

Bridging the flooding problem in Nkaimurunya

Hudson Chege and his wife Eunice used to live in perpetual dread the rainy season. This is the time when they would watch helplessly as classes in their school were submerged in water and rendered useless.

They are the directors of Boonhouse School in Nkaimurunya area of Ongata Rongai, in Kajiado County. They had no alternative other than to wait until the flood waters subsided for the affected classes to be used again. The playing field too would be affected by the flooding.

Today, however, the couple has something to smile about. The school is no longer submerged in flood waters. This is even after the heavy rains that have been pounding the area. They have the Nairobi Metropolitan Services Improvement Project (NaMSIP) to be thankful for.

Under the Nairobi Metropolitan Storm Water Drainage Project and with funding from the World Bank, NaMSIP teamed up with the County Government of Kajiado and have expanded the waterway that passes under the Nkaimurunya Bridge and the waters that used to flood the area have been contained. "The water is flowing along nicely and people can now go about their daily activities without being overly worried about flooding," says Mr Chege. He however urges the engineers to consider raising the walls of the drainage so as to contain all the water.

Raphael Mbulu knows only too well the harmful effects of flooding that hits the area during the rainy season. He is the Ongata Rongai Division chairman of the Nyumba Kumi Community Policing Project. "Last year alone we spent more than sh3 million to provide shelter, food and beddings for people who had been affected floods in this area," he explains. "This is now a thing of the past following the construction of the drainage. We thank the government for that." Mr Mbulu is also the chairman of the Nkaimurunya Bridge drainage project.

Zachary Waweru, the engineer who supervised the construction of the drainage explains that the works entailed expanding the existing drain and installing larger culverts to accommodate the water that flows from the various catchment areas. "This area has unique challenges as the water catchment areas are many. With more funds we can totally transform the area," he adds.

And while the people using the Nkaimurunya Bridge are happy that their area will not be affected by the flooding, the ones that use the Gitaka/Chap Chap Road are not as happy. Storm waters from uphill have converged at the bottom of a gentle slope, completely cutting off the road and marooning people who live nearby.

James Waichanguru, the Nkaimurunya MCA, is now worried that if the flooding persists for longer than the one month it has lasted, people who live in the area might start contracting water borne diseases. "Incidentally, this is the road that goes up to the local hospital, and thus it is a huge inconvenience when it is not being used," he adds.

Mr Waichanguru is now appealing to NaMSIP to consider improving the drainage on the Gitaka/Chap Chap Road. “We are also calling upon our people to remove all structures that have been constructed on waterways and riparian sections as this is what causes flooding,” he says. “We are thankful for the work that was done on the Nkarumurunya Bridge. We would also be grateful if the same is extended to this road if and when funds are available.”

Apart from Nairobi, the Nairobi Metropolitan Storm Water Drainage Project also covers Kajiado, Kiambu and Machakos Counties. According to Engineer Silas Gitau, who manages the project, In Kajiado, the works are concentrated in Ongata Rongai, while in Machakos, focus is in Mavoko. In Kiambu, repair work is being done in Thika. “The project that started in November 2018, is now coming to a close and has been undertaken at a total cost of about sh512 million. With the availability of more funds we can do more work and reduce flooding as there are many more places that also affected by flooding,” adds Eng Gitau.