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WOMEN

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Inspiring Leadership Across Generations



Janet Museveni:
Shaping Uganda's
Future Through
Education & National
Leadership

**The Queen
of Courage:**
Behind the Veil of a
Visionary Leader

**Robinah
Nabbanja:** The
Hands-on Prime
Minister

**Dr. Jane Ruth
Acen Ocer:**
Healing a
Nation Through
Leadership

Prof Sarah Ssali:
Exploring The Deep
Journey of Makerere's
2nd Female Deputy
Vice Chancellor



March 8

HAPPY WOMEN'S DAY

Today we celebrate trailblazing women whose strength, vision, and resilience continue to transform our families, workspaces and society.

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EDITOR'S NOTE

Every generation of women inherits a world shaped by the courage of those who came before it. Each generation, in turn, leaves that world a little wider for the women who follow.

Welcome to this special Women's Day publication themed **"Women at the Helm: Inspiring Leadership Across Generations."**

Across Uganda's history, the story of women in leadership has been one of courage, resilience, and steady progress. Each generation has confronted its own barriers, challenged long-standing assumptions, and expanded the space for women to contribute meaningfully to national development.

The pioneers of earlier decades fought to secure a seat at the decision-making table. The generations that followed worked to ensure that women's voices within those spaces were heard and respected. Today, a new generation of women leaders is emerging, women who are not only participating in leadership but shaping institutions, influencing policy, and redefining what leadership itself looks like.

This publication seeks to capture that journey.

Within these pages are stories of women whose leadership continues to shape Uganda's national life, from government and public service to professional practice and

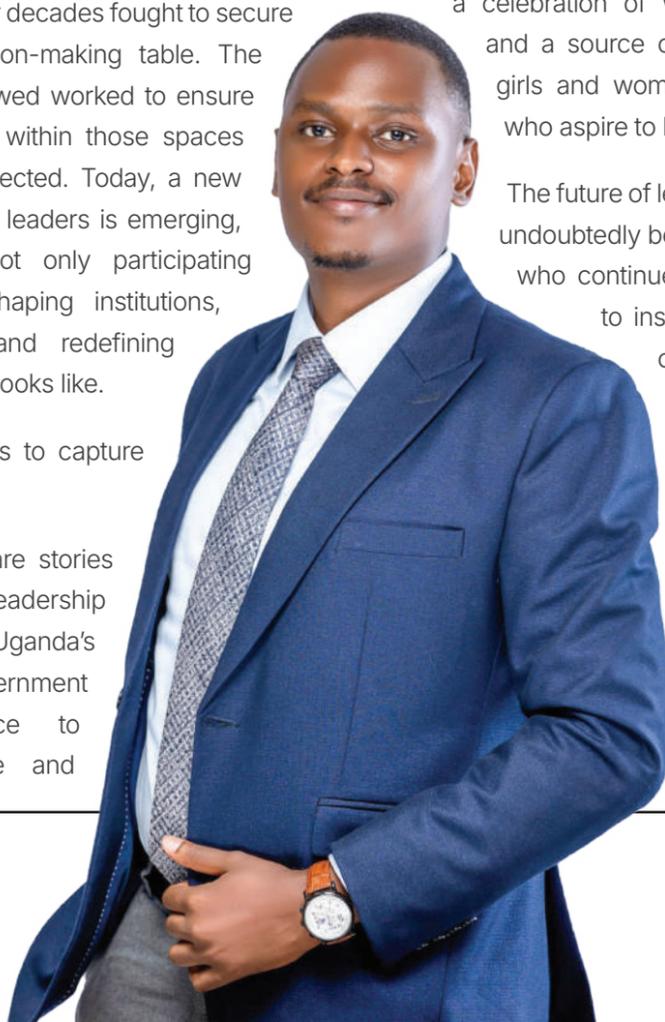
community transformation. Some have spent decades strengthening institutions and guiding national policy. Others represent a younger generation stepping confidently into positions of responsibility. Together, their journeys remind us that leadership is not a single moment of achievement, but a continuous process of learning, service, and influence.

Our intention was not simply to document accomplishments, but to highlight the experiences, values, and lessons that shape leadership. Progress is rarely accidental; it is built through perseverance, mentorship, and the willingness of one generation to create opportunities for the next. We therefore hope this publication serves as both

a celebration of women's achievements and a source of inspiration for young girls and women across the country who aspire to lead in their own fields.

The future of leadership in Uganda will undoubtedly be shaped by the women who continue to rise, to serve, and to inspire. And as we reflect on these stories, one question remains: What kind of leadership will the next generation of Ugandan women define?

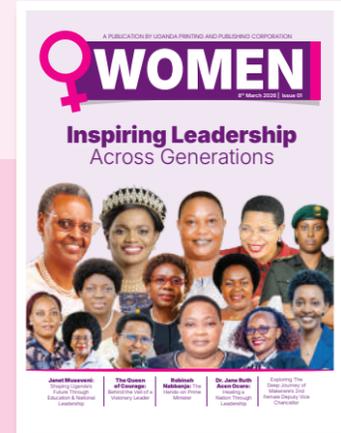
Marvin Robert Mutenyo
EDITOR IN CHIEF



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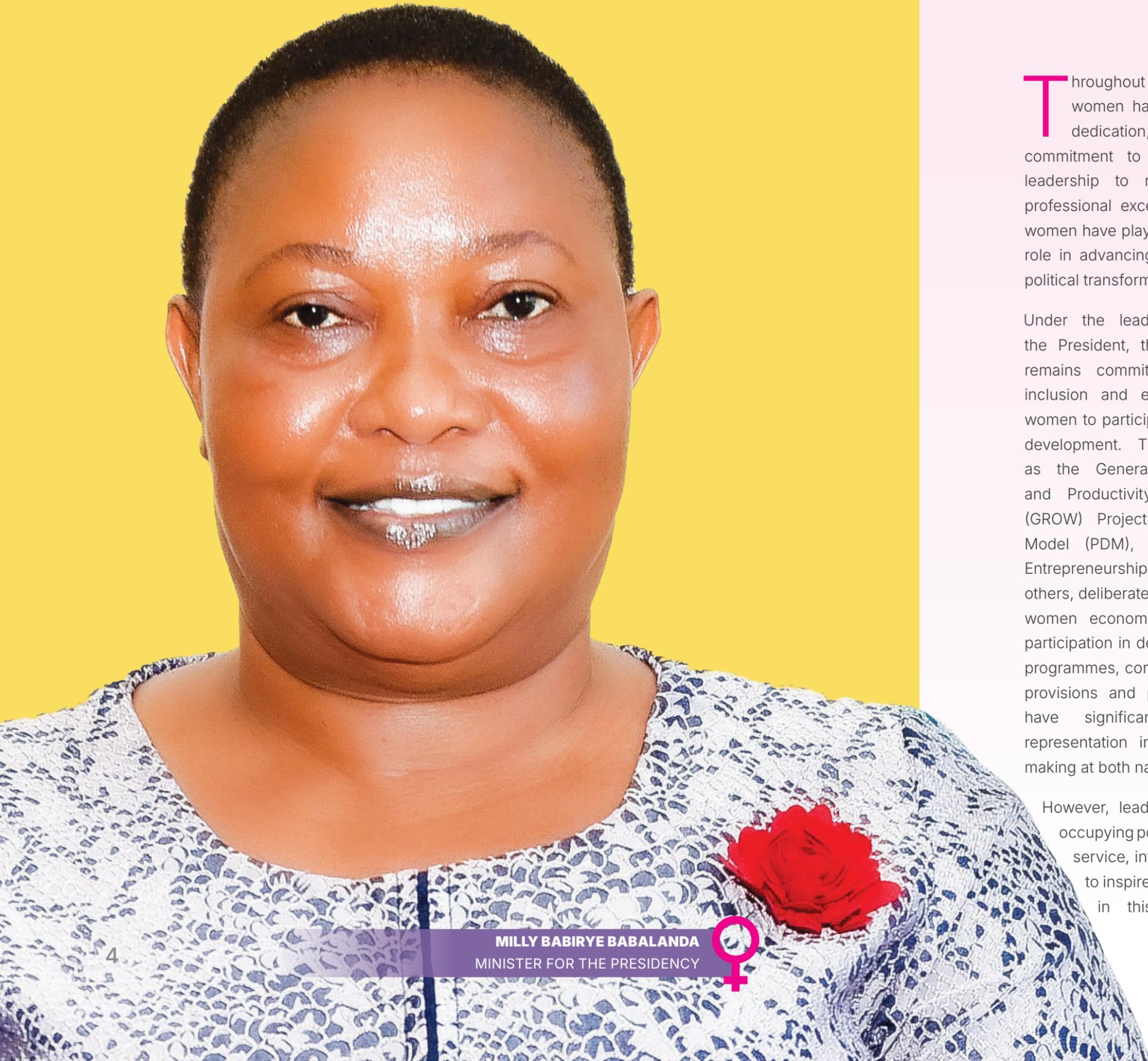
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MILLY BABIRYE BABALANDA
MINISTER FOR THE PRESIDENCY



FOREWORD

Throughout our nation's history, Ugandan women have demonstrated resilience, dedication, and an unwavering commitment to service. From community leadership to national governance, from professional excellence to entrepreneurship, women have played an increasingly important role in advancing the social, economic, and political transformation of our country.

Under the leadership of His Excellency, the President, the Government of Uganda remains committed to promoting gender inclusion and expanding opportunities for women to participate meaningfully in national development. Through programmes such as the Generating Growth Opportunities and Productivity for Women Enterprises (GROW) Project, the Parish Development Model (PDM), and the Uganda Women Entrepreneurship Programme (UWEP), among others, deliberate efforts continue to empower women economically and strengthen their participation in development initiatives. These programmes, complemented by constitutional provisions and progressive policy reforms, have significantly expanded women's representation in leadership and decision-making at both national and local levels.

However, leadership is not merely about occupying positions of authority; it is about service, integrity, and the responsibility to inspire others. The stories captured in this publication demonstrate

how women leaders across generations have overcome challenges, broken barriers, and created pathways for those who will follow.

The theme of this publication reminds us that progress is built collectively. Each generation benefits from the courage and sacrifices of those who came before it, while carrying the responsibility to open doors for those who will follow. It is therefore encouraging to witness more young women stepping forward with confidence and determination to contribute to Uganda's development agenda.

I commend the Uganda Printing and Publishing Corporation for documenting and sharing these inspiring stories. By highlighting the achievements and experiences of women leaders, this publication not only celebrates progress but also inspires young girls and women across the country to aspire to leadership and service.

As we commemorate this occasion, may we continue to support and nurture women's leadership so that future generations inherit a society where opportunity, dignity, and leadership are accessible to all.

FOR GOD AND MY COUNTRY.



Milly Babirye Babalanda
MINISTER FOR THE PRESIDENCY

MESSAGE FROM THE MANAGING DIRECTOR

Advancing Leadership Through Inclusion

Leadership is often measured by the ability to shape institutions, inspire others, and contribute meaningfully to the progress of society. Across Uganda and around the world, women continue to demonstrate these qualities with remarkable resilience, determination, and vision.

Over the years, Uganda has made important strides in expanding opportunities for women to participate in leadership and national development. Women today play increasingly significant roles in governance, business, academia, public service, and community leadership. Their contributions have strengthened institutions, broadened perspectives in decision-making, and helped drive social and economic transformation.

Uganda's national development framework recognises the importance of inclusive leadership. The Fourth National Development Plan (NDP IV) emphasises that sustainable and



“ As we reflect on the progress made by women in leadership, we are reminded that each generation builds upon the achievements of those who came before it ”

inclusive growth depends on the meaningful participation of women in economic activity, governance, and decision-making across all sectors of society. Empowering women is therefore not only a matter of equity, but also a strategic investment in the nation's development.

At the Uganda Printing and Publishing Corporation (UPPC), we are proud to work alongside many talented and dedicated women whose professionalism and commitment continue to contribute to the growth and effectiveness of our institution. Across our departments, from publishing and printing operations to corporate support functions, women play an important role in advancing our mandate as the publisher of the Uganda Gazette and a provider of secure printing and publishing services to government and other stakeholders.

Their contributions reflect a broader principle: that institutions thrive when diverse talents, experiences, and perspectives are brought together in pursuit of a shared purpose. Equally important is the responsibility to nurture future leaders. As more young women

enter professional spaces with ambition and capability, institutions must create environments that enable them to grow, innovate, and lead. Mentorship, opportunity, and supportive institutional cultures remain essential in ensuring that the next generation of women leaders can fully realise their potential.

As we reflect on the progress made by women in leadership, we are reminded that each generation builds upon the achievements of those who came before it. The advancement of women in leadership is therefore not only a reflection of individual success, but also of collective progress.

At UPPC, we remain committed to fostering a professional environment that recognises merit, encourages leadership, and supports the continued advancement of women within the organisation and beyond.

Happy Women's Day!

Prof. Sudi Nangoli
MANAGING DIRECTOR
UGANDA PRINTING AND PUBLISHING CORPORATION



Janet Museveni: **Shaping Uganda's Future Through Education & National Leadership**

By Damali Mukhaye

Few women in Uganda's public life have embodied service, compassion, and leadership quite like Janet Kataaha Museveni, fondly known to many as "Maama". Over the decades, her life journey has inspired generations through her commitment to family, faith, humanitarian work, and national service.

From her early years as a devoted mother and homemaker to her later role in public leadership, Janet Museveni's story reflects resilience, humility, and a deep sense of purpose. Her involvement in initiatives that support vulnerable communities, empower women, and guide young people has made her a respected figure both within Uganda and beyond.

Today, as the First Lady and Minister of the Ministry of Education and Sports, she continues to champion reforms and initiatives aimed at strengthening Uganda's education sector and shaping the future of the country's young generation.

In this profile, Ministry of Education Dr. Denis Mugimba and UPPC's Damali Mukhaye revisit the life and legacy of Maama Janet Museveni, highlighting the values and milestones that have defined her remarkable journey.

First Lady with Vision and purpose.

The wife of the President of the Republic of Uganda, His Excellency Gen. (Rtd.) Yoweri Kakuta Museveni, and fondly referred to as Maama, Janet Kataaha Kainembabazi Museveni, the First Lady and Minister of Education and Sports, remains an icon, a role-model, and a matriarch to many in Uganda and beyond.

Adored by the young and old, boys and girls, men and women, Maama Janet Museveni displays the aura, calmness, and personality that have become the symbols that many have come to associate with a First Lady, a mother, and a grandmother.

A consummate mother, homemaker, prayerful, and God-fearing person, Maama Janet has been and continues to be a figure that girls and

women, boys and men have looked up to as an exemplary role model, since she came to the full limelight following her husband's ascent to power forty years ago on 26th January 1986.

Of her skillfulness in homemaking, her husband, H.E. the President, had this to say of Maama Janet in her life's autobiography, *My Life's Journey*: "She is the manager of our family properties (sic) and farms, a work she does very well."

Hardly had the NRM administration settled down when the ray of hope that had shone on Uganda was met by the darkness of a formidable enemy in the form of HIV/AIDS. Devastating both young and old, the country found itself faced with a growing burden of vulnerable orphans, widows, and child-headed homes and households.

Not being the kind to ignore the plight of the least in society, while settling for the honors that come with being a First Lady, Maama Janet felt a divine responsibility to do something to this burden of the vulnerable orphans and widows, and that's what compassion is all about, just like her *Kainembabazi*, which means God is compassionate!

Mrs. Museveni, born nearly 78 years ago on 24th June 1948, was no stranger to personal experiences of childhood tragedies. The 6th born to her parents, four of her siblings' candles were short-lived due to childhood illnesses. Then, when Maama Janet was in her latter years of adolescence, she lost her only brother, Henry Kainerugaba, who was eleven years older than her and had grown to become a towering figure of reassurance in her life,



H.E. President Yoweri Museveni with the First Lady Janet Museveni at Namboole National Stadium

having lost the biological father, Edward Kataaha, at the young age of seven years.

Therefore, to Mrs. Museveni, what these vulnerable orphans and women were facing as a result of the HIV/AIDS plague at the time was an emotional reminder of events in her own life, especially her time wandering as a refugee with her four children while on the run-on account of her husband's clandestine activities against the governments at the time.

Perhaps, nothing thrust Maama Janet into

the local and global spotlight like her work with the Uganda Women's Effort to Save Orphans (UWESO). This was an organization she formed while working together with like-minded women, such as Mrs. Camille Alier and others, with whom they held hands to give birth to UWESO. UWESO became a sanctuary of hope to hundreds of orphans by offering them not only rescue, but rehabilitation as well as holistic care.

When one listens to Maama Janet recount her life's experiences, it is difficult to deny that the

divine Hand was preparing her for what she was to do later in her life. Divine providence instilled in her a tenacious hope to overcome adversity, a trait that has remained with her even today.

While being conferred the International Woman Icon Award, 2025 by Binary University of Malaysia at State House, Entebbe, Mrs. Museveni recounted how the memories of her time as a refugee in Sweden compelled her to also start an organization to assist rural women of Uganda.

That organization is called 'The National Strategy for the Advancement of Rural Women in Uganda (NSARWU). With a footprint all over Uganda, NSARWU has engaged in training women at the grassroots in modern methods of farming while at the same time offering them microfinance support to upgrade their economic status.

There is a generation of Ugandans in the age-bracket of 40 and 50 years or so old who are often nostalgic about the movement they often refer to as "True Love Waits Campaign." This campaign was more than a slogan in its heyday, but a lifestyle that the generation that participated in is very proud to be identified with even today.

Uganda's younger generations may not know that this movement was one of the transformational works by Maama Janet Museveni's Uganda Youth Forum, another of the civil society organization that she birthed together with other concerned parents who desired to see the tide of HIV/AIDS stemmed through behavioral change lifestyle of

abstinence from sex outside marriage and remaining faithful to one's partner in marriage.

Maama Janet Museveni's Uganda Youth Forum was not just about gathering young people in conferences and the camaraderie that comes with such gatherings, but an impartation of life skills in this age-group to live responsibly. It was such efforts that contributed foundational blocks to Uganda's acclaimed reversal of the HIV/AIDS prevalence rates way before the advent of Anti-Retroviral Therapy (ART).

Maama Janet's humility and humbleness remain a mystery to many who do not understand the depth of her commitment to obeying the voice of God when convinced that the Almighty has called her to an assignment. She lives with a sense of divine calling and purpose, with a strongly held belief that God places people where He does for a given purpose that He could have chosen other people.

Maama Janet mellowed from a civil society orientation into active politics, not by choice, but a sense of divine calling from the Lord in the latter half of 2005 for her to stand for public office. She often recounts the clear, still small voice saying to her, "You should run for Parliament next year (2006) to represent your parents' constituency", and she never looked back.

Maama Janet's Journey into Politics

Nearly thirty (30) years ago, in February 2006, Maama Janet was overwhelmingly voted the Member of Parliament for her home constituency of Ruhaama in Ntungamo. Not long after, she was appointed the Minister of

State for Karamoja in February 2009.

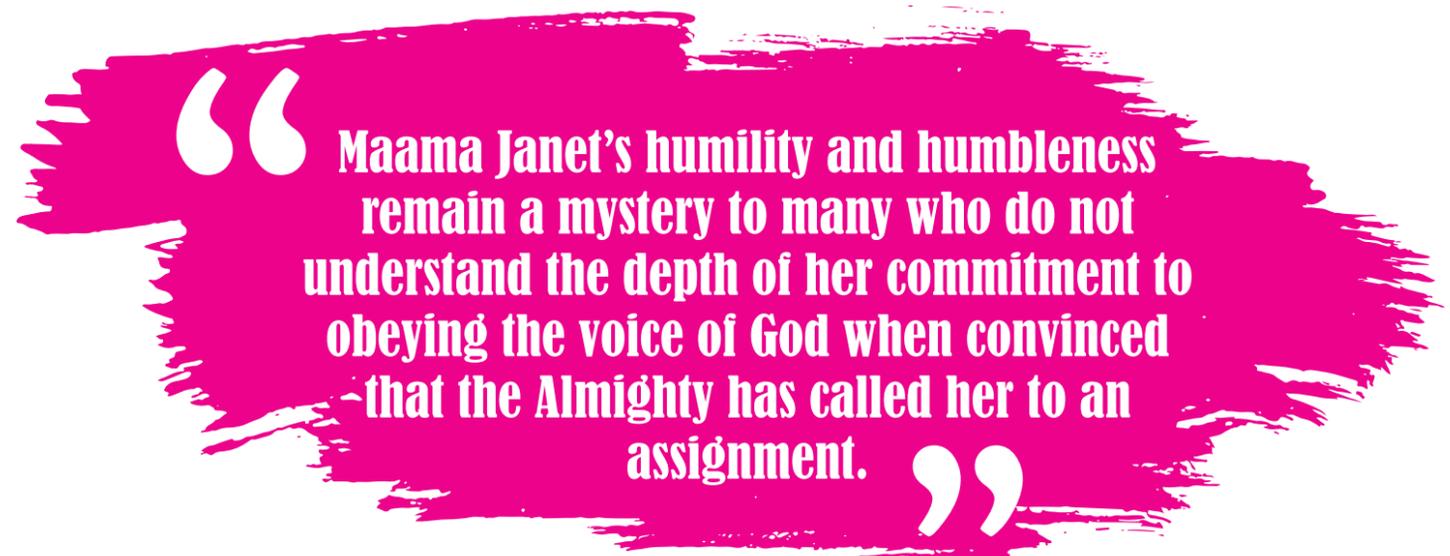
Like divinely ordered footsteps, her appointment to Karamoja was not strange to her because Mrs. Museveni had been working with women of Karamoja as far back as the late 1980s. Whereas some politicians hated being posted to the Karamoja docket, this was not the case with Mrs. Museveni.

