

HOW TO CONSTRUCT DIFFICULT ROADS CHEAPLY: WHEN BUHWEJU PEASANTS CHALLENGED BUREAUCRATS IN ECONOMICS AND ENGINEERING

By Nathan M. Byamukama

Peasants are not always conventional in their ways but many bureaucrats are. Bureaucrats tend to work within existing templates and with the advent of the internet, they simply 'cut and paste' same scenarios for different situations. Peasants can be a radical group and if well mobilised can level mountains into plains within a twinkle of an eye. I witnessed this personally when the peasants of Akatooma in Buhweju defied the conventional wisdom propagated by academics and bureaucrats to put on earth what many had thought would only be 'when Jesus returns'. What a coincidence that this was achieved during the Christmas season of 2013.

Buhweju's problem has always been inaccessibility. The problem is usually attributed to the geographical features like several hills, swamps, valleys, rocks, streams and forests that have been perceived as barriers to infrastructure development and communication. A geographer J.C Doornkamp (1964), while teaching Geography at Makerere University in 1964 wrote about "the isolation of Buhweju County, Ankole". He stated: "of all the counties in Ankole, Buhweju is the most isolated. This is true in both physical and human sense".

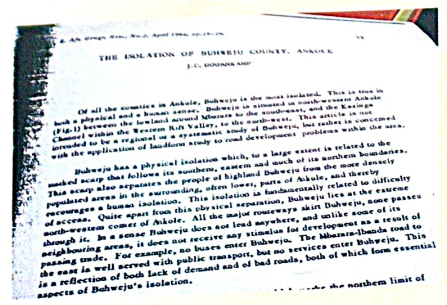
He observed that "all major route ways skirt Buhweju, none passes through it... In a sense Buhweju does not lead anywhere, and unlike some of its neighbouring areas, it does not receive any stimulus for development as a result of passing trade. For example, no bus enters Buhweju". He further wrote: "The Mbarara - Ibanda road to the East is well served with public transport, but no services enter Buhweju.

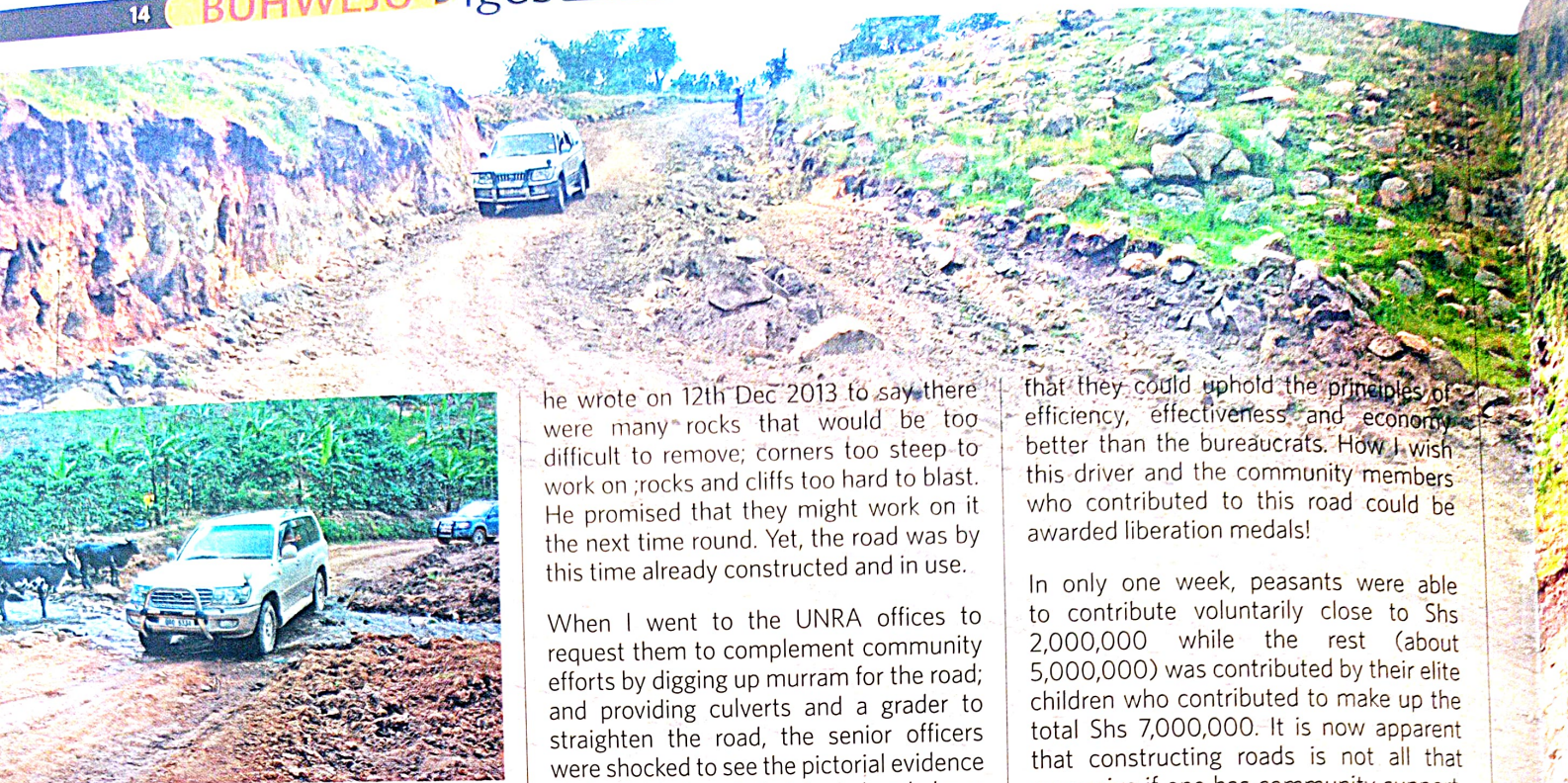
This is a reflection of both lack of demand and of bad roads, both of which form aspects of Buhweju's isolation". In addition he pointed out that "there is no road leading in from the north, and no transport connection ... other than infrequent footpaths" and that "...apart from the land and family ties (which is strong) there is little inducement for man to stay in Buhweju". However, Doornkamp did not suggest options for helping the people of Buhweju apart from noting that it would take difficult and expensive engineering works.

