ISSN: 2524-1354 (Online), ISSN: 2519-7851 (Print)
Africa Habitat Review Journal
Volume 16 Issue 1 (September 2022)
http://uonjournals.uonbi.ac.ke/ojs/index.php/ahr

Fostering Urban Growth Through Green Growth Practices in Secondary Cities:

A Case Study of Uganda

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Received on 26th March, 2022; Received in revised form 20th July, 2022; Accepted on 30th July, 2022.

Abstract

Uganda is urbanising fast and this phenomenon is largely found in the country' secondary cities. These secondary cities struggle to cope with the demand of the population influx from the country-side; they are poorly serviced with the necessary infrastructure to support the fast-growing population, are largely unplanned, poorly financed and ill managed, and are unprepared for the challenges they are to face in the immediate and long-term future. Therefore, the objective of this paper was to investigate ways through which secondary cities in Uganda can achieve sustainable development based on green growth development principles. The study employed an exploratory desk research methodology, examining Uganda's Green Growth Development Strategy to foster sustainable growth through analysis of secondary sources, focusing on the country's secondary cities. Official documents and publications on the topic of study formed the main source of information. Results show that Uganda's secondary cities are facing high population growth largely due to rural-urban migration. These cities are poorly serviced with infrastructure and services, poorly planned and governed, and struggling with high unemployment and fragile economies that are under the threat of climate change effects. Hence, at the moment Uganda is ill prepared to undertake its green growth and development strategy and achieve the objectives set forth. To realise its objectives, the study recommends that the country should focus on addressing threats to decentralisation. Government should enhance productivity of the economy; tackle issues of high informality of the economy, poor economic infrastructure and high infrastructure investment costs; and address threats of climate change, while prioritising environmental protection.

Keywords: Green economy, Green growth, Secondary cities, Sustainable housing, Urban housing.

INTRODUCTION

Urbanisation is taking place in many nations around the world, and it comes with challenges and opportunities that we have to contend with for our sustenance and survival. One of the concepts believed to guarantee our survival under such conditions is the Green Growth of cities. This concept of green growth is about fostering economic growth and development while ensuring that natural assets continue to provide the resources and environmental services on which our well-being relies (OECD, 2013). Green growth development is about developing new growth models and interventions for mitigating both immediate and long-term adverse effects on the environment that come with urban development.

Hammer et al. (2011), in their report about cities and green growth, outline key research questions and protocols that can guide green cities' programmes. Hammer et al. (2011), examine economic and environmental conditions that have triggered the green growth agenda as a topical debate, and assess the critical role cities play in advancing green growth. Under the green growth concept, it is argued that advances in environmental efficiency can help to achieve economic growth while regulating resource use. It is about pursuing technologies that reduce pollution, improving efficiency to reduce consumption, and using markets to foster sustainability (OECD, 2013).

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Urban Growth in Uganda

Uganda is fast urbanising and the urban population is also experiencing a high growth rate. This phenomenon is largely found in the secondary cities of the country, where the population growth is mainly due to rural-urban migration. At the same time, these secondary cities are poorly serviced with the necessary infrastructure to support the fast-growing population. They are largely unplanned, poorly financed and managed; making them unprepared for the challenges they are to face in the immediate and long-term future. The country's urban population grew from 19.38 percent (2010) to 24.95 percent (2020), a space of just ten years (O'Neill, 2020). This high rate of growth that outstrips the country's rate of economic development has resulted in rural-urban migration, more so to the country's secondary cities where migrants move in search of employment and better access to infrastructure and basic services, such as health and education (Mukiibi, 2020). In the process, the poorly prepared cities struggle to cope with the demand of the population influx from the country-side. As a result, the economic situation of many residents in these cities is far from satisfactory, and the depreciating environmental conditions that arise from the unplanned urbanisation puts the cities at risk of fostering the growth of informal settlements, poor living conditions and crime (Mukiibi, 2011).

In order to mitigate the negative impacts of this fast urbanization, secondary cities in Uganda need to come up with strategic interventions for their future development, hence the need to examine the green growth development concept as a possible framework that can ensure their sustainable development.

