

Bad roads choke service sector, trade in Rukungiri



Motorists dodge a pothole at a section of the Rukungiri - Kanungu road. The road connects Rukungiri and Kanungu districts through Nyakagyeme and Rwerere. PHOTO/RONALD KABANZA

Rukungiri has two tarmac roads connecting it to Ntungamo and Kanungu districts.

BY RONALD KABANZA

Leaders and residents in Rukungiri have raised concern over the deteriorating state of the district's road network.

The leaders say the poor infrastructure is affecting trade, service delivery

and socio-economic development.

The district has about 345.81 kilometres of roads; 122.17 kilometres of urban roads and 223.64 kilometres of community access roads, many of which are in poor condition.

Rukungiri has two tarmac roads connecting it to Ntungamo and Kanungu districts.

However, the Rukungiri-Ntungamo road, constructed between 2004 and 2005, is now in a poor state, with numerous potholes posing danger to motorists and pedestrians.

Some of the worst affected sections include Buyanja-Omukiragiro-Kebi-

DISTRICT ROADS

- **Total district roads:** 345.81km
- **Urban roads:** 122.17km
- **Community access roads:** 223.64km
- **Tarmac roads:** 2
- **Main challenges:** Limited funding
- Hilly and rocky terrain prone to mudslides
- Heavy rains that wash away murram roads

soni Town, Kiborogota-Kahengye, and Nyamunuka-Rwashamire, which are riddled with deep potholes.

Most of the other roads in the district are murram, making them difficult to use during the rainy season.

These include Kebisoni-Kisiizi-Muhanga, Rukungiri-Buhunga-Mitooma, Rukungiri-Ruhinda-Mitooma, and Rukungiri-Nyakagyeme-Rwerere-Kanungu roads.

The roads connect Rukungiri to neighbouring districts such as Kanungu and Mitooma, but residents say their poor condition has disrupted transport and trade.

The district chairperson of the Roads and Bridges Committee, Dr Elisa Rutahigwa, attributed the poor road conditions to a shortage of road equipment.

"The road equipment we received from the government cannot last long because of the size of the district. Rukungiri is too big to be worked on by one piece of equipment. Unless the district receives more equipment, the state of our roads will not improve," he said.

Dr Rutahigwa, who is also the Rukungiri Municipality Member of Parliament, said the district is constrained by limited funding from the central government.

Funds

"The central government should allocate more funds to big districts like Rukungiri because Shs1 billion is not enough to maintain roads in such a large district. I, therefore, ask government to increase funding for road repair and maintenance," he said.

The LC5 chairperson, Mr Geoffrey Kyomukama, said the district's hilly terrain also contributes to the rapid deterioration of roads.

"Our district is rocky and hilly, with steep slopes that are prone to mudslides during the rainy season. When it rains, run-off water easily washes away our roads," he said.

"But we are trying our best to work on the district roads because good roads are key to development," he added.

The Rukungiri Municipality Mayor, Mr Charles Makuru, called on government to increase funding and provide more road equipment to the district.

"The roads in a sorry state would have been worked on if we had enough road construction equipment. The situation has forced the municipal authorities to write to different institutions seeking assistance, but without success," he said.

Rukungiri District Engineer Julius Bagira blamed roadside sand mining for weakening many of the district roads.

"People excavate sand along the roads, which weakens the road base, especially during the rainy season. This makes the roads easily washed away by run-off," he said.

"Our district is bigger than many others, yet we receive the same amount of funding for roads. We appeal to our Members of Parliament to lobby for more funding and additional road equipment," he added.