Such an observation (and many still think like that), implies that as long as there are rocks, swamps and poverty (no effective demand) and probably no imperative economic activity in Buhweju we would never get any kind of roads, let alone good roads. It is no wonder that 50 years since Doornkamp's assertion, the situation remain the same in Buhweju.

What Doornkamp was not able to note as a major problem was the lack of interest and will to have good roads rather than the lack of demand for them. As they say where there is a will, there is a way. When it rains, the Buhweju roads, where they exist, are impassable. Yet, murrum is plenty in Buhweju and can be acquired cheaply.

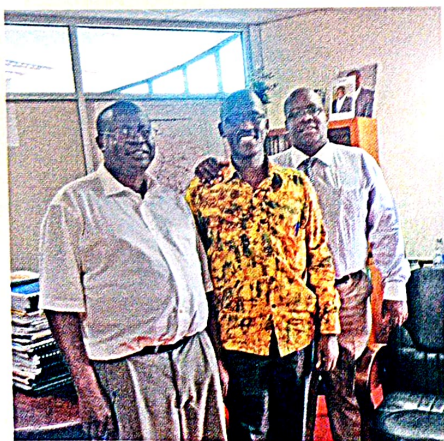
The tough questions to ask though are: If rocks and stones exist can they be used to construct roads? Yes the Barundi have done it; or even construct houses cheaply as Kenyans have done. Are those rocks as





hard to crash as reported? Can they be a resource? Why should Buhweju export water and yet have no water on account of the poor infrastructure? Can Buhweju have roads first without tagging them to demand?

When I asked in 2012 how much it would cost to construct a 2.5 kilometre road from Kyanika in Kashari to Akatooma in Buhweju, a bill of quantities by Mbarara District Engineers put the total cost to Shs 151,000,000. When the people of Bisya complained during the women MP by-elections of sept-Oct 2013 about continued denial of access roads to Kashari, they only sent a bulldozer without fuel. When we begged from the UNRA to consider us to benefit from Tarehe Sita and have some of our roads constructed



Nathan Byamukama (in the middle) Marvin Baryaruha - right and Justine Ogonga - left, asked for a new report from Mbarara UNRA offices in January 2014

he wrote on 12th Dec 2013 to say there were many rocks that would be too difficult to remove; corners too steep to work on; rocks and cliffs too hard to blast. He promised that they might work on it the next time round. Yet, the road was by this time already constructed and in use.