THEORY

Green growth has been defined in various ways by international organisations such as: The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), World Bank, African Development Bank, United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP). In Uganda, green growth has been described as an inclusive low emissions economic growth process that emphasizes effective and efficient use of the country's natural, human, and physical capital, while ensuring that natural assets continue to provide for present and future generations (Government of Uganda, 2017).

According to Cities Alliance, secondary cities are geographically defined as urban jurisdictions or centres performing vital governance, logistical, and production functions at a sub-national or sub-metropolitan region level within a system of cities in a country (Roberts and Hohmann, 2014). Roberts and Hohmann (2014), observe that many of these cities struggle to create or retain jobs, have high levels of unemployment, and find it difficult to diversify and revitalise their economies, retain capital and attract investment. They have poor infrastructure and housing, and other essential urban services do not have the capacity to manage urbanisation.

Worldwide, urban growth is a major driver of economic development of any country, and cities play a crucial role. At the micro level of urban development, housing becomes a necessity of life that anchors the economic activities of the cities. For the community to secure sustainable urban development it must have access to adequate housing and basic services for its members. This is well emphasised by Wachter et al. (2018):

"*Shelter is a necessity of life and an anchor of economic activities by households. Availability of affordable housing with access to transport, jobs, and necessary public services for health and safety, is a prerequisite for inclusive and diverse cities. Housing is the most important asset for the majority of households and homeownership is key for building wealth. Housing is also the anchoring component in the construction and expansion of cities and the main driver that catalyses sustainable and resilient territorial development through land-use, infrastructure and transport sectors*".

At the macro level, sustainable development is an important aspect of a country's economic growth. Here, the urban environment is an indicator of the health of the country's economy. Hence, sustainable urban development becomes a fundamental feature of development.

Realising these two important levels, at the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III) in Quito, Ecuador, the New Urban Agenda was adopted. The New Urban Agenda calls for ensuring adequate housing and basic services for all under Goal 11 as captured in the Sustainable Development Goals. Whereas this objective has been on many stakeholders' agenda, its realisation has proved to be a problem. Habitat II attempted to achieve this noble objective without success. Wachter et al. (2018), at the Habitat III conference, pointed out that a number of national and regional governments have had challenges in realising this goal due to lack of financial resources.

Recognising the role of the urban environment in development, The New Urban Agenda emphasises equal rights and access to the benefits and opportunities that cities can offer for all. It highlights five principles for focus when aiming at achieving sustainable and inclusive development - national urban policies, urban legislation and regulations, urban planning and design, local economy and municipal finance, and local implementation (United Nations, 2017).

RESEARCH METHODS

The objective of this paper was to investigate ways through which secondary cities in Uganda can achieve sustainable development based on green growth development principles. The study was exploratory in nature, undertaken as desk research, examining how Uganda's secondary cities can foster sustainable development through implementing the country's Green Growth Development Strategy (2017/18–2030/31) to foster their sustainable growth. Official documents and publications on the topic of study formed the main source of information and analysis.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Uganda's Green Growth and Development Strategy (2017/18 - 2030/31)

In 2007, the Government of Uganda approved and adopted its development vision, Vision 2040, with a vision statement – *A transformed Ugandan society from a peasant to a modern and prosperous country within 30 years*. Under this vision, the country hopes to harness the opportunities in oil and gas, tourism, minerals, ICT business, abundant labour force, geographical location and trade, water resources, industrialization and agriculture (Government of Uganda, n.d.).

To realise Vision 2040, Uganda, in 2017, adopted Uganda Green Growth Development Strategy (2017/18-2030/31). Uganda Green Growth Development Strategy (UGGDS) is a multi-sectoral policy document aimed at achieving an inclusive low-emissions economic growth process that emphasizes effective and efficient use of natural, human and physical capital, while ensuring that natural assets continue to provide for the present and future generations (FAO, 2017). The strategy proposes eight areas of action - climate change actions to prioritise national resilience through adaptation and mitigation; bio-diversity conservation and natural resource management; sustainable management; land management; sustainable energy; sustainable transport options; city and urban development; agriculture; and, status of policy and financing instruments for green growth (Government of Uganda, 2017).

