

Kampala: City research brief

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The African Cities Research Consortium (ACRC) is a collaborative research programme, seeking to tackle complex urban development challenges in the continent's rapidly changing cities. ACRC aims to generate robust insights and evidence that will help improve the living conditions and urban services for all city residents, especially disadvantaged communities.

ACRC's research integrates political settlements thinking with city systems analysis, to understand the dynamics underpinning infrastructure and service challenges in cities. Targeted analysis of specific urban development domains provides deeper insights into how sectoral shortcomings can be overcome and residents' needs addressed.

Kampala is one of 12 African cities in which ACRC is engaging community organisations, researchers, practitioners, key state actors and non-state agencies, to co-produce knowledge and evidence to advance urban transformation.

Research highlights

- > The strain on existing infrastructure in Kampala is negatively impacting public service delivery, creating a gap that is being filled by private formal and informal actors.
- > Power struggles, corruption, ineffective governance and slow decisionmaking processes are bottlenecks in addressing city-wide challenges.
- > Proximity to power at the city and national level influences how informal communities experience, navigate and negotiate everyday challenges.
- > Low incomes and limited knowledge about nutrition are impacting the health and wellbeing of Kampala residents, despite an abundance of food.

- > Young people constitute the majority of Kampala's population, but there is a huge gap in data on the youth demographic and a lack of targeted initiatives.
- > Land brokers in Kampala are using the lack of information in land markets to their own advantage.

Research summaries

City of systems

Kampala, the capital city of Uganda, is one of the fastest-growing African cities, with annual population growth rates of 5.6%. Currently, the city has a daytime population of over 4.5 million and is home to nearly 1.7 million people, 60% of whom reside in informal settlements. With the rapidly increasing population, the city is grappling with major infrastructure and service planning and provision deficits. We investigated ten major systems that deliver goods and services in Kampala and found that:

1. All systems are governed and influenced by multiple actors (government authorities, NGOs, CBOs, CSOs and private sector players) and have become sites of contestation. Transport emerged as the most contested system, with relatively lower levels of contestation around food distribution, finance, and law and order.



2. Kampala Capital City Authority (KCCA) and the central government often struggle to coordinate service delivery within and across these contested systems and employ different modes of engagement with private sector providers in particular. Apart from establishing formalised partnerships with some private sector operators, this can include deferral, capture and, sometimes, harassment (for example, legal bans). Perennial funding shortfalls, especially since 2016, undermine KCCA's capacity and authority, despite multi-year collaborations with several development partners.
3. Systems delivery outcomes can be characterised by Kampala's (in)formal neighbourhoods, (in)accessible settlements, (in)efficient transport systems, (in)effective electricity distribution systems, (in)secure neighbourhoods, (in)justice, etc. These shortcomings are most visible in informal settlements. The dominance of informality existing side by side with established standards and accepted formalities continues to thrive in the city. Integration across systems is notably absent in most cases, at both the operational and planning levels.

The politics of Kampala city

Kampala occupies a contested position within Uganda's broader political settlement. The most recent elections revealed high degrees of opposition to the ruling National Resistance Movement (NRM) government within Kampala. Power in Kampala City has been recentralised under KCCA, with a ministry specially created to oversee the city's governance. Mistrust continues to characterise the relationship between the political leadership of the city on the one hand, and KCCA technical leadership and central government on the other, reducing the prospects for coordinated reform efforts and sustained investment.

Politics within Kampala is characterised by power struggles, corruption and ineffective governance and decisionmaking processes, which all delay efforts to address the city's development challenges. Operating informally alongside the formal political and technical structures are powerful political and business elites with strong connections to the NRM government and the president. Individuals of varying allegiance to the NRM and the opposition have also been co-opted to work under a complex geometry of informal-formal political bargaining. These city-level power networks filter downwards through rent-seeking and clientelism to impact service provision, critical infrastructure, financial and development programming (such as roads, slum upgrading,

markets, taxes, licensing, vending, and so on) and law enforcement. All of these significantly impact the everyday experiences of residents, particularly in the city's informal settlements.

