

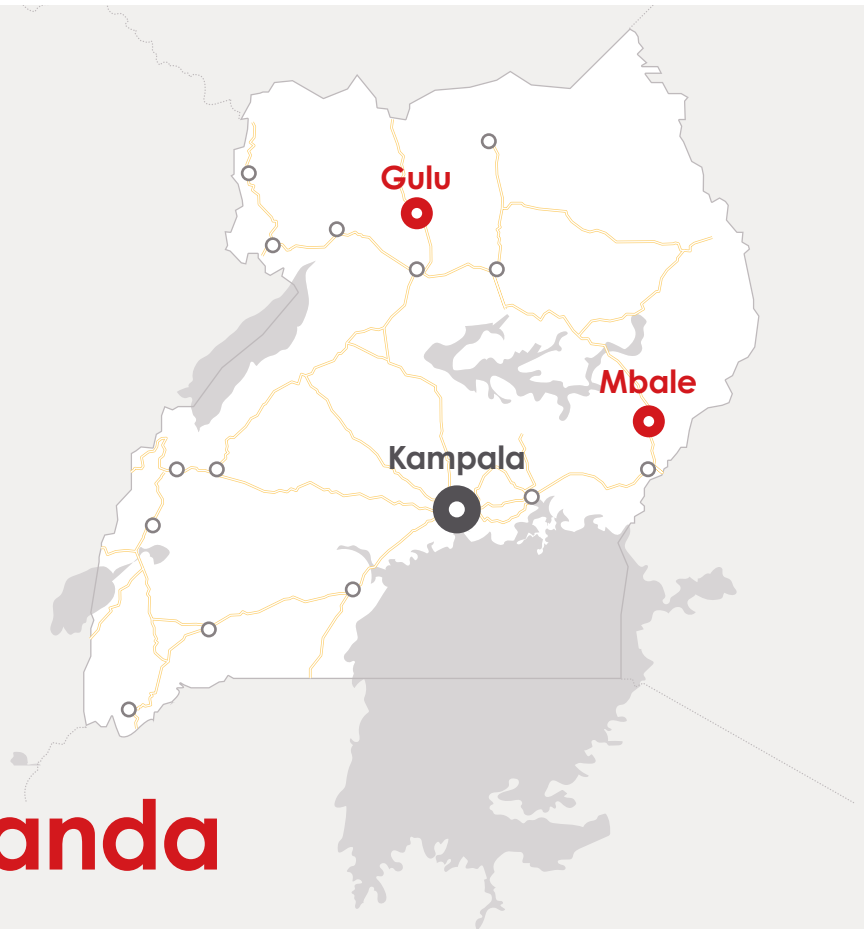
# Joint Work Programme for Equitable Economic Growth in Cities

**Cities Alliance**  
Cities Without Slums

Hosted by:  **UNOPS**



Figure 1:  
Campaign Cities map



## Campaign City Brief

# Mbale, Uganda

Urbanisation rate  
(district-level data)<sup>1</sup>

**25%**

Average annual urban  
population growth  
(between 2002—2014)<sup>2</sup>

**2.5%**

GDP (Mbale district  
urban GDP)<sup>3</sup>

**\$270m**

People with access to  
piped water (district-  
level data)<sup>4</sup>

**33%**

A recognition of the importance of equitable economic growth (EEG), and the need to understand how EEG can be effectively promoted in secondary cities, led to the establishment of Cities Alliance's Joint Work Programme (JWP) on EEG in cities.

A trademark component of the JWP-EEG programme has been the Campaign Cities Initiative (2016–2020). This initiative began by creating local partnerships in eight secondary cities in Bangladesh, Uganda, Ghana, and Kenya. For each city, a diagnostic assessment of constraints to EEG was produced, resulting in the selection of a particular public good or service in the city that should be prioritised.

In Uganda, the Campaign Cities Initiative was implemented by the United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF) from June 2017 to August 2019.

The initiative assisted the secondary cities of Gulu and Mbale (see Figure 1) prepare evidence-based policy recommendations concerning how municipal public goods and services could be delivered in a manner that directly contributes to EEG. The focus was on the use of public spaces, and improvements in land management that would support livelihood activities and address local economic development needs.

## Mbale context

The urban sector of Uganda is rapidly growing, driven by high fertility rates, rural-urban migration and land use reclassification.<sup>5</sup>

Mbale is one of the country's fastest growing secondary cities. It has a population of around 100,000, and is located approximately 245 km to the east of Kampala. Its proximity to Kenya provides the city with opportunities for various economic activities and trans-border trade.

Secondary cities like Mbale face a range of development challenges associated with rapid, unplanned and uncoordinated urbanisation that has often left segments of their population, marginalised and vulnerable, and unable to access basic public goods and services.<sup>6</sup>

Increasing importance is attached to improving the delivery and management of public spaces and other municipal assets such as land in a way that promotes EEG.<sup>7</sup> Streets, sidewalks, markets, squares and parks that are accessible, safe and inclusive are part of the basic infrastructure that is key to the productivity and wellbeing of workers and to both formal and informal businesses alike, as they are primary sites of economic, social and cultural exchange.<sup>8</sup> Over 40% of the businesses in Mbale operate on the street and open spaces.<sup>9</sup>

## Approach and methodology

Each Campaign City initiative took around 24 months to complete, and consisted of the establishment of a City Level Partnership (CLP), followed by the preparation of three consecutive reports and associated workshops:

### 1. Establishment of a City-Level Partnership (CLP):

The Campaign City process began by establishing a CLP that used existing local multi-stakeholder fora. The CLP consisted of representatives from local

government, chambers of commerce, the informal economy and the broader community, as well as the JWP facilitator. Members of the CLP debated issues and were responsible for the preparing the reports throughout the process.

