Crime in the city: Kampala is now in the bloody hands of gangsters

A drive across Kampala on Saturday night left your columnist feeling nervous and fearful of what the country, at least as represented by the city, has slowly become.

In Kyambogo, near the City Oil service station, cars had come to a standstill. It wasn't clear why, given that it was too late for traffic. I was still fighting the instinct to get out of the automobile and walk ahead to investigate when a stream of humanity sped by helter-skelter in the opposite direction.

As the cars finally inched forward, the method to the late-night madness became clear. On the right-hand side of the road, a half-smashed motorcycle lay on its side, half-hidden from view by at least half-a-dozen other motorcycle riders.

To the left of the road, a man lay face-down, a trickle of blood emerging slowly from underneath him. Bent over him, a young man holding what looked like an iron bar, was emptying his pockets in quick, practiced movements. Nearby, a young woman, legs covered in either mud or blood, hyperventilated as fear coursed through her veins.

The road ahead had opened up and I sped away like the cars ahead had done, dodging a stream of humanity on both sides of the road. At the Lugogo Mall another forest of motorcycle riders had planted themselves in the middle of the road jostling for passengers.

It was then that the pieces of the puzzle fell into place. There had been a concert nearby and gangs of young men were waylaying concert goers, perhaps including the hapless ones in Kyambogo, and separating them from their valuables.

All the way to the Airtel House roundabout, past Kitgum House junction, to the Clock Tower junction and beyond, small gangs of young men lurked in shadows robbing pedestrians and grabbing people off

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Daniel K. Kalinaki
In My View

boda bodas. The roads are mostly dark, and the thugs had plenty of places in which to hide. It was a dark, violent jungle.

Apart from two soldiers at Lugogo who were helping to clear the road for their master's car, I did not see any security and certainly no police officers. Not from the Kyambogo Police Post or from the Police Barracks in Naguru, and none from the Jinja Road Police station, all of which are within a three-kilometre radius of these incidents.

Where were the police, I wondered? What happened to the night patrols? Where do all the police patrols which scream like banshees during the day as they escort government officials to their errands disappear to at night? Why is it that you hear police sirens all over Kampala during the day when it is relatively safe, but never in the night? Has law and order been reduced to an eight-to-five?

These concerns are not new, of course. The first time I knew we were in trouble was in 2006 during the presidential swearing-in ceremony when I went to Jinja Road police station to report a theft case. I was told there was not a single police officer to attend to me, even if the station was teeming with about 200 policemen ready to put out political protests that never came.

By the time my brother was knifed for a $100 phone and left to bleed to death outside his house in 2013, it was clear the police had been hollowed out and turned from a tool to keep law and order into a baton of political repression.

Today crime statistics have become portraits on coffins as the angel of crime death visits one family after another. It isn't just the rough ghettos anymore, mind. A jogger was bludgeoned to death just outside a mall in the city centre earlier this year.

Every other day a report filters in of a gang riding on boda bodas waylaying someone in broad day light, moreover "in people", anywhere from downtown, to Bugolobi. It has even happened in Kololo, once a quiet, leafy, residential neighbourhood in the diplomatic quarter. Kampala's thugs no longer renew assurances of highest consideration.

I don't know if the man I saw lying limply on the side of the road on Saturday night as his pockets were emptied made it. I haven't seen it reported anywhere. But on Monday I heard that Susan Alweny, a lady who had helped me process a car insurance claim earlier in the year, had been murdered on Friday night. She was on her way home to her husband and children when a stone paver was smashed against her head. All for her phone and whatever was in her bag. It wasn't even 9p.m.

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Why we need to improve the Sports Bill

A few months ago when Budiope East Member of Parliament Moses Magogo tabled the National Sports Bill for first reading on the floor of Parliament, deputy speaker Thomas Tayebwa deferred it on grounds that there was a need for further consultations on the financial implications as well as to realign it with government's own new sports policy.

Fact is that the Bill is long overdue and there is a need to repeal the archaic National Council of Sports (NCS) Act to create an all-encompassing Sports Commission.

The proposed law intends to consolidate and modernise the law relating to the incorporation and registration of national sports organisations and community sports clubs as well as provide for the management, promotion, development and regulation of professional, amateur and recreational sports in Uganda.

It further aims to streamline the recreation, registration and management of national sports organisations and community sports clubs and to codify the obligations of the state under international sports governing statutes.

Given the huge transformation it will have on sports, I expected Fufa leadership to do further consultations with stakeholders of the sector.

However, since the Bill was deferred, the leadership is yet to organize a single symposium on the Bill.

