

River Cheptui bridge caves in

BULAMBULI

By Daniel Edyegu

Cheptui bridge, located along Muyembe-Nakapiripirit highway, has caved in.

The works ministry built the narrow concrete bridge, which stretches across River Cheptui, as a temporary diversion after floods destroyed the main bridge along the highway in 2007.

River Chetui, from where the bridge derives its name, serves as a natural boundary between Bwikhonge and Bunambutye sub-counties in Bulambuli district. The concrete surface of the bridge has gorged out, eating away about half of the road.

"We woke up to find the bridge had collapsed. But we suspect it could have collapsed under the weight of one of the cement trucks which use the route to pick marble from Amudat district," Joshua Masike, a resident explained.

M b a l e - M u y e m b e - Nakapiripirit highway has



Children walk past the damaged Cheptui bridge along Muyembe-Nakapiripirit highway. Photo by Daniel Edyegu

lately become a favourite for motorists being a shorter route to Karamoja sub-region. This is due to the tarmacking of the 77km Nakapiripirit-Moroto road, that the 144km Muyembe-Nakapiripirit

stretch joins.

To avoid accidents on the bridge, Uganda National Roads Authority (UNRA) has temporarily blocked the route and diverted motorists to the 270km Mbale-Soroti-Moroto

road, a much longer road.

According to Mark Baraza, the Bunambutye LC3 chairperson, motorists have continued using the damaged bridge.

"Vehicles manoeuvre through the better part of the

road. It is risky though. On July 14, the hind tyres of a Gateway bus, heading to Nakapiripirit, sank into the damaged section of the bridge. A tow truck had to be called in to pull the bus out," Baraza narrated.

"When this temporary bridge was built in 2007, we were told that it would serve for six months while the Government fixed the main bridge. It is now over 10 years," Baraza stressed.

BETWEEN THE LINES:

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Whereas Godfrey Ssonko, the UNRA Mbale station manager, admitted the damaged bridge was a temporary one, he explained that works on a permanent bridge could not be executed because Muyembe-Nakapiripirit route is already planned for tarmacking.

"That temporary bridge was projected to last three years. It is built to hold not more than 15 tonnes. But cement trucks load up 30 tonnes of marble. This has weakened the bridge. We are in the process of putting another overlay (concrete crossover bridge) at that spot. It will be ready in about three weeks," Ssonko explained.