Uganda's Green Growth and Development Strategy (2017/18-2030/31) is hinged on the principles of sustained economic growth; resource use efficiency; climate change response through adaptation and mitigation; creation of decent green jobs; and, human well-being and social inclusiveness. Its objective is to provide guidance and describe the governance framework on priorities and strategic interventions for implementation of the green economy, green growth and development in the country. It aims to achieve its objective through three specific objectives:

i. Accelerate economic growth and raise per capita income through targeted investments in the priority sectors with the highest green growth multiplier effects;

ii. Achieve inclusive economic growth with poverty reduction, improved human welfare and employment creation;

iii. Ensure that social and economic transition is achieved through a low carbon development pathway that safeguards the integrity of the environment and natural resources (Government of Uganda, 2017).

In terms of cities and urban development, the strategy advocates for development of a profile of natural assets to address pressure on these assets; identification of specific opportunities for Green Urban Development interventions; and institutional actions to regulate, enforce and protect assets and the development of more sophisticated measures to address eco-system loss (Government of Uganda, 2017).

However, for this strategy to be realised realistically, it has to overcome a number of challenges. Although the strategy highlights only non-inclusive growth exhibited in income inequalities and regional imbalances, the country has other challenges to deal with. These include: limited resources to invest in key economic infrastructure and poor economic infrastructure, inefficient production methods, poverty, poor work ethics and corruption, low human development, climate change, environmental protection and lack of political will to support enforcement mechanisms.

Secondary Cities in Uganda

Uganda's urban environment constitutes of Kampala-the capital city - a number of secondary cities, and numerous municipalities and trading centres. Uganda has several secondary cities that are growing fast due to rural-urban migration by people in search of employment and access to better facilities and services, but there is limited planning and guidance (Roberts and Hohmann, 2014). At the same time, these secondary cities are poorly funded, lack skilled and competent human resource, and suffer from high levels of corruption (Roberts and Hohmann, 2014).

The country has made some strides to focus on the development of five regional cities and five strategic cities. The cities were identified based on their regional and strategic competitive advantage. The regional cities include Kampala, Gulu, Mbale, Mbarara and Arua. The strategic cities are Hoima (oil), Nakasongola (industrial), Fortportal (tourism), Moroto (mining) and Jinja (industrial). It was hoped that these regional and strategic cities would act as catalysts for growth, facilitating local production, transformation, trade, information and services between systems of cities (Cities Alliance and DFID, 2016).

A report by Thompson (2021), showed divergent paths in economic transformation between Uganda and Ghana. In the period between 2000 and 2018, Uganda's Gross domestic product (GDP) declined from 21.4 percent to 19.9 percent, while that of Ghana increased from 25.4 percent to 31.5 percent. Access to electricity remained at 22 percent in 2018, compared to 79 percent in Ghana. At local levels, the report observed that in both countries there was persistent shortfalls in local revenues due to high informality, dwindling and erratic financial transfers from the central government to local governments, weak economic development strategies, growing incidence of unplanned human settlements that raises the cost of delivering social services, inadequate infrastructure, weak capacity to finance infrastructure, low private sector participation in infrastructure provision, weak infrastructure planning and management, weak local government control over core infrastructure and threats to decentralisation as governments recentralise many powers and functions.

The report made a number of recommendations to be undertaken, both at national and local levels. At the national level, it recommended accelerating structural transformation, strengthening population management, intensification of national electrification programmes, establishment of bond markets and pursuance of robust macro-economic policies. At the local level, it advocated addressing threats to decentralisation; considering population impact in local development planning; formalising the informal sector for enhanced productivity, high incomes and improved revenue; addressing technological and institutional challenges to revenue mobilisation; and coordination of basic infrastructure services from state owned enterprises (Thompson, 2021).

Challenges to the Urban Green Growth Agenda in Uganda

The country has many challenges to its urban growth agenda that it needs to urgently address if it is to achieve its development goals. Key amongst them include: poor economic infrastructure and key infrastructure investment costs, poor work ethics and corruption, low human development, poverty and inefficient production methods, climate change and environmental protection, and lack of political will to support enforcement mechanisms.

