

Driver

Collision

Checkpoint

Wedding

By Vision reporters

Thirteen people died on the spot and eight others sustained serious injuries on Sunday night when a Kampala-bound truck collided with a mini-bus at Katonga in Mpigi district, on the Kampala-Masaka highway.

Twelve of the dead were Tanzanian nationals who were travelling back home from a wedding reception in Kampala. The other was a turn boy of the Fuso truck which caused the accident.

Seven of the injured were also Tanzanian nationals. The other was the truck driver.

Police spokesperson Asan Kasingye said the vehicles "crashed head-on" after the truck's brakes failed and the driver lost control.

The dead were taken to the mortuary at Gombe and Nkozi hospitals on the fateful night and were yesterday transferred to Mulago Hospital for a postmortem examination.

Kasingye said seven of the dead were male and six female. All the 19 passengers aboard the mini-bus were Tanzanians.

They were returning to their country (via Masaka-Mutukula border), from a wedding of Dr Treasure Ibingira, son of Makerere University lecturer Prof. Charles Ibingira and wife Rev Can. Lydia Ibingira of All Saints Cathedral Nakasero.

Treasure Ibingira tied the knot with Tanzanian Dr Anneth Teu on Saturday at All Saints Cathedral Nakasero and the reception was held at the Kampala Parents School main hall.

"It was such a shock. When we got a phone call (notifying us) that people we had been with that day (Sunday), who

12 Tanzanians die in Katonga accident

BETWEEN THE LINES:

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had been around us as we prepared for and celebrated our children's marriage, had been involved in a fatal accident, we could not believe it," Charles Ibingira said.

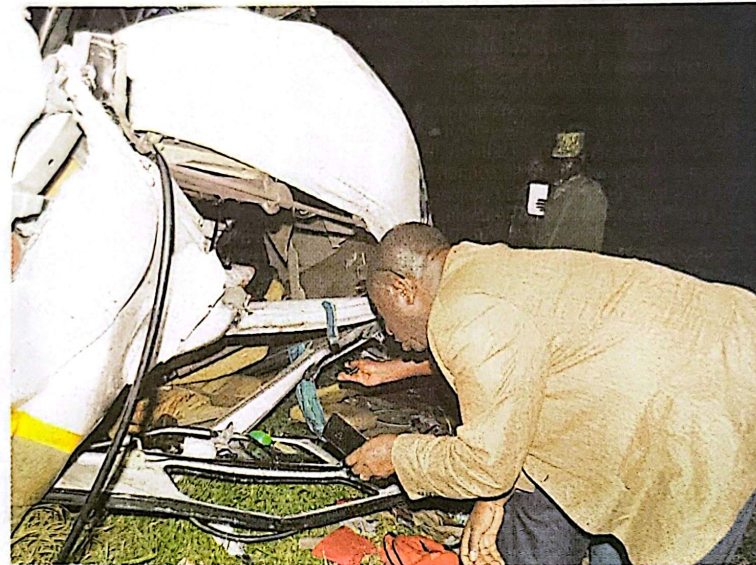
Some of the dead were identified as Esther Mwisigira, Edward Kimayo, Bonny Edward Migambo, Esther Gorreth Teu, Fred Hawle, Rehema G. Teu, Bonny Edmund Migambo and Enoth Laizer.

Some of the injured are Irene Ronal Lyatu and Dativa M. Shayo.

One survivor, Boniface Kemeline, said they were engrossed in a conversation only to hear a loud bang. "It was unfortunate, but we hope the couple will find peace and happiness after this tragedy," Kemeline said.

How it happened

Witnesses said the truck first developed mechanical



Prof. Ibingira observing the wreckage of the vehicle at the scene of the accident

problems at Lukaya (a township after Masaka) and could not brake, so a local mechanic fixed it.

However, the brakes could not hold again at Katonga, which has a steep slope, causing the driver to lose control as the truck sped downward before hitting the

Toyota coaster from its lane. After the bang, the mini-bus flew into the air before landing into a culvert, where the Fuso found it and smashed it again, finally landing atop it. This was at 9:00pm.

Most of the deceased and injured were stuck inside the vehicle until the Fire Brigade

Police unit from Kampala arrived hours later and cut them out of the wreckage.

The Police said they were still investigating the cause of the tragedy.

Charles Ibingira, who is also the dean at the School of Biomedical Sciences at Makerere University

College of Health Sciences, said his 'new relatives' had visited the Martyrs' shrines at Namugongo on Sunday morning before taking the mini-bus to return to Tanzania.

Kasingye said they were still studying particulars of the deceased and injured and would "see how to repatriate bodies" in consultation with the Tanzanian High Commission in the country.

"We are saddened as a country and a Police force by the unfortunate incident. We extend our heartfelt sympathies to the families of the victims both in Uganda and Tanzania," he said.

Kasingye added that the director of fire and rescue services, Joseph Mugisha, together with a traffic team officials are still on the ground.

A Police source who spoke on condition of anonymity, said the truck tyre burst, leading to loss of control.

"We believe the lorry was speeding, that is why the driver lost control when the tyre burst," a source noted.

Kasingye said the incident happened a short distance from the 'Fika Salaama' Police checkpoint, which was a "very unfortunate incident."

The Police spokesperson of Katonga region, Philip Mukasa, said they were holding the driver of the truck (identified as Badru Kassim Kamanzi) to help them with the investigations. The driver is still at Nkozi Hospital in critical condition.

The Kampala-Masaka highway has been notorious for accidents, but of late, the Police had managed to reduce the accidents to minimal levels through checkpoints.