On the contrary, she says, "I was pleased when the President appointed me to his cabinet as State Minister for Karamoja Affairs." She welcomed the assignment because of, among others, her years of working with rural communities in Uganda, especially the vulnerable and disadvantaged.

The Karamoja docket she held was later upgraded to a full cabinet Minister responsible for Karamoja Affairs, and the assignment she held from May 2011 to June 2016, when she was reassigned to the Ministry of Education and Sports as the responsible Minister in June 2016.

During her tenure as the Minister of Education and Sports, Maama Janet may be the most consequential leader at the helm of this vital Sector since Uganda became a republic. In her close to ten years in the Education and Sports docket, Mrs. Museveni has set a foundation for the Sector by overseeing the formulation of policy reforms unlike any other single reign of any responsible Minister for the Sector:

1. The TVET Policy, 2019
2. The National Teacher Policy, 2019
3. The National Physical Education and Sports Policy, 2023



4. The Early Childhood Care and Education Policy, 2024
5. The National Education and Training for Health Policy, 2025
6. The National Sports Act, 2025
7. The UNEB Act, 2021
8. The NCDC Act (Amended)
9. The TVET Act, 2025.
10. The Revised Lower Secondary Curriculum.
11. The Education Policy Review Commission (EPRC) Report, 2025.

Furthermore, Maama Janet has also laid a new foundation in terms of a macro policy framework for the Education and Sports Sector by establishing an Education Review Committee (EPRC) whose Commission Report was submitted to the First Lady in February 2002.

Upon arrival in Education and Sports, Mrs. Museveni referred to the Sector as one with a lot of unfinished business. However, as of today, she has helped tie up several loose ends so that Uganda can be proud of its education system. Policy formulation enhances

operational efficiency, increases compliance, ensures regulatory compliance, and provides a framework for sustainable growth or effective public service.

Lastly, Maama Janet was the construction of complete Seed Secondary Schools as opposed to building partial schools that require additional resources to construct new schools.

On this International Women's Day, 2026, the Ministry of Education celebrates Maama Janet Museveni for the phenomenal policy achievements and the she has left as an indelible mark she has left in the hearts of the countless lives she has touched through her civil society work, particularly in the Education and Sports Sector

As President John F. Kennedy said in his inaugural speech in 1961, "Ask not what your country can do for you, ask what you can do for your country!" What Maama Janet has done for her homeland is for all to see and endeavor to emulate.



The Queen of Courage: Behind the Veil of a Visionary Leader

In a universe of endless possibilities, some women emerge as celestial bodies guiding others with their radiant light, forging paths through uncharted constellations. HRH Nnaabagereka Sylvia Nagginda's story is a luminous constellation in this galaxy of leadership. From the gentle dawn of her childhood dreams to the blazing noonday of her impactful role, her journey is a symphony of resilience, grace, and unwavering purpose. Like a master gardener tending to a blooming garden, she nurtures not only her own potential but cultivates a legacy of empowerment, inspiring generations to reach for their own stars. Today, Christine Keehe delves into her inspiring odyssey, a beacon of hope and strength, illuminating the boundless horizon where women lead, inspire, and transform the world around them.

Qn: HRH, please share your journey to becoming a leader and the experiences that shaped your leadership style.

My voyage into leadership is woven with the threads of youthful dreams and silent promises. It began in the innocence of my school days, where I was entrusted with the roles of head of the drama and debate clubs, early whispers of responsibility echoing in my heart. As I stepped into the luminous halls of New York University, my spirit continued to blossom through my involvement with the African Students' Association, a vibrant garden where I learned that true strength resides in community and collective harmony. My academic pursuits, coupled with years of dedicated labour at the United Nations and across a mosaic of organizations and corporations,

gently moulded my leadership soul, whispering lessons of resilience, diplomacy, and purpose that would later become my guiding stars.

Yet, the most defining chapter unfurled in August 1999, when I was woven into the sacred fabric of Uganda's destiny through marriage to the Kabaka of Buganda, becoming the Nnaabagereka. The title, meaning "to prepare" or "to serve," carried no map, only a boundless horizon of expectation shimmering like dawn's first light. Our wedding was not merely a union of two souls but a sacred threshold signalling the end of my days as an ordinary girl and the birth of a new era. Entrusted with the hopes of an entire Kingdom, I found myself standing at the crossroads of duty and destiny. The role was both a mirror and a mirror's challenge daunting yet transformative. I had to sculpt from the clay of tradition what it truly meant to be the Nnaabagereka. In that reflection,



I discovered an echo of my long-held dream to nurture and ignite Uganda's social and economic blossom.

Years earlier, I had poured my visions into words penning my thoughts on "Communication for Development" in my undergraduate thesis and crafting a plea to Ugandans in the diaspora, urging them to return home beacons of hope, architects of our collective future. Becoming Nnaabagereka transformed these whispers of aspiration into a symphony of action, a platform from which seeds of change could take root and flourish.

At the very heart of my leadership journey lies a simple yet profound truth: to embrace opportunity with deliberate intention, to confront challenges with unwavering courage, and to hold fast to the belief that leadership is not a crown to be worn but a sacred call to serve. It is an act of humility, a dance of devotion to the hopes and dreams of those I am privileged to serve, guiding my steps on a path of purpose, transformation, and eternal hope.

Qn: Describe the key challenges you faced and how you overcame them along the way?

Pioneering change within a deeply rooted traditional space was my most formidable challenge. Establishing the Office of the Nnaabagereka was like planting a fragile seed in the heart of an ancient forest unseen, yet full of potential. In a kingdom where a formal office for a woman had never existed, many saw it as a taboo, an anomaly that threatened

Establishing the Office of the Nnaabagereka was like planting a fragile seed in the heart of an ancient forest unseen, yet full of potential

the very fabric of tradition. Resistance came from every direction: internal walls that denied me essential resources, whispers questioning my motives, branding my efforts as "bad faith" attempts to carve out a parallel institution. It was as if I was trying to shape new wings on an old, majestic tree, an act met with suspicion and silent resistance.

Externally, the terrain was just as treacherous. I found myself caught in a relentless tug-of-war, fighting to elevate our authentic African culture in a world that often dismisses or diminishes it, like trying to catch the sun's rays in my hands. Yet I held firm in my conviction: our traditions are not relics but blueprints for solutions rooted in our identity that can light the path forward in a rapidly changing world.

The logistical landscape was a storm of its own. International donors hesitated, viewing cultural institutions as political risks, shadows that could cast a pall over their investments. Our local economy, stretched thin like a fragile thread, struggled to support even the most vital initiatives. Amidst this, I bore the weight of community expectations, an overwhelming tide of invitations, requests for public appearances, pleas for school fees, and countless appointments. It was a delicate

balancing act being a figure accessible to the people while safeguarding the integrity of the office and ensuring the machinery of support ran smoothly behind the scenes. But through every storm, I chose resilience. I refused to let scepticism drown my resolve. Instead, I drew strength from the urgent needs I saw around me: maternal health, girls' education, and opportunities for the youth. I turned suspicion into trust by maintaining open, honest lines of communication with the Kabaka's and Prime Minister's offices, ensuring they were partners at every step. By holding fast to professionalism, transparency, and unwavering commitment, I demonstrated that our culture is not a relic but a vibrant force, an engine capable of transforming modern development.

Every hurdle I overcame became a testament to hope, proof that even in the shadow of tradition, new life can blossom. Seeing the palpable change in my community, the spark of progress ignited made every sacrifice, every sleepless night, profoundly worthwhile.

Qn: How do you see the role of women in leadership evolving across generations in Uganda and the region, and what qualities and skills will be most important for future women leaders?

It's such a joy to witness the profound transformation in the role of women leaders. We have journeyed from being confined within traditional, limited spaces to becoming a powerful, visible force in the public sphere. Today, women are seizing abundant modern opportunities, all while remaining thoughtfully anchored in our cultural roots. We are no longer on the sidelines; we are moving boldly toward a future where women are recognized as the very heartbeat of our nation's social and economic renaissance.

Looking back, there's a certain beauty in the innocent courage I carried when this all began. At 36, living in the U.S., I was not overanalyzing the role's politics; I simply wanted to find love



Her Royal Highness Nnaabagereka with her children during Ekisaakaate

and start a family. Since there hadn't been a Nnaabagereka in over thirty years, the weight of the position was not a daily conversation for me. I entered this journey believing, first and foremost, that I was beginning a family, and secondly, that I would offer my support to complement my husband's substantial work. I was unaware of the obstacles I would face. I didn't dwell on prejudices or worry about potential misunderstandings; I just dove in with genuine intent. That innocence became my superpower; it allowed me to start building and dreaming without the burden of "it can't be done." It taught me that sometimes, not knowing the obstacles is what fuels your fire to overcome them.

Women leaders should realize that success is not solely measured by titles but by the spirit with which they hold and exercise those titles.

Qn: My advice to future women leaders is as follows:

Courage to be a Pioneer: Do not be afraid to stand apart. If circumstances demand it, take those first, daring steps ahead of the line to challenge the status quo. It requires patience, persistence, and a steadfast refusal to be diverted from your purpose.

Selfless Vision: Always prioritize the community's interests above all else.

Integrity and Legacy: Protect your reputation and adhere unwaveringly to your principles. High integrity, transparency, and accountability sustain a leader in the long run. And finally, be a ladder for others pass on your skills, share your networks, and serve as a guiding voice for those rising behind you.

Qn: What practical steps, initiatives, or mentorship approaches have you used to empower and inspire young women to pursue leadership?

I have always believed in the philosophy of 'Serving to Serve.' It's a beautiful cycle: when you provide a service that genuinely benefits the people, they feel empowered to serve others in turn. When you show up for them, your role becomes respected not because of a title, but because of the impact you make. I have practically embodied this by turning every invitation to officiate a function into a platform for advocacy, ensuring that my presence is never just ceremonial but a catalyst for empowerment, especially for young women.

I truly believe that leadership is a privileged service, and my approach has always been to harness our traditions and turn them into powerful, modern tools. The heartbeat of my work is the Nnaabagereka Development Foundation (NDF). One of our most vibrant initiatives is Ekisaakaate Kya Nnaabagereka (the Royal Enclosure). We draw on the 800-year-old Kiganda tradition to nurture girls and boys into holistic leaders. The program is rooted in Obuntubulamu (Ubuntu), fostering social skills, cultural identity, and moral strength so they can harmonize traditional values with the demands of the contemporary world. It's about "serving to serve," equipping young people to serve their communities with heart and purpose.

The Nnaabagereka Nagginda Women's Fund (NNWF), with its mission to create sustainable social investments that transform the lives

of women, youth, and children, focuses on addressing mental health, education, healthcare, and economic empowerment. Recognizing the urgent mental health challenges faced by these groups, especially women, the Fund places mental well-being at the core of its initiatives.

To extend the reach of my voice and amplify the impact of my work, I have strategically engaged in collaborations and high-level partnerships. Whether as a Goodwill Ambassador for UNFPA, a champion for MDG3 (gender equality), or a patron for organizations like Child Fund Uganda and the Special Olympics, I have sought to center our cultural voice in the movement for women's empowerment and development.

Qn: How have your publications and storytelling contributed to your leadership work, and what is your vision for the future impact of women's leadership and empowerment across communities and nations?

Writing has become my compass, guiding me to mentor on a grand scale. While I may not be present in every room, my words are like seeds planted across vast fields; they take root in minds and hearts, blossoming into confidence and strength. Through storytelling, we weave a tapestry of heritage and hope, preserving the rich fabric of our traditions while shaping a legacy that endures beyond generations. My words carry the melody of resilience, discipline, hope, and service notes that can inspire symphonies of change.

Looking forward, I envision a world where women are the radiant heartbeat of sustainable

development, pulsating with vitality and purpose. Where women's leadership is no longer a rare bloom or a fleeting headline, but the steady sun that rises to light the path for all. It is a future where every community and nation recognizes that empowering women is the fertile soil from which true progress grows.

Furthermore, as women step through doors of opportunity, I hope they leave them wide open behind them as gates swing open to welcome others into the garden of possibility. I dream of women leading with integrity, using their compass of integrity and a spirit of service as their guiding star, lifting others as they ascend, building bridges of hope, and creating a landscape where collective strength blossoms into a mighty forest of change.

In a nutshell, as we navigate the complexities of our world, it becomes increasingly clear that women in leadership are a catalyst for positive change. HRH Nnaabagereka Sylvia Nagginda's remarkable story is a testament to the transformative power of women at the helm, inspiring generations to reach for their full potential. Through her courage, resilience, and unwavering commitment to her vision, she has lit a beacon of hope for women everywhere, enlightening new possibilities for leadership, empowerment, and growth. As we celebrate her achievements, we are reminded that true leadership is not about individual success but about creating a ripple effect that inspires others to take charge, break barriers, and forge new paths. The echoes of her brilliance will continue to resonate, empowering future generations to rise to the challenge, claim their place at the table, and shape a brighter future for all.



REBECCA KADAGA
DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER OF UGANDA



They Did Not Ask for the Room, They Built It

Uganda's women at the helm speak across generations — on power, purpose, and the path they paved

BY SSENKAYI MARVIN EZRA

There is a phrase often muttered in the corridors of power across Africa: the table was not set for women. And yet, here in Uganda, something remarkable has been happening; quietly, stubbornly, across decades. Women have not merely joined the table. They have, in many cases, become the table.

Today, Uganda counts among its most senior officeholders a Vice President, a Speaker of Parliament, a First Deputy Prime Minister, cabinet ministers, and a constellation of women who have led companies, hospitals, classrooms, and national institutions. Their journeys are not identical. They hail from different generations, different regions, different political traditions. But run a thread through their stories and you find a common pattern: they entered spaces they were not expected to be in, they stayed when the pressure to leave was immense, and they led in ways that reshaped what leadership in Uganda looks like.

On the occasion of this year's International Women's Day, this magazine examines their stories, drawing on their own words to piece together a portrait of Uganda's women at the helm.

THE GROUNDBREAKERS: CLEARING THE PATH

To understand where Ugandan women in leadership stand today, one must first reckon with the scale of what they were working against.

When Rebecca Alitwala Kadaga first entered Parliament in 1989 as a young lawyer from Kamuli, the corridors of Uganda's legislature were almost entirely male. She would spend the next two decades building the kind of experience and institutional presence that, in 2011, made her the first woman ever elected Speaker of the Parliament of Uganda: the third highest office in the land.

The journey was not smooth. Kadaga has spoken candidly about the unique weight women carry when they dare to lead. Addressing the launch of the African Women Leaders Network Uganda Chapter in 2020, she recalled the subtle violence of socialisation:

“Society puts different pressures on us than men. At school, while we women were being told that if we do not excel, government will not invest in us in higher education, the men were being told that they are the cream and will be the ones to take leadership.”

— Rt. Hon. Rebecca Alitwala Kadaga, First Deputy Prime Minister and former Speaker of Parliament (Source: Parliament of Uganda, AWLN Uganda Chapter Launch, February 2020)

It is a sentiment that captures a generational experience shared by many women who broke into professional and political life in the 1980s and 1990s: success was demanded of women as a condition of access, while it was assumed for men as a birthright.

In Kadaga’s decade as Speaker, her legacy in advancing gender equality legislation and creating space for women within parliament is beyond dispute. She used the office deliberately. At the same AWLN launch, she was direct about the responsibility that came with her position, citing an incident where two pregnant female police officers were withdrawn from Parliament:



Rebecca Kadaga (c) flanked by Miria Matembe (L) and former LOP Winnie Kiiza (R) during the 30 year anniversary of FOWODE

“I directed the Inspector General of Police to bring them back. If it was not me in that position, I am sure they would have gone. We need to keep looking out for different issues.”

— Rt. Hon. Rebecca Alitwala Kadaga (Source: Parliament of Uganda, AWLN Uganda Chapter Launch, February 2020)

It is the kind of quiet, unglamorous act that rarely makes headlines, but it is precisely this use of positional power to protect women in the ranks that defines the deeper meaning of women’s leadership.

ACROSS THE AISLE: A SHARED STRUGGLE

One of the more striking features of Uganda’s narrative on women in leadership is that it has crossed political lines. The gains made are not simply the fruit of one party’s ideology but of women who, regardless of affiliation, have pushed against the same ceiling.

Hon. Betty Aol Ocan, the Gulu District MP and former Leader of the Opposition in Uganda’s 10th Parliament, became only the second woman to hold that position in the country’s history. In a political environment that is often brutal and the opposition corridor especially unforgiving, her journey to the role was one of attrition and resilience.

Speaking at the Parliament-hosted AWLN event in 2020, Aol Ocan offered perhaps the most honest words of that evening:

“Women should stand shoulder to shoulder with men in business and decision-making. Together we work faster, better, and more effectively.”

— H.E. Maj. (Rtd.) Jessica Alupo, Vice President of Uganda (Source: AllAfrica/Electoral Commission Nomination, October 2025)

It is a message that resonates far beyond the walls of Parliament into the offices, workshops, hospitals, and fields where ordinary Ugandan women are carving out their own forms of leadership every day.

A NEW GENERATION AT THE HELM

f Kadaga represents the generation that broke the door down, Speaker Anita Annet Among, who in March 2022 became the second woman to hold the speakership, represents a generation that walked in and immediately started rearranging the furniture.

Among's rise has been polarising. She ascended to the chair of Uganda's 11th Parliament under the shadow of her predecessor's sudden death, inheriting a divided house and a public weary of political drama. Her tenure has attracted both admiration for community investment in her home district of Bukedea, mediating teacher strikes and pledging billions toward a cancer patients' home at Mulago, as well as fierce controversy, including UK and US sanctions, which she has firmly rejected as politically motivated.

Whatever one's assessment of the controversies, her words at the Ninth Women's Forum of the National Prayer Breakfast in October 2024 capture a vision of what women's solidarity in leadership must look like in practice:

"These gatherings foster networking and collaboration. It is an opportunity of self-examination and meditation as we pray, empower, and encourage each other."

- Rt. Hon. Anita Annet Among, Speaker of Parliament (Source: Parliament of Uganda, Ninth Women's Forum, National Prayer Breakfast, October 2024)

Among now presides over 188 female MPs — 33.8 percent of the total House composition. That statistic, while still falling short of parity, represents a transformation from the Parliament Kadaga first walked into as a young woman in 1989.

FROM RANK TO HIGH OFFICE: THE VICE PRESIDENT'S VOICE

Her Excellency Maj. (Rtd.) Jessica Alupo Rose Epel is, by any measure, a woman of institutional firsts. A former intelligence officer, educator, Minister of Education, and Member of Parliament for Katakwi District, she became Uganda's Vice President in 2021: the first woman to hold that office in twenty years, and only the second in the country's history.

Her biography is itself a rebuke to the idea that there is a single path to leadership. She trained as a cadet before entering banking, pivoted to academia, then to politics; demonstrating the kind of adaptive, multi-domain career that defines Uganda's new generation of women leaders.

Her vision for women's leadership is rooted in a conviction that it must be structural, not merely symbolic. Addressing a nomination event in October 2025, she put it plainly:

"Women should stand shoulder to shoulder with men in business and decision-making. Together we work faster, better, and more effectively."

— H.E. Maj. (Rtd.) Jessica Alupo, Vice President of Uganda (Source: AllAfrica/Electoral Commission Nomination, October 2025)



WOMEN AT THE HELM

That call for partnership rather than confrontation and genuine co-leadership is one Alupo has backed with action. She has been listed among Africa's top 100 most influential women and has represented Uganda at international forums on women's political leadership with a consistency that has elevated the country's standing on gender issues regionally.

Her remarks at the International Women's Day celebrations in March 2025 acknowledged the journey still to go, while saluting the distance already covered. She noted that girls across Uganda are now enrolling in schools, training as pilots, engineers, and chemists — entering professions that, a generation ago, were considered the preserve of men exclusively.

THE BONES OF THE STORY: WHAT THE NUMBERS TELL US

Uganda's record on women in leadership has drawn international acclaim. At the International Women's Day celebrations in Kyankwanzi in March 2025, Sweden's Ambassador Maria Håkansson made a remark that reverberated across the region:

"With all humility, I must say that Sweden is still way behind Uganda when it comes to women's representation in political positions. So, well done, Uganda."

