COMMUNITY POLICING ABOUT ACCIDENTAL RISKS AND ROAD USAGE IN UGANDA

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Abstract: The main objective for this study was to explore and coordinate the various reactions by all road stake holders. These included all road users from pedestrians to motorists; the road administrators like Uganda National Roads Authority (UNRA), District leaders, community leaders, and residents near these roads. The theme for the discussion was “Own the Roads, Reduce Road Accidents”. Generally, qualitative methods through focus group discussions were used. Data was generated from various groups, discussed and analyzed for this report.

Findings showed that there are various issues that happen around the roads. These included among others the destructive load-pulling on roads by motorcyclists, unplanned cyclists’ stages, over speeding, drainage dumping, dirty roads and misuse of road reserves.

The study suggested that there was need to pass on this theme patriotically in order to help in the proper road usage in Uganda. There is also need to follow the actual design standards, to help avoid the misuse of road reserves, maintain clean, non-bushy roads, and avoid unplanned humps. Knowledge from this study shall also help in road construction and maintenance designs.

Keywords: Drainage, Over speeding, Road maintenance, Roads Act, Road construction.

I. INTRODUCTION

Roads have been and are one of the most used but risky parts of human transport in the world. This is because they are also one of the most important and affected landscape regarding human activities. These roads support the biggest income percentages for most economies in the developing countries [1][2][3][4].

Roads also collect and channelize large volumes of water which eventually cause severe gulling [3][4]. Eroded soils from gully formation are finally duned in the roads to form one of the worst floods on roads. Various human activities regarding roads take place either knowingly or unknowingly. These activities include among others: Pulling Ox-ploughs and iron bars along roads; Digging, block-making and building construction along and in road reserves; staging in roads by cyclists; construction of non-standard humps and culverts exist even on paved roads and tying animals along roads. Other observations included the small-sized bushy roads and missing places of convenience like lavatories along roads. In the event of all this, data was collected and further analyzed and conclusions made. Thus the main objective of this paper was to explore the various usual happenings on these roads in order to support proper road usage in Uganda.

According to the Roads Act, the Minister in charge of roads may by statutory instrument declare an area bounded by imaginary lines parallel to and distant not more than fifty feet from the center line of any road, to be a road reserve. These are supposed to be kept clear accordingly as quoted “…no person shall, except with the written permission of the road authority, erect any building or plant any tree or permanent crops within a road reserve” [5]. The provision of efficient, flexible, safe and clean transport infrastructure can be regarded as a necessary precondition for economic development as it boosts productivity by facilitating the movement of people and goods [4]. There are many vehicles that enter the market every year, and there is a steadily increasing demand for mobility of people and goods in Uganda [6][7]. This presents environmental challenges that need to be addressed in the interest of long-term sustainability of the road infrastructure.

The study was a follow up of earlier study about modeling erosion on roads [1][2][3][4][6][7]. The background to this modeling led to various discoveries that finally made this manuscript.

II. METHODS AND MATERIALS

2.1 DISSEMINATION WORKSHOPS.

This study used the qualitative methods with regard to the group work designs and standards. The study involved exploring the application of the erosion model to road maintenance. In this study, however, we only explored observations and activities that take place near and on roads.

The complexity of the erosion model could not be discussed in the because of the various participant groups involved. Work shops were organized in four regions of Uganda: Central (Mpiji District), Eastern (Tororo District), Northern (Arua District), and Western (Kabale District). The study entailed a discussion that focused on the day-to-day happenings...
on the roads and good governance. It involved all road stake holders.

2.2 DATA COLLECTION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION METHODS

The participants included the following groups of stakeholders. These were composed of the users of or resident neighbors to the roads were earlier experiments took place; UNRA and District Engineers; the Police and District Leaders like the Chief Administrative Officers (CAOs). Each workshop had a total of over 50 participants totaling to over 200 participants in all. These were organized in groups of 6-8 people and were allowed to a discussion entitled “What happens on the road”. Various data were collected, analyzed and interpreted in this manuscript. The participants were selected from distinct areas were experiments took place.

III. RESULTS

3.1 ROAD DESTRUCTION

Some farmers along the roads do pull Ox-ploughs along roads in a bid to move the plough system to other farms. On the other hand business-motorcyclists commonly known as “boda-bodas” pull iron bars on roads as they transport them from hardware shops to building sites. These create weak points along the roads which eventually develop in to potholes or rills and eventual wasting the roads. This further creates noise pollution around the area. This kind of pollution incites other sicknesses like blood pressure [8].

Motor cyclists put stages at any point of interest along roads and junctions. These are a group of road users where the majority has little or no knowledge about road traffic. These keep misusing the road and are one of the biggest road accident sources in the country. Over speeding at crossing areas like schools, zebra crossing points is another practice by cyclists who have little or no knowledge about the proper use of the roads. This also not allowed according to law [5].

It has become a common act by the resident neighbors to practice traffic control by creating non-standard road humps especially on murram roads [2]. This is done in order to control the speed of motorists and dust [2][9]. On some paved roads, non-standard humps are also evident, for example the humps on Kabale-Katuna road and lower church road, Bbina, Luzira in Kampala. They are so big and only comfortable for buses, Lorries and trailers because cars find it hard or even fail to cross over. On some murram roads especially those managed by the districts, culverts are fixed anyhow thus creating minor hills on roads which eventually become accident black spots.