Instead, stakeholders such as heads of

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Immanuel Ben Misagga
Sports Bill

sports disciplines, clubs and technical people, among others, have been ignored. This has created discomfort, especially at NCS, where operations, future plans, and financings remain uncertain. Several NCS board members and high-level administrators have approached me to express their displeasure at being sidelined from having an input on a Bill that is going to directly affect them and the way they operate.

As Fufa president, Magogo, who rightly tabled the Bill, should be interested in seeing a harmonised Bill that serves everyone uniformly without favour. This is because this is an undertaking that seeks to change the way sports is run.

For instance, term limits should cover all sports administrators and should not be limited to commissioners. Also, there should be clear ways of doing business in sports across the board without excluding Fufa, whose Fufa TV incorporation remains murky yet it is moving to control all football business.

The Bill should explain how such an entity is created and how its funds should be distributed. At the moment, only a few of Fufa chiefs benefit from the TV.

For instance, when global body Fifa does business, it distributes the proceeds to national federations in their capacity as members but what do Fufa delegates/members get from Fufa TV?

Furthermore, the Bill needs to streamline how sports associations or federations do business, their checks and balances as well as punitive steps for culprits. Only then can we have these federations accountable to the people they serve.

Therefore, we shouldn't just focus on the structure of the sports commission, it will further entrench impunity in federations the commission is supposed to supervise and regulate.

Those that are at the forefront of this important document should pause and listen to the voices of reason. The Bill, which eventually will become law, shouldn't favour a few at the expense of the discipline.

Mr Immanuel Ben Misagga is a businessman

Why investment in child protection is important

ChildFund Uganda in partnership with Africhild Center on August 16 launched the findings of the national budget analysis on Child Protection for the last five years. The undertaking was aimed at providing budget allocation trends from 2017/2018 to 2020/2021.

It was also to establish funding gaps for child protection endeavors vis-a-vis the government's commitment as provided in key national and international frameworks which the government has ratified and domesticated.

According to the analysis, child protection is well articulated in the national policy and planning frameworks and receives allocations from the government of Uganda resource envelope under the "Youth and Children Affairs sub-Programme" of the Ministry of Gender Labour and Social Development (MGLSD). However, the budget allocation and public spending on child protection for the past five financial years, analyzed indicated a threefold undesirable trait namely; low, fluctuating and decreasing allocations.

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Moses Otai
Child protection

The analysis established that the proportional allocation to child protection as a percentage of the MGLSD budget has been oscillating between 0.01percent and 0.02 percent. This funding largely goes to support salaries of the mandated officers who are also few and under-resourced.

This validates the struggles and constraints faced by key actors such as Police, Probation and Social Welfare Officers and community officers to provide timely and adequate responses to child abuse victims when called upon/cases have been presented to them. From the responses of participants at the budget analysis launch, it was notable that there is still a wide information gap about the extent of child protection risks and their impact on children in the country. There's also inadequate understanding of the magnitude of risks we run as a country should the protection of children not be given due attention and priority funding.

Nonetheless, the publication and dissemination of the budget analysis is a great step in the right direction with the document now available for reference for action.

In the country's strategies to reduce child protection risks and create a violence-free community, climate change should not be ignored. A white paper published by ChildFund Sweden in August 2022 details how climate change increases the risks of violence against children. While the paper references experience from Cambodia, India, and Ethiopia, a lot of it mirrors what's happening in Uganda.

According to the paper, climate change catalyzes increases in droughts and water scarcity, floods, other natural disasters, and rising temperatures. These lead to migration, conflict, poverty, food insecurity, psychosocial health, and stress. They yield into incidents of violence against children such as child labour, child marriage, sexual abuse, physical abuse, gender-based violence, neglect, trafficking, and mental health issues. The paper calls for strengthening the discourse on linking climate change and environmental degradation risks and protecting children from violence.

Additionally, our budgets for child protection should also cater to emerging risks to children such as Online Sexual Exploitation and Abuse of Children (OSEAC).

ChildFund is already in the working to fight against OSEAC having started this agenda in 2019, with a shut-down online exploitation of children campaign in the Philippines. Since then, more campaigns have been done including in our neighborhood in Kenya.

As development partners, we will continue to play a supportive role in the government's endeavors to improve the well-being of children. This will be more impactful with the government taking the mantle. Child protection is a cross-cutting issue that should be factored into other sectoral budgets because if children's right to protection is not addressed, then every other right is at stake, including education, health, food, and other life essentials.

Increasing funding for child protection initiatives will go a long way in creating violence-free communities and homes where children live to their fullest potential.

Mr Moses Otai is the Country Director, ChildFund Uganda.