

Unsafe roads in Kampala: Need to cater for pedestrians with physical disabilities



Roads infrastructure

Safe and inclusive transport is essential to the attainment of Goal 11 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). While roads are a shared space for everyone, pedestrian infrastructure on most roads in Uganda is not inclusive of the needs of people living with disabilities. Over time, progress has been made in safer pedestrian infrastructure in Uganda, with 1-star roads moving to 2-stars. No road in Kampala has a safety rating of more than two stars¹.

Unsafe and inequitable roads for disabled pedestrians

Walking is the most predominant form of mobility in Uganda but safe walking facilities are not prioritized. Furthermore, the available road infrastructure in Uganda has not taken into account the fact that approximately 4.5 million Ugandans are persons with a disability. A road audit in Kampala found no infrastructural considerations for pedestrians with disabilities².

While road traffic crashes due to unsafe infrastructure are responsible for a significant amount of physical disability, those disabled cannot get around without worrying about another crash incident.

Although Uganda has had a non-motorized transport policy³ since 2012 that has a number of provisions to accommodate the needs of those with disabilities such as raised pedestrian crossing platforms, the implementation is still lacking.

Priority Actions for Director Engineering KCCA

1

Ensure that all roads in Kampala have ramps to allow access to walkways for wheelchair users

2

Provide audio signals at pedestrian-controlled signals for visually impaired pedestrians

3

Sensitize the public about the need to keep walkways clear from obstacles, and penalize illegal use of pedestrian space

Implications

Making provisions for persons living with disabilities on the roads in Kampala will result in lower pedestrian - vehicle collisions which will subsequently lead to a reduction in road traffic injuries in Kampala. Goal 11 of the SDGs calls for setting up sustainable cities which involve safe and inclusive road transport. If the needs of people living with disabilities are not catered for in road designs, Kampala and Uganda will not achieve the SDGs.

These desired modifications will come at a cost since road walkways will need to be widened and/or freed from road side activities like street vending. There may be some resistance from the residents. Furthermore, the city authority will need to invest resources not only in constructing the road infrastructure but also in sensitizing road users regarding the new road provisions like ramps and audio signals for the visually disabled. Literature from other countries shows that there is good return on investment as the city prevents crashes, injuries, property damage, healthcare costs, and lost incomes from the injured.



A blocked walkway in Kampala city: Photo source: CEBHA report, 2020



A blocked walkway in Kampala. Photo credit: CEBHA

Key Findings

- 1 None of the 8 inspected roads had ramps to cater for wheelchair users
- 2 None of the road signals had hearing aids at the crossing points to cater for those with visual impairment.
- 3 All observed walkways were blocked either by a) road-side vending activities, b) metal bars put in place to deter motorists from using the walkways, or c) other physical barriers like boda boda stages / parking points

References:

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3. Non-motorized transport policy, Uganda 2019. https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/25414/uganda_nmtpolicy.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y