When I went to the UNRA offices to request them to complement community efforts by digging up murrum for the road; and providing culverts and a grader to straighten the road, the senior officers were shocked to see the pictorial evidence of the kind of work that had already been done by the community that even the district engineer was not aware of in his 12th December letter. Interestingly, all of the UNRA engineer's fears were unfounded. The progressive officials at UNRA diplomatically directed the engineer to visit again and give a new report and they also promised to help out. I am sure he too will be impressed by the community work so far.

Incidentally one of the political leaders in Buhweju had earlier on reportedly told the President that this road could not be constructed because the stones would roll over the people living down the hill!

With the bulldozer lying idle for days on account of having no fuel, the community members then mobilised themselves. They negotiated with the driver (Mr. Vincent Tumusiime) of the Bulldozer and contributed to put in fuel, and pay him his allowances to get him to work. (See list of contributions). At the time the district engineer was writing to his superiors in Kampala about the so called difficulties of constructing the Kyanika-Akatooma and Bisya road; the community and the driver of the government bulldozer were completing opening up the road. The works that had been budgeted as Shs 151,000,000 turned out to cost about Shs 7,000,000. Even if we have to make the road first class murrum, the cost would not exceed Shs 15,000,000. The peasants working with a progressive driver of the government vehicle saved the government about Shs 140,000,000. With this, the peasants had proved

that they could uphold the principles of efficiency, effectiveness and economy better than the bureaucrats. How I wish this driver and the community members who contributed to this road could be awarded liberation medals!

In only one week, peasants were able to contribute voluntarily close to Shs 2,000,000 while the rest (about 5,000,000) was contributed by their elite children who contributed to make up the total Shs 7,000,000. It is now apparent that constructing roads is not all that expensive if one has community support. If we continue using the Akatooma spirit, we will attain the development goals in record time in Buhweju.



This was May 2013 when there was no road and only a footpath. It is important to note the peasants had used the hoe before to put some passable footpath.



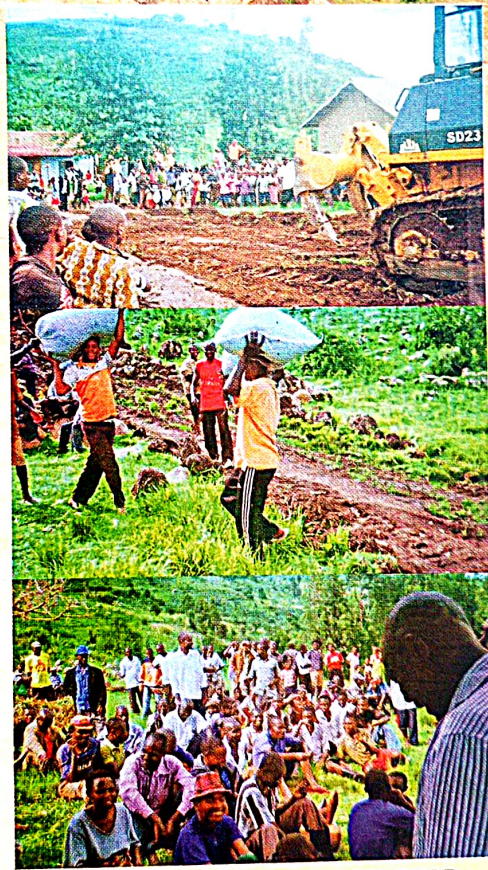
This was late December 2013 when the road was there and vehicles passing. The cost of the road was contributed by the community. The government provided the Bulldozer but to work on a different road



To appreciate the advantage of this road, one only needs to ask those who live on the Buhweju side of this hill and yet they have to do business with those who live on the Kashari-Mbarara side of this hill. A boda boda cyclist told me that previously he used two and half litres of fuel to move from Bisya to Rubindi but following the new road, he uses one litre to and from Rubindi. A bunch of banana used to cost shs 10,000 on the Kashari-Mbarara district side while it cost 3000 on the Buhweju side of the hill.

With this new road the farmers in Buhweju are liberated. Personally I used to drive 67 kms from Mbarara to my home. The new road shortened my distance to 49 kms only, 12kms of which is murrum road. Surely, it makes good economic sense to save 19 km worth of fuel on a single route every time I journey home.

