

No work done. Kasese RDC James Mwesigye says more than Shs280 million was given by government to district officials for construction of Kyoha bridge but no work has been done.

BY ENID NINSIMA
editorial@bug.nationmedia.com

Bridge construction stalls despite Shs280m funding

KASESE. Kasese District road and water projects have stalled even after funds for such projects were given to district officials.

Among the stalled projects is Kyoha bridge in Bwesumbu Sub-county which was estimated to cost Shs580 million.

According to the Kasese Resident District Commissioner, Mr James Mwesigye, more than Shs280 million was given by government to district officials for construction of Kyoha bridge but no work has been done.

"The construction work was supposed to start last year and end next year, but to date there is nothing on ground," Mwesigye said, adding that all the money was released and received by the district engineer.

Police last week arrested two district officials implicated in alleged shoddy works but they were later released on bond.

They had gone into hiding following the arrest of one of their colleagues for allegedly embezzling more than Shs600 million meant for the bridge, road and water projects in the area.

Following the alleged shoddy work that was done on Kasese-Karusandara and Muruh-Kyabarungira roads, Mahango and Mughete water projects, and the stalled works on Kyoha bridge in Bwesumbu, the RDC ordered the arrest of all the implicated civil servants.

Mr Mwesigye first ordered the arrest of the district water engineer, who is alleged to have embezzled Shs86 million meant for Muruh-Kyabarungira water project in Busongora north and then the road engineer, who received Shs280 million for the bridge yet no construction item is on the site.

One suspect was arrested by police last week and released on police bond and ordered to refund the money as investigations continue.

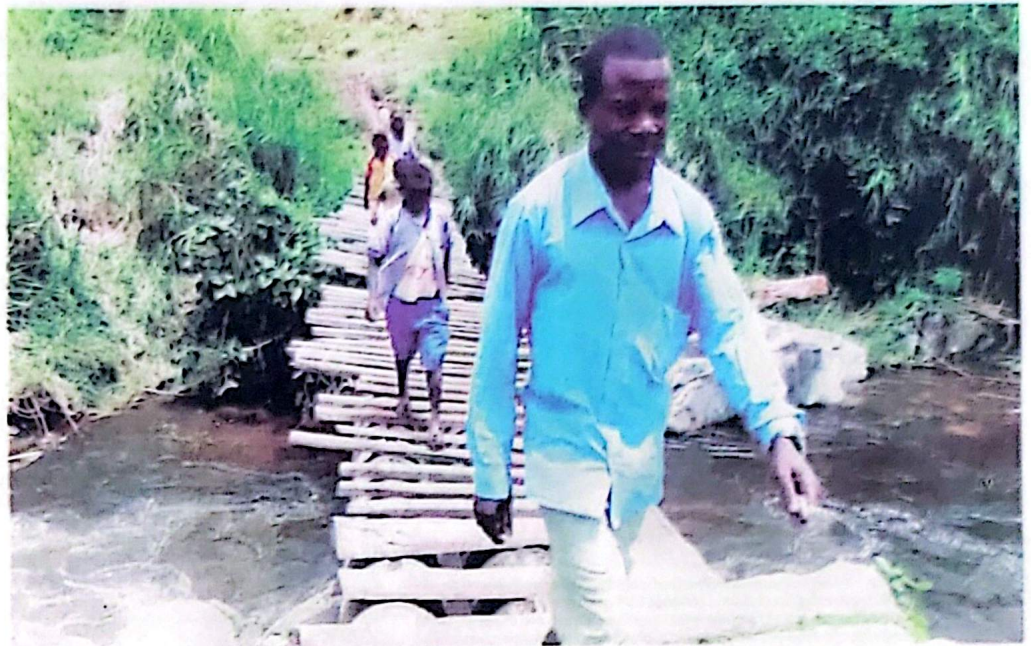
The Rwenzori East regional police commander, Mr Richard Ecega, said some water tap stands have been erected by the suspects following the arrest.

"We shall have to take him to court to answer the charges," Mr Ecega said.

He said Shs236 million meant for construction of Karusandara road misappropriated.

"We only saw 14 culverts on the road out of the Shs236 million spent. We have opened our file for investigations as we trace for another suspect who supervised the road and many others in the racket," Mr Ecega added.

He said corruption in Kasese is high, adding that the district chief administrative officer (CAO) has allegedly failed to prevail over his workers hence leading to no value.



Dangerous. A man and school children cross the makeshift bridge over River Kyoha. The bridge connects Kasese and Bunyangabu districts. PHOTO BY ENID NINSIMA

When contacted, the CAO, Mr Mathias Ndifuna said: "I am aware of the problem. You know the water engineer was arrested and he has tried to fix what was not right."

30

NUMBER OF PEOPLE WHO HAVE REPORTEDLY DROWNED IN RIVER KYOHA



Risky. A man crosses the rickety bridge over River Kyoha.

Due to delays in constructing the bridge over River Kyoha, residents are forced to cross the river on a makeshift wooden bridge. Several residents have reportedly drowned while attempting to cross the river.

"Many boda boda riders have died in this river, especially while coming from Bunyangabu due to the slope," Mr Disan Byaruhanga, a boda boda rider, said.

Ms Ruth Katusabe, a resident of Kateebwa Sub-county in Bunyangabu District, called for immediate government response to their plight.

"We have suffered while crossing this river and we cannot avoid it because we do cross here every day for business. We have lost our children and relatives in this river. We shall be happy the day the bridge will be done," Ms Katusabe said.

The district councillor for Bwesumbu, Mr Wilson Mbathuraho, said at least 30 people have drowned in the river.

"We thought that the bridge was a relief to us, but it is now overdue. We have lost 30 people to this river whenever it rains since they do their business across in

Kateebwa Sub-county, Bunyangabu District," Mr Mbathuraho said.

Mr Godfrey Dembe, the district councillor for Karusandara, said the work done on the road does not reflect the money given by government.

"We have shouted and shouted in council but nothing has been done. I have so far succeeded in having three district engineers arrested. I have given them up to November 7 to fix what is lacking or else we shall take them to court. We want them to refund the money they took as well as face the law," the RDC said.

VOICES

"It is true I received the money but the bridge cannot be done in phases. We have been waiting for the rain to subside so that we can start the work. I am sure the bridge will be done by June next year,"

RICHARD BALUKU,
DISTRICT ENGINEER

"We have suffered while crossing this river and we cannot avoid it because we do cross here every day for business. We have lost our children and relatives in this river. We shall be happy the day the bridge will be done."

RUTH KATUSABE,
BUNYANGABU DISTRICT