Poor economic infrastructure and key infrastructure investment costs

Uganda is a country with poor key infrastructure. The country needs to promote activities that promote key economic infrastructure, as it is a prerequisite for economic development. The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) report observes that low-cost access to infrastructure services supports industrial growth, increases an economy's competitiveness, helps alleviate poverty, and is a vital ingredient for many developing countries to meet their Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) (United Nations, 2011). The World Bank recommends that countries, such as Uganda, need to invest between 7 and 9 percent of their GDP annually in building and maintaining infrastructure. However, many of these countries invest just half of that figure (United Nations, 2011). Even under such circumstances, much of the funds used for infrastructure development are raised through loans that make it even harder for them to effectively develop their infrastructure.

In recent years, Uganda has embarked on an ambitious infrastructure investment campaign, where it is spending about 11 percent of its GDP on this sector (World Bank, 2022). While this is commendable, the country is still faced with the high-cost slow pace of construction of its infrastructure development. For example, the Entebbe–Kampala Expressway, a 49.56 km stretch, cost USD 476 million, of this, 73.58 percent was a loan from Exim Bank at 2 percent annual interest rate and 26.4 percent was funded by the Ugandan Government. The project took 7 years to complete (Ministry of Works and Transport, undated). Collier et al. (2015), carried out research on the cost of road infrastructure in low-and middle-income countries, and this included countries such as Ghana, Uganda, Poland, Armenia, Bangladesh, Philippines, Thailand, Vietnam and India. Collier et al. (2015), found out that costs were higher in countries with higher levels of corruption and political instability. The Entebbe–Kampala Expressway has been claimed from some quarters to be one of the most expensive roads in the world and this raises concern on possible causes.

Poor work ethics and corruption

Corruption in Uganda is systemic and endemic, it is political and bureaucratic. Political corruption is when those entrusted with the authority to make the rules are corrupt, in order to increase and sustain their power, status and wealth; while bureaucratic corruption takes place at the implementation end of politics, in service delivery and rule enforcement (Amundsen, 2006).

Poor work ethics and corruption negatively impact development. Organisations lose credibility and productivity declines, often leading to financial loss. The National Ethical Values Policy of Uganda outlined corruption, poor work ethic, sectarianism, selfishness, violence and tribalism, among others, as the major social hindrances to the country's desired development (Government of Uganda, 2013). To that end, the Government of Uganda undertook numerous structural, economic, political, administrative and legal reforms, including establishment of institutions to fight corruption, re-build ethics and integrity, and restore good governance (Government of Uganda, 2013). Despite these efforts, poor work ethics and corruption remain major threats to the development of the country. Part of the problem lies in a lack of political will and commitment to address these ills.

Low human development

Uganda is one of the countries in the world with low human development. According to United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Uganda's Human Development Index (HDI) value in 2019 was 0.544, putting it at position 159 out of 189 countries and territories (Baumann, 2021). The country also has a high dependency ratio of 92.31 percent, which is much higher than that of Africa (78.1 percent), with mean years of schooling of 6.2 (Baumann, 2021). This means that the country still has a lot to do to improve its human capital development situation so as to make it more competitive in the service and production sectors.

Poverty and inefficient production methods

Uganda's economic situation has been promising, growing at an average of above 6 percent per annum, and it is projected to reach 6.8 percent by 2026 despite the drop in 2020 to -0.84 percent due to the Covid-19 pandemic (O'Neill, 2021). Nonetheless, getting the

majority of its citizens out of poverty has remained a big challenge.

Uganda still suffers from a large proportion of people living in poverty. For the period 2005/06 to 2018/19, 8.4 percent of the households in Uganda moved out of poverty, whereas 10.2 percent slipped into poverty. The proportion of people below the national poverty line increased from 19.7 percent to 21.4 percent in 2019/20 (UBOS, 2020). This figure could increase by 2022 due to the negative effects of Covid-19 and poor economic performance. The Government of Uganda has tried to address the issue of poverty through various interventions such as Entandikwa credit scheme, adopted in 2000, that targets the poor, Uganda's Poverty Eradication Action Plan (PEAP) 2004/5 – 2007/8, Programme for Alleviation of Poverty and Social Costs of Adjustment Project (PAPSCA) and Plan for Modernisation of Agriculture; however, they seem less effective to make a significant turnaround of the situation. This year, the Government rolled out a new programme – the Parish Development Model. The Parish Development Model (PDM) is a development approach conceived under the third National Development Plan (NDP III) to drive socio-economic transformation through seven pillars: (1) Production, Storage, Processing and Marketing; (2) Infrastructure and Economic Services; (3) Financial Inclusion; (4) Social Services; (5) Mindset Change; (6) Parish Based Management Information System; and (7) Governance and Administration (Government of Uganda, 2021). Its benefits and impact are yet to be seen and felt.