With this road even the President would find it shorter to travel from Rwakitura to Bisya via Kagongi, Akatooma, and Katara for the Tarehe Sita function in February 2014 than to travel from Rwakitura through Bwizibwera, Nyakambu, Bisya and then Katara. More so, with such roads open, more investors, NGOs and UN agencies will access Buhweju with ease and discover the tourism and agriculture gem that it is ■



CONTRIBUTORS TO AKATOMA ROAD

KENJOGYERA I		
No.	NAME	AMOUNT
1.	Tukwasibwe Alexander	100,000/=
2.	Arinitwe Leoginio	10,000/=
3.	Saaja	5,000/=
4.	Kakwezi	5,000/=
5.	God Bingana	5,000/=
6.	Allen Jack	5,000/=
7.	Tr. Mbahairwe	5,000/=
8.	Tusiime Rutereza	10,000/=
9.	Atwine Robert	2,000/=
9.	Byaruhanga Alex-Kayunga	5,000/=

10.	Denis Bwiisho	5,000
12.	Sylvia Kagabura	2,000/=
13.	Siraj Nyerwanire	2,000/=
14.	Kanyankore Viccremt	2,500/=
15.	Mugirwa Speriano	10,000/=
16.	Nurse Wyne	5,000/=
17.	Byamukama Evarisi	5,000/=
18.	Isingoma Posiano	5,000/=
19.	Atubangire Remegio	5,000/=
20.	Mugabirwe Sabiti	5,000/=
21.	Wilber Kashokye	5,000/=
22.	Mugizi Remegio	10,000/=
23.	Mayangi	10,000/=
24.	Tibhakana Serivest	5,000/=
25.	Kamurari Seresiino	5,000/=
26.	Ahimaisibwe Egiaio	5,000/=
27.	Rwabyondo John	10,000/=
28.	Kaato	2,000/=
29.	Turyamureba Godfrey	10,000/=
30.	Tumwine Devinari	10,000/=
31.	Mwebembezi Posiano	10,000/=
32.	Kakuru Rukwaise	5,000/=
33.	Kakuru Tibhakana	10,000/=
	Sub total	310,000/=

KENJOGYERA II		
34.	Turyasiima Wilbroad	20,000/=
35.	Mukunzi Sidomino	5,000/=
36.	Bikwatorizo Rusiano	5,000/=
37.	Mrs Rutondogeore-Keisicuma	1,000/=
38.	Badindi	5,000/=
39.	Naihuweera. F	10,000/=
40.	Ndyahabwa. Badindi	5,000/=
41.	Tumukunde Zaverio	5,000/=
42.	Azirwe Alex	5,000/=
43.	Kemari Bonekonsiri	10,000/=
44.	Mukiiza Benedicto	10,000/=
45.	Atwine Posiano	10,000/=
46.	Ahimbisibwe G	15,000/=
47.	Kasibukide	5,000/=

48.	Musinguzi Keminago	10,000/=
4.	Kabandize Julius	10,000/=
50.	Twesigye Vitari	10,000/=
51.	Rutereza Willbroad	10,000/=
52.	Rwesiba Leonald	5,000/=
53.	Bamuhiga Evadious	5,000/=
54.	Bakahirwa. E	10,000/=
55.	Nabahirwa Beyeza	10,000/=
56.	Agaba Joab T/C	5,000/=
57.	Kakonde	2,000/=
58.	Kabesumba	5,000/=
Sub-total		213,000/=

KAKAMBA

59.	Nathan & Alison Byamukama	4,000,000/=
60.	Nuwamanya Rwankoba	6,000/=
61.	Byaruhanga Alex C/ person	5,000/=
62.	Tumuhairwe Innocent	5,000/=
63.	Katamira Rwanguta	5,000/=
64.	Tibijuka Maritazare	5,000/=
65.	Kanuma Fred	10,000/=
66.	Komando	5,000/=
67.	Benomugisha Kahemura	10,000/=
68.	Mbarebaki John	10,000/=
69.	Bushajja Kanuma	10,000/=
70.	Byarugaba Dez	10,000/=
71.	Abenaitwe Feresiamo	5,000/=
72.	TukahairwaSiston	5,000/=
73.	Byarugaba Julius	5,000/=
74.	Mukongo Savino	5,000/=
75.	Bangumya	2,000/=
76.	Mugaiga Counsellor	15,000/=
77.	Kigoto	5,000/=
78.	Bijengye G.	5,000/=
Sub-total total		4,128,000/=

