

To the rest of the country, Karen is one of the most luxurious neighborhoods in Kenya. Quiet, serene, and home to many influential individuals. It is the envy of many people, with most dreaming of one day owning a house in such a location. Given such a reputation, one would expect that the infrastructure of the area is top-notch. However, this is far from the case. The truth of the matter is that Karen residents face the same issues that are plaguing the rest of the nation. Unfortunately, some of these issues are recurring and are not being addressed, unlike in other parts of the nation.

DAMAGED ROAD SECTIONS AND POTHOLES

It is no secret that there are numerous sections of damaged roads all over Karen. Potholes are a nearly permanent occurrence in the region, often starting as small depressions and before long, rendering the road difficult to drive on. The three primary causes of such are:

1. Poor drainage that causes water to infiltrate into underlying road layers through cracks formed on the road
2. Heavy vehicles passing over roads that were not designed to carry such loads
3. Poor preparation of the underlying road layers

These factors not only result in potholes, but also destroy entire sections of a road, leading residents to look for alternative routes to get to their destinations. Some cabro roads have the blocks being completely removed, which can easily damage vehicles that are not able to withstand rugged terrain.

These are recurrent issues that arise nearly every single year, particularly during rainy seasons. Whereas they are ‘rectified’ nearly each year, a permanent solution needs to be found once and for all.





POOR DRAINAGE

When you see tarmac roads, you may be quick to assume that there are permanent roads in the area. However, the truth of the matter is that many tarmac roads in Karen are actually seasonal roads. This is because during the rainy season, they become nearly impossible to navigate. Why is this?? Drainage. There is a very serious drainage problem in the region that has been a problem to residents for years, and continues to be a problem today. During heavy rains, some roads literally flood, with water flowing on the surface. This is one of the primary causes of the damage roads. In addition, the reduced speed of vehicles due to this surface runoff causes unnecessary traffic jams in the area.

Vehicles aside, pedestrians also have to bear the consequences of poor drainage. When the roads have water flowing on them, there are sections where pedestrians cannot cross at all. In other sections, they cross with extreme difficulty, often leaving their clothes and shoes wet or muddy (on murram roads). For a location with such a revered and prestigious reputation, such issues should be a thing of the past. Karen is in a highland area and hence the rainfall will always be heavy. The solutions are very simple and known, and all that remains is proper implementation.



STREET LIGHTING

Not all problems or accidents on the road are as a result of poor drainage or poor quality of the roads. Many accidents occur simply because someone ‘didn’t see that’. It is not safe to assume that since all vehicles have headlights, everyone can see where they are going. There are certain occurrences on the road that may be seen too late if people are relying solely on headlights. This is what results in accidents that cause vehicle damage or even human/animal injuries.

It is also not prudent to assume that street lights are for motorists alone. Pedestrians are part of the road users that need to benefit from such an upgrade. First, when there is lighting, they are clearly visible to motorists, and hence anyone in a vehicle can easily see and avoid colliding with them. Secondly, this enhances safety on the road. Karen is not a high-traffic region, and at times some entire road sections may not have a single vehicle moving. Imagine being a pedestrian, having to walk alone on a dark road with no cars around. It is a matter of concern for the safety and wellbeing of ALL road users.



ROAD MARKINGS AND ROAD SIGNS

Most of Karen is a residential area, with very few commercial areas. In addition, the traffic levels in the area are significantly less than in other areas. Even so, road markings play a significant role in guiding road users. Some sections of roads have speedbumps that are barely visible even during the day, which many motorists usually miss. It is a very important practice to have speedbumps to discourage speeding in residential areas. However, if they cannot be seen, then they pose an even bigger threat to the safety of road users.

There is also a substantial lack of road signs in the region. This is particularly dangerous in areas where there are no street lights, the roads are narrow, and there are sharp bends that act as blind spots. Although uncommon, all it takes is one bad judgement call to endanger the community.



Bump barely visible



Very Narrow Roads

Anonymous Karen Resident