900
Nakawa Market	100
Luzira Market	100
Wandegeya Market	250
City Abattoir Central	250
New Ntinda	100
Kamukya Central	200
Nateete Market	20
TOTAL	2,520

SPACE IN MUNICIPALITIES (MUN) AROUND KAMPALA

MUN	NUMBER OF STALLS
Mukono Municipality	1,000
Entebbe Municipality	400
Nansana Municipality	200
Mpigi District	200
Kira Municipality	180
TOTAL	1,980

Mr Waiswa added that the market management is working closely with KCCA officials to ensure that allocation is transparent and orderly. "We are allocating

stalls on a first-come, first-served basis. Our goal is to ensure that every genuine vendor gets a space."

He also revealed that Busega Market can accommodate more than the 500 stalls KCCA recorded, pointing to the roof top that is still empty and it can be used as a flea market.

At Usafi Market, Market Mistress Hadja Nante said more than 400 vendors had registered for stalls out of the 1,000 available spaces. Many vendors, Ms Nante further revealed, had abandoned the market since there was an opportunity to sell on streets. "We are expecting more than 1,000 vendors to add on the 2,000 that we have, the market stalls are all for free."

Compliance

Mr Kabuye Kyofatogabye, the junior Kampala and Metropolitan Affairs minister, has urged traders to take advantage of the available markets.

"We are not eliminating livelihoods; we are organising them. Vendors should report to the designated markets and register. Stalls are available and vulnerable groups such as women, youth and PWDs will be given priority," he said.

He emphasised that restoring trade order is essential for improving sanitation, easing congestion and enhancing safety in the city.

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"The streets are meant for movement not trading. By relocating vendors to proper markets, we are safeguarding both traders and customers," he said.

Despite the growing scramble for stalls, the chairperson of street vendors, Mr Kenneth Kazibwe, told *Sunday Monitor* that many traders are reluctant to move because the available markets are either full, poorly structured or not strategically located to attract customers.

"Wherever they are sending us, there are no spaces. Some markets that have space are in bad condition," he said.

Mr Kazibwe added that some markets are inaccessible, making it difficult for buyers to reach traders, which forces vendors to return to the streets.

"These vendors had places where they used to operate from, but some were demolished while others were bought by city tycoons who have now put up expensive structures that vendors cannot afford to rent, like Park Yard and Nakawa Channel," he said.

Mr Kazibwe revealed that he previously operated from Mutaasa Kafeero Plaza but failed to make sales for six months despite servicing loans, prompting him to relocate to the streets.

"We are tired of being used, especially during election time. The number of vendors increased during campaigns and now it is overwhelming," he disclosed before calling for the construction of modern markets and warming up to evening Sunday and public markets.

As enforcement continues, several markets have busy registration desks recording daily increases in applicants.

Mr Waiswa said the coming days will determine how quickly the available spaces are filled as more vendors respond to the eviction drive.

KCCA says the relocation exercise is part of a broader strategy to restore order and create a structured trading system in Kampala, with officials expressing confidence that the markets can accommodate all compliant vendors.

"We have talked to all market masters to ensure the registration of all the vendors from the streets. All vendors will be relocated," Mr Daniel Muhumuza Nwabe, the KCCA head of public and corporate affairs, said.

Compiled by Shabibah Nakirigya