

WHAT TO AVOID

Museveni warned against the dangers of building on top of mountain cliffs and cultivating below mountainous areas

By Paul Wataia

President Yoweri Museveni visited Bulusaba village in Bufupa Parish, Sironko district in Bugisu sub-region, where landslides claimed nine people in August.

During interaction with the communities, the President on Wednesday expressed condolences to the bereaved and also distributed relief items to the victims of the August 28 landslides.

Museveni also pledged building materials.

"We are going to provide them with construction materials such as iron sheets, bricks and nails. We should encourage our communities in landslide-prone areas to go for urban settlement and use the land for farming," Museveni said.

The President was accompanied by six ministers namely Irene Muloni (energy and minerals), Hilary Onek (disaster preparedness and refugees), Vincent Ssempiija (agriculture), Mary Goretti Kitutu (state minister for environment) and Musa Echweru (state minister for disaster preparedness).

Addressing a rally at Masaba Senior Secondary playgrounds in Budadiri West Constituency, Masaba sub-county, the President warned against the dangers of building on top of mountain cliffs and cultivating below mountainous areas, saying such activities have largely caused massive soil erosion, leading to landslides.

"This Masaba mountain looks after you like a mother, but it is a taboo to see your mother naked lest you get cursed. God gave clothes to our mother Masaba which are the forests and grass. When you come, your mother might give some of her clothes to you, but if you go far and want to see her nakedness, then you will get in trouble and this is what is happening. Let us agree to look after our mother just as she has looked after you for centuries," the President said.

Museveni said he has mobilised funds to assist in the relocation of the people who had settled in the mountainous areas.

"We must do everything possible to persuade these people to get out of those areas. This is not the issue of the mountain anymore, but a matter of avoiding death," he stressed.

The President said the high and low areas of the cliffs should only be used for economic rather than residential purposes. He proposed that the wananchi should build houses 500 metres away from the bottom of the mountain, adding that the Government is ready to assist those that were planning to build organised houses following the demarcated distance.

The President also visited the landslide scar in Bufupa and blamed the agriculture ministry and their



Museveni on Wednesday touring Sironko district where seven people were killed in a landslide. PPU photo

Museveni tips Sironko residents on cultivating in hilly areas



Minister Muloni leads the President and other guests during the tour of the area

extension workers at the district for failing to teach locals good and modern farming methods that would help them regulate massive wash away of top soils leading to soil erosion.

Museveni directed Ssempiija and Kitutu to organise training for communities living in mountainous areas on best farming practices.

He lashed out at the agriculture ministry and district extension workers for failure to educate communities living in mountainous areas to practise terracing farming, which he said was leading to massive wash away of top soils.

"Our agriculture ministry and district extension workers are busy sleeping in the district comfortable

offices, leaving our people suffering. I now direct the two ministers to come back here and see that our farmers are told the right way of cultivating in hilly places," Museveni said.

"We should encourage our people to use contours and dig across the hills, plant grass and trees to protect soils from being washed away," he added.

Museveni also warned politicians against their reckless talk of encouraging the communities to dig up to the top of Mt Elgon and also encroach on the Mt Elgon forest, saying it is leading to more landslides in the country.

He also advised the people of Bufupa to utilise the rocks there and construct strong roads.

"Bufupa has a big rock just waiting to kill people. Why don't you blast it and make strong roads. In Rome, roads are made of stone. They could have been made during the time of Jesus. These rocks here too, can be used to make tiles and long-lasting roads which will promote tourism," he observed.

Onek commended President Museveni for going to Sironko district to share with the people their grief, following the loss of life due to the landslides. He said such disasters were not only confined in Sironko district, but have also happened in other areas of the country as a result of climate change and environmental degradation by some people.

Sironko LC5 chairperson Herbert Mulekwa said the President's visit was a clear testimony of his ability to sympathise with the people in times of grief not only for Sironko, but also other areas of the country.

Vincent Waboya, the Member of Parliament for Budadiri East, appealed to the Government to expedite the process of evacuating the landslide victims in Mt. Elgon, adding that they are sitting on a time bomb.

Waboya also asked the agriculture minister to provide onion seedlings to farmers in Sironko. He added that people in mountains depend on agriculture for survival.

The Woman Member of Parliament for Sironko, Sarah Nambozo Mayoga, thanked Museveni for visiting the area and interacting with the victims.

"You are our hero and parent. We ask your office to help and extend safe water to the people of Sironko and also improve the health centre in Budadiri," Nambozo said.

LEADERS SPEAK OUT