

# special report

**STATE** **245** Numbers. According to Google maps, the 8th Street stretch from the Mukwano Road junction to Main Access road going down to 7th Street, is 1.3km with a total of 245 potholes.



# 103

**POTHLES.** The 7th Street in Industrial Area is a 3.4km stretch and home to a number of warehouses and two fuel depots - Gapco and Vivo Energy. Fuel tankers and trailers of all tribes are a common sight on this street. The road has a total of 103 potholes.



# Rising cost of patching up KCCA's gaping potholes

**Potholed roads.** Potholes on Kampala City roads range from one to 10 square metres with roads such as 8th Street in Industrial Area, Dwaliro and Binaisa being among those that are regularly patched, writes Henry Lubega.



## Shs5b

**Repair.** Mr Peter Kauju, the KCCA spokesperson, says KCCA spends up to Shs5b every year patching up roads in the city.

bump on the road. The bumps have made some of the roads impassable. For some time, Lumumba Avenue was full of bumps in the guise of tar mac. It was a common scene to find men filling the potholes while others carrying buckets of dripping black tar poured it on the soil compacted in the holes.

Roads such as 8th Street in Industrial Area, Dwaliro around Mulago hospital, and Binaisa are among those that are patched more than once a year.

Mr Christopher Katongole, a highway engineer with Abubaker Technical Services and General Supplies Ltd, says: "Whenever water percolates through the void (unfilled space between a patch and the old surface of the road) it creates a hole. With time, if it is in the same place, it would need complete rehabilitation of the road not just patching up the potholes."

According to Mr Katongole, potholes in the city roads range from one to 10

square metres. "When being patched, the top layer of Asphalt is 50mm while the lower base is stone filled," he says.

He, however, adds that this is just a temporary solution to prolong the road life. "It costs a taxpayer Shs160,000 to refill every pothole. And this is not a permanent solution. Just to keep the road useable."

I went out on a pothole count on some of the roads. According to Google maps, the 8th Street stretch from the Mukwano Road junction to Main Access road going down to 7th Street, is 1.3km with a total of 245 potholes. Based on Mr Katongole's calculations, it would cost the city authority Shs39.2m every time they have to patch the road.

He says the bumps created by patching are not due to poor workmanship. "Many of the city potholes are small in size making it impossible for them to be machine patched. The manual patching cannot be as good as the machine and what we see is the best that can be done manually."

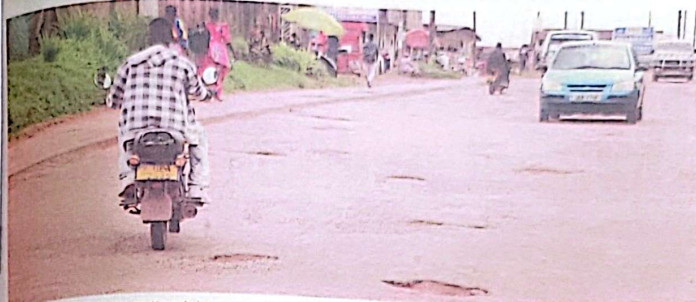
On the quality of patching up the potholes, Mr Peter Kauju, the KCCA spokesperson, blames entities that are involved in digging up the roads and don't do a clean job on repairing the damages they cause.

"Utility companies dig up roads and poorly restore the areas they dig up," he says. Despite the digging up by the different utility companies, he admits that many of the roads in Kampala have outlived their design lifespan and also that the traffic load has increased beyond what the roads were designed to handle.

"The main reason for potholes in city



**66** The main reason for potholes in city roads is because most paved roads do not have the strength to support the traffic load. These roads are serving way beyond their intended life and load." PETER KATONGOLE, KCCA SPOKESPERSON



**Damaged.** This road in Mulago, Kampala, is one of those that have developed various potholes. PHOTOS BY ALEX SAGALA



is continually patch them." He admits that there are many roads in the city that have served beyond their intended time and need total overhaul. "All paved roads in the city that continue to serve beyond their intended life must be rehabilitated, but in the meantime we are continuing to work within our means as we look for funding to expedite these works."

### CITY ROADS IN NUMBERS

- 2110km.** Total distance of roads in Kampala.
- 500km.** Total distance of paved roads in Kampala.
- Shs160,000.** Amount charged to fill each pothole.
- Shs5b.** Money available for road maintenance in a year.
- 31,250.** The number of potholes that can be filled with KCCA's budget.
- Shs4b.** Cost of constructing one kilometre in Kampala.
- 15 years.** Lifespan of city roads.
- 50mm.** Thickness of Asphalt on the streets of Kampala.

fore their design life." Mr Katongole cites Bukerere Road, which branches off Jinja Highway at Setta and connects to the bypass via Namugongo.

"This road was designed for small vehicles and trucks below 50 tonnes. But fuel tankers and other heavy trucks and trailers use the route to avoid jam on Jinja Road. In such circumstances, the road will not last to its design plan life."

**Cost** As part of its mandate, KCCA takes care of the city roads and has an annual budget to patch roads. Mr Kauju says, "as KCCA, we spend up to Shs5b every year patching up roads in the city."

Mr Katongole's costing of patching a pothole in Kampala that money would be able to patch 31,250 potholes. This is sealing the pothole with a stone base and 50mm of asphalt.

Pothole patching on city roads is attributed to lack of funds for complete resurfacing of the roads. According to Mr Katongole, it costs Shs5b to construct a kilometre of city road. "This covers the surfacing of the road, constructing the pedestrian walkway, cables and water channels," an amount of money that Mr Kauju says KCCA does not have.

"We don't have the budget to over-

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### EFFECT

Driving on Binaisa Road towards the city, there are particular spots that develop potholes every year and resealed every year. The section of this road from the New Mulago Gate Road to Yusuf Lule-Kira road-Haji Kasule road junction is the worst hit. The 1.2km distance has 39 potholes some are almost a foot deep and more than three metres wide. Making them unavoidable hence contributing to the traffic jam on the road at the peak hours.

stretch with a total of 245 potholes. Along this stretch there is a concentration of potholes between the Monitor Publications Ltd entrance and the Vivo Energy tank farm.

Another of the city roads that has seen more patchwork than actual road construction is Dwaliro Road stretching from Nkazi Road past the Old Mulago via the hospital main entrance to Binaisa Road.

According to Google maps, the road is a 1.73km stretch with a total of 375 potholes. It would cost Shs92m to patch it up. With two rainy seasons a year that makes it Shs184m to maintain a distance of 1.73km. Due to concentration of potholes at some sections on this road like at the point where Hospital Staff road joins Dwaliro road it becomes a traffic hold up creating a jam at peak hours.

The 7th Street in Industrial Area is a 3.4km stretch and home to a number of warehouses and two fuel depots - Gapco and Vivo Energy. Fuel tankers and trailers of all tribes are a common sight on this street.

The road has a total of 103 potholes and with the rainy season still on, the number is likely to increase. Besides those in the weather made potholes there are two open manholes in the road. Near Gapco fuel depot there is a pothole running across the road, also on the same street there is another pothole running across the street on the edge of the hump.