### 2. Preparation of an Institutional Enabling Environment Report (IEER):

A description of the institutional parameters under which the Mbale Municipality operates was presented in the IEER.

### 3. Preparation of a Local Assessment Report (LAR):

Based on the outcome of a workshop reviewing the IEER, the CLP identified one priority area of intervention to be further explored within the LAR: the use of public spaces and related improvements in land management. An inventory of public spaces and an analyses of land management mechanisms were completed. An examination was undertaken of the challenges and opportunities related to the way in which various stakeholder access public space and land assets. Recommendations were made concerning how the city administrations could improve the provision and management of public services in a manner that promotes EEG.

### 4. Policy Briefs and the Recommendations:

Two respective Policy Briefs and Recommendations were then prepared based on the recommendations of the stakeholders.

The Campaign Cities initiative collaborated closely with the relevant municipal authorities and Municipal Development Forum (MDF), the Ministry of Lands, Housing and Urban Development, the Ministry of Local Government, the Urban Authorities Association of Uganda (UAAU) and other relevant government and non-government stakeholders, as well as with the JWP members in Uganda including Cities Alliance, DFID, the World Bank and GIZ.



## Findings

The IEER and LAR found that public land and spaces in Mbale are scarce, amounting to no more than 0.85 hectares for every 1,000 municipal residents.<sup>10</sup> Moreover, the distribution of public spaces is spatially unequal, and what little there is suffers from lack of maintenance and poor governance and institutional oversight.<sup>11</sup>

As urban areas expand, public spaces and land risk becoming re-allocated, or grabbed by individuals who fraudulently acquire land titles and then sell them off. It is a distressing reality of many municipalities across Uganda that their public spaces and land are shrinking and often disappearing altogether.<sup>12</sup>

The LAR highlighted a number of policy interventions that could significantly improve EEG, including:

- Supporting the Mbale municipality develop public open spaces and manage urban lands in a manner which generates environmental, social and economic benefits; and
- Given the dwindling discretionary financing to municipalities in Uganda, assistance is required to develop alternative financing models for public service delivery and local economic development activities.

If implemented, these measures contribute to overcoming the existing bottlenecks in terms of public

service delivery and regulation of public space and land.

The Mbale Physical Development Plan (2016-2026) makes a strong case for providing public spaces, including playgrounds, sports grounds, and public open spaces which make up municipal green spaces, used for leisure and recreation purposes.

However, the inadequate coordination of physical planning activities within the municipality has resulted in the unpleasant and unattractive quality of open spaces. There are no regulations and bye-laws available to the Municipal Council for the use of public or open space and no proposal has been advocated in order to address this issue.<sup>13</sup>

The declining public space in Mbale mainly stems from failure to pro-actively plan urban land development, poor coordination amongst and between local government departments, corruption, mixing of urban management with politics, the laxity in enforcement mechanisms, and limited sensitization and awareness on the benefits of public spaces by residents and local authority officials.<sup>14</sup>

This situation has led to disjointed land use programmes, resulting in conflicts, unbalanced development, uneconomical land use, land fragmentation, and destruction of fragile ecosystems.



## Recommendations

The Campaign City policy briefs and consultations identified measures to promote public space and land management for EEG in Mbale:

- There is a need for the political leadership and the Mayor to **'champion' public space** for EEG. Highly visible mayoral support becomes an important assurance that the city's public space and land is secure.
- Effective management of public spaces and land must start with **adequate data and information**. Municipal properties, spaces and land need to be surveyed, registered and land titles issued to generate a complete municipal asset register and database.
- Public spaces and land should be **part of a broader Municipal Development Strategy**. Public spaces should be locked into the city's development process. Public space and land management plans must be realistic, comprehensive and integrated.
- There is a need to demonstrate how public spaces **meet wider development objectives**, such as education, health, safety, environment, and local economic development.
- **The institutional framework** that guides public space and land management needs to be revised to establish a clear regulatory framework to help in the alignment of land transactions that are consistent with the municipal physical development plans.
- **Regulate and invest in public space** for business development. Institute effective regulation for vending business through issuance of vendor permits and providing space.
- Identify **creative and innovative ways of financing** the management of public spaces and land. This can be through partnerships, collaborations and joint ventures with the private sector. For example, engage private sector to develop PPP-based markets in areas where the municipalities are unable to gazette markets due to tenure challenges.
- **Land value capture and land banking** are tools that cities could adopt to capture private values generated by better public spaces to sustain investment in public space.
- There is a need to **build the capacity** of the municipality both human and financial to carry out their responsibilities effectively for equitable provision of services for all urban residents in view of the planned future growth.

## Endnotes

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