- H.E. Maria Håkansson, Swedish Ambassador to Uganda (Source: State House Uganda / UN Women Uganda, March 8, 2025)

It is a remarkable thing to hear from a Nordic nation, long considered a gold standard on gender equality. And yet the ambassador's point is borne



Adolf Mwesige is the Clerk to Parliament, Lady Justice Jane Francis Abodo, Speaker of Parliament Anita Among, Deputy Speaker of Parliament Thomas Tayebwa, and Lady Justice Catherine Bamugemereire attending the Women's Day breakfast meeting at Parliament on Friday, February 6, 2026.

out by the data. Uganda's Parliament, with 33.8% female representation, outperforms the global average. Women occupy the second and third highest offices in the land. The Cabinet has been among the more gender-diverse in East Africa.

But the women who built this reality are the first to caution against complacency. The gaps remain, and they know it.

A COUNTRY STILL WRITING ITS STORY

Uganda is not a perfect story on gender equality. The challenges are real and documented:

gender-based violence, teenage pregnancy, female genital mutilation, child marriage, and a stubbornly uneven distribution of economic opportunity all continue to undermine the gains made in formal leadership.

That said, this is also a country where a woman from Kamuli became Speaker. Where a former military intelligence officer became Vice President. Where a teacher from Gulu became the most senior opposition leader in Parliament. Where a veterinarian and epidemiologist from

Butebo launched a satellite and is building the architecture of a science-led economy.

These are not incidental stories. They are the architecture of a different possible future; one that a new generation of Ugandan women can now look up and see, not as fantasy, but as evidence of what is already true.

They did not ask for the room. They built it.

Now, they are handing over the blueprint to the next generation of female leaders.

Robinah Nabbanja: The Hands-on Prime Minister

By Diana N. Kintu

Rt. Hon. Robinah Nabbanja, Uganda's first female Prime Minister, is a champion of results-driven leadership, with a deep commitment to serving the people. From humble beginnings to the highest levels of government, she has been guided by a strong desire to ensure that services reach all Ugandans.

Her leadership as Premier and Leader of Government Business in Parliament demonstrates what women can achieve when given the opportunity and support to lead. She has inspired women across the country to dream bigger and aim higher.

As we celebrate International Women's Day, Nabbanja's story reminds us that women can shape nations, lead with resilience, and make a lasting impact. It helps us understand how empowering women in leadership can transform communities and drive progress.

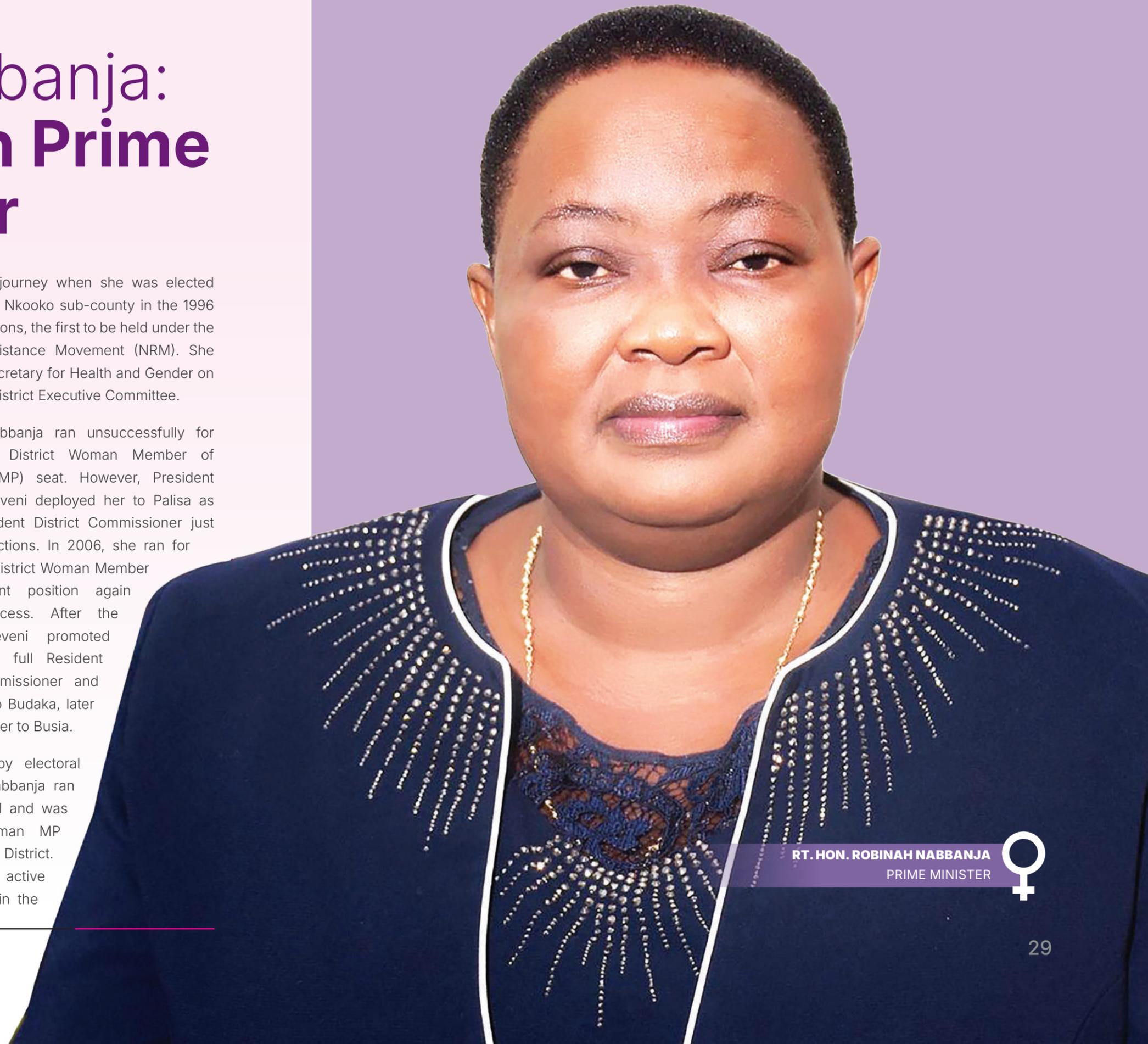
Who is Hon Robinah Nabbanja

Born on 17 December 1969, in Kamusenene village, then Kibaale District (now Kakumiro), Nabbanja, a teacher by training, launched

her political journey when she was elected councillor for Nkooko sub-county in the 1996 general elections, the first to be held under the National Resistance Movement (NRM). She served as Secretary for Health and Gender on the Kibaale District Executive Committee.

In 2001, Nabbanja ran unsuccessfully for the Kibaale District Woman Member of Parliament (MP) seat. However, President Yoweri Museveni deployed her to Palisa as Deputy Resident District Commissioner just after the elections. In 2006, she ran for the Kibaale District Woman Member of Parliament position again without success. After the polls, Museveni promoted Nabbanja to full Resident District Commissioner and posted her to Budaka, later transferring her to Busia.

Undeterred by electoral setbacks, Nabbanja ran again in 2011 and was elected Woman MP for Kibaale District. Due to her active involvement in the



RT. HON. ROBINAH NABBANJA
PRIME MINISTER



NRM, she served as Treasurer of the NRM Parliamentary Caucus during her first term. She was re-elected in 2016, and when Kibaale was later split to create Kakumiro and Kagadi districts, she chose to represent Kakumiro, where her home is located. Nabbanja served as a Parliamentary Commissioner in her second term.

In the 2019 reshuffle, President Museveni appointed her Minister of State for Health (General Duties), marking a giant step in her political career progress. Nabbanja was elected Woman MP for Kakumiro District in the 2021 elections, and shortly afterwards, the President appointed her Prime Minister of Uganda, making history as the first woman to hold the office.

Local government experience

Many of Nabbanja’s colleagues say her local government experience, gained both as a Councillor and RDC, prepared her for her current role. As a Councillor, she witnessed firsthand how minor challenges could block service delivery, and how simple, practical interventions could resolve them.

As an RDC, she was exposed to the coordination and monitoring of government programmes, ensuring they reach the intended beneficiaries. These experiences shaped her practical, grassroots-oriented approach to leadership.

It is no surprise that today Nabbanja follows the chain of service delivery from the highest levels of government to the grassroots. Her direct engagement with communities allows her to better understand the real challenges people face and propose **practical and**



Prime Minister Robinah Nabbanja, former Minister of State for Northern Uganda, Grace Kwiycwiny, Minister of State for Bunyoro Affairs, Jenniffer Namuyangu, and technical officials during an inspection tour of Karuma Dam in Kiryandongo District in July 2023.

innovative solutions.

“When I go down to the villages, I see the true picture; sometimes the reports don’t reflect the real situation. That’s why I insist on being present.” Nabbanja once said. As a result, many Ugandans, including politicians, such as Hon. Mary Mugasa, the Minister of State for Public Service, and Hon. Godfrey Kiwanda, the former NRM Vice Chairperson for central region, say Nabbanja has taken the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM). “No Prime Minister has ever reached ordinary Ugandans as much as Nabbanja does to promote the NRM government programmes and improve service delivery. She is very accessible and connected to the people,” Kiwanda said during OPM-led agricultural expos in Mityana District in 2023.

Supporting women

Beyond improving service delivery, she has challenged perceptions about women’s leadership in a traditionally male-dominated political environment. She has navigated gender biases with resilience



Robinah Nabbanja addressing Honorable Members during a House sitting at Parliament

and decisiveness. “Leadership is not about gender; it is about service, discipline, and dedication,” she often states.

Nabbanja appreciates the role of women in socioeconomic development, and has supported women from all walks of life, from female politicians to female food vendors. “Women are the backbone of our society, and empowering them is central to Uganda’s progress,” Nabbanja says.

Marketing Uganda

Nabbanja takes the same results-driven and service-oriented mindset to national and international engagements. She has passionately promoted Uganda as an attractive investment destination. Speaking to a group of investors in London in October 2025, she said, “Uganda is gifted by nature, and we have numerous investment opportunities. When you invest in Uganda, you will recover your money in a very short time and start enjoying profits. We are not only blessed with natural resources, but also with

a very intelligent leader, President Museveni, who has greatly transformed Uganda.”

These investors, from the Westminster Africa Business Association and the South Asia Chamber of Commerce and Industry, visited Uganda in February 2026. “You are most welcome to Uganda, the Pearl of Africa. Thank you for honouring the invitation I extended to you in London in October 2025 on behalf of President Yoweri Museveni.” Nabbanja told the delegation during a welcome reception at her office in Kampala.

Saluting the President

In her public engagements, Nabbanja often acknowledges President Museveni for recognising her potential and allowing her to serve. She typically begins her speeches by conveying greetings from the President and concludes by reaffirming the NRM government’s commitment to improving service delivery and advancing Uganda’s socioeconomic transformation.



DR. JANE RUTH ACEN OCERO
 MINISTER OF HEALTH & WOMAN MEMBER
 OF PARLIAMENT FOR LIRA CITY

Dr. Jane Ruth Acen Ocero: Healing a Nation Through Leadership

By Damali Mukhaye

For more than two decades, Dr. Jane Ruth Aceng Ocero has played a defining role in shaping Uganda's health sector. A Senior Consultant Paediatrician turned national policymaker, her journey from clinical medicine to cabinet leadership reflects a deep commitment to improving the health and well-being of Ugandans.

Today, as Minister of Health and Woman Member of Parliament for Lira City, she stands at the centre of Uganda's health policy, guiding reforms, expanding access to services, and strengthening systems designed to protect millions of citizens.

Her leadership has been particularly visible during moments of crisis, when steady decision-making and public trust become essential.

From Paediatrician to National Leader

Dr. Aceng's journey into leadership began in clinical service. After completing her internship at St. Mary's Hospital Lacor in Gulu, she joined Lira Regional Referral Hospital, where she steadily rose through the ranks, first as a paediatrician, then Medical Superintendent, and eventually Hospital Director.

Her years at the hospital placed her on the frontlines of Uganda's healthcare challenges, where limited resources often collided with growing public health demands. But they also shaped her understanding of how strong health systems can transform communities.

Her dedication to improving service delivery and strengthening hospital management eventually earned her national recognition. In 2011, she was appointed Director General of Health Services at the Ministry of Health, placing her at the centre of Uganda's health policy implementation and system development.

Five years later, in 2016, President Yoweri Kaguta Museveni appointed her Minister of Health, a position she continues to hold today.

Transforming Uganda's Health System

Throughout her leadership, Dr. Aceng has focused on expanding access to healthcare while strengthening the institutions that support it.

One of the most significant developments has been the expansion of lower-level health facilities, including the upgrading of more than 430 Health Centre IIs to Health Centre IIIs, improving access to maternal and emergency services across the country.

The country's immunisation programme has also expanded significantly. Uganda now protects children against fourteen vaccine-preventable diseases, compared to just six in earlier years, with the recent introduction of the malaria vaccine marking another milestone.

Uganda has also sustained its polio-free status since 2006, while steady progress continues in reducing maternal and child mortality through improved access to care.

Other important investments have strengthened national health infrastructure, including the establishment of five regional blood banks, improvements in emergency medical services, and the construction of a large-scale medicine and vaccine storage facility for National Medical Stores at Kajjansi.

These efforts, health experts say, have helped build stronger systems capable of responding more effectively to both everyday healthcare needs and public health emergencies.



Leading Uganda Through COVID-19

Perhaps the most visible test of Dr. Aceng's leadership came during the COVID-19 pandemic, one of the most challenging public health crises in modern history.

As Minister of Health, she led Uganda's response through a coordinated and science-driven approach. An Incident Management System was established to coordinate the national response, supported by a Ministerial Scientific Advisory Committee that guided policy decisions using scientific evidence.

Under her leadership, Uganda rapidly expanded diagnostic and laboratory capacity while strengthening contact tracing and case management systems.

She also led a nationwide COVID-19 vaccination campaign, while maintaining consistent public communication to build awareness, encourage preventive behaviour, and strengthen public trust. Working closely with international partners and health institutions, the Ministry

mobilised resources and technical support that helped sustain the national response.

The experience, she says, reinforced the importance of preparedness, strong institutions, and collaboration. "Strong institutions and coordinated action are essential in responding to public health emergencies."

Managing a Complex Health Sector

Managing a national health system is never without challenges. According to Dr. Aceng, one of the most persistent challenges remains resource constraints, as healthcare demand continues to grow alongside Uganda's expanding population.

The Ministry has therefore focused on improving efficiency, strengthening accountability, and building strategic partnerships with development partners.

Another challenge is managing public expectations. Health issues are deeply personal, and citizens understandably expect

WOMEN AT THE HELM

immediate solutions when challenges arise. This reality requires transparent communication and policies guided by evidence and data.

To strengthen preparedness for emerging health threats, Uganda has also invested in disease surveillance systems, laboratory capacity, and emergency response structures such as the National Public Health Institute and Emergency Operations Centres.

These institutions now play a critical role in detecting and responding quickly to outbreaks such as Ebola, Marburg, and Yellow Fever.

Inspiring the Next Generation of Women Leaders

As Uganda celebrates women who are shaping the country's future, Dr. Aceng believes leadership must ultimately be about service. Her advice to young women aspiring to leadership focuses on character, competence, and resilience.

"Leadership is about service rather than status," she noted. She encourages young women to invest in education, remain determined in the face of challenges, and support other women in their professional journeys.

Even while serving in demanding government roles, Dr. Aceng continued her own academic journey, pursuing advanced studies while balancing the responsibilities of public office. She also emphasises the importance of family support and open communication in sustaining leadership careers.

A devout Christian and Canon in the Church of Uganda, she credits her faith with grounding her leadership and guiding her decisions.

A Legacy of Service

Dr. Jane Ruth Aceng Oceró's journey reflects the growing influence of women in Uganda's national leadership. From hospital wards and public health administration to cabinet leadership, her career has been defined by discipline, compassion, and an enduring commitment to public service.

Her contributions have strengthened Uganda's health system while inspiring a new generation of women leaders to pursue careers in public service and health governance.

As Uganda continues to celebrate women who shape its institutions and communities, Dr. Aceng's story stands as a powerful reminder that leadership rooted in service can transform not only sectors but entire nations.

And for a woman who has spent much of her career strengthening the systems that protect the nation's health, her legacy continues to grow, one reform, one policy, and one life saved at a time.



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HON. RUTH NANKABIRWA SSENTAMU
MINISTER OF ENERGY AND MINERAL DEVELOPMENT



The Iron Lady of Uganda's Energy Sector

By Damali Mukhaye

From the historic debates that shaped Uganda's 1995 Constitution to leading the country's energy sector today, Ruth Nankabirwa Ssentamu has spent nearly three decades navigating some of government's most demanding institutions. Her journey reflects resilience, discipline, and a steadfast commitment to public service.

Few women in Uganda's public life have walked the corridors of power as extensively, or as decisively, as Ruth Nankabirwa Ssentamu.

For nearly three decades, she has served in some of the country's most demanding government positions, navigating ministries that were once dominated almost entirely by men. From defence and agriculture to parliamentary leadership and now the technically complex Ministry of Energy and Mineral Development, her career reflects a steady rise through Uganda's political and administrative ranks. Yet longevity alone does not define her story.

What distinguishes Nankabirwa's journey is the imprint she has left on every institution she has served, a leadership style rooted in discipline, pragmatism, and an unwavering commitment to public service.

A Voice in the Nation's Founding Debate

Long before leading Uganda's energy sector or serving in cabinet, Nankabirwa was already present at one of the country's most historic political moments. As a delegate in the Constituent Assembly that drafted Uganda's 1995 Constitution, she found herself among leaders shaping the future structure of the nation's governance.

During one particularly heated debate, women delegates were rebuked and compared to a frog trapped in a pot, able to see only as far as the pot's mouth and unaware of the wider world beyond.

The remark sparked outrage among several female delegates. Led by veteran politician Maria Matembe, many women staged a walkout from the Assembly chamber in protest. Nankabirwa, then a young delegate representing Kiboga, made a different choice. She remained seated.

Later, when asked why she had not joined the walkout, her response was simple and resolute. "My constituents had sent me to debate on their behalf. If I walked out and the debate continued, who would defend them?"

The moment offered an early glimpse into the pragmatic leadership approach that would define her career. During the constitutional debates, she contributed to provisions that strengthened women's representation in national governance structures, helping embed gender representation requirements in Uganda's political framework.

Breaking Barriers in Defence

One of the defining chapters of Nankabirwa's career came when she joined the Ministry of Defence. At the time, the ministry was widely viewed as one of the most intimidating portfolios in government, a domain traditionally associated with military leadership and male authority.

Yet Nankabirwa stepped into the role and served eight years as Minister of State for

Defence, becoming the first woman in Uganda and across Africa to hold the position. Her responsibilities included overseeing issues affecting veterans and working closely with senior military officers.

Despite being younger than many of the officials she supervised, and without a military background, she quickly learned that leadership in such spaces demanded clarity, confidence, and composure. She often recalls the first time senior generals saluted her and addressed her as "sir," a term embedded in military protocol regardless of gender. Rather than finding the moment awkward, she embraced it as a sign of institutional respect. The experience strengthened her resolve and prepared her for even greater leadership responsibilities.



Hon. Nankabirwa inspecting progress of the Albertine project in preparation for first oil. Next to her is Permanent Secretary Eng. Irene Bateebe



A Strategist in Parliament

Over the years, Nankabirwa served in several government roles, including Minister of State for the Luwero Triangle, Minister of State for Microfinance, and Minister of State for Agriculture in charge of Fisheries Resources.

But one of her most politically visible roles came when she was appointed Government Chief Whip. For six years, she stood at the centre of parliamentary strategy, coordinating government business and navigating some of the most contentious legislative debates in Uganda's recent political history.

During this time, she became widely known as "Nampala wa Government," reflecting her role as the government's chief mobiliser within Parliament. Her tenure coincided with intense constitutional debates that drew national attention.

As Chief Whip, she frequently addressed the media following parliamentary sessions, defending Parliament's authority to amend laws within the framework of the Constitution.

The role demanded both political stamina and diplomatic skill, balancing competing interests while maintaining legislative momentum.

By the time her tenure ended in 2021, she had become one of the longest-serving Government Chief Whips in Uganda's history.

Powering Uganda's Energy Future

Today, Nankabirwa leads one of the most technically demanding ministries in government, Energy and Mineral Development. She describes electricity simply as "the engine of development," emphasizing that reliable and affordable energy is central to Uganda's economic transformation.

Under her leadership, the country's electricity generation capacity has expanded significantly through investments in hydropower, solar energy, and transmission infrastructure.

One of the sector's major milestones was the commissioning of the Karuma Hydropower Plant, which added 600 megawatts to



Hon. Ruth Nankabirwa, alongside Hon. Phiona Nyamutoro, the Minister of State for Mineral Development, accompanied President Yoweri Museveni at the commissioning of the Wagagai Gold Mining Project in Busia.

Uganda's electricity supply and helped reduce generation costs.

