KAKUMIRO

Kyenyonga-Kikaada bridge commissioned

By Andrew Musinguzi

Residents from more than 10 villages in Bwanswa and Kasambya sub-counties in Kakumiro district have commended the Government, through the works and transport ministry, for constructing the Kyenyonga-Kikaada trail hybrid bridge, which cost sh500m.

The jubilant residents from Kikaada, Kisengwe, Kaibarabara, Mijinga, Kyenyonga, Rwengabi, Bwanswa, Mukijuru, Kasojo and Kaitabigere villages, said the long-awaited bridge will ease access to markets, improve access to healthcare, and reduce school absenteeism and dropout rates.

Maria Gorretti Nakabira, a resident from Kyenyonga village, described the bridge as a lifesaver, especially for women.

"This is a great opportunity for us, particularly expecting mothers who previously delivered babies in rivers and swamps during floods due to lack of an access bridge to the health facility," she said, noting that the nearest health centre is about 30km away.

Noeline Nantumbwe from Rwengabi village recalled tragic incidents linked to the impassable crossing, saying: "Two children drowned in the flooded Kyenyonga River and swamp before the bridge was constructed. We thank our Member of Parliament Fred Byamukama for responding to our plight," she said.

Eria Twebaze from Bwanswa welcomed the development but cautioned residents against vandalism and theft of bridge components.



Byamukama (right) accompanied by Kikaada residents, cross the newly constructed Kyenyonga-Kikaada trail hybrid bridge in Kakumiro district

GOVT COMMITMENT

Minister of State for Works and Transport Fred Byamukama, who commissioned the 120-metre bridge, reaffirmed government's commitment to improving rural infrastructure.

He said the bridge is designed mainly for pedestrians, bodaboda riders and schoolchildren, while an alternative route fitted with culverts will cater for vehicles and trucks.

"This bridge runs through a unique ecosystem of rivers, swamps, flora and fauna, which also presents tourism opportunities. The area neighbours the Birembo war memorial sites where President Yoweri Museveni and NRA fighters passed during the 1981-1985 liberation struggle," Byamukama said.

He added that Uganda has made significant strides in road infrastructure, growing from less than 1,000km of tarmacked roads before the National Resistance Movement government came to power to over 6,000km today.

The minister noted that the bridge, co-funded by FIKA, a non-profit organisation building rural trail bridges, at sh267m, is expected to last more than 30 years. He added that government's plans to upgrade access roads to support vehicular traffic are underway.

"I warn those involved in vandalising public infrastructure to stop it or face the law. The Government cannot afford to lose investments to saboteurs. Residents should report such acts to authorities," he noted.

PARTNERS REACT

Pauline Ketty Okello, the country director of FIKA, is happy about the opportunity to partner with the Government to improve rural connectivity.

"We urge residents to take ownership of this infrastructure. These bridges are costly investments," she said.

Okello added that FIKA has constructed 44 similar bridges in Uganda and other countries, including Ethiopia, Zambia and Rwanda.

Rose Apio, the assistant commissioner for engineering drainage structures at the works ministry, who represented permanent secretary Waiswa Bageya, credited local leadership for identifying infrastructure gaps.

"While we commend government for this development, we must also recognise leaders who lobby for them," she said.

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