

Landslides strike Bududa again

BUDUDA

By Paul Watala

Landslides last weekend struck again, affecting 11 villages in two parishes of Bushibino and Bukimuma in Bududa district. The landslides left 1,600 people seeking shelter in schools and trading centres.

The district chairperson, Wilson Watila, said houses, livestock, crops and trees worth millions were destroyed.

The affected villages include Shamwanza, Shianza, Bukhasiru East, Bukhasiru West, Buwaninda, Makalama, Sholelo, Nafunane, Bunateme and Bukhalobo.

He said the district officials and area Members of Parliament had rushed to the area to assess the impact.

"The displaced persons have sought refuge in the nearby churches and schools, while some have sought shelter at their relatives homes in the neighbouring villages that have not been affected," he added.

Isaac Mutenyo, one of the affected residents, said the calamity occurred late in the night after heavy rains started early that afternoon, but later intensified in the evening at 5:00pm.

He added that after the first phase of the downpour ended at 3:00pm, they witnessed the cracks widening and alerted

"We are sitting on a time bomb, because more cracks have formed." Manjiya MP

the residents to move to safer places.

Juma Ahmed Musamali said the landslides submerged his house, but he managed to flee with his family of 14 members. When he returned the following morning, he found his house and all the property inside destroyed.

"I heard children screaming and I asked my wife to check what was wrong, only to discover that their bedroom was full of water and we had to evacuate immediately," he said.

The Manjiya County MP, John Baptist Nambeshe, said the number of the displaced people is projected to rise to over 2,000 because fresh cracks are developing.

"We are sitting on a time bomb because more cracks have formed and we cannot tell their depth. At any moment, the soil may be moved downhill as the rains intensify," he said.

According to the assessment made by district leaders, landslides have created several

cracks throughout the two parishes and this necessitated all people living in the vulnerable areas to be moved.

Jane Nambuya appealed to the Government to expedite the relocation of the affected families, adding that food, safe water and medication had become a challenge.

"Every time these calamities occur, government rushes in with food relief and rescue for the displaced people. It is now over five years but no relocation plan has been put in place, yet we are losing lives, food and property," she said.

She added: "We have lost crops, yet we were almost harvesting in a few weeks. We are bound to face severe famine in the near future."

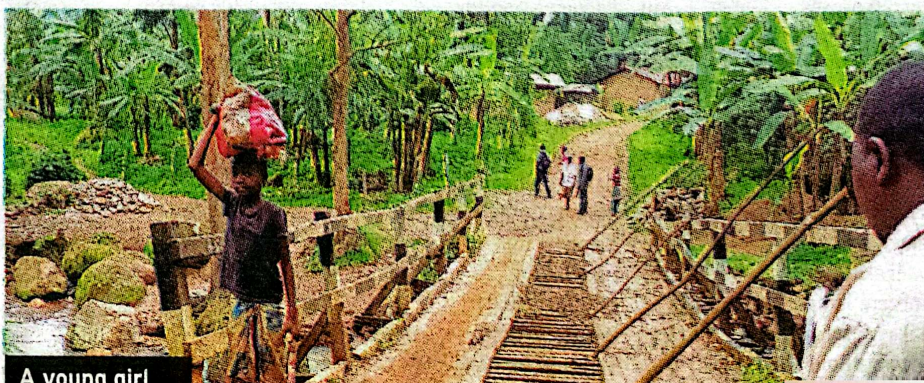
Nambeshe warned the disaster preparedness ministry not to come up with the usual policy of giving food relief to the people of Bududa, but rather focus on having a permanent solution of relocating people who are living in the risky area of Bududa.

The state minister for environment, Mary Goretti Kitutu, attributed the landslides to human activities on the slopes that has left the hills bare, thereby making the land susceptible to landslides.

Kitutu said there are several factors that have led to the continuous occurrence of landslides in the Elgon region.

She said the clay soils there

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