Her ministry also addressed long-standing electricity challenges in the West Nile region, which had for years experienced unreliable supply. By resolving disputes with project-affected communities and accelerating stalled infrastructure projects, the region was finally connected to the national grid — opening new opportunities for business and economic growth.

Beyond electricity generation, Nankabirwa has also overseen policy reforms aimed at strengthening regulation, attracting investment, and expanding access to clean cooking and modern energy solutions across the country.

Leadership Lessons for Women

Despite her many achievements, Nankabirwa speaks candidly about the challenges women continue to face in leadership — particularly in sectors historically dominated by men.

Her advice to aspiring women leaders centres on three principles: character, knowledge, and faith. "Character contributes sixty percent to success," she often says.

Knowledge, she adds, is equally essential. Even while serving in demanding government roles, she returned to university to pursue a master's degree, balancing academic pursuits with the pressures of public office. She also emphasizes the importance of strong family support systems for women in leadership.



Open communication within families, she says, helps create partnerships that allow both personal and professional responsibilities to thrive.

A devout Christian and Canon in the Church of Uganda, Nankabirwa credits her faith with grounding her leadership and guiding her decisions throughout her career.

A Legacy Still Unfolding

Married with children and seasoned by decades of leadership across multiple ministries, Ruth Nankabirwa views her journey as one shaped by perseverance and discipline.

From constitutional debates and defence leadership to parliamentary strategy and energy sector transformation, her career reflects the evolving role of women in Uganda's national leadership.

For a woman who entered politics at a time when few women occupied positions of authority, her story stands as a powerful example of what determined public service can achieve. And as Uganda continues to celebrate women who shape its institutions and communities, Ruth Nankabirwa's legacy remains a reminder that leadership pathways are often carved through persistence, courage, and conviction.

Her story, she says with a quiet smile, is still being written.



LADY JUSTICE JANE FRANCES ABODO
PRINCIPAL JUDGE



Justice Jane Frances Abodo: **From Prosecutor to Principal Judge**

By Caroline Nakire.

Justice Jane Frances Abodo's quiet confidence conceals a lifetime of resilience, principled action, and pioneering contributions to Uganda's legal system. Hailing from Karamoja, and a mother of two, she has dedicated over three decades to shaping the nation's legal landscape, from prosecuting some of the most complex cases to leading the Judiciary as Principal Judge. Her journey is not only a testament to professional excellence but also an inspiring example of how vision, courage, and commitment can break barriers and transform institutions.

Early Career: From Aspiration to Legal Practice

Justice Abodo's path into law was not a straightforward one. She initially aspired to become a librarian, far from the courtrooms and complex legal battles that would later define her career. "I did not set out to become a lawyer," she recalls. "I initially wanted to pursue librarianship, but my colleagues encouraged me to study law. I decided to try it, and I have never looked back."

In 1993, after completing her university education, she joined the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP), marking the beginning of a distinguished career in public service. Over the next nineteen years, she served in a variety of roles, gaining extensive experience across Uganda and building a reputation for diligence, fairness, and legal expertise. Her assignments took her to multiple stations nationwide, exposing her to diverse challenges and opportunities that would shape her approach to justice and leadership.

Leading the Anti-Corruption Charge

A pivotal chapter in Justice Abodo's career was her decade-long tenure at the Anti-Corruption Court, where she led the Anti-Corruption Department. At the time, the court was newly established, and corruption cases had historically received limited attention. Under her leadership, the department achieved unprecedented results.

"For the first three to four years, our conviction rate was consistently at 100 per cent. We had a committed team of prosecutors, investigators, and judicial officers who worked tirelessly," she recalls. Yet she is quick to emphasize that these were collective achievements. "I do not like to call them my achievements because I

did not work alone. I was fortunate to work with excellent mentors and colleagues who believed in the importance of delivering justice."

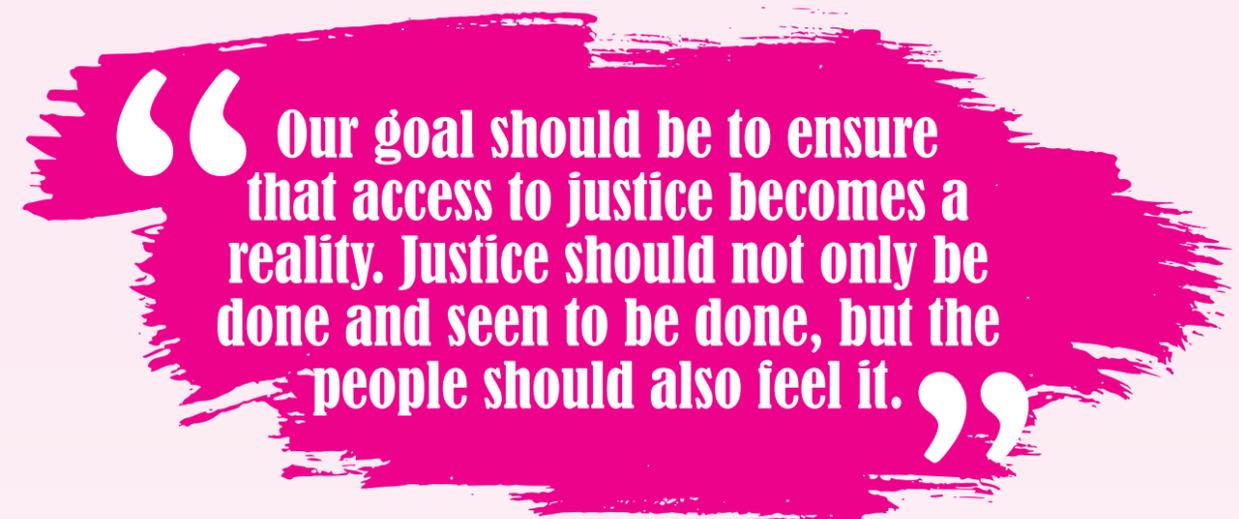
Her work at the Anti-Corruption Court not only strengthened her legal skills but also reinforced the importance of teamwork, mentorship, and institutional support, principles that would guide her throughout her career.

Transition to the Judiciary

After nearly two decades at the DPP, Justice Abodo joined the Judiciary as a High Court Judge. Assigned to the Criminal Division, she spent two years overseeing numerous cases and contributing to reforms, including the introduction and strengthening of plea bargaining in Uganda.



Lady Justice Jane Frances Abodo sworn in as the first-ever female Principal Judge of Uganda



"For the first time in Uganda's history, we had more convicted prisoners than remand prisoners. That was possible because of the collaboration between the Judiciary, the Office of the DPP, defence lawyers, and the Uganda Prisons Service," she explains. Her work during this period demonstrated not only her legal expertise but also her commitment to practical, results-oriented justice.

Returning to Lead the DPP

Justice Abodo's career came full circle when she returned to the Office of the DPP, this time as the Director of Public Prosecutions. Leading the institution where she had once served as a junior prosecutor, she regarded the role as both a professional and personal homecoming.

During her tenure, the office recorded notable progress. Conviction rates rose from approximately 67% to 77%, and comprehensive prosecution guidelines were developed to improve consistency and professionalism. "We created guidelines for many areas of

prosecution to guide our prosecutors in their work. We also prioritized the welfare of prosecutors and improved working conditions," she explains.

Infrastructure and institutional capacity also expanded significantly, with new offices opening across the country and budgets increasing to support more effective operations. Justice Abodo underscores that these achievements were never hers alone. "The work of justice is a chain. No institution can do it alone. We rely on the police for investigations, the courts, government agencies, development partners, and many other stakeholders."

Principal Judge: A New Chapter

Today, Justice Abodo serves as Uganda's Principal Judge, a role she describes as simultaneously familiar and novel. "I may be new in the position, but I am not new to the environment. I previously served here as a judge, so it feels like coming back home."

Looking ahead, she emphasizes the importance of innovation and technology in strengthening the Judiciary. "Our goal should be to ensure that access to justice becomes a reality. Justice should not only be done and seen to be done, but the people should also feel it."

Women in Leadership

As Uganda celebrates women's achievements on International Women's Day, Justice Abodo reflects on the growing presence of women in leadership roles. "I believe Uganda is on the right trajectory. There has been a deliberate effort by the government to place women in leadership positions, and many women have performed exceptionally well."

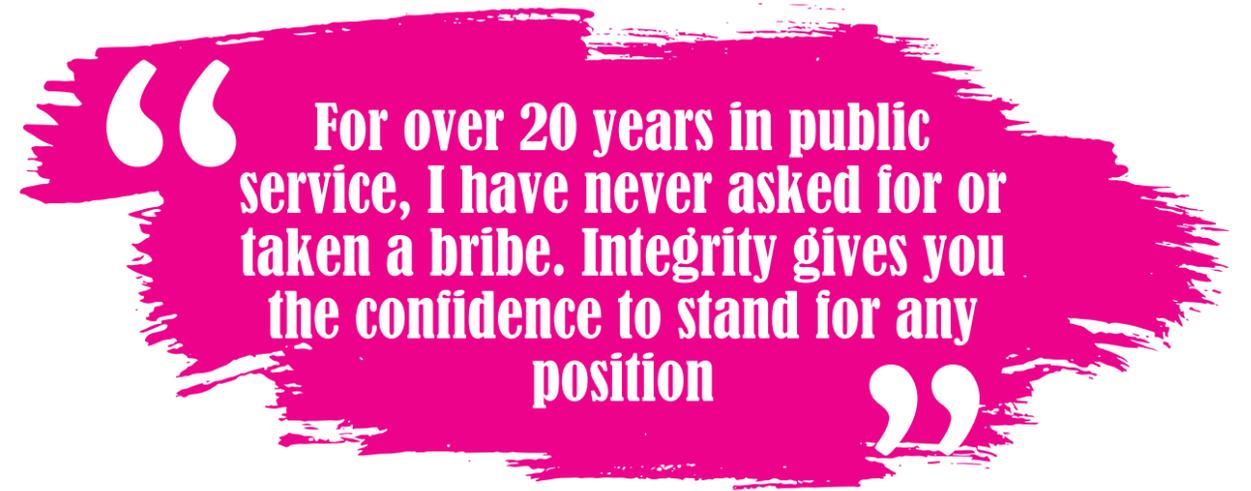
However, she notes that such milestones should eventually become the norm rather than the exception. "It is unfortunate that in the 21st century we still talk about 'the first woman'. Leadership positions should be about competence, not gender."

For her, true leadership is measured by the impact it creates. "A title means nothing if it does not translate into positive outcomes for the people you serve. Leadership must improve the lives of others." She encourages women in positions of authority to remain professional, focused, and results-oriented. "When women are given opportunities, they should remain consistent, professional, and committed to delivering results."

Navigating Male-Dominated Spaces

Justice Abodo acknowledges that women in leadership often face unique challenges, particularly in male-dominated institutions. "When I was appointed Director of Public Prosecutions, I returned to an institution where many of my mentors were now my subordinates. It was not easy."

Her approach relied on humility, fairness, and respect. "The most important thing is to stay focused and remain fair in your decisions. Respect those who came before you and recognise their experience." She underscores that leadership is fundamentally about service rather than authority. "Being a leader is not about reminding people that you are the boss."



“For over 20 years in public service, I have never asked for or taken a bribe. Integrity gives you the confidence to stand for any position.”

Leadership is about service, mentorship, and listening to others."

Over time, her integrity and consistency built trust and shifted attention from gender to performance. "When people see fairness and integrity in your leadership, the focus shifts from gender to competence and results."

Advice to Young Women

Justice Abodo attributes much of her confidence to integrity. "For over 20 years in public service, I have never asked for or taken a bribe. Integrity gives you the confidence to stand for any position."

She offers several pieces of advice to young women aspiring to leadership: believe in yourself, pursue excellence, and maintain professionalism. "Believe in your abilities. Many people fail to try simply because they doubt themselves. Whatever you choose to do, do it with passion and excellence. Maintain your professionalism and integrity."

Courage, she adds, is essential. "Sometimes you simply need the courage to apply for that position and believe that you can succeed."

Mentorship and supportive networks, she insists, are equally vital. "Young women should support one another and build strong professional networks. When women lift each other, everyone rises."

Legacy of Justice

Reflecting on her career, Justice Abodo emphasizes that her journey is not about personal accolades but about service to society. From her early days as a prosecutor to her current role as Principal Judge, her work has consistently upheld justice, fairness, and accountability. She embodies the principle that the law is not merely a profession, but a powerful tool to protect the vulnerable, resolve disputes, and create meaningful change.

This International Women's Day, Uganda celebrates Justice Jane Frances Abodo, a trailblazer whose dedication, integrity, and leadership continue to inspire generations. Her story reminds us that leadership is not defined by titles or obstacles but by the difference one makes in the lives of others.



FELICIA BETTY KUGONZA
COMMISSIONER DESIGNATE OF HOIMA CITY

From Teenage Mother to Government Commissioner

By Caroline Nakire

*In Uganda's evolving leadership landscape, stories of resilience often begin long before the titles and recognition appear. For **Felicia Betty Kugonza**, that story began with a crisis at just seventeen years old.*

Today, she is a Certified Public Accountant, entrepreneur, author, and appointed as Commissioner of Hoima City, a respected professional whose work spans public service, business, and community leadership. But long before the achievements, Felicia was a teenage mother confronting stigma, rejection, and the collapse of the future she had once imagined.

What followed was not simply recovery, but transformation.

Her journey from a frightened schoolgirl on the brink of despair to a national example of perseverance reflects the power of second chances and the extraordinary possibilities that emerge when determination meets compassion.

Felicia Kugonza's story is not only inspirational. It is a reminder that leadership is often forged in the most unlikely circumstances.

A Crisis at Seventeen

In 1999, during her first term of Senior Four, Felicia's life shifted dramatically. Against her mother's advice, she entered into a relationship that resulted in a pregnancy. At seventeen, she was confronted with a reality that many young girls in similar circumstances experience: social isolation, judgement and the abrupt suspension of youthful dreams.

The news devastated her parents. Overwhelmed by disappointment and fear for their daughter's future, they reacted harshly. To them, it seemed as though years of sacrifice had crumbled in an instant. Within the community, whispers spread quickly. Teenage pregnancy, particularly at that time, was treated less as a shared societal responsibility and more as a personal moral failing.

Seeking refuge, Felicia approached the family of the young man responsible for her pregnancy. They rejected her. Alone and emotionally battered, she made a desperate attempt to end her life by taking poison. It was a moment of profound despair, a cry for escape from humiliation and hopelessness.

Providence intervened, and she survived.

That near-tragic episode became the turning point. Faced with the possibility of losing their daughter forever, her parents' anger softened into remorse. Love eclipsed shame. They resolved not only to care for her during pregnancy but to ensure she resumed her education. In that decision lay the seed of restoration.

The Power of a Mother's Commitment

Felicia often speaks of her late mother, Betty Namasaba Akiiki, as the central force behind her recovery. Though modestly educated and of humble status, she possessed remarkable emotional strength. While relatives criticised and society judged, she shielded her daughter from emotional collapse.

She made her daughter's survival and academic performance a priority when others had deserted her. Rather than allowing pregnancy to define her daughter's future, she insisted that education would remain the path forward.

Her mother's passing in December 2020 during the Covid- 19 pandemic left a deep emotional scar. Yet the principles she instilled, faith, dignity, and perseverance, remain deeply rooted in Felicia's life and leadership philosophy.

Academic Excellence Against the Odds

Despite the demands of early motherhood, Felicia returned to school without losing a year. Balancing childcare, academic pressure, and the stigma surrounding teenage pregnancy



Felicia indulges in farming during her free time.

“ Her enterprises employ more than 30 Ugandans, directly supporting livelihoods and strengthening local economic resilience. ”

required exceptional discipline. Financial challenges were constant, but giving up was never an option.

Raised in a family that believed strongly in gender equality, she and her siblings were encouraged to pursue education with equal determination.

Felicia went on to build an impressive academic profile. She is a Certified Public Accountant of Uganda and holds a Master of Business Administration from the Eastern and Southern African Management Institute, a Master's degree in Management Studies, and a First-Class Postgraduate Diploma in Financial Management from the Uganda Management Institute. She also earned a Bachelor of Commerce from Makerere University and a Certificate in Law Administrative Officer Course from the Law Development Centre.

While pursuing her CPA, she emerged as the best participant with a first class Post Graduate Diploma in Financial Management,

a moment that symbolized how far she had come from the uncertainty of her teenage years.

Service, Entrepreneurship and Economic Impact

Felicia served for over fifteen years in Uganda's public service across various government institutions. Her work was marked by professionalism, accountability and steady progression through the leadership ranks.

After opting for early retirement, she transitioned into entrepreneurship and commercial agriculture. As Managing Director and co-owner of Hoima Haven Hotel in Hoima City, she contributes to regional hospitality development. Her agricultural ventures span coffee, cocoa, sugarcane, poultry, goats, and cattle, demonstrating practical engagement with wealth creation.

Her enterprises employ more than thirty Ugandans, directly supporting livelihoods and strengthening local economic resilience.

Her appointment as Commissioner of Hoima City, pending inauguration, reflects recognition of her experience and commitment to public service.

Marriage, Partnership and Family

Felicia is married to Capt. Ntegeka Yunus Jacob of the Uganda People's Defence Forces, the same man who fathered her first child during their secondary school years. What began as a youthful relationship matured into a stable partnership grounded in shared responsibility.

She speaks openly about her past because it allows her to dismantle shame and offer hope to others. Together, they are raising six children, one girl and five boys, in a home founded on equality, discipline, and faith.

Mentorship and Advocacy

Felicia's advocacy focuses strongly on teenage mothers and youth empowerment. Through personal mentorship and her book, *Maneuvering Through Teen Pregnancy, A Story of Shame and Rebuke*, she shares lessons drawn from her own life.

She challenges parents, teachers, and communities to respond differently to teenage pregnancy. While prevention remains essential, she argues that condemnation only compounds tragedy.

Failure, she emphasizes, is not final. Everyone deserves a second chance.

She highlights the dangers young girls face when rejected, including forced early marriages, school dropouts, and unsafe abortions. Many of these outcomes are preventable with compassion, guidance, and sustained support.

A National Lesson in Second Chances

Felicia maintains humility about her accomplishments, yet her life offers a powerful national lesson. With attitude change and structured support, young mothers can return to school, excel academically, lead institutions, and contribute meaningfully to national development.

From a frightened seventeen-year-old on the brink of self-destruction to a respected professional, entrepreneur and Commissioner designate, her story reflects courage forged in adversity.

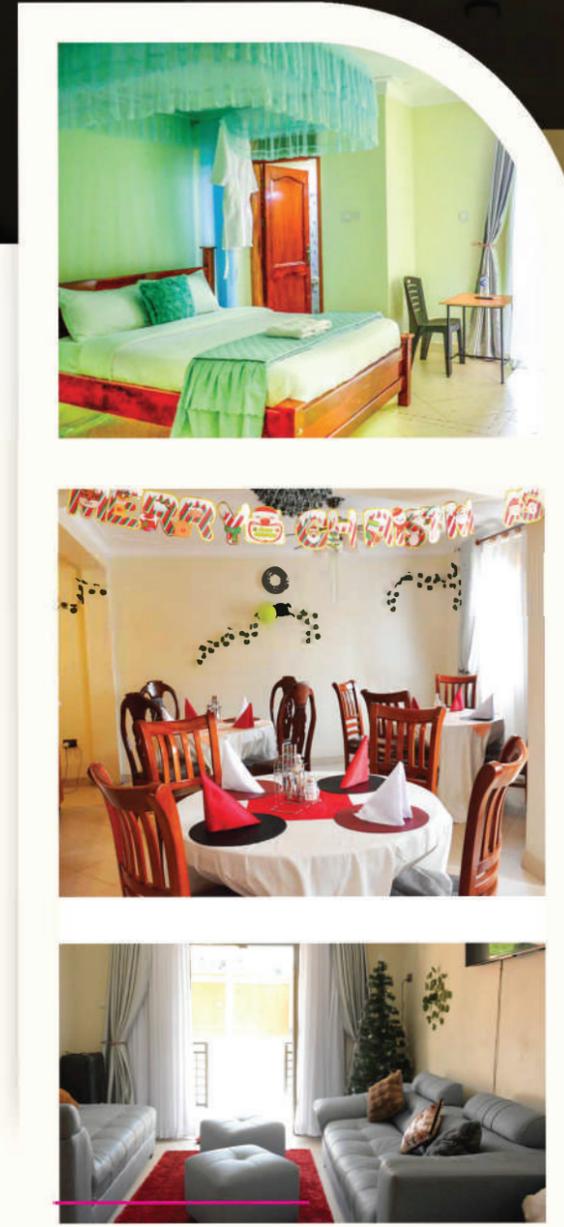
As Uganda celebrates women who shape communities across generations, Felicia Betty Kugonza stands as a reminder that leadership is not born from perfection but from perseverance. Her journey affirms that destiny can be rewritten, not by erasing the past, but by transforming it into purpose.