Noted also was the issue of animals that are tied along and within the road reserves. These always create threats to motorists while driving. They are sometimes associated with serious accidents. Similarly, there are animals like goats and cows that are seen loitering on roads especially the highways like Kampala-Arua road, around Luwero, Nakasongola, and Bweyale; Mbale-Iganga road around Tirinyi. The laws allows us to tie these animals at least 20m away from the roads [5].

The other observation was about the small-sized roads. The road-size range has a minimum of 6.4 meters, and sometimes, the district roads in Uganda go below this length. Some of these roads are always bushy, which makes them smaller that they appear. There is continuous development along the roads which usually contradicts the rule on the road reserves. This is because of the communication lines, power lines, and water lines. Whereas these are supposed to be using the road reserves, they end up with destruction of well-built pavements, and sometimes buildings.

It was noted also that some business areas like markets, situated along the roads are associated with various accident problems because of the congestion. They make the roads narrow and create traffic jam on such roads. The drainage at such spots is in most cases filled up with rubbish deposits which hinder the normal drainage hence causing flooding and sedimentation on roads.

When moving around roads, it is observed that there are many illegal dumping points (dust bins) on roads. Similarly there is piled sediment that is picked from the ditches which is left for long along roads. This normally happens with town streets and their suburbs. This is a wrong practice because such refuse takes long to be picked and eventually end in the roadside ditches finally causing poor drainage and sedimentation. This also blocks culverts hence causing flooding. These are coupled with building materials that are put alongside roads in hips. These reduce the roads size and form accident sports on the roads.

Most Ugandan roads are dark at night because they have no lights. Lighting streets is one way of reducing on highway robbery. It also helps reduce the risks of road users with poor vision of the road details. More so, Ugandan paved and unpaved roads are characterized by dusty streets mainly because of murram feeders and possibly less cleaning. These roads drain mud in to the paved roads through sedimentation. The eroded sediment eventually dries up in to dust along the paved roads. Dust on the roads is one accident-risk points for speeding vehicles.

Uganda’s national roads lack properly established places of convenience like lavatories. Noted also was that the pavements of some highways like Mbale-Iganga road are used to dry the harvested food like cassava, maize, sorghum, rice etcetera. This part of the road is supposed to be used by cyclists, pedestrian
and as a parking space. These are supposed to be used correctly and appropriately, but not as driers [14].

3.2. ADMINISTRATIVE FACTORS
There is notable poor supervision of activities taking place on roads. This happens right from the construction stage through the use of the road to the maintenance stage [4]. This leads to poor and shoddy work which lasts for a short time and further increases the maintenance costs. This also implies that illegal constructions like in road reserves, can easily take place.Similarly, lack of enough funding is a usual phenomenon regarding road construction and maintenance in developing countries [10]. District roads, for example, are allocated between 30 and 40 million Uganda Shillings per kilometer. Funding for compensation for district and community access roads is not provided in case a particular road is to be expanded.

It was also noted that sometimes rain water is diverted to people’s homes and gardens. At times, this is too much water which eventually washes away this property. This is a result of misusing road reserves by either landlords or road construction and maintenance bodies.

It was also noted that along the roads, some signposts are missing, unclear, invisible, or totally not understandable. Some of them are too small and unreadable or interpretable to some good extent. These include roads like Tororo-Iganga road around Idudi and after Iganga town towards Jinja.

This study also found out that the behavior of police enforcers should ensure that law enforcers should ensure that they are well supervised and remunerated to avoid bushy roads. These can also be used to report any unusual happenings on the road. This means that timely management is possible. The community access roads still have a problem of illegal constructions like in road reserves is necessary.

Regarding the behavior of motorcyclists, there are temporary working permits should be issued to people or organizations that may wish to use the reserves [5]. Drains should be planned for road reserves only. The design should not allow much rain water in to people’s property regarding the proper use of roads.

The government should reconsider prioritizing the transport system. These include, head counts, licensing policy, riding permits. However little has been done on the unregistered stage that crop up anywhere. There is also a need to manage the cyclist’s traffic knowledge.

Road gangs who do slashing, lookout, small maintenance for at least the district and national road authorities should be well supervised and remunerated to avoid bushy roads. These can also be used to report any unusual happenings on the road. This happens right from the road reserves only. The design should not allow much rain water in to people’s property regarding the proper use of roads.

Bi-laws on sanitation are necessary to curb the unlawful dumping along the roads. Governing authorities for towns and city suburbs (markets or business centers can administer the proper dumping and proper use of the road reserves. Guidance and counseling over the proper use of the road and its reserves is necessary.

A leaf should be borrowed from the ways other countries do it in terms of lighting the roads. It is an advanced level of development which requires the government to manage the financing. Similarly, the lavatories are a necessary evil if we want to eliminate the habit of passengers stopping and easing themselves at any point along the highways. It may also be seen as an aggressive behavior that reflects the country with a bad image.

CONCLUSION
The government should reconsider prioritizing budgets for road construction and maintenance. There is need for redirection of funds from unnecessary
expenditures. This can reduce on accident risks which claim the lives of Ugandans every day.

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REFERENCES