In order for Uganda to boost its production methods, the country needs to clearly identify constraints to various sectors of production, adopt new technologies and innovative practices, address corruption, and prioritise the development of it human resource.

Climate change and environmental protection

Uganda is a country that is highly vulnerable to climate change and variability. The effects of climate change have been felt in the country in recent years. Uganda has experienced floods, droughts and an increase in average temperatures in the last 20 years, resulting in loss of food, infrastructure and even life (Hepworth and Goulden, 2008).

The Government of Uganda established the National Environment Management Authority (NEMA) in 1995 to coordinate, monitor, regulate and supervise environmental management in the country. The institution develops environmental policies, laws, regulations, standards and guidelines for the sector. In 2004, the Government also created the National Forestry Authority (NFA) with a mandate to manage central forest reserves on a sustainable basis and to supply high quality forestry-related products and services to government, local communities and the private sector.

Sadly, the quality of forest administration remains wanting in the country despite the existence of a full ministry charged with environment protection – Ministry of Water and Environment, the National Forestry Policy (2001), National Forestry Plan (2002), NEMA and NFA. Under these policy documents, the Government of Uganda commits itself to sustainable development of the forestry sector. Despite this, the country has continued to lose forest cover at an alarming rate. Between 1990 and 2015, the country lost 37 percent of its forest cover. 88 percent of the cover was lost on privately owned land, with 79 percent being woodland (Government of Uganda, 2016). If this situation is not arrested desertification may take root in Uganda in the next few years, and severe consequences of climate change may aggravate the situation.

Lack of political will to support enforcement mechanisms

The CMI Commission Report observes that political corruption and the lack of political will to fight it represent serious challenges to fighting corruption in Uganda (Amundsen, 2006). Kukutschka (2015), identifies four factors that play a role in building the political will of policy makers to undertake reforms as individual, organisational, relational and societal factors. Kukutschka (2015), argues that it is crucial to show politicians that by fostering transparency, accountability and empowering citizens, they enhance their popularity and power, thereby enhancing support to enforcement mechanisms.

CONCLUSION

Whereas Uganda has a green growth and development strategy with an ambitious vision, it faces a number of challenges both at the central and local levels. At the moment, Uganda is ill prepared to undertake its green growth and development strategy and achieve the objectives set forth therein. Despite the gloomy picture, the country still has prospects for fostering its urban green growth agenda.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To realise its objectives, the country's green growth strategy for cities and urban development should be in the context of sustainable development focusing on addressing the six challenges highlighted earlier in this paper. Bolstering Uganda's secondary cities green growth agenda should focus on addressing threats to decentralisation such as poor work ethics, corruption, and lack of competent and motivated human capital. It should tackle issues of high informality of the economy in the country and enhance productivity by addressing the poor economic infrastructure and high key infrastructure investment costs, insufficient production methods, and threats of climate change, while prioritising environment protection.

Although Uganda has increased spending on infrastructure development to 11 percent of its GDP, it should strive to do so using domestic resources instead of foreign loans. This can be achieved by, among others, bringing a large sector of the informal sector to the formal to contribute to a wider tax base. Government should endeavour to address poor work ethics and corruption as a way of reducing financial loss, building credibility, improving efficiency and productivity, as well as reducing investment costs in its various sectors of production. For this to happen, the political will has to be inculcated and enforced in leaders at all levels. In addition, the country should devise pragmatic strategies of dealing with the perpetual poverty experienced by the majority of its citizen by involving various key stakeholders at all levels.

Environmental protection should be a high priority of Uganda's action points if the country is to better prepare itself to deal with climate change effects. Uganda has a number of agencies tasked to regulate activities in their respective docket in order to protect the environment. These agencies should be compelled to play their role devotedly. Uganda should work to reverse the country's forest cover loss by planting more trees, re-defining the use of the different tree species and targeting methods of reducing wastage in wood consumption activities.

The country's green growth and development agenda will be better realised if its development strategies are implemented in a holistic and pragmatic manner, involving all stakeholders at all levels.

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