Failure is never final. With faith, education, and unwavering support, every woman holds the power to redefine her future and help reshape her nation's story.



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Leadership Anchored in Vision and Integrity

Jolly Kaguhangire on purpose, perseverance, and principled leadership

By Marvin R. Mutenyo

For Jolly Kamugira Kaguhangire, leadership has never been about titles or recognition. It is about purpose, discipline, and the quiet determination to overcome obstacles while remaining grounded in faith and integrity.

Over the years, her journey through Uganda's public service from the Uganda Revenue Authority (URA) to the Uganda Investment Authority (UIA) and now as Chief Executive Officer of Uganda Women's Effort to Save Orphans (UWESO) has reflected a leadership style defined by commitment, resilience, and a desire to create systems that improve lives.

Yet behind the accomplished executive is a story shaped by early responsibility, determination, and a relentless pursuit of education and growth.

Early Responsibility and Determination

Kaguhangire's path to leadership began with responsibilities that arrived earlier than many would expect. She married at the age of nineteen and soon found herself balancing the roles of wife, mother, student, and professional. Within six years, she had become a mother of four children, a reality that demanded extraordinary discipline and careful management of time and priorities. Yet even as family responsibilities grew, her desire to pursue education remained unwavering.

While raising young children, she continued her studies and carefully selected courses that would allow her to balance academic demands with family responsibilities. It was during this time that she discovered a natural affinity for numbers. Accounting, with its structure, precision, and analytical thinking, quickly became her passion. She pursued a Bachelor of Business Administration in Accounting. But even then, her ambitions extended beyond technical competence. From an early stage, she knew she wanted to lead. "I wanted to become a finance director," she recalls, "but I also knew leadership was something I wanted to pursue." That desire later led her to pursue a Master's in

JOLLY KAMUGIRA KAGUHANGIRE
Chief Executive Officer UWESO





Jolly along side President Museveni and First Lady Janet Museveni pose for a group photo with their daughters during her birthday celebrations in 2024 in Masulita, alongside some of the rehabilitated children from Masulita School.

Organizational Leadership and Management, which shaped the trajectory of her career. Growing Through Leadership

Kaguhangire's professional career saw her steadily rise through senior management ranks, a progression she attributes to commitment, discipline, and a willingness to take on challenging assignments. Throughout her career, she often found herself placed in complex situations that required careful decision-making and problem-solving. Rather than reacting impulsively, she developed a habit of analysing issues thoroughly before acting, a leadership approach that

helped her navigate difficult environments and institutional challenges.

One of the most defining chapters of her professional life was her twenty-three-year tenure at the Uganda Revenue Authority (URA). During this period, she contributed to strengthening systems within the institution, including the introduction of digital systems that improved efficiency in revenue processes and reporting.

Her experience in institutional systems and organizational management later proved invaluable when she joined the Uganda

Investment Authority (UIA) as Executive Director. At UIA, she spearheaded the development of a digital one-stop investment centre, an integrated platform designed to simplify processes for investors seeking to establish businesses in Uganda. The system connected multiple government institutions, allowing investors to verify requirements, licenses, and approvals through a single digital interface. By streamlining information flows and improving transparency, the initiative significantly improved the ease of doing business. During her tenure of just over

a year, approximately fifty new factories were established, contributing to industrial development and job creation.

Leading with Purpose

In 2024, Kaguhangire assumed a new role as Chief Executive Officer of Uganda Women's Efforts to Save Orphans (UWESO), an organization dedicated to supporting vulnerable children, women, and families facing crisis and hardship. For her, the transition represents an opportunity to apply decades of leadership experience to work that directly impacts communities.

"This work is about touching lives," she explains. "We work with children and women who are facing serious challenges and need support to rebuild their futures." At UWESO, she sees leadership not only as administrative responsibility but also as an opportunity to extend compassion and opportunity to those who need it most.

Leadership Shaped by Faith and Values

Throughout her career, Kaguhangire has drawn strength from faith and a strong personal value system. She believes leadership begins with clarity of purpose.

"You must know where you are going," she says. "When you have a clear vision, it strengthens your leadership." Her worldview is deeply rooted in her understanding of faith. While society sometimes portrays women as weak, she rejects that notion entirely. Instead, she believes women are created with purpose and strength. Alluding to the biblical idea of women as helpers, she interprets it not

WOMEN AT THE HELM

as weakness but as capability, the ability to support, guide, and solve complex challenges.

At one stage in her career, she served in senior management as the only woman among five male colleagues. Rather than viewing the situation as intimidating, she focused on performance and results.

"Women must change their mindset," she says. "Confidence and wisdom are important, especially when dealing with challenges or resolving conflicts."

Challenges Along the Way

Despite her professional success, Kaguhangire acknowledges that balancing career and family has required careful attention. As a wife and mother of four, she had to ensure that her leadership responsibilities did not overshadow her family commitments. "Marriage requires attention," she says. "Children also need equal attention."

She believes women often have to make greater effort than men to succeed, particularly when juggling professional growth with family life. At the same time, her career exposed her to ethical challenges.

Working in institutions that handle significant financial resources meant she often faced opportunities for corruption. During difficult moments when personal finances were strained, resisting such temptations required strong conviction. For Kaguhangire, faith and reputation became guiding principles. "The fear of God helped me remain firm," she explains.

She also developed a personal discipline around punctuality and accountability. Faith, she insists, should never become an excuse for poor performance. "Prayer should strengthen discipline," she says. "It should never become a reason to neglect responsibility."

As her career advanced, she occasionally encountered insecurity from colleagues who questioned her success. Rather than responding emotionally, she focused on maintaining professionalism and letting her work speak for itself.

Advice for the Next Generation

Reflecting on her journey, Kaguhangire believes leadership is anchored on three principles: clarity of purpose, integrity, and discipline. Knowing one's goals guides decision-making, integrity builds trust, and strong organization and work habits sustain long-term success.

For young women aspiring to leadership, Kaguhangire emphasizes the importance of identity and self-belief. "Know who you are and understand your value," she says. She notes that women play a foundational role in society, with families forming the building blocks of nations. Education, she adds, remains essential, encouraging women who paused their studies to return and continue developing their skills. At the same time, she stresses the importance of respect within families, noting that true leadership should strengthen homes and communities rather than create division.

Above all, she encourages women to remain grounded in faith. "Fear God," she says. "When you do that, everything else falls into place."

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Rising with Resilience: Celebrating Women's Strength in Challenging Times

By Christine Keehe

As the world marks Women's Week and pays tribute to International Women's Day, it's a moment to reflect on the extraordinary resilience and strength women demonstrate every day, especially during times

of hardship and uncertainty. In a season when the economy is strained, jobs are scarce, and many families are feeling the weight of financial pressure, women remain the unwavering pillars of hope, love, and support within their homes and communities.

Let's celebrate women, they carry with them extraordinary strength and resilience

A publication by
Uganda Printing and Publishing Corporation

Amina's story: turning adversity into opportunity

Take the story of Amina, a mother of three from a humble neighbourhood. When her husband lost his job due to company downsizing, the future suddenly seemed bleak. The uncertainty of how to provide for her family weighed heavily on her shoulders. Yet, instead of succumbing to despair, Amina made a conscious decision to turn adversity into opportunity. She started baking traditional snacks using her grandmother's recipes passed down through generations, and selling them at local markets. What began as a small venture in her kitchen gradually grew into a steady source of income. "It wasn't easy, and there were days I wanted to give up," she admits. "But I knew I had to be strong for my children, for my husband, and for myself. Every little step forward gives me hope. We are not just surviving; we are finding ways to thrive."

Women demonstrating resilience and ingenuity

Amina's story echoes in countless homes across communities where women are stepping up in remarkable ways. Women are starting small businesses, learning new skills through online courses, and taking on extra shifts or freelance work to make ends meet. They are creatively managing household resources, making sacrifices, and supporting their spouses emotionally, offering encouragement rather than blame during times when the family's stability is threatened.

Grace's initiative: using skills to help the community

Across the board, women are demonstrating resilience and ingenuity. Grace, a young woman from a nearby village, used her sewing skills to produce masks and PPE during the pandemic. Her initiative not only earned her income but also served her community in a time of need. Her story exemplifies how adversity can spark creativity and leadership. "I realized I could use what I knew to help others and also put food on my family's table," she says with a smile. "It's not just about making money; it's about making a difference."

Supporting loved ones emotionally: the power of unity

Supporting loved ones emotionally has become just as vital as providing financially. Women often find themselves acting as emotional anchors, praying together with their husbands, sharing fears and hopes, and planning their futures even when the present feels uncertain. Fatima, a wife whose husband has been unemployed for several months, explains, "Supporting him doesn't mean I stop dreaming or lose hope. We pray, talk, and plan together. We remind ourselves that this season is temporary, and we will come out stronger on the other side. Supporting each other with love and patience keeps us going."

Prioritizing mental and emotional well-being

Women must also prioritize their mental and emotional well-being amid these challenges.

Rest, community support, and faith are essential in maintaining resilience. "Sharing my fears with my friends and leaning on my church community keeps my spirit alive," says Sarah, a single mother juggling work and raising her children alone. "I remind myself that I am not alone, and that my strength lies in my faith and my community."

Women as builders of hope and future

Women are more than caregivers and supporters; they are builders of hope and architects of the future. They nurture children, manage household finances, uphold dignity in difficult times, and sustain hope when the future appears uncertain. Lydia, a single mother who works tirelessly as a market vendor, shares her perspective: "My children motivate me. I want them to see that even in hardship, we can stand tall. Our resilience is our greatest strength. We are teaching the next generation how to persevere."

Celebrating women's contributions and empowerment

This week, as we celebrate women's contributions, it's vital to recognize that every effort counts. Whether it's a small business, a word of encouragement, or simply holding the family together with love and patience, women's roles are invaluable. Women's empowerment, economic, emotional, and social, is essential for building stronger, more resilient communities. We must foster environments where women feel supported in their endeavours and celebrated for their resilience.



As women our emotional well-being is important, lets broom it

A Call to action: supporting women's growth and solidarity

Let this Women's Week not just be about flowers, speeches, and accolades but a call to action. A call to support women's economic empowerment, emotional resilience, and community solidarity. Let us celebrate the quiet heroines who, despite hardships, lead their families with strength and grace.

Honouring the resilient women around us

Even when the economy is hard, when the load feels heavy, and the future seems uncertain, women's true power shines brightest. Their courage to persevere, love unconditionally, and lead by example is a beacon of hope for all. Because a woman's strength isn't measured by her silence in struggle but by her determination to move forward with love, wisdom, and unwavering faith.

So, as we honour women this week, let us remember and celebrate the resilient women around us, the mothers, wives, daughters, and sisters who support, build, and lead through adversity. You are seen, you are valued, and your strength is profoundly powerful.

Happy Women's Week to every woman striving, supporting, building, and believing you are the heartbeat of every community, the light that guides us forward.



REBECCA NYAKAIRU
DIRECTOR BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT, UPPC



Leading Beyond the Applause

By Marvin R. Mutenyo

*Leadership is often associated with visibility: titles, recognition, and public applause. Yet for **Rebecca Nyakairu**, leadership has never been about occupying the spotlight. For her, its true measure lies elsewhere: in impact, influence, and the quiet transformation of institutions.*

*In a reflective conversation for this Women's Day commemorative publication, **Marvin Mutenyo** candidly speaks to Nyakairu about her professional journey, the evolving role of women in leadership, and the responsibility that comes with occupying spaces of influence.*

"Leadership is not measured by the title you hold or the applause you receive, but by the impact you leave and the barriers you break for others to rise." – Rebecca.

For Nyakairu, that philosophy has guided every stage of her career.

From early on, Nyakairu viewed communication not simply as messaging but as a bridge, a powerful tool for building trust between institutions and the public.

When she entered the field of public relations, she was drawn less by the promise of recognition and more by a sense of purpose. Communication, she believed, had the ability to shape reputations, strengthen relationships, and ensure institutions remained accountable to the people they serve.

That conviction would later shape one of the most defining chapters of her career.

When Nyakairu joined the Uganda Printing and Publishing Corporation (UPPC), she stepped into an institution with a proud and longstanding history. Yet despite its more than a century of existence, the corporation had never operated with a structured communication function.

She became UPPC's first formal Public Relations practitioner. Introducing such a role into a long-established institution was not without challenges. Scepticism emerged both internally and externally. Many believed communication could continue to be handled informally, as it had been for decades.

Nyakairu saw things differently.

To her, trust, credibility, and stakeholder confidence are never accidental; they are deliberately cultivated.

Rather than argue for the importance of structured communication, she chose to demonstrate its value through action. She began by listening to leadership, staff, and stakeholders. She consulted professional networks, sought guidance, and worked collaboratively with colleagues and partners to establish more purposeful engagement.

Gradually, communication channels expanded. Dialogue improved. Relationships that had weakened over time began to strengthen. Trust was rebuilt steadily. Confidence was earned repeatedly.

“Trust, credibility, and stakeholder confidence are never accidental. They must be deliberately cultivated,” she emphasized.

Over time, structured communication frameworks were established, and partnerships strengthened. Communication itself began to be recognized as a key pillar of institutional growth within the corporation.

Today, Nyakairu reflects on that experience as a reminder that institutional change rarely happens overnight. It grows through patience, consistency, and the courage to introduce new ideas into established systems.

Leadership Beyond Titles

Having grown through the ranks into Business Development leadership, Nyakairu now reflects more deeply on what it means to be a woman at the helm.

“ Women today occupy roughly a third of parliamentary seats and nearly half of local council positions. These milestones represent important progress. Yet Nyakairu cautions that representation alone does not automatically translate into influence. ”

Leadership, she says, is never static. It evolves with every challenge encountered, every individual empowered, and every example set for those watching.

And someone, she believes, is always watching. Uganda is a youthful nation, with nearly half of its population between the ages of eighteen and thirty-five. Half of that demographic is female, a generation that is educated, ambitious, and ready to contribute meaningfully to national development.

Women today occupy roughly a third of parliamentary seats and nearly half of local council positions. These milestones represent important progress. Yet Nyakairu cautions that representation alone does not automatically translate into influence.

Young women who rise to positions of leadership are often met with quiet scepticism. Questions arise, not about competence, but about circumstance.

“How did she get there so young? Who is behind her?” Such narratives, Nyakairu argues, subtly

diminish capability and discourage ambition. Yet experience repeatedly demonstrates that when women are trusted with responsibility, they deliver.

Across the continent, examples continue to reinforce this truth. Rwanda, for instance, has the highest proportion of women in Parliament globally, shaping legislation and national priorities. In Uganda, emerging leaders such as Yvonne Mpambara, who stepped forward at a young age to contest for the presidency, illustrate that leadership courage is defined not by age but by conviction.

Inspiring Across Generations

The theme of this publication, “Women at the Helm: Inspiring Leadership Across Generations,” resonates deeply with Nyakairu. For her, the phrase goes far beyond titles or positions. It is about legacy.

Women who lead today, she believes, carry a responsibility that extends beyond their own careers. They must intentionally create space for the girls rising behind them. Mentorship,



Rebecca Nyakairu, with the newly elected Bishop of the Busoga Archdiocese, Rev. Canon Dr. Grace Lubaale, after a strategic partnership meeting at UPPC, Entebbe

therefore, is not optional; it is a duty. Excellence is pursued not only for personal success but as a means of opening doors for others.

Uganda's development aspirations, articulated by the National Planning Authority through the Fourth National Development Plan (NDP IV), emphasize inclusive growth, human capital development, and the meaningful participation of women and youth in economic transformation.

Nyakairu believes these aspirations cannot be fully realized without women who lead competently, ethically, and collaboratively. When women occupy leadership roles in business, governance, education, and community development, they shape institutions that influence families, communities, and future generations.

The Responsibility of Influence

Yet as empowerment grows, Nyakairu believes an important question must also be asked: Are women fully prepared for the weight of the leadership they seek? Influence carries responsibility. Power demands discipline.

Within the African context, where family, marriage, and community remain central pillars of society, leadership must coexist with identity. For Nyakairu, the challenge is not choosing between professional excellence and personal values, but integrating the two.

True inspiration across generations, she says, lies in demonstrating that ambition and family are not opposing forces. Strength and grace

can coexist. A woman can lead institutions while nurturing a stable home. When younger girls witness women who carry influence with dignity and balance, they learn that leadership does not require abandoning values, but embodying them more intentionally.

A Legacy of Impact

For Nyakairu, being a woman at the helm therefore goes beyond occupying a seat of authority. It means stewarding that position wisely, recognising that leadership today shapes opportunity tomorrow. It means understanding that personal conduct, discipline, and resilience become living templates for the next generation.

She believes the narrative must shift from doubt to preparation, and from limitation to legacy. Young women do not need permission to dream; they need mentorship, structure, and opportunity to pursue those dreams.

Leadership, in Nyakairu's view, is not about visibility. It is about impact. And when women lead with integrity, service, and purpose, they do more than succeed individually; they inspire generational confidence.

She ended by saying, "As we mark this Women's Day, may we not simply celebrate women in positions of authority. May we commit to raising women who are prepared, principled, and purposeful. Women who lead boldly. Women who build wisely. Women who inspire across generations, not only by what they achieve, but by how they achieve it."



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Sarah Kagingo: **A Driving Force Behind Uganda's Private Sector Growth**

By Damali Mukhaye

When the Private Sector Foundation Uganda (PSFU) is mentioned, the name of Sarah Kagingo often comes to mind. As the **Vice Chairperson of the Board**, she plays a pivotal role in providing leadership and strategic oversight to Uganda's apex private sector body, convening over 3.5 million businesses across 12 sectors of the Ugandan economy.

Through her work, Kagingo has championed initiatives that strengthen entrepreneurship, support women and youth-led enterprises, and promote sustainable economic growth. Her leadership reflects a commitment to building a resilient and competitive private sector capable of driving Uganda's development.

Sarah Kagingo is a distinguished Ugandan communications strategist, business executive, and governance advocate. Her work spans policy advocacy, business development, sector integration, and strategic oversight, reflecting a commitment to sustainable growth, entrepreneurship, and the empowerment of women and youth in Uganda.

Kagingo's leadership journey began early.

She recalls her first responsibilities in primary school, collecting blackboard erasers and supervising younger siblings in household chores under her grandmother's guidance. These small tasks cultivated her sense of responsibility, discipline, and initiative.

In school, she progressed to roles such as class captain, timekeeper, and ultimately head girl in P7, setting a foundation for lifelong leadership. At Makerere University, she became a prominent student leader, winning the Guild Presidency in a competitive race that included multiple male contenders.

This experience, Kagingo notes, taught her resilience, strategic thinking, and the importance of learning from mistakes, lessons she has carried into her professional and civic engagements.

Professional Leadership and Governance

Sarah's professional career spans strategic communications, corporate governance, and private sector advocacy. She served as President of the Public Relations Association of Uganda (PRAU) from 2018 to 2020, where she promoted professional excellence



SARAH KAGINGO
VICE CHAIRPERSON, PRIVATE SECTOR FOUNDATION UGANDA



and emphasized Uganda’s international positioning. Her tenure encouraged colleagues to continually develop their credentials and leverage global insights to strengthen businesses and government institutions alike.

As a board member of PSFU, Uganda Tourism Association (UTA), and the National Environment Management Authority (NEMA), Kagingo provides strategic oversight, risk management, and policy foresight.

She has been actively engaged in environmental sustainability, advocating for the triple bottom line of people, planet, and profit, and ensuring businesses adopt ESG standards that attract global investment while preserving natural resources. She observes that disinformation and misinformation pose economic risks, affecting investment, tourism, and business operations, highlighting the need for informed, transparent communication in both private and public sectors.

The GROW Project: Scaling Women-led Businesses

One of the flagship initiatives at the PSFU is the GROW Project, a World Bank-funded program implemented by PSFU to scale women-led businesses from micro to medium enterprises. The project targets businesses where women hold at least 51% shareholding, though ownership may be co-held with spouses or partners. GROW addresses critical barriers such as lack of collateral, formalization challenges, and financial inclusion.

Through partnerships with six banks, including Centenary Bank, Stanbic Bank, and Pearl



Sarah Kagingo, alongside officials from the World Bank and the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development, at the Catalysing Innovation and Gender-Inclusive Finance Expo held at Motiv Bugolobi in 2025.

Bank, GROW offers 10% interest business loans, among the lowest in Uganda, enabling women entrepreneurs to formalize their businesses, open bank accounts, and gain access to finance. Kagingo emphasizes the project’s holistic approach: in 2023, PSFU, in partnership with the government and World Bank, introduced the We-Finance Code, which standardized the understanding of women-led businesses, informing financial institutions of their needs and guiding the design of tailored financial products. The impact has been significant as many women-led businesses are now formalized and banked, increasing their eligibility for additional interventions from the private sector and government. PSFU also explores non-collateralized loans for small women-owned businesses that lack land or assets, promoting inclusive growth.

GROW not only provides capital but also mentorship, skills development, and access to

networks, ensuring women grow sustainably while gaining financial literacy and operational efficiency.

