Cash, Credit Cards & Traveler's Checks for use in Uganda

Personal cash needed in Uganda is for souvenirs and other personal items you might wish to purchase, to allow for benevolent gifts to Ugandans (best to give such gifts in shillings) and, if your team is planning to visit a game park, $300. It is easy to exchange US dollars for Uganda Shillings (UGX) and all team members will want some shillings.

Foreign exchange services (FOREX) pay the highest exchange rate for crisp, new, unmarked US $100 bills **series 2009 or newer** and $50 bills, **series 2013 or newer (see below)**. $20 bills receive a much lower exchange rate. If you want to exchange less than $50, I suggest two or more team members combine smaller bills and then use a $50 or $100 to get the best exchange rate. **I do not recommend traveler's checks**, you can only exchange them at banks and they too receive a lower exchange rate. Older bills typically show a lot of use and are exchanged at a much lower value. Many American bank tellers are aware of this as they have had such requests from other overseas travelers. It is nice to give them a few days notice. I tell the tellers at my bank a week ahead of time that I will need a certain amount of new bills. This allow them to sort through the bills when they are not busy, something they appreciate. The tellers at my bank appreciate the mission work and a couple have asked to be added to my email update list. The availability of ATM's is growing in Uganda. They dispense Uganda Shillings but charge a transaction fee plus your own bank/credit card will most likely charge a fee as well.

If you visit http://ugandamission.net/hayes1/kits/depart/ugandashillings.pdf you will see the paper Uganda shillings and their relative value. The exchange rate shown is just an example. The actual exact exchange rate continually fluctuates at little up or down, even during the day so a fixed example is not possible.

When shopping overseas, in gateway cities (London, Brussels, Amsterdam, etc.) it is cheaper in the long run just to use a credit card. The charges will appear in US dollars on your monthly statement. The benefit is you only pay for what you buy. For example, if you change $100 into a foreign currency, and then only spend $88 worth, you are stuck with the remaining currency which you cannot reexchange and get anywhere near what you paid in the first place. The effect is, your $88 purchase actually cost $100. If you should overnight in a major city while traveling, there very well might be an advantage to exchanging currency rather than using a credit card. Most credit card companies require you notify them of dates for overseas travel.