

Mukono leaders divided over illegal sand mining

MUKONO
By Henry Nsubuga

The Police and Mukono district council leaders have failed to stop illegal sand mining at Wansinga village, which has encroached on the Nsanja-Mpunge road.

The council, on May 29, resolved to immediately stop sand mining in the area because the process was threatening the lives of road users, but the Police have failed to implement the directive.

It was revealed during the council meeting that a one Charles Mutumba, who acquired a land title on public land at Wansinga village on Mpunge sub-county, was illegally mining sand in the district feeder road.

Mukono district speaker Emmanuel Mbonye said the council also found out that the sand miners had diverted the road into an old woman's (Miriam Nambi) land, after digging the road over 90 feet deep.

The sand mining has also threatened the lives of the school children of St. Lawrence Primary School because the miners have dug up to the school fence.

"The council halted the sand mining immediately and directed the Police to stop the miners. We also directed Police to set up a post in that place because it was reported to be insecure. Unfortunately, the Police have refused to exercise the council's resolutions," Mbonye said.

Mukono resident district commissioner (RDC) Maj. David Matovu in his letter dated May 30, instructed the district Police commander, Rogers Sseguya, to act as per the council resolutions. However, to date, nothing has been done.

"The destruction of the public road can no longer be tolerated. You, as Police, must move in firmly, to check this defiance and impunity and stop all activities. Keep me posted daily, as the matter poses insecurity in the area," the RDC directed in the letter.



Ongoing sand mining activities at Wansinga in Mukono district. Photo by Henry Nsubuga

Mbonye told *New Vision* that they are distressed with the fact that Police refused to act as the council had asked, and that they saw Sseguya with a patrol of policemen offering protection to sand miners.

During the council session, councillor Sylvia Kyowa, who read the minority report over the illegal sand mining at Mpunge, said their investigations linked some of the district's top leaders to illegal sand mining in the area.

Without mentioning names, Kyowa said the clique of the top leaders received over sh20m to allow the illegal sand mining to take place.

When contacted on phone, Sseguya acknowledged his

BETWEEN THE LINES:

- The district council accuses the Police of siding with the miners.
- Some district leaders are accused of taking bribes from the miners.

visit to the place where illegal sand mining is taking place, but said he had gone there to carry out investigations because they opened a general inquiry file on the matter.

"I also heard rumours circulating that I went there to give protection to the sand miners, which is not true," Sseguya said sand mining

has been going on in the area for more than one year, so he cannot complete the investigation in one day as the councillors may wish.

"At one time, we went to the scene with the district chairman, Andrew Ssenyonga, and asked the miners to stop their activities. Some were even arrested, but they returned, ignoring our order," he said.

Mbonye said the councillors are ready to pass a vote of no confidence against the district chairman, Andrew Ssenyonga, saying the Local Government Act requires him to make sure the council resolutions are fully exercised, however, he has been quiet over the matter.

Dramatic?

Ssenyonga, however, said the councillors who are pushing the matter are just seeking media attention over nothing.

He said they have made several attempts to stop the miners.

"The sand miners illegally reached an agreement with Mpunge sub-county, which gave them permission to mine the sand and later reconstruct the road. This was after the sand miners promised to build a structure to house the sub-county headquarters," Ssenyonga said.

He said the sub-county leadership is looking at the district as saboteurs of their programme.

VOX POPS

Miriam Nambi: Charles Mutumba, who owns the place where sand mining is being carried out, was always pressuring me to allow the road to pass via my land. Because I stay here alone, I had no option but to accept.



Timothy Kiryowa, sand miner: Our names are being tarnished by people with selfish interests in this matter. We are here legally. Mutumba, who is our landlord, has a land title.



Daniel Ssekandi, the chairperson for sand miners: We are not as defiant as the district councillors portray us to be. They wanted us to bribe them when they visited this place, but we refused as we did not know them. We only know the sub-county leaders with whom we made an agreement.



Emmanuel Mbonye, Mukono district speaker: My council ordered the sand miners to stop their work immediately because their actions are illegal. Unfortunately, our chairman, Andrew Ssenyonga, seems to be on the opposite side. He has not acted as expected over this issue.

