

Fishing communities decry hardships in retrieving bodies of drowned victims

KASESE

By Samuel Amanyire

Kasese is among the few districts naturally endowed with lakes, including George, Edward and Katwe. These lakes, characterised by several landing sites and fishing villages, are a transport means for commodities to and from DR Congo (DRC), and multiple tourist activities.

However, there have been several drowning cases registered, frustratingly leaving a huge burden for marine experts, local leaders and residents to retrieve the bodies of victims.

Wilson Asiimwe, the LC3 chairperson of Katwe sub-county, decried the absence of a quick, equipped rescue team designated to specifically help people who are victims of drowning, since all the available boats are meant for business.

"When people drown, the water waves relocate their bodies, making it hard to quickly trace their whereabouts," Asiimwe told *New Vision* in an exclusive interview on Tuesday. He further informed that because of the delays to retrieve the bodies, at times they are

A LIFE THREAT

On average, one person is lost monthly due to drowning. Most incidents are caused by illegal fishing activities, including the use of unrecommended boat sizes and failure to have and use life jackets. Water waves caused by strong winds and boats without engines, easily overturned by hippos and crocodiles, are other risk factors for drowning.

eaten up by crocodiles, adding more pain and misery to the relatives of the deceased; it becomes a challenge to conduct a burial ceremony without a physical body.

"We urgently need marine police equipped with at least one speed boat and also be given toll-free landline numbers for easy communication in case of any drowning incident," Asiimwe suggested.

Musa Masudi, the former fishermen chairperson for Katunguru Landing Site on Kazinga channel, attributed the overwhelming cases of illegal fishing to government's decision to withdraw the Fisheries Protection Unit (FPU) last year, which had waged strategies in conserving Ugandan water bodies.

"As local leaders we have tried our level best to confiscate illegal fishing gears but the task is just too hectic for us," Masudi told *New Vision*.



Fishermen at Katunguru Landing Site setting off for fishing without wearing life jackets