Domains

> Informal settlements

The governance of service delivery in Kampala's informal settlements is a complex mix of centralised and dispersed authority, given the engagement of multiple actors under different legal and institutional mandates. Many of the relevant state institutions are dogged by high levels of bureaucracy, ineffectiveness, vulnerability to corruption and an acute lack of resources. Partisan contestation – including between elected opposition MPs and the NRM's local representatives and networks – further undermines coordinated action.

The functionality of critical systems on which Kampala's informal settlement communities depend is closely linked to the nature and outcome of interactions between different sets of actors. At the local level, the less visible NRM local "mobilisers" – the majority of whom also double as LC1 chairpersons – work clandestinely with State-House-connected individuals (such as large-scale businessmen and women, military officers and politicians) in determining the success or failure of local water supply systems, sanitation, waste management and market development projects in informal settlements. This directly shapes how disadvantaged urban communities access social services, find livelihood opportunities, secure their tenure, participate in decisionmaking processes and also secure their inclusion in the urban economy.

Informal settlements are becoming increasingly significant for both the economic rents and the political benefits that they offer to national and city political elites – both because of the numbers of voters involved and because they occupy the largest share of the most accessible prime lands across the city.

> Health, wellbeing and nutrition

The Ministry of Health's 2016 Status of Non-Communicable Diseases report indicates that 88% of Ugandans do not have healthy diets, despite an abundance of food. In Kampala City, 97% of households have access to food through market purchases, meaning city residents should be considered food secure. However, fluctuations in income and the precarious nature of the informal sector make access to nutritious food difficult for informal settlement residents, especially children, leaving them susceptible to diseases related to unhealthy diets.

"If you look around, food is everywhere but it is only those with money who can get it... only the rich."
- Focus group discussion with male youths

In addition, health, wellbeing and nutrition in the city continues to be constrained by:

- Limited knowledge and understanding of healthy diets.
- Low incomes, weak purchasing power and competing priorities.
- Unaffordability of healthcare services, due to private sector domination and lack of public services.
- Weak policy and regulatory mechanisms for the production, advertising and distribution of food.

> Youth and capability development

Young people constitute most of Kampala's population – 46% of residents are under the age of 20 – and have huge economic and political significance. There is a vast data gap on the youth demographic as well as on youth-targeted initiatives in Kampala. As a result, many youths are unable to benefit from governmental and non-governmental programmes, while key actors are working in silos and basing their activities on largely out-of-date data and information. Additionally, young people remain highly vulnerable to:

- Exploitation by elites to further political agendas, although certain youths are capitalising on their association with political elites to promote their own personal interests and ambitions.
- Violence and insecurity, which they are also accused of creating.
- Teenage pregnancies and drug abuse, making them susceptible to a vicious cycle of poverty and vulnerability.

> Land and connectivity

Land is a strategic resource for any city. It is a political, economic and social resource that guides planning, and rational and orderly development. Unlocking the socioeconomic and political development of Kampala City largely depends on effective access to and utilisation of land.

Land and connectivity in Kampala is intricate and contentious, due to the multiple political interests and economic value attached to it, but also to differentials in infrastructure and

real estate developments, service and network connectivity. While many land and connectivity actors exist, informal actors have emerged as key players in Kampala's land matrix, and are significantly reshaping land values, markets and transfers.

Multiple land tenure regimes – rooted in Uganda's colonial history and constitutional arrangement – exist side by side with a corrupt registry and politically connected "land grabbers", further complicating issues in the city. Land brokers have taken advantage of information asymmetry and gaps arising from parallel, overlapping and competing tenure regimes to seize and even block land values, markets and transfers in the city.

Potential strategic interventions

The political drivers that enabled the radical city-wide reforms of the early 2010s have been absent since 2016 and are unlikely to return. This suggests that reform efforts need to be more gradualist and reformist in nature, focused on specific problems that have political traction and which can be addressed with limited state capabilities.

