

# Kabaale bridge boosts production in Kyankwanzi

By Ashraf Kasirye

**I**n nearly drowned three years ago. We were crossing River Mayanja

when our canoe was hit by something in the water. It overturned and we all fell in the water." Jacqueline Mushemereza shares. "But I thank God, some young men on the river bank jumped into the river and got us out," she says.

Conveyance of people as well as goods and services across the river was difficult those days and in many cases people and animals died in the treacherous river.

This was then, but now Musehemereza says the construction of a bridge over River Mayanja has removed a major bottleneck to trade and movement of persons to and from either side of the river.

The Kabaale Bridge joins Nakaseke and Kyankwanzi districts, which are among the cattle corridor districts. Canoes were the main means of transport and cattle had to be taken through the water by some skilled swimmers.

Godfrey Kamurari, the LCII chairperson of Banda in Kyankwanzi district said crossing the 100 metre stretch by canoe cost between sh3000 and sh5,000 per passenger. If one wanted to convey a motorcycle across, they had to part with sh20,000.

Young and able bodied swimmers also made a kill helping people cross the river on their backs when the canoes were not available.

According to Kamurari, they would pay between sh10,000 per person and were charged

**120**

The number of years the constructed bridge is designed to last

**sh14.5b**

The amount of money that the bridge which was constructed by Terrain Services cost

30,000 to take a cow across.

This usually ate deeply into the profits of the traders. Often the cows would drown and the owner had no right to ask the swimmer to pay for the dead animal.

"The swimmers used to raise the charges at their own discretion depending on their mood," Kamurari added.

But there were also other dangers – the water creatures like the hippos and crocodiles made the river riskier, even with a canoe sometimes, according to Juliet Mukankusi, the woman councillor of Banda, Kamutiika and Rwebishansa parishes in Kyankwanzi.



UNRA's Ben Owilli

According to the Uganda National Roads Authority (UNRA), the bridge was a presidential initiative to ease linkage for the area community and ease access to better markets by farmers and traders.

President Yoweri Museveni and other government officials had also occasionally used a canoe to cross the river from one side to another.

**IMPACT**

Samuel Mugwanya, a former canoe operator, says although some residents lost jobs after the Bridge, commissioned in May 2017, it has had a very positive impact.

"Life was hard on this river. Vehicles could not cross through, making it more expensive to use alternative routes," he said.

Peter Butarabwe, the mayor of Banda division in Kyankwanzi, says perhaps the major impact of the Kabaale Bridge is that now taxis and other vehicles can take passengers and merchandise from Nakaseke to Kyankwanzi because River Mayanja is no longer an obstacle.

"We even have two taxis that transport people from Kyankwanzi to Ngoma, to Nakaseke, Luwero, Kyamukweya, Bukomero and Kampala.



The new bridge has had a positive economic impact on residents in the area

Sadam Ssebucu, a trader in Kyankwanzi, says he used canoes to transport his cargo across river Mayanja, which was risky and expensive.

He explained that one needed to spend above sh20,000 from Kyankwanzi to Ngoma, but now with the bridge, it only costs sh8,000.

**DISTRICTS CONNECTED**

Ben Owilli, the engineer of bridges and structures

at UNRA, says though the bridge connected Kyankwanzi and Ngoma sub-county in Nakaseke district, it also eased a trade route for the surrounding areas of Kiboga, Masindi, Hoima, Nakasongora and Luwero among others.

The modular steel structure reinforced with concrete is a dual carriageway and has a pedestrian walkway on either side and is designed to last 120 years, according to Owilli.

He added that UNRA

contracted Terrain Services to construct this bridge at a cost of sh14.5b for two years.

**CHALLENGES**

According to Owilli, the Kabaale bridge project had challenges which delayed its completion, though he did not say, if this had increased its cost.

"We had Challenges in land acquisition so the contractual deadline had to be extended," he noted.



Before construction of the bridge

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