



Ministry of Water and Environment

Kampala, Uganda - The Ministry of Water and Environment has launched an investigation into the recent flooding of the River Katonga Bridge along the Kampala-Masaka Highway. The flooding caused a major disruption in transportation and affected the lives of many individuals in the surrounding communities. The floods led to the eroding of wetland vegetation, gardens and causing damage to the Katonga Bridge in the process.

The Ministry of Water and Environment has deployed a team of experts to the site to assess the situation and determine the cause of the flooding.

The Ministry monitors the water level and flow of River Katonga at a station located at the Katonga Wetland right at Katonga Bridge. Similarly, the Uganda National Meteorological Authority regularly releases rainfall figures for the country which indicate that the rainfall in the area has reached 512mm against a long-term average of 200mm for the March to May period. Preliminary findings indicate that the water level in River Katonga based on the station reading was 4.62m on 10th May which was considered to be changing normally in response to the rainfall received in the catchment. The sudden upsurge in the water level by over 2m that eventually caused the flooding at the Kampala- Masaka highway was reported to have started at 3am on 11th May 2023. This was unexpected based on rainfall and water level measurements, and it is likely to have been triggered by other phenomenon upstream of the Katonga bridge.

Katonga Wetland is part of Katonga Catchment system that spans an estimated area of 13,837km². It covers the districts of Mubende, Mityana, Kalungu, Gomba, Sembabule, Kyegegwa, Kamwenge, Kyenjojo, Kiruhura, Lyantonde, Lwengo, Mpigi, Masaka, Kyotera, Bukomansimbi and Butambala. Inspections upstream of the Katonga bridge has revealed a “dam breach” along the 4km stretch of the Kalungu - Gumba road in Bugomola Village, Rwabenge Subcounty in Kalungu District. The local community reported that water had progressively built up on one side of the road due to blocked culverts creating a damming effect. The rising water level is likely to have created massive force beyond the design capacity of the road creating dam breach which led to a sudden release of a large volume of water creating a flood wave that moved downstream the Katonga River.

Typically, as a flood wave moves downstream, it can cause significant damage to infrastructure, such as bridges, roads, and buildings, and can also pose a threat to human life. The speed, height, and extent of the flood wave depend on the volume of water released by the dam, the topography of the surrounding terrain, and other factors such as the presence of vegetation or other obstacles in the river channel.

As of 12 May, the water level at all the sections of Katonga system from upstream to downstream had greatly receded, measuring 5.30m at Katonga Bridge.

The technical team will conduct a comprehensive study of the river's hydraulics and hydrology, considering rainfall patterns and water flow rates. The findings of the investigation will be used to develop strategies to prevent similar incidents from occurring in the future.

The Ministry of Water and Environment is committed to ensuring the safety and well-being of all Ugandans. We recognize the importance of maintaining vital infrastructure such as the River Katonga Bridge and will continue to work diligently with other relevant Government Agencies including UNRA and NEMA to protect it from natural disasters such as flooding.

We urge all motorists and commuters to exercise caution and follow all traffic regulations and instructions during this period. The Ministry of Water and Environment will provide regular updates on the situation as the investigation progresses.

For more information, please contact the Ministry of Water and Environment through our official channels.

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Dated 13 May 2023