Building on the research findings outlined above, we propose two integrated, cross-domain interventions to address the challenges identified:

> Kawenja Plastic Waste Entrepreneurship and Innovation Hub: Revitalising and scaling up a locally-led slum upgrading intervention for flood control and livelihood enhancement in Kisenyi III. This would entail undertaking the following activities:

1. **Co-creating a plastic waste actor coalition** composed of settlement and city forums with the support of the ACRC Kampala team.
2. **Building a network of informal youth plastic waste collectors** mobilised around a "plastic-preneurship" hub. Their competencies and skillsets will be harnessed by equipping them with critical technical and business skills to become innovative "plastic-preneurs". This network of young people will lead lobbying and negotiation for better prices with industrial sector firms by leveraging the recent Presidential Executive Order No 2 on waste management in cities and municipalities.
3. **Conducting a situation analysis** (including actor mapping, working relations/social networks dynamics, business structure inputs and outputs, business performance and profit analyses, plastic flows analysis, market conditions assessment) to better

understand the current models in place and derive baselines to inform a targeted skilling garage/clinic, for a scalable community plastic waste enterprise model.

4. **Procuring, installing, testing and commissioning capital equipment and machinery**, including a crusher, pellet boiler and PET pre-foam injection molding machines.
5. **Formalising the plastic recycling initiative with KCCA and other key agencies**, such as the National Environment Management Authority (NEMA), alongside revising the Waste Management Ordinance model and improving the Ministries, Departments, and Agencies' (MDAs') coordination and collaborative working.

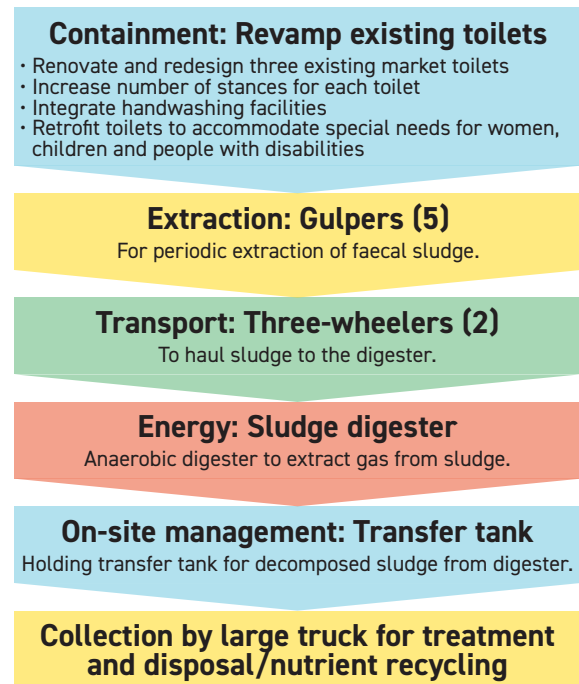
> **Installation of a sludge transfer tank and three-wheeler vehicle at Ggaba market to improve hygiene and sanitation standards for food vendors.** This would involve implementing a co-produced, innovative, on-site sanitation and hygiene system to enhance food handling standards. The aim is to improve working conditions and livelihoods of women food vendors, enhance the market management, and fulfil the overall health, wellbeing and nutrition needs of the market's clients.

Existing sanitation facilities will be revamped and expanded as part of a comprehensive and affordable on-site sanitation system. Technologies including a faecal sludge transfer tank, a bio-digester and other ancillary infrastructures for faecal sludge extraction and transportation, on-site partial treatment and recycling – including five gulper pumps and two three-wheeler vehicles – will form key elements of this system.

From this system, the generated gas will be channelled for fish-drying/smoking and other on-site energy needs. The manure will be sold to farmers as soil conditioner for reuse in urban agriculture. More importantly, the

intervention will facilitate a more collaborative working arrangement between the different market stakeholders, KCCA and National Water and Sewerage Corporation (NWSC). Longer term, this would work towards creating a more participatory and inclusive regulatory mechanism for scaling-up, extending and regulating an off-grid sanitation service delivery model, increasing service access and coverage, particularly to underserved communities in Kampala.

Figure 1: Proposed intervention for Ggaba market



About this brief

This brief was produced by ACRC's Kampala team to outline research findings and potential interventions, in preparation for the final city uptake workshop in the programme's Foundation Phase (2022-23).

Photo information (by order of appearance): 1. Street vendors in Kampala - Vlad Karavaev / iStock; 2. Kisenyi in Kampala - SDI / Flickr (CC BY 2.0).



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