ISHINGIRO I & II

79.	Pastor Mugisha	5,000/=
80.	Turyomuriwe Denis	3,000/=
87.	Laurence Maxim	10,000/=
82.	NyamukoraDeoh	10,000/=
83.	Mugabe Muhammed	20,000/=
Sub-total		48,000/=

NYARUBOMBORA

84.	Tibamwenda	5,000/=
85.	Tinsimwa Julian	4,000/=
86.	KakyanyaDevs	10,000/=
Sub- total		19,000/=

KABISHO

87.	Kataryeba Sliver	5,000/=
88.	Kakyanga	3,000/=
Sub-total		8,000/=

KIIBINGO

89.	Byaruhanga Donizio	10,000/=
90.	Kadio	50,000/=
91.	Kahara	50,000/=
92.	Muhwezi	10,000/=
93.	VenariKahungu	5,000/=
94.	Katafire John	10,000/=
95.	Mwesigye Seregio	10,000/=
96.	Rubihayo Bwerizahi	20,000/=
97.	Mujumi Fred	10,000/=
98.	Bakamwoga	1,000/=
99.	Kabudongo	5,000/=
100.	Kasaja John	5,000/=
101.	Ahimbitsibwe WB.	10,000/=
102.	Arinaitwe Kibiingo	10,000/=
103.	Mugisha Robert	5,000/=
104.	Muhwezi J.B	5,000/=
105.	Mugisha Buryakari	5,000/=
106.	Mwesigye Willboard	2,000/=
104.	Tibihika Augustine	10,000/=
Sub- total		233,000/=

MUSHASHA

108.	TumuKazimiri Boda	10,000/=
109.	Ayebazibwe Alavterio	10,000/=
110.	Muhanguzi Kazooba	5,000/=
111.	Bashajja J.B Tori	1,000/=
112.	Tumuhairwe John	1,000/=
113.	Buzabo Rodgers	10,000/=
114.	KategyeStorio	5,000/=
115.	Tumuhairwe Tarasisio	10,000/=
116.	WarugabaNiclas	70,000/=
117.	Benefansio Tibifumura	5,000/=
118.	Kamukama Robert	10,000/=

119.	Kamukama Stephen	5,000/=
120.	Warugaba Gerald	5,000/=
121.	Mbabazi LCIII C/person	150,000/=
Sub-total		297,000/=

MIRAMA

122.	Bwemarire Privato Karati	20,000/=
123.	Ngabirano David	20,000/=
124.	Mushabe Novice	20,000/=
125.	Ashabahebwa Rogers	20,000/=
126.	Tumukunde Alexander	20,000/=
127.	Musiime Richard	5,000/=
128.	Birungi Galasiano	10,000/=
129.	Mujuni Julius	2,000/=
130.	Mwesigye Alauriano	5,000/=
131.	Nayebare Felex	5,000/=
132.	Kabeya	500/=
133.	Bwehare Wilboard	500/=
134.	Musinguzi Leonald	5,000/=
135.	Mwesigye J. Viccent	10,000/=
136.	Mrs. Kahwa Dianah	5,000/=
137.	Kanyamitsya John	10,000/=
138.	Ayebazibwe Alex (Kyakabare)	10,000/=
139.	Kamukama fred	10,000/=
140.	Binomugisha Innocent	10,000/=
141.	Kabwita Fred	5,000/=
142.	Twesime Francis	10,000/=
143.	Asiimwe Robert	10,000/=
Sub-Total		213,000/=

KANKARA

144.	Mugume Robert	5,000/=
145.	MuhairweKosia	5,000/=
146.	AtwineMurangira	20,000/=
147.	Kabeta	2,000/=
148.	Nuwamanya Kabushaija	4,000/=
149.	Natukunda	5,000/=
150.	Kabazeyo	5,000/=
151.	Birungi Byamukama J.B	10,000/=
152.	Ngabirwe	10,000/=
153.	David Birungi	2,000/=
154.	Butitiba Devs	4,000/=
TOTAL		72,000/=

Other Supporters from Buhweju

155.	Mwijukye Francis	500,000/=
156.	Hon Oliver Katwesigye	500,000/=
157.	Eng Karisa John Bosco	500,000/=
SUB TOTAL		1,500,000/=
GRAND TOTAL		7,041,000/=

Compiled by Ashabahebwa Rogers
and Alexander Tukwatsibwe