

History. Kampala is rich with 51 buildings and sites that were constructed before 1969 reflecting Uganda's socio-cultural, religious, political and economic history. The buildings have been identified by several organs as an important step towards preserving and promoting them. Bamuturaki Musunguzi writes.

Both the Chwa Building and Muteesa I Dormitory at Mengo Primary School in Kampala have cracked walls, crumbling plaster and rough cast, very old timber, doors and paint, and damaged verandas as a result of rainwater.

While taking *Daily Monitor* around the Muteesa I Dormitory, Mengo Primary School headteacher Festus Kimura says the school has endeavored to maintain the dormitory's veranda so that it is not damaged by rainwater. The lower end of the dormitory has been reinforced with hardcore stones in order to protect the walls from falling off as well.

"The gutters are rusted. The original timber and doors are old and need to be replaced, which is going to be our next project," Kimura says.

On the other hand the original timber and iron sheets on the Chwa Building are still strong. However, soft ceiling boards need replacing and veranda repaired.

Kimura says because the sun-dried bricks were joined by mud in the construction of both buildings, termites find it easy to destroy the timber and soft boards on the walls. "We fumigate to control the termites."

"Our biggest challenge is lack of funds to maintain these historic buildings. The situation is even made worse because we are a Universal Primary Education-funded school where funds are very minimal. The best we can do is to start by painting. We need to work on the verandas and general maintenance so that the buildings can last ages," Kimura adds.

"We should appreciate such buildings, technology and architecture of the people who lived before us. They serve as memory. We should thank Kabaka Chwa for his initiative to promote education in Buganda Kingdom," he says.

Heritage

Christian missionaries established Kayanja Elementary School (later Mengo Primary School) in 1895. The Chwa Building was the first formal education building in Uganda, financed by the Buganda Kingdom and British donations. The mvule tree (*Chlorophora excelsa*) Kabaka Chwa planted on its inauguration still stands at the yard. This was followed by the Muteesa I Dormitory, both buildings having thick walls made of mud and grass bricks.

Chwa houses a small boys' dormitory, the main school library and four classrooms. While the Muteesa I Dormitory houses big boys only. The mixed school that sits on about 7 acres currently has 971 pupils and 22 teachers.

These Mengo Primary School buildings are among the 51 buildings and sites in Kampala that were constructed before 1969 reflecting Uganda's socio-cultural, religious, political and economic history.

The sites have been identified by the Cross-Cultural Foundation of Uganda (CCFU) in partnership with Uganda Tourism Board (UTB), Buganda Heritage and Tourism Board, Uganda National Museum and Kampala Capital City Authority (KCCA).

Saving Kampala's historical



Kisingiri House on Mengo Hill, Kampala is one of the oldest houses in Buganda Kingdom. PHOTOS BY BAMUTURAKI MUSUNGUZI

as an important step towards the preservation and promotion of these assets.

Kampala is fast expanding and becoming a modern city, but it is also losing its historical and cultural identity, especially as historical buildings and sites get modified or even demolished.

Heritage preservation efforts in Uganda and the world over are, however, confronted with a number of challenges, the deputy commissioner for tourism development in the Ministry of Tourism, Rosemary Kobutagi, notes.

"In Uganda particularly, rapid population growth causes intense demand for space and resources for development. This, coupled with a lack of sufficient awareness of the significance of cultural and historical assets, places buildings and monuments at risk of being modified or demolished. In addition the limited investment in our heritage assets reduces their viability as tourism products, especially in a context where development is to a large extent equated to economic growth," Kobutagi adds.

Challenges

According to Dr Fredrick Omolo Okalebo, a lecturer at the Department of Architecture and Physical Planning, Makerere University, the significant historic buildings are at risk because their owners or managers are unaware of their importance.

In his paper titled "Preserving Historical Buildings in Uganda," Dr Okalebo observes: Many have been neglected and abandoned; some are being threatened or eyed for destruction (like the Uganda National Museum in Kampala); some have been altered (like State House in Entebbe); some destroyed (like the Kasubi Royal Tombs of the Buganda Kings, which are under reconstruction); many have been destroyed (like Fort Lugard Historical Museum and



Chwa Building at Mengo Primary School is among the historical buildings that should be preserved in Kampala.

the Nakawa African Housing Estate in Kampala), and a few are preserved or under conservation (like Parliament Building and Makerere Main Building).

"The levels of preservation and conservation also leave a lot to be desired," Dr Okalebo notes in the paper that he presented at the launch of the map titled "Kampala's Historical Buildings and Sites - Our Valuable but Vanishing Heritage" in Kampala in November last year.

Dr Okalebo lists a number of challenges in the preservation of historical buildings in Uganda: there is limited national budget allocation to the sector (Kenya allocates about 2 per cent of its budget; Uganda 0.1 per cent); Uganda's heritage legislation has been overrun by events and calling for its revision; limited expert or specialist conservation personnel; weak institutions; attitudes to and from government; and defragmentation of custodianship (ministry of Gender oversees the National Theatre and Nomo Gallery; others are

under the department of antiquities and museums in ministry of tourism, trade and industry).

According to Dr Okalebo, a town or city in which old buildings stand alongside new buildings is, of course, a veritable, outdoor museum of history, as by studying the oldest to the most recent buildings, one gets an idea of what sort of people have resided there over the years, how prosperous the residents have been, what sort of technology and materials have been available to them.

"Unlike other objects of everyday life which when no longer suitable for their original use can either be discarded or stored, buildings can often outlive their original use. If the integrity of the architecture of the building is not diminished, and its character and setting safeguarded, then with the skills of a conservation architect new uses can often be accommodated satisfactorily," Dr Okalebo says.

