

Let's stop building other countries, start building our own

Walk through any major town in Uganda today – Kampala, Gulu, Mbarara – and you will see the cranes. They tower over our skyline, lifting steel and concrete to build the hospitals, highways and high-rises we desperately need. But look closer, those cranes do not have Ugandan names painted on the side. The project managers on-site rarely speak Luganda or Luo. And the multi-



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billion-shilling contracts? Signed in boardrooms in Ankara (Türkiye), Beijing (China) or Nairobi (Kenya).

I have spent years in this industry and watched a troubling pattern repeat itself: Uganda's infrastructure is booming, but Ugandan contractors are being left in the dust. We are not just missing out on profits; we are missing out on a generation of expertise, and it is time we had a frank conversation about it.

The Government talks about empowerment, but we need to move beyond talk and into deliberate policy. It is not about shutting the door on foreign investment; far from it. We have so much to learn from the outsiders. Take the Chinese model, for instance. It is brilliant in its execution. When you see five Chinese companies bidding against each other for a single road project in Kampala, you have to appreciate the strategy. They are backed by their government with machinery, financing and soft loans. No matter who wins the tender, China wins.

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