Youth Engagement and NextGen Programs

Kagingo is equally passionate about youth empowerment. With over 50% of Ugandans under 17, she emphasizes the need to integrate young people’s creativity, technological skills, and innovation into national strategies. In 2024, she spearheaded the inaugural PSFU NextGen, bringing young entrepreneurs together with veteran business leaders.

The program fosters mentorship, knowledge transfer, and networking, enabling young innovators to understand business sustainability, access finance, and navigate operational challenges.

She highlights that youth engagement must be deliberate and strategic, ensuring young people are not merely present but actively shaping initiatives. This philosophy aligns with Uganda’s broader industrialization and economic growth agenda, emphasizing convergence between experience and innovation to accelerate national development.

Job Creation and Social Impact

Through strategic partnerships with organizations such as the MasterCard Foundation, PSFU has contributed to Uganda’s Young Africa Works initiative, creating over 400,000 direct and indirect jobs in the last five years. This approach emphasizes co-creation, listening to young entrepreneurs’ needs, and designing programs that multiply economic

impact, including encouraging youth to start their own businesses and employ others.

In addition, Kagingo supported initiatives in health and social development, such as the annual cancer run, which raises funds for diagnostic facilities at Nsambya Hospital, ensuring early detection and treatment for Ugandans. Her engagement reflects a holistic understanding of leadership as not only business-focused but deeply human-centered.

Women in Leadership and Workplace Inclusion

Kagingo openly shares her personal challenges balancing career and motherhood. She highlights the importance of workplaces that support women, advocating for flexible work arrangements, remote work options, and childcare facilities, referencing successful models in South Africa.

She believes supporting women during childbearing years is essential for maintaining productivity, well-being, and long-term career growth. She also stresses the significance of continuous professional development, networking, and mentorship for women aspiring for leadership.

She advises women to start small, formalize their businesses, join business associations, acquire credentials, and leverage digital platforms. Kagingo underscores that leadership and business growth are accessible to all, regardless of background, provided there is focus, perseverance, and a willingness to learn.

Dr. Monica Musenero: From the Frontlines to the Frontier

By Ssenkayi Marvin Ezra

She has walked into rooms swallowed by fear, rooms where an invisible killer was claiming lives by the dozen, where even seasoned doctors fled, and entire health systems buckled. She did not flee. Instead, she built teams from scratch and turned chaos into a coordinated response.

That may be the most fitting introduction to Dr. Monica Musenero Masanza, Uganda's Minister for Science, Technology and Innovation, and one of the most consequential scientific minds the country has produced.

Born in the remote village of Petete in Butebo District, her life reads like a quiet revolution, the story of a girl who repeatedly defied the odds across decades and continents. Today, she sits at the centre of one of Uganda's most ambitious national visions: transforming the country into a science-led, innovation-driven economy. But to understand where she is going, one must first understand where she began.

The Making of a Scientist

Monica Musenero grew up in circumstances that might have discouraged many from

pursuing academic excellence. Yet from an early age, she was drawn to science with remarkable determination.

After studying at Bubulo Girls Secondary School and Nabumali High School, she joined Makerere University, graduating with a Bachelor of Veterinary Medicine, a bold step in a field historically dominated by men. She later crossed the Atlantic to Cornell University, where she earned a Master of Science in Microbiology and Immunology, conducting research on vaccine development, work that would prove prophetic decades later.

Her academic journey continued with a Master of Public Health at Makerere University, specialising in Field Epidemiology. This interdisciplinary training positioned her uniquely at the intersection of veterinary medicine, molecular biology, and epidemic response.

Few scientists in Uganda's public health landscape possess such breadth of expertise. Yet her path was not without difficult choices. At one point, she had to decide between continuing in academia, which required a PhD, and caring for a son born with congenital heart disease. She chose her son. The decision



DR. MONICA MUSENERO
MINISTER FOR SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION

WOMEN AT THE HELM



Dr Musenero poses for a photo with other panelists at the 7th African Regional Science, Technology and Innovation forum

meant leaving academia but ultimately led her to public health, the field where she would go on to save not one child, but thousands.

"I always wanted to be a paediatrician," she recalls. "But through public health and epidemic response, I realised I could save far more children than I ever could in a clinic."

Walking Into Ebola

If one chapter best defines Dr. Musenero's courage, it is the 2014 Ebola epidemic in West Africa. The outbreak was the largest in history. Thousands were dying. Health systems were collapsing. She travelled to Sierra Leone as a consultant for the World Health Organization. Initially expecting to stay for just three weeks, she remained involved for nearly three years.

"When I arrived in Freetown, I was unprepared

for the horror," she recalled. "Many people were dying." Within weeks, she had built a surveillance system, trained contact tracers, and assembled multidisciplinary teams using the One Health model she had helped pioneer in Uganda.

It was an approach that brought together medical, veterinary, and environmental experts to tackle epidemics from multiple angles. In the midst of a crisis, she helped transform confusion into coordination.

The Philosophy: Think. Build. Lead.

Central to Dr. Musenero's work is a powerful belief: Africa must think for itself. "Africa must stop delegating thinking," she has said. "We can succeed better if we invest in original systems, structures, and processes."

This philosophy has shaped her leadership of Uganda's Science, Technology, and Innovation (STI) portfolio. When she assumed the role, she set an uncompromising standard: "I don't want people to buy our products out of sympathy. I want them to buy them because they are the best on the market."

Her vision is bold: Uganda as the most technologically advanced country in the region.

Science at the Heart of National Transformation

As Minister for Science, Technology and Innovation under the Office of the President, Dr. Musenero has championed initiatives that seek to place science at the centre of Uganda's development.

One of the most notable milestones under her leadership was the launch of Uganda's first satellite, PearlAfricaSat-1, designed by Ugandan engineers and launched from the International Space Station in 2022.

She has also advanced the Industry 4.0+ agenda, encouraging Ugandans to develop capabilities in artificial intelligence, robotics, 3D printing, and other emerging technologies. Her ministry has supported projects ranging from agricultural technology for smallholder farmers to electric vehicle manufacturing and diagnostic medical technologies.

The guiding principle is simple: Uganda must produce innovation, not merely consume it.

The Woman Behind the Title

Beyond science and policy, Dr. Musenero is deeply rooted in family and faith. She has been married to Professor Michael Masanza since 1999, and together they have three children, Joshua, Michelle, and Joel. Their home, however, extends far beyond their biological family. Over the years, they have supported and raised many other children, reflecting the same mentorship instinct that defines her professional life.

Her Christian faith is equally central to her identity. "Most of my strength comes from a



Some of the locally manufactured products developed by STI-OP



Hon Musenero speaks to the guests during the National Science week

deep faith in God," she says. "Integrity is the foundation of everything I do."

A Woman in Spaces Not Built for Her

Dr. Musenero's career has unfolded largely in spaces historically dominated by men. She entered veterinary medicine when female professionals were rare and navigated leadership roles in public health institutions where women were even fewer.

The challenges began early.

While a student at Makerere, she once confronted inappropriate advances from a professor, an experience that reinforced her determination to stand firm in environments that often underestimated women.

"Gender issues remain a challenge," she says. "The girl child must not be reduced to a stereotype."

Lessons for the Next Generation

For young women aspiring to leadership, Dr. Musenero's advice is grounded in self-discovery and courage.

"Take time to know what you want to be," she says. "I spent years trying to be what others thought I should be. Eventually, you must take responsibility for thinking for yourself." She calls it "landing in your river," the moment when you stop performing expectations and begin living your true purpose.



Keeping high spirits amidst dangerous situations. The Kenema Team.

Mentorship, she adds, is essential. Her own inspirations range from global figures like Margaret Thatcher to national leaders such as Dr. Specioza Kazibwe, Uganda's first female Vice President. But her deepest influence was her mother, whose encouragement shaped her early confidence.

When Dr. Musenero was preparing to take office as a minister, her mother fell critically ill. In one final conversation, she urged her daughter to continue her journey. "I brought you up to here," she told her.

The Warrior Continues

Dr. Monica Musenero's story is far from finished. She leads a ministry with an

enormous mandate at a pivotal moment in Uganda's development, and she does so with the urgency of someone who has witnessed the cost of waiting for others to solve Africa's challenges.

From a village in Butebo to laboratories in Cornell, from Ebola frontlines in Sierra Leone to cabinet leadership in Kampala, her journey embodies the possibilities of science, courage, and vision.

In Sierra Leone, communities gave her a name: Kornya, the female warrior. It is a title she carries across borders, and a powerful symbol for every young Ugandan woman who chooses to build in spaces that were never designed for her.



We need men and women to exist together

Are Women and Men Separate Entities Operating in Isolation today?

By Christine Keehe

In a modern world obsessed with independence, self-sufficiency, and individual achievement, it's easy to forget the fundamental, divinely rooted truth: women and men are not separate entities operating in isolation. They are two halves of a divine whole, created to complement and depend on each other. The persistent myth that women can do without men is not only misguided but fundamentally flawed when viewed through the

lens of divine design and creation. The question is not whether women can survive without men; it's whether society, indeed, civilization itself can flourish without embracing the divine interconnectedness of both genders.

The illusion of women's autonomy

Women have achieved incredible milestones. True and yes, they are breaking barriers, leading nations, pioneering industries, and shattering stereotypes, and much more is yet to come. But these achievements, while impressive,

should not be mistaken for evidence that women can stand on their own. Instead, they reveal resilience within a system designed by the Creator, one that inherently recognizes the necessity of male and female working in harmony. As a theologian and scholar, Dr. Yusuf reminds us: "Woman was created from man, and man from woman. Their bond is woven into the very fabric of existence. No woman can be truly complete without acknowledging her divine origin and purpose."

I sometimes revisit some histories, and you will agree with me that this idea echoes Aristotle's timeless wisdom: "The whole is greater than the sum of its parts." When women ascend to positions of power, it's a reminder that their strength and success are rooted in divine design, which inherently links their existence to that of men. It therefore stands to reason that we as women are not independent islands but vital components of a divine ecosystem, each fulfilling a unique role that sustains the whole.

The fallacy of complete independence

I stand strong to differ with the current ongoing misconception that women can flourish without men. It is superficial and ignores deeper spiritual and societal truths. Well, could it be that Societies that thrive are those that recognize the divine partnership of man and woman, each with their strengths and flaws, working together toward a shared purpose? Friedrich Engels, the co-founder of modern socialism, once observed: "The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles, but underneath that is the fundamental gender struggle

OPINION

intertwined and mutually dependent." Societies that deny or diminish this divine interdependence tend toward chaos and disintegration.

Social media debates often echo this misconception. Posts assert, "Women can do everything on their own," but this is a superficial claim that overlooks the divine blueprint. Women are created for partnership, love, and mutual support, not independence in isolation. The strength of one magnifies the other's contribution, and societal stability depends on this divine balance. As William Wordsworth eloquently stated, "The best portion of a good woman's life: her little, unremembered acts of kindness and love." These acts are rooted in divine purpose and in the acknowledgment that true strength is found in union, not in independence.

The Reality of Creation and the Need for Better Men

On the other hand, I also want to acknowledge that, at the heart of this discussion, is the failure of men to fulfil their divine responsibilities. Systemic issues such as violence, neglect, irresponsibility, and moral decay among men threaten the very fabric of society. While in senior two, I happened to study a little bit of Islam. At one time, Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) emphasized this when he said: "The best of you are those who are best to their women." This Hadith underscores that true greatness among men is measured by their responsibility, kindness, and moral integrity towards women. I am still searching for credible reasons why 'some' men are neglecting their responsibilities.

Philosopher Søren Kierkegaard once said, "To be a human being is to be in a constant state of becoming, of moral responsibility." Men are called to embrace this moral responsibility to be protectors, providers, and moral anchors. When men neglect their divine role, societal chaos ensues. Without responsible men, societies crumble, and women's progress remains incomplete.

In this case, I suppose the remedy is not merely empowering women but also transforming men, encouraging them to become better, more responsible, and more aligned with their divine purpose. Grace Wanjiku states: "We cannot claim societal progress until men embrace their role as protectors, providers, and moral anchors. Without this, women's success is incomplete, and society suffers." Why would you be a contributing factor to society's misery?

Redefining masculinity: the path to societal harmony

I want to suppose that the necessary revolution is rooted in redefining masculinity not as dominance or superficial strength, but as humility, responsibility, and service. Men must understand that their true strength lies in moral integrity, respect, and accountability, values that build families, communities, and nations. Mahatma Gandhi's words resonate: "The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others."

A society where women succeed without dependence on men is impossible without men stepping into their divine roles. Better men are not optional; they are indispensable. Until men recognize their divine purpose and live accordingly, societal harmony remains elusive.



“ True societal harmony is rooted in spiritual equality and divine purpose, recognizing that both genders are essential, each with unique but interconnected roles ”

The divine truth: co-creation, not competition

Central to this debate is a divine truth: women and men were created to coexist, co-create, and complement each other. Neither can truly exist without the other in the divine plan. Societies that deny or distort this truth through misogyny, radical feminism, or superficial independence face chaos and decline.

As Plato eloquently noted, "The greatest wealth is to live content with little, and to be content with others." True contentment and societal progress rest in the divine partnership of gender, an intricate, sacred union rooted in divine purpose. To deny this is to deny the very essence of our existence.

The biblical Apostle Paul emphasized this unity: "There is neither male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus." True societal harmony is rooted in spiritual equality and divine purpose, recognizing that both genders are essential, each with unique but interconnected roles.

Let's embrace divine partnership for societal progress

Women do not and cannot do without men, just as men cannot do without women. Their coexistence is rooted in divine creation, and their roles are interdependent. Society's future depends on this recognition.

Borrowing a leaf from what Fyodor Dostoevsky once stated, "The mystery of human existence lies not in just staying alive but in finding someone worth living for." That "someone", that divine partner, is integral to our purpose. Society's future depends on men and women embracing their divine roles, acknowledging their interconnectedness, and building life on the foundation of divine partnership.

The universe, community, and civilization flourish when we accept and uphold this divine truth: that men and women are co-creators in a divine plan, each incomplete without the other, each essential to the harmony of all existence.

Stewarding Uganda's Tourism Story

Doreen Katusiime on leadership, heritage, and building a global destination

By Caroline Nakire.

For more than three decades, Doreen Katusiime has quietly helped shape the institutions that tell Uganda's story to the world.

Today, as Permanent Secretary at the Ministry of Tourism, Wildlife and Antiquities, she stands at the center of the country's efforts to transform tourism into a pillar of economic growth. But long before guiding national tourism policy, her journey began in a classroom, teaching English at City High School in Kampala.

From education to public administration, and eventually to one of the most influential leadership roles in Uganda's tourism sector, Katusiime's career reflects a philosophy grounded in discipline, service, and purpose.

Her story is one of steady leadership, built not on spectacle but on commitment to institutions, mentorship, and the long work of national development.

Early Influences and Personal Foundations

Growing up as the only girl among seven brothers shaped her confidence and resilience. In a home that encouraged independence and courage, she learned to compete and express herself without fear. Her father, a respected parish chief, introduced her to leadership values at an early age, while her mother instilled discipline and strength. These formative experiences laid the foundation for a leadership style defined by empathy, responsibility, and inner strength.

Mentorship and Empowering Future Leaders

Mentorship remains central to her philosophy. She is committed to nurturing future leaders, particularly women and young professionals, by equipping them with practical skills and fostering initiative. She believes leadership is most effective when it creates opportunities for others to grow.

Her approach emphasizes trust, delegation, and open communication, enabling individuals to take responsibility while remaining accountable for results.

DOREEN KATUSIIME
PERMANENT SECRETARY AT THE MINISTRY OF
TOURISM, WILDLIFE AND ANTIQUITIES

“ Investment in skills development has also been prioritized, with facilities upgraded to strengthen hospitality training and address customer care gaps within the industry. ”

Transforming Uganda’s Tourism Sector

Under her stewardship, the tourism sector has experienced a significant transformation. Once regarded as secondary to other sectors, tourism is now recognized as a key driver of economic growth. The development and implementation of the Explore Uganda brand have strengthened destination marketing and raised Uganda’s international profile.

Key milestones include infrastructure improvements at heritage and tourism sites, the renovation of the Uganda Museum, and the restoration of cultural landmarks such as the Mugaba Palace in Mbarara. Developments in the Rwenzori region and conservation efforts supporting mountain gorilla habitats have further enhanced Uganda’s competitiveness as a destination.

Investment in skills development has also been prioritized, with facilities upgraded to strengthen hospitality training and address customer care gaps within the industry. Tourism’s elevation to Uganda’s leading foreign exchange earner in 2018 marked a defining achievement for the sector.



A Leadership Style Rooted in Empathy and Accountability

She describes effective leadership as visionary, empathetic, and accountable. Understanding that fostering trust within institutions is central to her approach. She rejects blame-oriented leadership, emphasizing collaboration, guidance, and shared responsibility instead.

By engaging staff beyond their formal roles, she cultivates supportive working environments that inspire commitment and productivity.

Challenges and the Road Ahead

Despite progress, challenges remain. Continued investment in professional training is required to strengthen service standards

within the hospitality industry. Improving road infrastructure is also essential to enhance access to tourism destinations nationwide.

Domestic tourism initiatives continue to showcase Uganda’s cultural heritage, including the Ankole cattle tradition and ranching experiences in western Uganda. The renovation of historic sites, now operating

WOMEN AT THE HELM

as museums and cultural centers, reflects a sustained commitment to preserving heritage while generating economic opportunity.

A Legacy of Purposeful Leadership

Her leadership journey embodies the spirit of International Women's Day, demonstrating how resilience, mentorship, and dedication can transform institutions and inspire future generations. When women lead with vision and purpose, they expand opportunity and create lasting pathways for others.

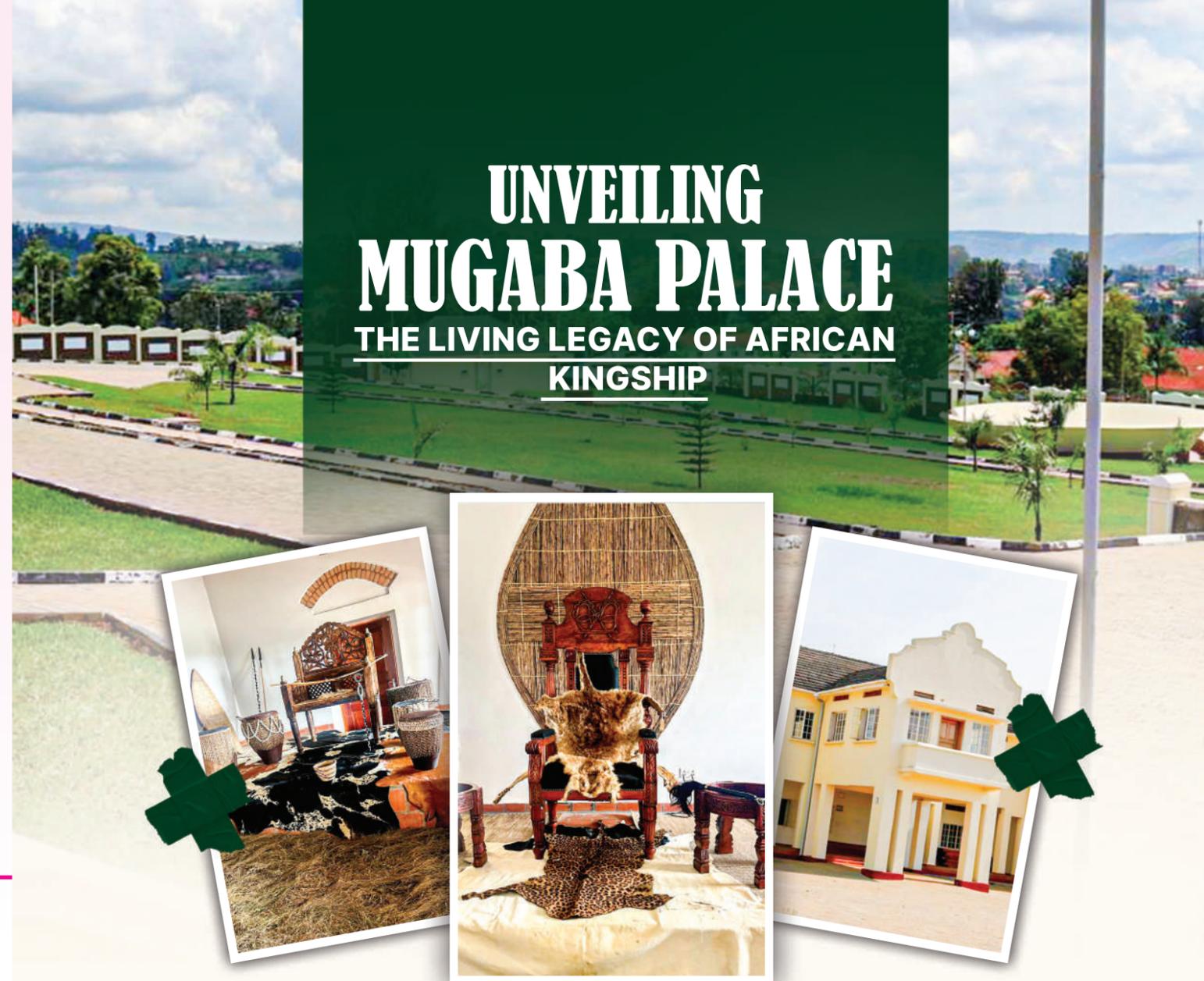
Advice to Young Women Aspiring to Lead

She encourages young women to let their work speak through excellence and professionalism. Remaining teachable, seeking mentorship, and pursuing continuous learning are essential principles she upholds.

