



Madukuda residents stand next to the broken bridge.

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BRIDGE COLLAPSES TWICE

It's the only way out of village

By **NOMZAMO YUKU**

ANGRY villagers are frustrated because their only bridge has collapsed for the second time.

For nearly three weeks, Madukuda villagers in deep Qumbu, near Mthatha, have been left stranded after their rickety bridge collapsed overnight following heavy rain.

They claimed that the Mhlonto Municipality only sent out a backhoe truck to build a temporary road next to Ngxakolo Bridge on Wednesday.

Villagers said they are thankful that the Ngxakolo River is dry because of the recent drought. Otherwise they would not have been able to cross over to other

villages.

Thembeke Nkonyane (45), a resident who lives near the bridge, said three weeks ago she and her family were shaken by a loud cracking sound.

She said when they rushed out of the house to investigate, they were shocked to see that half the bridge had crumbled down.

"There is only one bakkie operating as a taxi in our village. It arrives early in the morning and returns from town late in the afternoon.

"Since the collapse of the bridge, we've had to walk about 3km to get to and from our village.

"We have to walk our kids to school

just to make sure that they can get across safely."

Thembeke added that the bridge, built in 2008, also collapsed four years ago.

Zama Radebe (24) said it was sad that children now have to leave for school at 6.30am to catch transport across the river. She said if it rains, they will be forced to stay at home because the river will be full.

Sisa Mpehle, Mhlonto municipal spokesman, said: "The department of public works appointed a contractor prior to the collapse of the bridge. The contractor has already been introduced to the community and construction is set to start immediately."