Most buildings are privately owned, meaning the onus of keeping the building in good shape or repair

buildings

ence, for local and international tourists, who will discover the history of religions, cultures, education, health and political systems in Uganda.

"(Historical buildings) are the history of us as Ugandans, they are the culture, they tell the story, they tell where we have been, they tell where we came from. But there is no real effort to preserve these things, and by and by, people are forgetting them..." KCCA executive director Jennifer Musisi observes.

Unfortunately, Musisi adds, our laws are not very strong. "In other jurisdictions, you can change the inside however much you want, but you cannot touch the exterior. So you have all these buildings which are like facades. Very old, very historical, very well preserved, but the inside is very convenient and has been modified to suit the needs of the current generations," she says.

Musisi believes we need to strengthen our laws as long as all of us have acknowledged; we need to increase awareness and we need to put more efforts in this so that when one walks into a building or down a street one will be able to identify parts of our history as one goes along.

Speaking at the launching ceremony, Ireland's Ambassador to Uganda Donal Cronin argued that historical buildings in Kampala are not second rate examples stick in some backwater town - the buildings here are superbly fine, built by Ugandan men and women and often designed by the best architects working on the continent at that time.

Call to authorities

Cronin said Dublin (in Ireland) learned a number of bitter lessons. "First, the city authorities and the government have a duty and responsibility to enforce the protection of historic buildings. Without this, the free market will be less likely to preserve, with profit and modernisation the main motives," he said.

"However, there is also a need to get the private sector, landlords, developers on board. Not just the stick, but also the carrot. So incentives for preservation are also needed, small grants, awards... publicity - these are also very useful in promoting a culture of preservation. A preservation that we can all benefit from, the city, the private sector, the residents, visitors - a true win-win situation."

Cronin would love to see KCCA address two things: retention of the leafy realm and support for maintain the upkeep on the fine historic buildings in the Central Business District.

"The leafy realm refers both to the tree-lined streets once so characteristic of many African cities of which many, but not all, are as casually removing the trees, often by the way for small issues like inserting a cable or a small widening of the road," Cronin added. UTB recognises historical buildings and sites as important aspects of Uganda's heritage, history and identity and as potential sources of cultural tourism.

Musisi revealed that KCCA has started a guided tour of Kampala where the buses will stop.

In addition to the existing monuments and statues, KCCA plans to construct others in the capital.

On behalf of her ministry, Kobutagi pledged to support the promotion of cultural tourism by ensuring that Uganda has a conducive policy framework to identify and protect historical and cultural buildings. Through the Department of Museums and

Monuments, provision shall be made to develop these national assets into viable tourism products that will be used to promote respect for Uganda's cultural diversity and history.

According to Kobutagi, the government has demonstrated its will to preserve and promote historical sites and buildings by updating legislation, such as the Museums and Monuments Policy 2015 and the draft Uganda Heritage Bill 2015 that seek to address contemporary preservation concerns, cognisant of heritage and its contribution to sustainable development, peace, mutual respect and understanding among peoples.

"Heritage preservation requires the concerted efforts of diverse actors to pool expertise and resources from custodians of cultural heritage; historians and owners of historical properties; responsible government agencies; tour agents and development partners, alike..." Kobutagi says.

"Indeed our historical buildings are evidence of the intellectual, social, economic and political efforts of previous leaders and generations and this must be recognised and preserved," she adds.

CCFU in partnership with relevant stakeholders plans to advocate for the establishment of legal instruments to identify, list and protect historical properties and to encourage cultural activities and creative artists to use their skills to promote historical buildings.

CCFU will publicly recognise individuals and institutions that have made an outstanding contribution to the preservation of built heritage in Kampala and Uganda in the near future.

SOME OF KAMPALA'S HISTORICAL BUILDINGS, MONUMENTS



St. Mary's Cathedral (Rugaba) (L) constructed by the White Fathers between 1914 - 1925 following the 1888 religious wars. The Romanesque Cathedral contains the remains of Archbishop Joseph Kiwanuka. Uganda's first native archbishop. Images of the 22 Catholic martyrs are displayed in the stained glass windows.



The Makerere Main Building (L) built between 1939 and 1942 is the administrative building for East Africa's oldest university. Constructed with funding from the Colonial Development Fund, the building was designed to partly resemble the Senate Building at the University of London, to which Makerere College was then affiliated.



The Bahai House of Worship (1958) was designed to fit with Uganda's culture and environment with its nine-sided circular shape and striking dome. At the time the highest building in East Africa, it remains one of the largest religious structures in Africa.



The Independence Monument (L) built in 1962 by Gregory Mapoba, one of Uganda's first professional sculptors, heralds the newly born country free from bondage. It was inaugurated on October 5, 1962 by Apollo Milton Obote. Uganda's first prime minister after independence.



The Nakasero Hindu Temple built in 1954. The Shree Saranath Dharma Mandir was built by public subscription and follows the precepts of Hindu Temple architecture. Building materials were imported from India and no steel bars were used. A masterpiece of Indian masonry with intricate stonework, the temple is equally richly decorated.



The Uganda Railway Station was built in 1904. It was built after the Uganda Railway reached Kampala from Mombasa (1931), the imposing building attests to the status of the railway in the colonial period, when all of the Protectorate foreign trade (and its passenger traffic) depended on railway transport.



St. Luke and St. Katherine Wards at Mengo Hospital were built in 1904. They stand where Albert Cook built Uganda's first (grass-shedded) hospital in 1897. It was rebuilt with earth and grass bricks in 1904 with most of the labour provided through bulkingwasi (community service).



World War's Memorial Monument (1945), which is Kampala's oldest monument built by the Protectorate Government in memory of Ugandans who died during World War I & II. Upon return, world war veterans played an important role in struggle for Uganda's independence.