



MBALE MUNICIPALITY

Infrastructural Development an engine for transformation in Mbale Municipality

MBALE
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On June 26, 2006, Mbale town, located in Mbale District, and a number of other towns in Uganda, marked 100 years since their declaration as townships by the colonial government.

According to The Official Gazette of the East Africa and Uganda Protectorate Vol. VIII No 161, Mr. H. Hesketh Bell, then His Majesty's Commissioner, signed a declaration on June 26, 1906, that declared: "By virtue of the powers conferred upon me by the Uganda Township Ordinance 1903, I hereby declare the following places within limits hereinafter set forth to be townships for the purposes of the aforesaid Ordinance".

By 1951, the town had built modern offices on what is now called Republic Street and after independence in 1962, the Mbale Municipal Council was the first town to be granted official status of an urban authority.

Most of the people who have lived since then especially the now grey haired generation will tell you with nostalgia the days when Mbale was the cleanest town on East and central Africa.

In the days Mbale gained reputation as the cleanest town in East Africa. The Late President Apollo Milton Obote referred to it as the "Jewel of East Africa". Mbale rotary club then described it as the town with the best and well-designed roads.

According to Mbale historians, the town developed along a low ridge running from East to West at the foot hills of Mt Nkokonjeru, currently known as Wanale hill.

Visible from all parts of the town with its picturesque cliffs, cascading waterfalls and green cultivated slopes, the Wanale ridge supplements the town's allure; the white rocks along the hills are spread like a white sheet on the hills, no wonder the late colonial agent Mr Semel Kakungulu called it a white cock due to the white rocks that appear from a distance like a white cock.

An elder and former speaker Mr Davies Mwaule says Mbale's beginnings can be traced to an ivory tusks gathering site. This site had numerous rocks locally called Zimbale from which the district derived its name Mbale (Meaning stones).



Mbale Clock Tower - the Central point of the Town 1954.

Mr Mwaule says that with the support of the colonial masters, the then colonial agent Mr Semel Kakungulu transformed Mbale into a commercial and metropolitan town.

"The development enterprises like African textile mills boasted market in Kenya, Tanzania, Sudana, DR Congo and Zambia which helped the town to grow. All the industries helped the running of the town because they maintained roads, kept buildings clean, Mbale depended on them for survival," said Mr Mwaule.

The lucrative coffee trade led to the establishment of one of East Africa's premier and pioneer coffee trading unions, the Bugisu Cooperative Union in

"Establishment of the union, Mbale was inaugurated with many businessmen eager to stand the treat of the flourishing trade. It quickly evolved into a coffee business melting point for coffee traders from the north, far east, central, western and southern Sudan," Mr Jack Wamal Wamanga, the municipality MP says.

Mr Wamai says that many indigenous coffee farmers and traders became wealthy as a result of the town's booming and organized Coffee, hides and skins, Ivory and cotton trade.

"Actually most of these bought land in Mbale and constructed beautiful houses, improved on infrastructure that made Mbale town, the most beautiful and organized town in the late 1960s, through the 1970s and early 1980s," added Mr Wamai.

Mr Wamai explained that Mbale Municipality is the third largest town in Uganda after Kampala, the Capital City and that it consists of three autonomous but inter-dependent lower local Government Councils/Divisions or boroughs namely Industrial, northern and Wanale Division Councils, which together with the Mother Council are responsible for the socio-economic development and planning of the town.

He added that the town has long been known to be the cleanest town in east and central Africa with well-planned and organized streets that have only been damaged due to poor management and increasing population.

Expansion
The deputy town clerk Mr Kenneth Khatuli says the increasing human settlement has created new residential estates despite the delay of a Municipality Physical planning to expand the boundaries of Mbale municipal local government council to include Munkaga, Namanyonyi and

Nakaloke in question for a city status.

He said the municipality has also created Mbale physical planning department created to enforce planning and bring orderly settlement and development in the rapidly growing urban areas around Mbale.

He explained that Mbale municipal council hatched the idea two years ago to carve parts of the three sub-counties and annex to Mbale as a unitary governance entity in order to gain a city status.

He revealed that the major residential areas have emerged beyond Mbale municipality, especially on all major roads connecting to the town.

He further said the geographical location of Mbale municipality, its neighborhoods, accessibility, road network and power supply are the main determinants of market prices for a plots of land today in Mbale municipality.

Mr Khatuli explained that Mbale Municipality is one of the most competitive and attractive business centres in eastern Uganda and that this has further been aided by its close proximity to Kenya.

He added that Mbale's status as a business hub has resulted in high rates of migration into the town as many people flock to Mbale in search of livelihood opportunities.

"This has led to high population growth and which has caused a strain on the town's social infrastructure and led to the mushrooming of slums such as Kikyafu, Kisenyi, Mooni, and Namatala / Malukhu among others," Mr Khatuli noted.

The Municipality Public Relations Officer Mr James Kutosi says Mbale stands at the Mbale is approximately 245 kilometres (152 mi), by road, northeast of Kampala on an all-weather tarmac highway. The coordinates of the city are 1°04'50.0"N, 34°10'30.0"E (Latitude:1.080556; Longitude:34.175000).

He explained that the town lies on the main great North African road that runs from South Africa to Cairo through Nimule in northern Uganda.

He added that Mt Elgon, one of the highest peaks in East Africa, is approximately 52 kilometres (32 mi) east of Mbale and that the town is 45 minutes away from the border with Kenya that makes the cross border business a big activity in the area.

He revealed that the town has both two three star and five star hotels that offer hospitality to all visitors within and outside the country.

Beautiful town and tourist destination
Mr Saleh Naminya a businessman and proprietor of Casa del turista a popular coffee shop in Mbale says that even when it is true that Mbale doesn't have the features that the European towns boast of, but for people that a seeking to adventure, there is more than just the clock tower standing tall as you enter the busy town

"In Mbale you will experience the coffee story from the garden to your cup and a highlight to visiting Mbale is a tour that takes you through the entire coffee process at a nearby family farm," said Mr Naminya.

He adds that you will pick the coffee berries, to the shell and grind them with a traditional mortar and pestle, and roast them on an open fire, before - the best part - finishing with a fine cup of strong Arabica coffee.

Hiking to the top of Wanale Ridge
The Municipal Public Relations Officer Mr James Kutosi says Wanale ridge is obviously Mbale's



Mbale Republic Street under reconstruction