

The dilemma of accessing public toilets in Kampala

Options. Following MP Abiriga's decision to urinate in public recently, we assess whether the city has designated toilet facilities that the public can easily access.

BY STEPHEN OTAGE
sotage@ug.nationmedia.com

KAMPALA. Mr Ibrahim Abiriga, the controversial Arua Municipality Member of Parliament, recently caused a social media frenzy when a picture of him urinating in public went viral on various media platforms.

Ugandans found it baffling that an MP would ease himself in public, in broad daylight right in the centre of the city, moreover near the entrance of the ministry of Finance.

Asked why he did it, the MP's response was prompt: "I was badly off. Should I have kept urine on myself?"

Indeed, nature's call is unavoidable and on an ordinary day, one will spot a man urinating by the roadside. Within the city setting, there should be designated toilet facilities that the public can easily access. So what were the options for Abiriga or any motorist stuck in a traffic jam in the city centre or even for a pedestrian?

When this newspaper visited the spot where MP Abiriga was spotted urinating a few weeks ago, our survey showed that the nearest

toilets that he would have used were at the Finance ministry. Another option was Kampala Serena Hotel, about 150 metres away or Imperial Royal Hotel, which is about the same distance. Other options would have been Mosa Courts but a road island separating the Nile Avenue would not have allowed him easy access to the facility or the Somali Embassy, which is nearby.

Available options

According to Blasio Masembe, a boda boda rider at the stage opposite Kampala Serena Hotel, when he wants to answer nature's call, he walks into the hotel but that is usually when the hotel is not very busy. On days Serena is sealed off by security, they ride their motorcycles to the Railway gardens near Esso Corner on Jinja Road, where the nearest public toilet is located. Members of the public are required to pay Shs300.

Asked whether they can detect people who just want to use their toilet facilities, a cleaner at Kampala Serena Hotel says they cannot differentiate between the hotel clients and people who want to use the facilities, so they end up allowing everybody.

Mr David Eporet, a guard working at Imperial Royale Hotel, says it is mostly drivers who approach them to show them the rest rooms when they are waiting for their bosses during meetings at the hotel; but

NEAREST PLACES WHERE MP ABIRIGA COULD HAVE EASED HIMSELF



it is rare for members of the public to enter the hotel just to use the toilets. Mr Kefa Magoola, a boda boda rider near Imperial Royale Hotel, says when he wants to ease himself, he rides to Shell Grand Imperial where access to the toilets is free. Alternatively, he goes to Constitution Square.

Asked how many public toilets they have in the city, Mr Peter Kauju, the KCCA spokesperson, says the city authority has 16 public toilets. He says in public buildings, anyone should be allowed to use the toilets and all toilets in private buildings such as shopping centres are supposed to be accessed freely by shoppers.

WHAT PUBLIC SAYS



Matia Ronald, Farmer "Urine does not usually come suddenly, you can hold it for some time until you get a convenient place."



Lincoln Banji, Businessman "In the village, I can do it anywhere but in the city, it is impossible; I hold it until I get to a place of convenience."



Harriet Namugerwa, Businesswoman "I usually go to public places within town and they are quite clean; I use them often."