

Govt, IsDB pledge to build school, health facility on Lake Kyoga island

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A joint mission from the Government of Uganda and the Islamic Development Bank (IsDB) has committed to constructing a school and a health facility on Tisai island.

The pledge follows significant improvements in infrastructure and community well-being under the \$150 million (Shs 543.8 billion) Local Economic Growth Support (LEGS) project.

Earlier this year, the ministry of Local Government launched the second phase of LEGS, a five-year initiative aimed at addressing climate change, supporting youth and women entrepreneurs, providing irrigation for small-scale farmers, promoting agro-processing, and improving post-harvest handling services.

Tisai island, located in Lake Kyoga, was once considered one of Kumi district's most isolated communities. Despite being home to about 11,000 people, the island had no electricity, no clean water source, no health centre, and no reliable road network. Reaching the mainland required navigating papyrus-filled channels using rickety, overloaded canoes.

Residents recalled the hardships they faced: expectant mothers giving birth on the lake shores after failing to find a sober boat operator; women wading through filthy, leech-infested water to fetch drinking water; and farmers pouring hundreds of litres of milk into the lake after it got spoiled before reaching buyers. But these scenes are slowly becoming history.

A new road linking the island to the

mainland, constructed by the ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries, along with internal roads built under the LEGS project, has eased movement.

A community solar mini-grid installed at Acera Trading Centre has sparked new business activity, with welding shops, photocopy and printing services, refrigeration points, and several youth-led enterprises emerging thanks to reliable electricity.

The project also installed a piped water system, giving residents access to clean and safe drinking water for the first time one of the most transformative changes for a community previously dependent entirely on lake water.

Tisai's cattle-driven economy has also benefited. Previously, farmers suffered huge milk losses due to the absence of cooling facilities. With the introduction of milk

aggregation, a functional cooler, and improved cooperative systems, farmers now have a dependable market, and youth have gained jobs in milk transportation and collection.

Despite these achievements, residents used the mission's visit to highlight their next priorities: an ambulance for medical emergencies, a school, and a health facility. Currently, Tisai has only one primary school serving six parishes, and no health unit, forcing residents to cross the lake for even the most basic treatment.

Tisai lies within the Lake Bisina ecosystem, a designated Ramsar site known for its rich biodiversity and rare bird species, including the iconic Shoebill stork. With proper planning, residents say, the island could tap into the region's growing interest in birding, nature excursions, and cultural tourism.