

# Why Jinja is an adventurous city

By Stella Naigino

**L**ocated at the confluence of Lake Victoria and River Nile, Jinja is a magnet for tourists who visit it as the perfect get-away as they savour its beautiful attractions.

With a population of about 392,000 people, Jinja town is the second most important city of Uganda and in the 1960's, it was the industrial heart of the country.

According to Uganda tourist sites, 6.94% of the district area is open water, 1.63% wetland and 8.3% is forest. These and other factors have made tourists to get attracted to the area.

So, what exactly attracts tourists to Jinja?

## Source of the Nile

John Sempebwa, the deputy chief executive officer of Uganda Tourism Board (UTB), says being the second-longest river in the world, tourists flock to the Nile to touch and feel it.

"It is at the source of the Nile where John Speke stood in 1861 and saw the Rippon Falls, something everyone wants to experience," he says.

This gives Jinja a competitive edge over other tourist destinations. Tourism, he says, is fast replacing manufacturing for which the town was famous in the past. With the source of the Nile, comes the promise of adventure.



Local tourists enjoying the scenery of the fast-running water at Bujagali falls

## Bujagali, Itanda falls

Ssempebwa notes that for those who love watching birds, this is the place to go.

It does not only generate hydroelectric power but also hosts different activities like the Nyege Nyege festival. Both local and international tourists come to enjoy the scenery. He adds that these falls also offer good scenery not only for bird watching, but also for parties, picnics and camping among other activities.

## Water activities

"The water falls allow activates such

as scuba diving so that people touch real jets coming out. Besides, there has been construction of a new dam which allows tourists to go under the water for a unique experience," Ssempebwa says.

"A boat goes under because it is suspended from top. With the old dam you could not cross because it was a hydro power dam. But with the new dam, there is no hydropower, so here we can have parties, major boats, boat houses. The construction of the new dam is tourism sensitive and in Jinja life has just begun," he says.

Ssempebwa says in case the old

dam is broken, people will sail and see the President Idi Amin rock, where he used to hold cabinet meetings.

## Beaches

Beaches have been partially exploited for location of tourism developments, especially hotels.

These beaches include Sailing Club, Tilapia Club and Masese. Besides the scenery, the lake can be exploited for water sports, which would attract the domestic, foreign resident and foreign non-resident tourists. Potential also exists for sport fishing and canoeing.

## Islands

These include Samuka, Ndaiga, Lwabitooke I and Lwabitooke II. Apart from Samuka, the rest of the Islands have not been exploited for tourism purposes despite the existing potential. The existing potential includes boat racing, sport fishing, over-night camping, day excursions and other various water sports.

## Historical sites

A number of historical sites exist in Jinja district. These are the ancestral site for Soga tribe ancestral spirits at Bujagali falls; the current Busoga king's palace at Wanyange hill; Mpumudde hill, the historical meeting place of the Busoga chiefs and the British colonial Governors. Mpumudde is also the place where Omukama Kabalega of the Bunyoro died. Mahtma Ghandi ashes were also scattered in Jinja and also Indians eat Diwali at the source of the Nile, making it a must-visit area for both local and international tourists.

James Mwera, a tourism promoter in Jinja, says the stories related to these sites are so interesting that when tourists listen to them, they feel a lot is happening around. This makes them want to discover more.

However, Ssempebwa notes that much as many tourists are attracted to Jinja, the youth need to utilise the resources available and generate income from tourism. More needs to be done around these sites.

Enabel

## Uganda's Tourism and Hospitality Sector Skills Council (T&H SSC)



Young women participating in a catering course in Arua district

As one of the world's largest economic sectors, Hospitality & Tourism promotes international exchanges, and generates prosperity across the world. Just as in many other countries, tourism is a key sector in Uganda's economy. However, it is riddled with challenges that have minimized its profitability and contribution to the country's development. One of the major challenges in the sector is poor skills. President Yoweri Museveni's emphatic message on the International Youth Day to Uganda's 40 million plus population that is largely young, was the need for capital and "skills". The Uganda Tourism Board (UTB) chief has also lamented on the poor skills, especially in the hospitality industry, and how low motivation of human resources impact negatively on the quality of service delivery.