She advises against adopting a victim mentality, urging women instead to become value-adding professionals who contribute confidently to national development. Maintaining a balance between career ambition and family responsibilities, she notes, is vital for long-term success.

Professional Profile Summary

With more than thirty-five years of service in Uganda's public sector, Doreen Katusiime has built a distinguished career in institutional leadership and policy development. Since 2016, she has served as Permanent Secretary at the Ministry of Tourism, Wildlife and Antiquities, providing strategic leadership for Uganda's tourism transformation agenda. Her work has strengthened international partnerships, advanced sustainable tourism policies, and elevated Uganda's global tourism profile.



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SHARON KAMUGANGA
AG. COMMISSIONER OF HUMAN-WILDLIFE CONFLICT



Sharon Kamuganga: Trailblazing Woman Leading Uganda's Conservation Revolution

By Christine Keehe

*What if the very existence of wildlife depended on our ability to coexist? What if the greatest challenge in conservation isn't just protecting endangered species, but reimagining our relationship with nature itself? In a world where the boundaries between humans and wildlife are constantly tested, one woman stands at the forefront of this crucial frontier, transforming conflict into harmony, adversity into opportunity. At the heart of Uganda's conservation efforts, Afande **Sharon Kamuganga** is rewriting the narrative of leadership. As Ag. Commissioner of Human-Wildlife Conflict, she confronts fierce challenges with unwavering grit and ingenuity, transforming conflict into coexistence. How do we reconcile the needs of communities with the survival of endangered species? Can empathy and science forge new pathways in conservation? And in a sector historically dominated by men, what does it take for a woman to lead, innovate, and inspire change? Join us as we delve into the wild, complex, and captivating realm of wildlife conservation where every decision shapes the future of Uganda's biodiversity and the resilience of its people.*

Qn: *What was your early life like? Did it in any way influence your passion and career in wildlife conservation?*

Certainly, I was born and raised in Entebbe. I attended Entebbe Christian Academy for my primary education. Entebbe is near Lake Victoria, where the rich biodiversity sparked my love for wildlife. Growing up near the zoo and being part of wildlife clubs at school deepened this passion.

My father, Mr. John Kagwisaa, now retired from the Canal, and my late mother, Ms. Jovia Kabeija, mentored me so well. Discipline was not only for mankind but also for nature. I applaud them for having instilled in me the values of responsibility and service.

My education at Trinity College Nabbingo for high school and at Makerere University, where I specialized in Wildlife Health, Environment, and Natural Resources, for my Bachelor's and master's, provided essential knowledge

and practical skills. Further, my MBA and certifications in tourism and hospitality helped me understand the strategic and economic aspects of conservation. All these experiences and studies have guided my journey and leadership in wildlife conservation."

Qn: *You have held numerous leadership roles from childhood through university and now in your professional life. What drives your passion for leadership, and how has it evolved over the years?*

Leadership for me is a sacred act of service, a ripple that creates lasting impact. Growing up, my father's example as an army officer, who retired as a colonel in the UPDF Army, painted a vivid portrait of discipline, responsibility, and unwavering integrity, the backbone of true leadership. My mother (RIP), with her exceptional strength, raised us with a tender yet firm hand, even as our father ventured across distant lands for work. She nurtured us with love and discipline, weaving strength into the foundation of our lives. My father and mother, the dedicated educationists, were the guiding stars, ensuring we soaked in knowledge at the finest schools, urging us to strive for excellence, always reminding us to study diligently and sharpen our skills like a craftsman honing his masterpiece.

As I journeyed through high school, I immersed myself in numerous leadership trainings, each one a stepping stone on my path. The Kyankwanzi training in 2012 stands out as a moment when I was recognized as the top student, awarded for being the overall best in the class. The lessons from the Uganda

Wildlife Authority and other programs further shaped my understanding of the true essence of leadership. Naturally, I gravitated toward roles of influence, serving as a library prefect, a student council member, and eventually a university representative; each position was a platform for igniting positive change. Through these experiences, I learned that leadership is not merely wielding authority but a sacred act of mentorship, empowerment, and inspiration that helps others unlock their full potential. Every role, every challenge, revealed that real leadership is rooted in humility, service, and the relentless desire to make a difference. This passion has only grown deeper, fuelled by the fires of experience and purpose.

Qn: *Picking from what you said earlier, each step and each moment of dedication have brought you to where you are today. Can you take us through your work journey and share how your experiences have shaped your path?*

My journey into conservation was gradual but passionate. I volunteered at the Ministry of Tourism immediately after finishing school, which exposed me to the importance of sustainable tourism and wildlife protection. During this time, I realized that I wanted to contribute more actively. I briefly worked at a bank, but my heart was in conservation. In 2012, I was fortunate to join the Uganda Wildlife Authority as a Reservations Officer. The opportunity to work directly with wildlife, protect endangered species, and promote community coexistence was deeply motivating. I saw it as a chance to give back



Crocodiles captured from Kibuye Landing site in Nakasongola

to my country and make a tangible difference in preserving Uganda's rich biodiversity. Later joined the tourism department and finally am in community conservation, as a Senior Officer and Acting commissioner, human wildlife conflict.

Qn: *How do you balance the demands of your profession with your personal life?*

Balancing the demands of my profession with my personal life is always a challenge, but I find strength in my family. I have three wonderful children and a caring husband, Mr. Enock Kigozi Kumumanya, who supports me unconditionally. I am the third born in a family of six siblings, and my father, a retired colonel, has been a remarkable role model and a loving

dad. Sadly, my mother passed away, but I hold her memory close to my heart; she was a dear presence in my life. Despite the busyness, I cherish every moment I spend with my family, as their love and support keep me grounded and motivated in everything I do.

Qn: *Facing challenges as a woman in a male-dominated sector must be tough. Can you share some of the obstacles you've encountered, and how you've managed to succeed despite them?*

Indeed, working in such a challenging environment requires a strong technical skill set and resilience. I have addressed societal stereotypes that women cannot handle dangerous animals or work in remote terrains by

continuously enhancing my expertise through specialized training in wildlife management, safety protocols, and conflict mitigation. My approach combines technical competence with emotional intelligence, leveraging skills in communication, teamwork, and conflict resolution to effectively manage wildlife incidents and community relations. Support from my family and organization has been vital in balancing demanding fieldwork with personal responsibilities. I see each challenge as an opportunity to demonstrate professionalism, adapt to complex situations, and push the boundaries for women in conservation, ultimately setting new standards for resilience and technical excellence in this field.

Qn: *You were recognized with an award on Women's Day in 2024. How did this recognition affect you personally and professionally?*

Receiving this award from his excellence on Women's Day in 2014 was an incredible honour. It was a validation of my hard work, dedication, and the impact I've made in conservation and community engagement. Personally, it boosted my confidence and motivated me to aim higher. Professionally, it increased my visibility, opened doors for more leadership opportunities, and inspired other women to pursue careers in conservation. It reinforced the message that women's contributions are valued and that we can lead effectively in challenging sectors.

Qn: *Who inspires you in your circles*

Several individuals have inspired my journey in conservation. My Headteacher at Nabbingo Middle School, Nakate Kikomoko, and my father, who introduced me to conservation

through the late Mr. Justus Tindiharukayo, have been key influences. His advice to pursue a BSc in Wildlife Health and Management opened my eyes to the importance of conservation for national development.

At Uganda Wildlife Authority, two women have greatly motivated me: Vanice Mirembe, whose resilience and passion I admired during my internship and later as my supervisor, and Margaret Kasumba, a dedicated law enforcement officer whose professionalism I respect. A memorable moment was serving as Parade Commander alongside her at the 2018 UWA Rangers' pass-out parade, a proud and inspiring experience. These individuals' dedication and strength continue to inspire me to make a meaningful impact in conservation.

Qn: *Using drama and theatre as educational strategies effectively promotes awareness and fosters community participation in wildlife conflict mitigation. What strategies have been put in place in accordance with this?*

Currently, we are producing various films and broadcasts on conservation and human-wildlife conflict that will be aired across various media outlets. These initiatives aim to reach a broader audience, raise awareness, and promote positive behaviours towards wildlife. We are committed to integrating creative arts and media-based approaches into our conservation efforts because they resonate well and can lead to lasting behavioural change. At UWA, we believe that using drama and theatre as educational tools is a powerful strategy. These methods engage communities emotionally

and culturally, making messages about wildlife conservation and conflict resolution more impactful and memorable. When communities see and participate in dramatizations that reflect their own experiences, it fosters understanding, empathy, and a sense of shared responsibility.

Qn: *What are some of the most pressing challenges facing wildlife conservation in Uganda today, and what strategies is your team employing to address them?*

Uganda faces several conservation challenges, including human-wildlife conflict, poaching, illegal wildlife trade, invasive species, and limited funding. To address these, we implement targeted mitigation measures like electric fences, community sensitization programs, anti-poaching patrols, and habitat management. We also leverage research and technology for monitoring wildlife populations. Community engagement is vital we educate locals about the importance of conservation and their role in protecting biodiversity. Additionally, we seek increased funding and partnerships to strengthen our efforts. The goal is to ensure the survival of our wildlife while supporting local livelihoods.

Qn: *As a trailblazer, what is the legacy you wish to leave behind for future generations of women in conservation?*

I want to be remembered as someone who broke barriers and opened doors for women in conservation. I hope to inspire young girls to dream big, pursue their passions, and lead with integrity and resilience. My legacy is

about creating opportunities, mentoring others, and demonstrating that women can excel in even the most challenging roles. I believe that empowering women in conservation will lead to stronger communities, healthier ecosystems, and a brighter future for Uganda.

Qn: *More on this subject, how does UWA balance wildlife conservation efforts with the needs and livelihoods of local communities, and what strategies are in place to ensure these interventions are culturally sensitive and accepted?*

UWA promotes coexistence between wildlife and communities by involving local leaders and residents in conservation efforts. They encourage community-led solutions, such as building protective barriers and offering crop insurance. UWA also supports eco-tourism to provide economic benefits and respects cultural traditions by integrating conservation messages into local festivals. These strategies foster trust and cooperation, making conservation efforts more sustainable and culturally appropriate.

You will agree with me today that, as we celebrate women at the helm guiding with strength, wisdom, and unwavering resolve. Their leadership brightens the path for generations to come, fostering a future where resilience and compassion reign. As we honour their courage, let us commit to empowering more women to lead because when women rise, communities flourish, and the world transforms. Together, we forge a legacy of inspiration, hope, and enduring change.



PROF. SARAH SSALI
DEPUTY VICE CHANCELLOR FOR ACADEMIC AFFAIRS



Exploring The Deep Journey of Makerere's 2nd Female Deputy Vice Chancellor

By Damali Mukhaye

In the century-long history of Makerere University, the rise of Prof. Sarah Ssali to the position of Deputy Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs marks both a personal milestone and a significant moment for women's leadership in higher education. Her appointment places her among the university's top three administrators and makes her only the second woman to hold the position in more than 100 years.

The announcement, made by Vice Chancellor Prof. Barnabas Nawangwe and confirmed by Chancellor Dr. Crispus Kiyonga, was received with excitement across the academic community. For many, it symbolized both recognition of an accomplished scholar and a step forward in the ongoing pursuit of gender equity in academic leadership.

A Career Built on Scholarship and Service

Prof. Ssali holds a Bachelor's degree in Social Sciences, a Master's degree in Gender

Studies, and a PhD in International Health and Development. Over more than two decades at Makerere, she has contributed extensively to teaching, research, and institutional leadership.

She has participated in numerous research projects, published widely in peer-reviewed journals, supervised graduate students, and held several leadership roles within the university.

Among these roles, she served as Director of the Institute of Gender and Development Studies and as a member of the University Council, where she chaired committees responsible for quality assurance, student affairs, and staff development.

Her leadership experience also extends beyond the university. She has served on national boards, including the National Curriculum Development Centre (NCDC) and the Uganda Institute of Bankers Senate.

Rising Through Dedication

Prof. Ssali's journey to the Deputy Vice Chancellorship has been shaped by more than

23 years of commitment to teaching, research, and institutional service. Since joining Makerere as a young lecturer, she has built a reputation as a thoughtful scholar, dedicated mentor, and capable administrator. Her research and academic work have consistently focused on issues of health, governance, and women's empowerment, areas that remain central to social transformation.

The selection process for the Deputy Vice Chancellor position was rigorous and highly competitive. Candidates were required to demonstrate outstanding academic scholarship, administrative leadership, strong research output, postgraduate mentorship, and international engagement.

Preparing the application alone required months of compiling academic achievements and leadership experience, an exercise that highlighted the depth of Prof. Ssali's contribution to academia.

A Symbol of Progress

Her appointment carries powerful meaning for women across Uganda who aspire to leadership in academia and beyond.

While educational opportunities for women have expanded significantly over the years, representation in senior academic leadership remains limited. Prof. Ssali's rise, therefore, represents both progress and a reminder that continued effort is needed to achieve balanced representation in positions of influence. Her leadership reflects a growing recognition that women's voices and perspectives are essential in shaping the future of higher education.

Shaping the Academic Future

As Deputy Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs, Prof. Ssali plays a central role in guiding the academic direction of Makerere University. Her office oversees teaching and learning,

curriculum development, graduate training, research coordination, quality assurance, and student welfare.

One of her priorities is improving the learning environment across the university. She believes that quality education is shaped not only by the curriculum but also by the physical conditions in which students learn. Functional lecture rooms, reliable equipment, adequate seating, and clean facilities all contribute to the seriousness and dignity of the academic experience.

To strengthen these standards, she is working toward introducing a Lecture Room Essentials Checklist, aimed at ensuring that teaching spaces meet basic requirements necessary for effective learning.

Strengthening Graduate Education

Another major focus of her leadership is expanding postgraduate training. While many students complete undergraduate degrees, a smaller proportion continue to postgraduate studies. For a university with Makerere's long-standing reputation as a leading research institution in Africa, strengthening graduate education is essential.

Efforts are therefore being directed towards improving supervision systems, streamlining academic processes, and ensuring that postgraduate students complete their studies within reasonable timelines. Enhancing postgraduate output will strengthen the university's research capacity and its global academic standing.

Innovation Through Technology

Prof. Ssali is also championing the use of technology to improve accountability and efficiency within the academic system. Plans are underway to expand biometric systems for staff attendance and introduce digital tools that allow students to register their class attendance. These innovations are expected to foster a culture of shared responsibility between lecturers and students while ensuring that teaching schedules are respected.

At the same time, strengthening the Student Evaluation of Courses and Teaching framework will allow students to provide structured feedback, supporting continuous improvement in teaching quality.

Supporting Students Holistically

Beyond academic reforms, Prof. Ssali places strong emphasis on student welfare and mentorship. She believes universities must support not only intellectual growth but also the emotional and social well-being of students.

Strengthening counselling services and addressing the stigma surrounding mental health support are part of her broader vision for a supportive academic environment.

She also advocates renewed attention to sports and extracurricular activities, recognizing their role in building discipline, resilience, teamwork, and community among students.



Leadership Beyond the University

Outside the university, Prof. Ssali's life is deeply rooted in family and community. She is a wife, a mother of two, and a grandmother. In addition, she supports the welfare and education of seventeen children under her care and guardianship.

Balancing these responsibilities alongside her academic career has strengthened her empathy and understanding of the challenges many young people face while pursuing education.

Inspiring the Next Generation

Prof. Ssali's journey carries an important message for young people across Uganda. Her academic path did not begin in elite schools. She studied at Tororo Girls School before continuing at Fairway Secondary School in Mbale.

Through determination, discipline, and dedication to learning, she built an academic career that eventually led her to one of the highest leadership positions at Makerere University.

Her advice to women is simple: work hard, remain committed, and surround yourself with supportive networks. She encourages women to value mentorship, remain grateful to those who support their journeys, and build professional relationships grounded in integrity and respect.

A Story of Possibility

As Uganda celebrates International Women's Day, Prof. Sarah Ssali's journey stands as a powerful reminder that women can rise to leadership in spaces historically dominated by men.

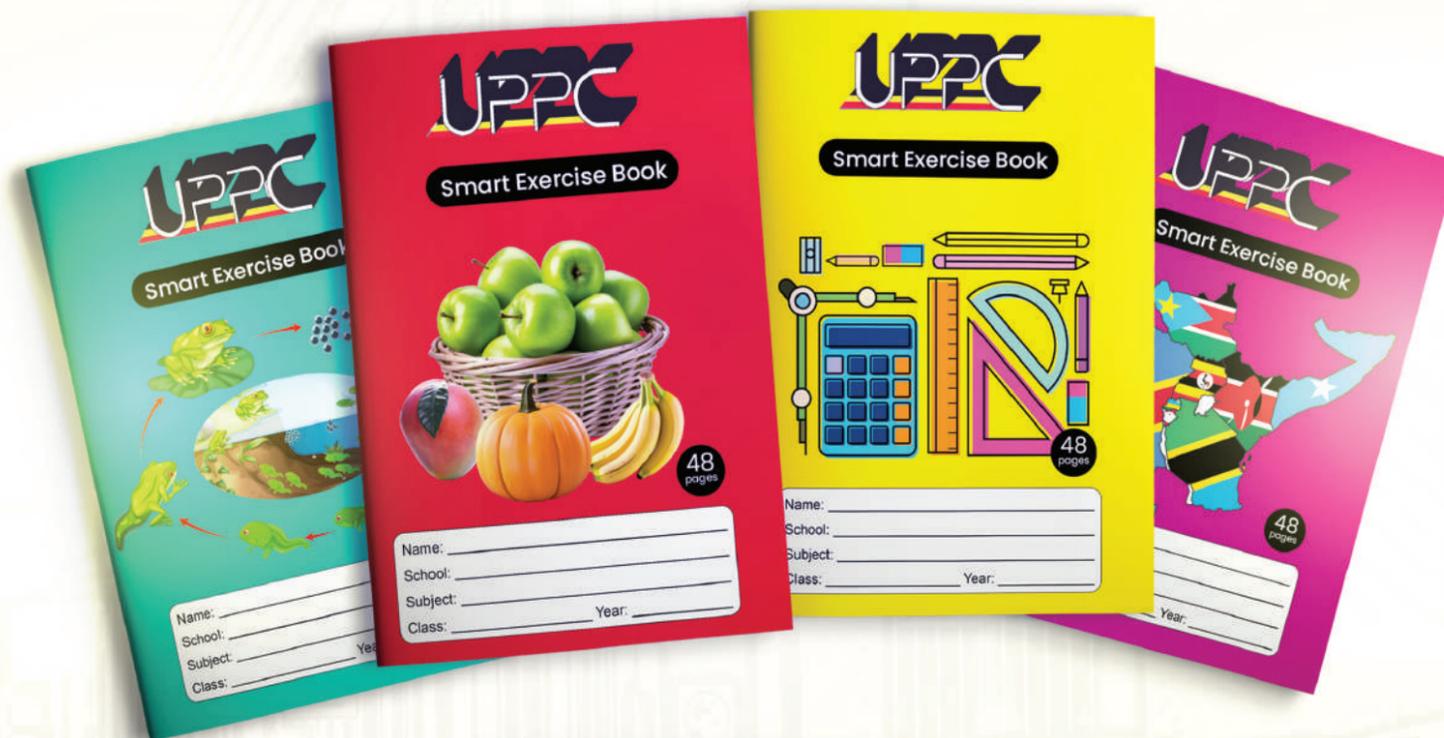
Her story is not only one of personal achievement but also a symbol of possibility for the next generation of women who aspire to shape the future of education and leadership in Uganda.



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NUDIPU'S INTERVENTION

INVESTMENT IN SAVINGS AND SOCIAL WELFARE: A PRE-REQUISITE FOR EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN AND GIRLS WITH DISABILITIES

In Nakapiripirit, a compelling story of empowerment unfolds as persons with disabilities transform their lives through sustainable livelihoods.

The Eteetunos ISAVE Group, one of 35 gender and disability-inclusive community-based savings groups in Tokora Sub-county, Okwapon Parish, Morungor Village, stands as a testament to this change.

