



By Mandla Khoza

them to town.

mazi

worsened

villages.

Scores of people, including pupils, were trapped in their

villages yesterday morning as the overnight downpour flooded nine bridges connecting

People from 20 villages

were

Wednesday

around Mpumalanga's Nko-

municipality

severely affected by heavy

rains which started two weeks ago, killing two people, and

night. This saw almost 1,000

pupils not being able to cross

bridges that would normally link them to various schools in

other villages and Malelane

Lex Holman, who owns

Malelane Super Spar and Inkwazi Mall (in Malelane),

said he had to operate his busi-

ness with 26% of staff as many

workers were trapped in their

"Taxis and buses are not

operating, hence the town is

empty and some businesses

are closed as some of the peo-

ple come from those affected

and most are from the east side

of Malelane, which is your

KaMhlushwa, Boschfontein,

Schoemansdal, Mzinti and

more villages, and those ones

could not come to work be-

members who are mostly

managers and supervisors. We

are lucky there have not been

huge damage because around

midnight we had about 300ml

of rain pouring straight for

about six to eight hours, some-

thing we have never had for

about five years and now the

rivers have started swelling."

Also, bridges connecting

villages to Komatipoort and

said Holman.

"We now have about 80 staff

cause of flooded bridges.

"We employ about 300 staff

on

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## Villagers and pupils stranded as rain floods bridges

## '700 learners cross a makeshift bridge on a daily basis'

the R571 linking the Lebombo border post and Mozambique and Mananga border to the kingdom of eSwatini were flooded too.

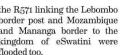
the Nkomazi Yesterday, municipality warned parents in affected areas against sending their children to school. "It is bad and that is why we

[officials] can't even reach damage caused to infrastructure.

"We are working with community members in moving those living in low-lying areas to high places for now as the rain continues. We are warning the community not to cross flooded bridges," municipal spokesperson Cyril Ripinga.

Parents in Khulubuse village in Schoemansdal kept their children at home as their





some of the communities and we only rely on councillors who send us pictures of the

bridge had collapsed.



Pupils cross a rickety makeshift bridge to school in the Nkomazi area

The bridge was built by the community with wood, mud and wires some time ago out of desperation.

Khulubuse resident Suzman Gama told Sowetan that about 700 pupils crossed the bridge every day.

"We built the bridge after years of asking the municipality to build us a proper one but they kept making promises. We actually need schools this side because having 700 children crossing this bridge everyday is a problem," said Gama.

Cooperative governance and traditional affairs spokesper-



Workers and pupils were left stranded after water flooded a bridge to town in Nkomazi. / PHOTOS / MANDLA KHOZA

son Lindiwe Msibi said they were still quantifying damages and also trying to help those who need immediate help.

"Scores of houses are flooded with water, hence we are calling for the public to be cautious and not risk their lives, and also report to their councillors if they need help. This afternoon we are holding a operation committee

meeting at Malelane to get a clear picture of the situation from members of the community on the ground.

"The issue of bridges has been a problem for years and that will form part of the discussions because we are having all stakeholders, including departments of education, public works and police in that meeting," said Msibi.

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