

TWO URA STAFF LOSE LIVES IN ELEPHANT CRASH

By Michael Odeng
and Robert Arinika

Grief and shock have engulfed the Uganda Revenue Authority (URA) following a horrific Sunday night crash at Murchison Falls National Park that claimed the lives of two staff members and left four others injured. This was after their vehicle rammed into an elephant along the park road.

The deceased has been identified as a supervisor for taxpayer education, Robert Lumanyika Wamala and Moses Adola Odong, a short-term employee in the tax education division. The victims were attached to the strategy and risk management specialists team supporting the National Curriculum Development Centre (NCDC).

Also, killed in the accident is Andrew Lubega, who is not a URA employee.

According to sources, Wamala's mother had previously lost four children in a road accident in Luwero. Following the latest tragedy, she is now left with one child, the last born.

The fatal crash involved a Toyota Hiace registration number UA 20121AA and an elephant that was crossing the road. Videos circulating from the scene showed the badly damaged van overturned by the roadside as residents and motorists rushed to rescue the victims.

According to Michael Kananura, the spokesperson and liaison officer for the Directorate of Traffic and Road Safety at Uganda Police Force, the accident occurred at about 8:00pm on May 24, 2026, along the Karuma-Pakwach highway at the boundary of Murchison Falls National Park in Nwoya district.

Police preliminary investigations indicate that the vehicle, which was carrying seven URA officials travelling from Arua to Kampala after official duty, knocked down an elephant crossing the road before the driver lost control of the vehicle.

Kananura said three occupants died on the spot while four others, including the driver, sustained injuries. The bodies of the deceased were taken to Anaka Hospital in Nwoya district.

He said Police rushed the injured victims to Kiryandongo Hospital for emergency treatment before they were later transferred to Kampala for further medical management.

The URA northern region manager, Simon Tumwesigye, said after the crash, the agitated elephant charged at the vehicle and rammed into it, resulting in the death of the three individuals.

He added that a rescue team from the Karuma area, together with police officers, rushed to the scene and managed to save the remaining URA staff.

Tumwesigye said the team was able to leave the park quickly because they were only about 10km from the exit.

URA spokesperson Robert Kalumba said the team had been in northern Uganda conducting tax education sensitisation for teachers ahead of the reopening of schools.



The URA van which was involved in the fatal incident on the Pakwach-Karuma highway

UWA STARTS PROBE

The Uganda Wildlife Authority (UWA) has since launched investigations into the crash.

In a statement released yesterday, UWA also advised motorists travelling through protected areas to exercise caution, noting that wild animals frequently cross roads within national parks.

"There are signposts at the park indicating speed limits and where animals frequently cross," UWA spokesperson, Bashir Hangi, said.

However, he noted that the accident occurred on a road outside the park, where it is not possible to restrict people from crossing.

The wildlife body extended condolences to the families, relatives and friends of the deceased and wished the injured a quick recovery.

"They were sensitising teachers on the inclusion of tax education in the school curriculum. Their last station was in Arua, where they completed the programme on Sunday before setting off for Kampala when the accident happened," Kalumba said.

He added that URA management would ensure that the injured staff receive proper medical care and support while in the hospital. However, he did not mention the name of the hospital where they were admitted.

"We extend our deepest condolences to the families, friends, loved ones and the entire URA fraternity during this difficult time. We pray for a quick



Lumanyika Wamala



Moses Odong

recovery for the injured and may the soul of the departed rest in eternal peace," URA stated in a statement released yesterday.

HOW TO AVOID CRASHES WITH ELEPHANTS
There are around 5,000 elephants in Uganda. They are mostly found in the landscapes of Kidepo, Murchison-Semliki and the Greater Virunga Landscape.

According to UWA, elephants are intelligent, sociable, affectionate animals. They portray behaviours similar to humans, such as caring for weaker individuals, adoption of orphaned calves and grieving over dead companions.

They detect danger through an extraordinary combination of senses, including the ability to feel ground vibrations, a powerful sense of smell and acute low-frequency hearing.

This sensory network enables them to sense predators, approaching storms or human threats from miles away and respond swiftly.

When elephants pick up seismic alarm signals warning of danger, they immediately adopt a defensive posture, with family groups clustering tightly together to protect one another. Elephants can tell whether a human is a friend or foe by their scent.

Therefore, when driving through a national park, like the Karuma-Pakwach Road, please note that the speed limit is 40 kilometres per hour. This is because wild animals, particularly elephants, keep crossing the road.

Elephants and other animals have the right of way in the parks. This is because they cannot understand human traffic laws, yet ensuring safe passage for animals and avoiding

About the deceased

Wamala, a former employee of CBS radio and WBS Television, was recognised for his contribution to tax awareness campaigns and taxpayer education in the region.

He attended St Joseph's Naggalama Secondary before joining Makerere University, where he acquired a Bachelor of Communication and a Master of Business Administration.

In January 2024, Wamala completed a Chartered Institute of Public Relations diploma course at Uganda Management Institute.

However, little was shared about Odong apart from the fact that he graduated from Uganda Martyrs University in 2021 with a Bachelor of Arts in public administration and Management.

devastating collisions takes place. "Be extra cautious when driving inside or near wildlife-protected areas. Wild animals can suddenly cross the road at any time. Always drive at a controlled speed, stay alert, and be prepared to stop immediately to avoid accidents that can cost both human and wildlife lives," Hangi said.

"Elephants can cross from anywhere and it is important to be alert."

He also pointed out that elephants have been knocked down along the Karuma-Pakwach road in the last five years, meaning an elephant dies every year in an accident.

He advised that as motorists approach elephants, they should only give the right of way but avoid completely at least 30-50 metres and turn off the engine and headlights to avoid agitating the elephant.

"Stay inside your vehicle with windows up and never honk or rev your engine. Rushing them can trigger life-threatening charges," a source said, adding that the occupants in a car should not make any noise.

Also, look out for signs of aggression according to the source. "If elephants flare their ears out to appear larger, kick up dirt, or flap their ears aggressively, you are too close," the source said, adding that motorists should not approach an elephant. Also watch for elephants that single (aren't in a herd) because they may be crazy outcasts.

In case of an encounter with elephants, ensure that there is enough space behind to manoeuvre in case of herd advances.

Additional Report
by Gerald Ten