Skills are indeed key to the prosperity of a service-oriented industry such as tourism. It is on this basis that the Tourism and Hospitality Sector Skills Council (T&H SSC) was formed. Commissioned on 8th September 2015, together with 4 other sector skills councils, the council is currently structured within the Ministry of Education and Sports' Business, Technical, Vocational Education and Training (BTSET) department. The T&H SSC is run by a 14-member council body with representation from three categories of stakeholders including: (1) the demand side of skills: employers and private sector; (2) the government represented by key departments from the two line ministries of Ministry of Education and Sports and Ministry of Tourism, Wildlife and Antiquities; (3) supply side of skills employees, and learners from public/private training institutions and providers.

In the near future, the T&H SCC will be structured under the TVET Council, since the TVET policy which is still under development places all sector skills councils under the TVET council, yet to be established. Recently, Enabel, the Belgian Development Agency decided to rekindle support to operationalize and strengthen the T&H SSC. Mr. Herbert Baryuhaga, a bird watching enthusiast and deputy head of the Uganda Tourist Association, has been head of the Council until 15 August 2018, when the council membership three-year term expired.

Promoting skills development in the tourism sector is the council's mandate, its task being to deal with the pressing skilling problems that the sector faces. This covers all level of skills throughout the national tourism value chain from waiters, room attendants, tour guides, flight attendants, hotel managers, and hotel chefs and generally all occupations in the Tourism and Hospitality industry. The limited knowledge of the skills requirements for each value chain actor in the industry and the fact that the tourism sector is dominated by small and medium enterprises as well as family-owned businesses employing unskilled family members at low pay, compromises quality visitor/tourist experiences. In addition, there is little capacity in terms of instructional infrastructure, training manpower and the human capital of trainers in the available tourism training institutions; working conditions are in general, poor, leading to high labour turnover in the sector; and there is limited investment in skills development for the existing workforce in the private sector.

The T&H SCC plans to tackle the skilling of large manpower to fulfil the industry requirements through: developing curricula appropriate to the industry; updating and maintaining industry occupational standards; identifying training centres of excellence that can be a point of reference to acquire world class standards, be a repository of information as well as showcase good practices; setting up places for practical sessions that would enable trainees get hands-on training; and organising job fairs and skills competitions to encourage innovation as well as showcase the successes in the sector. Support to the Tourism and Hospitality Sector Skills Council One of the objectives of Enabel's Support to Skilling Uganda (SSU) programme is to support the establishment of a coordinated governance structure for the education and employment sector. The governance structures at national level include the sector skills councils, and among the five,

Enabel is focusing on the Tourism and Hospitality Sector Skills Council. Needless to say, the first three years of the T&H SCC has been riddled with institutional reform challenges, low capacity and lack of mentorship to the council members, coupled with inadequate financial support to kick-start the private sector led body that has the potential of improving the employability of thousands of Ugandans in the near future. It's within that interest that Enabel, the Belgian development agency has decided to partner with the Government of Uganda to reinvigorate support to the almost non-functional body, with an aim of strengthening its (council) operationalization and achieving its vision and mission. Enabel, will, among other activities, support the T&H SSC to undertake a skill needs assessment of the sector to be able to take stock of the existing institutional and human capacity, and prepare a recommended plan to assist in addressing deficiencies.

"We have a great vision for the employees and employers in the industry. This business of saying that Uganda has the worst service in the industry has to come to an end. Very soon, the employers will find satisfaction in their employees, and employees will earn their rightful income from their skills. Once we work on skills improvement and world class standards, service will improve, the employers will be happy to invest in the employees' career development, clients will be satisfied, the industry will grow, the industry will grow and Uganda's GDP will skyrocket!" Said the council chairperson during the last Council meeting in May 2018 at Enabel offices. The journey towards achieving Herbert's dream starts with 'call to action' to Uganda's employers and employees in the Tourism and Hospitality industry to get involved in setting up a formidable sector skills organization.

This year's theme of the World Tourism Day is "Tourism and the Digital Transformation". Indeed, the Tourism and Hospitality Sector in Uganda needs to catch-up with the digital revolution we see in other parts of the world in this sector. Enabel is very well equipped to support the sector in digital skills development through its Digitalisation for development (D4D) and Wehubit program ([www.wehubit.be](http://www.wehubit.be)).

For more information, write to Herbert on [sectorskills@ugandatourismassociation.org](mailto:sectorskills@ugandatourismassociation.org), or contact Ministry of Education and Sports -BTSET department or Enabel in Uganda