

Beating all odds. From scrubbing clinic floors to creating jobs, Robinah Nyakecho's grit proves that persistence unlocks extraordinary opportunities for success in life.

BY JANE NAFULA

The academic journey is not always smooth for many Ugandan students, especially those whose parents struggle to raise school dues or are abandoned by parents at a tender age. However, those who endure the hard times and strive to hunt for available opportunities, most times see light at the end of the tunnel.

The power and fruits of resilience are evident in the life of Ms Robinah Nyakecho, a graduate who is currently pursuing an online Master's Degree in Education Computing at the American University of Beirut, in Lebanon. She is the brain behind the Kecho-Agro-Processors company, found in the eastern Uganda District of Iganga.

Ms Nyakecho says she was raised by her maternal grandmother in Amagoro B Village in Tororo District, after her parents separated.

After sitting for Primary Leaving Examinations (PLE) in 2012, Ms Nyakecho came to Kampala to live with her elder sister, who sorely depended on hawking yellow bananas on the city streets and laundry to make ends meet.

When her results came back, Nyake-

Nyakecho's journey from a cleaner to an employer

cho was enrolled at Kansanga Seed Secondary School, one of the government schools in Kampala offering Universal Secondary Education (USE) and Universal Post O-level Education and Training (UPOLET).

Her sister could contribute Shs100,000 per term to cater for meals. During weekends, she could help the sister to sell yellow bananas to be able to raise money for scholastic materials, rent and upkeep.

The duo lived in the Namuwongo slums, in Makindye Division and their monthly rent was Shs 80,000, according to Nyakecho.

On a good weekend, she would sell bananas worth Shs 10,000. During her senior six vacation, Ms Nyakecho had to think outside the box so that she could raise money to support her university education.

Fortunately, she landed a job as a cleaner at a health clinic in Namuwongo. Here she earned Shs150,000 per month. When her A-level results were released, she started looking around for sponsors, as she had scored 16 points and could not win a government sponsorship.

As she pondered her next move, she shared her plight with a nurse at the clinic where she worked as a cleaner. The nurse told her about the MasterCard Foundation Scholarship at Mak-



“Dream chaser. “I headed to Makerere and inquired about it before applying for the scholarship. When I returned to the clinic, I had been fired on the grounds that I had absconded from work. I was expected to keep the clinic clean all the time, but on this day, I stayed away to secure my future by chasing for a scholarship,” **Robinah Nyakecho, a graduate pursuing Master's Degree in Education Computing**

erere.

“I headed to Makerere and inquired about it before applying for the scholarship. When I returned to the clinic, I had been fired on the grounds that I had absconded from work,” she recalls. “I was expected to keep the clinic clean all the time, but on this day, I stayed away as I hoped to secure my future by chasing for a scholarship.”

After losing the cleaning job, she instead started hunting for a teaching job in a Primary School and landed on one, where she earned Shs 100,000 per month in wages.

As she hustled as a Primary Three class teacher, she was informed that her application for the scholarship was successful. She immediately abandoned the teaching job, to prepare for university.

“I was lucky. They called me saying my application was successful. I felt so happy because I had always wanted to study at Makerere University, Uganda's premier university. The staff of MasterCard Foundation came home for validation before I could be granted scholarship,” She recalls.

In 2019, she enrolled for Bachelor of Arts of Education programme and graduated in 2023 with a First Class degree. Upon graduation, her sponsors, the MasterCard Foundation, through the MasterCard Foundation Fund for

similar project work because Uneb gives schools the same theme,” she said.

Alumni Start-Ups in Transition (FAST) programme, awarded her a grant of \$3,500 (about Shs 12.7 million).

“I used the funds to start Kecho Agro-Processors Company. I bought the machine and started processing sweet potatoes and cassava among others. I employ four people, three women and a man,” she explains.

Currently, Nyakecho is working with MasterCard, on a one year contract, where every alumnus is given an opportunity to serve the foundation upon graduation. Her advice to young people is to take courage, focus, and be determined to chase their dreams and always look out for opportunities.

During Makerere University's 76th graduation ceremonies, early this year, Ms Reeta Roy, the First President of the MasterCard Foundation challenged students, who go through the hands of the foundation to uphold values of integrity and respect and serve with humility.

“Uphold your values, you are the true definition impact. You are special leaders with an assignment to make your community better and inclusive. Extend a hand of justices and equity. I thank you for what you are about to do,” she said.

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