Made up of 30 members 18 persons with disabilities, 7 caregivers, and 6 well-wishers Eteetunos ISAVE Group was formed in response

to the crippling challenges faced by individuals in this remote community. Poverty, stigma, limited mobility, and exclusion from financial services and government livelihood programs have long been barriers to their participation in economic and social activities. In addition, a river separating villages and significant distances to essential services further amplified their marginalization. Before the intervention, access to income-generating opportunities and social protection programs was severely restricted. Key services, like grinding mills, were located over three kilometres away across a river, making them virtually inaccessible for persons

with limited mobility. Consequently, many households remained economically vulnerable and excluded from local development initiatives.

However, significant progress has been made through the Gender and Disability in Practice II (GADIP II) program, supported by the Austrian Development Cooperation. Since 2024, NUDIPU has facilitated community sensitization on inclusive savings and livelihoods, resulting in the establishment of 35 gender and disability-inclusive savings groups, including the Eteetunos ISAVE Group.

Through trained NUDIPU Community-Based Trainers, group members received valuable training in ISAVE methodology, financial literacy, and enterprise management. They elected leaders, developed a constitution, and officially registered the group at the sub-county. Through the first cycle of saving, the group managed to save up to Shs **7,978,000**.

The members have since used their savings into involve in micro- enterprise activities such as buying and selling products (like soda and milk), food production (such as making chapati), and agriculture (both large and small scale). In addition to this members also received information on government programs, such as Emyooga, the Parish Development Model, and the Social Grant for Persons with Disabilities.

In September 2025, five representatives from the group opened a bank account to receive the UGX 5,000,000 National Special Grant. Guided in identifying a disability-friendly enterprise, the group invested the funds in a grinding mill, effectively addressing both mobility barriers and community needs. Since its establishment, the enterprise has generated a profit of UGX 980,000 monthly, which has been reinvested into group savings.

A member shared their experience, stating, "Before this support, crossing the river to grind food was very difficult. Now our income has improved, and we feel respected." This sentiment reflects the broader impact of gender and disability-inclusive savings and social protection on empowering persons with disabilities. It strengthens their livelihoods and helps restore dignity.

With continued support from NUDIPU and its partners, the Eteetunos ISAVE Group aims to expand its enterprise further, improving the well-being of all its members, particularly women and girls with disabilities.

This initiative demonstrates that inclusive approaches to economic empowerment can lead to transformative change, creating opportunities for self-sufficiency and social inclusion.





SOPHIA NAMUTEBI,
AKA MAMA FIINA



Turning Tears into Triumph: The Empowering Story of Mama Fiina

*Imagine rising from the depths of poverty, losing your parents at a young age, and yet, against all odds, transforming your life into a bonfire of hope for others. Today, Christine Keehe brings you the extraordinary story of **Sophia Namutebi, aka Mama Fiina**, a barefoot orphan who turned her humble beginnings into a powerful force for community change. From mastering traditional healing rooted in her heritage to becoming an influential leader and entrepreneur, her journey is a testament to resilience, faith, and unwavering determination. Join us as we uncover the inspiring chapters of a woman who proves that true leadership begins not in the boardrooms, but in the hearts and homes of ordinary people.*

Qn: *Mama Fiina, your story begins in extreme poverty and hardship. What kept you going during those difficult times?*

What kept me going was a deep sense of responsibility for my siblings, my community, and myself. I believed that no matter how hard life was, I could create a better future through perseverance, faith, and small, consistent steps forward. Every challenge was an opportunity to learn and grow.

Qn: *You inherited a gift from your father in traditional healing. How did that shape your journey and identity?*

My father's teachings introduced me to the world of herbs and healing, which became

more than a skill; it became my passion and purpose. Traditional medicine taught me discipline, patience, and the importance of respecting culture while practicing with dignity. It's a gift I cherish and continue to honour.

Qn: *Your work as a healer has transformed lives, including that of a woman abroad who struggled with infertility. How does that success impact you personally?*

That moment was life-changing. Knowing I could bring hope and healing to someone, even from afar, reinforced my belief in traditional medicine's power. It also validated my hard work and dedication. It's a reminder that service and compassion can truly transform lives.

Qn: *You diversified your income from small businesses to boda bodas. What inspired you to adopt such a strategic approach?*

I believed in the power of diversification. Starting with a boda boda was a practical decision, an income-generating activity that could lift entire families. I wanted to create sustainable livelihoods, not just for myself but for others, especially women. Wealth grows when small habits are nurtured consistently.

Qn: *What were some of the biggest challenges you faced along your journey, and how did you overcome them?*

I faced skepticism about traditional medicine, gender biases, financial struggles, and emotional strain. I overcame these through patience, prayer, strategic thinking, and professionalism. Instead of reacting emotionally, I focused on results, diversified my income, and let my work speak for itself.

Qn: *How has your influence expanded beyond business and healing to become a voice in community development and leadership?*

As my influence grew, I realized that leadership is about service. I started sharing my ideas on the radio, engaging in community discussions, and joining associations. My goal is to represent ordinary women, advocate for their empowerment, and contribute to positive change at every level.



Qn: *What does leadership mean to you, especially as a woman who has risen from humble beginnings?*

Leadership is about service, humility, and making an impact. It's not about titles or power but about lifting others and creating opportunities. My journey shows that women can lead with resilience, integrity, and compassion—whether in homes, forests, or community halls.

Qn: *What advice do you have for young women who may not have had the chance to complete formal education but want to succeed?*

Education is important, but not the only path. Learn a skill, respect small beginnings, save diligently, and stay disciplined. Success comes from hard work, integrity, and solving others' problems. Laziness, not lack of schooling, is the real obstacle.

Qn: *Looking ahead, what message do you want to leave for women aspiring to lead and make a difference?*

Believe in yourself, start small, and keep going. Leadership begins in the simplest places: your kitchen, your herbs, your community. Persistence, faith, and service are the true keys to making a lasting impact.

Qn: *Your journey is deeply rooted in service, whether as a healer, businesswoman, or community leader. How do you balance all these roles, and what keeps you motivated?*

It's about purpose. Each role complements the other. My motivation comes from seeing lives change, families thrive, women be empowered, and communities grow stronger. Balance is about prioritizing service and staying grounded in my values.

Qn: *Can you share a moment or experience that made you realize your impact was truly changing lives?*

One moment that stands out was when a woman from abroad came to thank me after her successful treatment. She said I gave her hope where there was despair. That moment reaffirmed my calling and deepened my commitment to serve others. She gave me a lot of money that helped me start building myself.

“Traditional healing is a vital part of our culture and identity. It must evolve by integrating modern knowledge, hygiene, and research while respecting its roots.”

Qn: *How do you see the role of traditional healing evolving in today's modern society?*

Traditional healing is a vital part of our culture and identity. It must evolve by integrating modern knowledge, hygiene, and research while respecting its roots. We can bridge tradition and modernity to better serve communities.

Qn: *What is one lesson you wish every young woman would learn from your story?*

Never underestimate the power of small beginnings. Consistency, discipline, and faith can turn humble steps into a journey of greatness. Trust the process and keep moving forward.

Qn: *As a leader, how do you inspire others to believe in themselves and pursue their dreams?*

I lead by example, showing that resilience and integrity open doors. I encourage women to start where they are, use what they have, and never give up. Every woman has potential; she just needs to believe and act.

Qn: *Where do you get your support and resources? Do you rely on government assistance or any special favours?*

It is a common misconception that I receive financial support from the government or any influential figures. I want to clarify that my resources and stability are the result of hard work, perseverance, and community support. Success is achieved through dedication, integrity, and resilience. I take pride in my efforts and believe that with determination and honest effort, anyone can attain stability and progress. It is important to recognize that genuine success is built on personal commitment and the community's collective strength.

Mama Fiina's story is a powerful reminder that leadership and success are not reserved for the privileged or those with formal education. They are born from resilience, service, and a relentless belief in oneself. Her journey teaches us that even in the simplest acts, gathering herbs, washing clothes, or lending a helping hand lie the seeds of transformation. As we celebrate women at the helm today, let her story inspire us all to start where we are, keep going despite obstacles, and remember that true leadership begins with service from the heart, - Christine Keehe.

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Primary Health Care	Community health education	Friday 8:00 PM – 9:00 PM
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Prudence Ukkonika: Building Uganda's Homegrown Wine Industry

By Caroline Nakire

As the world celebrates the resilience, innovation, and leadership of women during International Women's Day, the story of Prudence Ukkonika stands out as a powerful testament to determination, family values, and entrepreneurial courage.

As the Chief Executive Officer of K-Roma Limited, the producer of the well-known Bella Wines and Bella Juice brands, Ukkonika has spent more than two decades building a business that has helped place locally produced fruit wine on Uganda's economic map. Her journey is not only a story of business success but also one of persistence, self-belief, and the courage to pursue education and personal growth later in life.

Through her dedication, she has demonstrated that leadership can emerge from humble beginnings and that women have the power to transform industries, communities, and families when given the opportunity.

A Business Inspired by Family

Prudence Ukkonika's entrepreneurial journey began in 2000, when she started what would later become KE and S Roma Company. The company was officially registered in 2004, but the idea behind the business had already taken root years earlier. Interestingly, the inspiration came from within her own family. According to Ukkonika, the idea to venture into wine production was first suggested by her late second-born son.

Motivated by the idea and supported by her family, she explored the opportunity of producing wine from Uganda's abundant fruits. At the time, most wines consumed in Uganda were imported, leaving limited space for locally produced alternatives.

Recognizing this gap, Ukkonika saw an opportunity not only to start a business but also to promote the value of Uganda's agricultural produce.



Today, more than 25 years later, K-Roma Company continues to grow, producing Bella Wines and Bella Juice while creating employment opportunities for many Ugandans.

A Family-Driven Enterprise

One of the unique features of Ukkonika's company is its strong family involvement. Rather than relying on a traditional corporate board structure, she runs the enterprise with the support of her children, who actively participate in the company's operations and decision-making processes. For Ukkonika, this model is both practical and personal. She believes her family understands the company's vision and values better than anyone else. Despite its unconventional structure, the company operates within Uganda's regulatory framework and remains compliant with tax obligations. Beyond supporting her own family, the enterprise has also contributed to job creation and local economic development.

Balancing Family and Career

Prudence Ukkonika's story is also one of balancing family life with professional responsibilities. She is the mother of six children, four boys and two girls. She married in 1980 to a colleague she worked with at the Ministry of Finance. Her husband, who was ten years older, had a long and distinguished career in public service. The couple welcomed their six children in less than seven years, a demanding period that required immense resilience as she balanced motherhood with her career. Both she and her husband devoted many years to public service. Ukkonika worked at the Ministry of



Finance for nearly 30 years, while her husband served for more than 40 years.

Their government careers instilled values of discipline, accountability, and hard work, principles that would later influence how she ran her business.

A Journey Back to Education

Although she began her professional life early, Ukkonika later realized the importance of advancing her education. After completing her O-Level studies, she enrolled at Uganda College of Commerce in Nakawa, where she pursued a certificate in Office English and Management. This qualification enabled her to secure employment at the Ministry of Finance.

However, she later felt insecure about her academic qualifications, particularly because many members of her husband's family were highly educated. Determined to improve herself, she returned to school as an adult learner. She initially sought private tutoring before enrolling in the Makerere Advanced Level programme for adult learners. Later, she joined Ndejje University, where she completed a Bachelor's degree in Business Administration.

Although she once attempted to pursue a Master's degree, she could not complete it due to the demands of research and running her business. Nevertheless, the knowledge she gained played an important role in strengthening her leadership and entrepreneurial capacity.

Integrity and Public Service

Throughout her career at the Ministry of Finance, Ukkonika remained committed to honesty and professionalism. She emphasizes that during her decades in public service, she never engaged in corruption and instead relied entirely on her salary. These values continue to guide how she manages her company today. She prioritises transparency, fairness, and the welfare of her employees. For Ukkonika, integrity is not just a personal virtue; it is the foundation of sustainable leadership.

Championing Uganda's Local Wine Industry

One of Ukkonika's greatest achievements has been pioneering local wine production in Uganda. At a time when imported wines dominated the market, she took the bold step of developing a locally produced alternative using Ugandan fruits.

Bella Wines quickly gained recognition as a unique Ugandan brand. Through persistence and innovation, the company has managed to compete with international brands.

Her entrepreneurial journey has also taken her beyond Uganda's borders. She has travelled to countries such as Vietnam and South Africa to learn from international producers and explore export opportunities.

Supporting Local Production

Despite her achievements, Ukkonika acknowledges the challenges facing local manufacturers. One of the biggest obstacles, she says, is the limited support for locally produced goods. Many consumers continue to prefer imported products, making it harder for domestic industries to grow. She believes Uganda could benefit from stronger policies and public support for locally made products. "Development starts with supporting what we produce," she often says.

Inspiring the Next Generation

As a businesswoman, mother, and pioneer in Uganda's wine industry, Prudence Ukkonika's story carries an important message for women across the country. Her journey shows that it is never too late to pursue education, start a business, or follow a dream. Through determination, hard work, and faith in her abilities, she has built a legacy that continues to impact lives. As Uganda celebrates women shaping the nation's future, Ukkonika's story stands as a powerful reminder that women are not only participants in development—they are leaders, innovators, and change-makers.



HAJJAT SOFIA SAFINA KENYANGI
NATIONAL CHAIRPERSON OF THE UGANDA MUSLIM WOMEN'S COUNCIL



Amplifying the Voice of Muslim Women in Uganda

By Marvin Mutenyo

Once whispered about in the shadows of tradition, Muslim women are now stepping into the spotlight, radiant, resilient, and resolute. Their stories are no longer confined to the margins; they are unfolding as powerful narratives of transformation, ambition, and unwavering faith.

Across Uganda and beyond, Muslim women are proving that faith and ambition are not mutually exclusive but mutually empowering. They are forging a future where leadership, excellence, and influence are universal rights.

*At the centre of this evolving narrative stands **Hajjat Sofia Safina Kenyangi**, a determined advocate whose work reflects the growing momentum of Muslim women stepping forward to shape their communities and influence national discourse.*

A Voice for Inclusion

For many years, Muslim women in Uganda faced social and structural barriers that limited their participation in leadership and community decision-making. Cultural expectations, limited opportunities, and underrepresentation in institutional structures often kept many voices unheard.

But that reality is changing. Through advocacy, organisational leadership, and public engagement, Hajjat Safina Kenyangi has emerged as one of the women working to expand the space for Muslim women in leadership.

As National Chairperson of the Uganda Muslim Women's Council and Director of Old Kampala Hospital, she has played a significant role in raising the profile of Muslim women within both religious and civic structures. Her leadership within the women's arm affiliated with the **Uganda Muslim Supreme Council (UMSC)** has strengthened the participation of women in national dialogue and community development.

Leadership Rooted in Community

Under Safina Kenyangi's stewardship, the Uganda Muslim Women's Council has pushed for greater institutional inclusion of women in the leadership structures of the Uganda Muslim Supreme Council.



Safina Kenyangi and members of the Uganda National Muslim Women's Council pose for a photo with H.E Yoweri Museveni at the inaugural Uganda Muslim Women's conference.

The council has also supported women's SACCOs, economic empowerment initiatives, and leadership capacity-building programs, addressing issues ranging from poverty alleviation to domestic violence prevention.

Through community mobilisation and advocacy, the council has become an important platform for Muslim women to address concerns related to health, education, social welfare, and economic empowerment. By amplifying these voices, Kenyangi has helped create new pathways for Muslim women to participate actively in community development and national discourse.

Stepping Into National Leadership

Safina Kenyangi's leadership is not confined to community structures alone. Her decision to pursue elective leadership as a candidate for Kampala Woman Member of Parliament in the 2026 elections reflects a growing confidence among Muslim women to participate in national politics and public service.

Her candidacy represents more than a political aspiration. It symbolizes a broader shift in the Muslim community where women are increasingly stepping forward as leaders, advocates, and changemakers. For many young women watching her journey, it

signals that leadership is not limited by faith or tradition but strengthened by them.

A Broader Movement of Muslim Women

Safina Kenyangi's story is part of a larger transformation unfolding within Uganda's Muslim community. Across the country, Muslim women are rising in various sectors, including education, business, civil society, and public service. Their growing presence in leadership reflects a deeper recognition that women's voices are essential in shaping communities and institutions.

In the judiciary, for example, the appointments of Justice Faridah Shamilah Bukirwa and Justice Celia Nagawa in 2022 marked

important milestones for Muslim women in Uganda's legal landscape. Such achievements demonstrate that Muslim women are steadily breaking barriers and expanding their influence across different spheres of national life.

Inspiring the Next Generation

For young Muslim girls and women, Safina Kenyangi's journey carries an important message: faith and leadership can coexist. Her example demonstrates that women can remain grounded in their cultural and religious identity while actively participating in leadership and national development.

Through mentorship, advocacy, and community engagement, she continues to inspire a new generation of Muslim women to envision themselves not only as participants in society but as leaders shaping its future.

A Future of Possibility

The rise of Muslim women in Uganda is more than a story of individual success. It is a collective movement. From grassroots initiatives to national leadership, Muslim women are redefining their roles and contributing meaningfully to the country's progress.

As these women ascend to new heights, they become symbols of hope and proof that perseverance and faith can rewrite destinies. Their journeys remind us that within every challenge lies an opportunity, and within every woman resides the power to shape a brighter tomorrow. The rise of Muslim women is not merely a chapter in history. It is a revolution of resilience, dignity, and determination.

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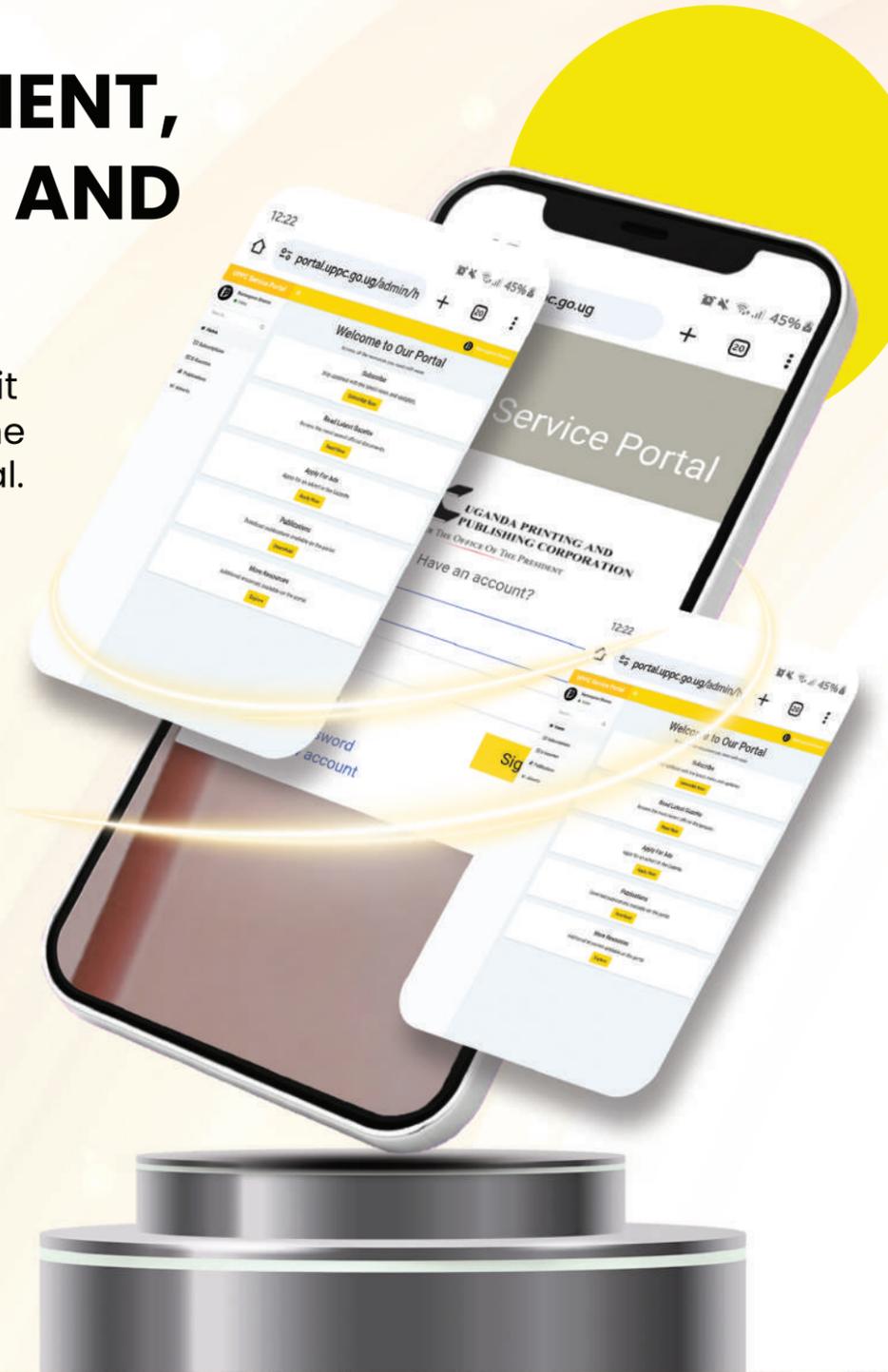
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