

Floods wreak havoc in Bulambuli

Works and Transport ministry officials pledge to investigate cause of the floods to determine their next course of action.

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Residents of Sisya, Lusha, and Buginyanya sub-counties in Bulambuli District are have decried the government's failure to address the devastating floods caused by large volumes of water flowing from Biritanyi Gorge.

Biritanyi Gorge, located in Lusha Sub-county, features a 60-metre S-shaped road that was carved through the hill to connect the lowlands to the highlands.

Now, the water from the highlands flows over the road surface instead of passing underneath a bridge, causing the residents and the water to share the same path for approximately 60 metres.

This has caused danger, particularly when the volume of water increases during the rainy season, often leading to loss of lives.

Mr Lemeka Magona, a resident of Buginyanya, said the flooding caused by large volumes of water from Biritanyi Gorge has destroyed gardens and other properties of locals.

"It has also severely affected the transportation of goods, such as onions, which end up rotting in the flooded gardens," he said.

Mr Magona added that whenever it rains heavily, Simu Kona-Masila-Bufumbo Road becomes impassable, disrupting the movement of people, goods, and agricultural products in the low-lying parts of the district.

Locals say construct of the road disrupted nature's ability to absorb the water from the Biritanyi Gorge underground, causing the flooding.

"Unfortunately, the construction of the road disrupted the natural water flow, and over time, the drainage channels directing the water became obstructed," Mr Yasiin Mafabi, a boda boda rider, said. He said the government should take



Locals on a flooded section of Simu Kona-Masila-Bufumbo Road that passes through the Biritanyi Gorge.
PHOTO/ANDREW WABUSHADA

ABOUT BIRITANYI GORGE

Biritanyi Gorge, located in Lusha Sub-county, features a 60-metre S-shaped road that was carved through the hill to connect the lowlands to the highlands in Bulambuli. Locals say Simu Kona-Masila-Bufumbo Road becomes impassable when it rains.

immediate action to resolve the issue.

"The government should also prioritise the creation of an alternative route by breaking the rocks in the gorge. This would allow for better transportation of goods to the market," he added.

Mr James Mwabu, the chairperson of Mugabe Upper Village, said flooding is one of the most pressing issues affecting the people of Elgon North constituency.

He said an estimated 15,000 people are affected in the constituency that has a

population of more than 100,000 residents.

"The flooding disrupts local businesses, forcing traders to carry goods on their heads to cross and or they take longer using the alternative routes through difficult terrain to reach markets," Mr Mwabu said.

The village chairperson said the government should break the rocks in the gorge and create a safer and more reliable route for both people and goods.

"This would ensure smoother transportation to Bulambuli, Mbale, and beyond, improving the lives of the affected communities," Mr Mwabu said.

Mr Ronald Kisa, the youth councillor for Bulambuli District, explained that Biritanyi Gorge, which was constructed during the colonial era, has now become a danger zone.

"The government should involve experts to assess the limestone in the area and use it to stabilise the situation," Mr Kisa said.

Mr James Songo, the chairperson for Buginyanya Sub-county, echoed similar

concerns, emphasising the loss of lives and the disruption of transportation.

"The flooding has cut off access to transport, and when it rains, the water floods the entire area, preventing movement. The situation has been affecting both the upper and lower sub-counties of Bulambuli," he said.

The upland sub-counties affected by the flooding include Bufumbo, Bulago, Lusha, Buginyanya, Bumugibole, and Bumasobo, while the lowland sub-counties—such as Sisya, Kamu, Bulegeni, and Bulambuli Town Council—are also severely impacted during heavy rains.

Mr Songo said the flooding has also caused landslides, destroying gardens and homes in the lower parts of Bulambuli. "The government must act swiftly to resettle affected families and create long-term solutions," Mr Songo said.

Ms Irene Muloni, the Bulambuli Woman MP, explained that Biritanyi Gorge is

Complaint.

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— James Mwabu, the chairperson of Mugabe Upper Village

part of the Simu Kona-Masila-Bufumbo Road.

She said stones have blocked the drainage channels at Biritanyi Gorge, preventing water from flowing underground.

"As a result, water is forced to flow over the surface, flooding the middle of the road and creating a serious hazard," Ms Muloni, who is also an engineer, said.

She added: "Elgon North is known for being one of the food baskets of the region and surrounding areas, but this road is now severely affecting the transportation of goods to the market, causing significant losses for farmers."

Mr Paul Walimbwa, the district engineer for Bulambuli, said preliminary investigations have shown that

the drainage channel has become silted, with many stones and boulders obstructing the flow of water.

"When there is a lot of water, the drainage system can no longer handle the flow, as the channel has been reduced in size due to silting and the accumulation of boulders," Mr

Walimbwa said.

He further stated that the district would write to the Ministry of Works and Transport to request a technical team to conduct a detailed investigation and recommend solutions, including clearing the silt and boulders from the channel to allow proper water flow.

Ms Dina Nakombe, the station manager for the Ministry of Works and Transport's Mbale Branch, said the technical assessment will be conducted to determine whether the channel was originally constructed with concrete.

"If not, we will recommend that the channel be reinforced with concrete to prevent future flooding," she said.

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15,000
AFFECTED LOCALS