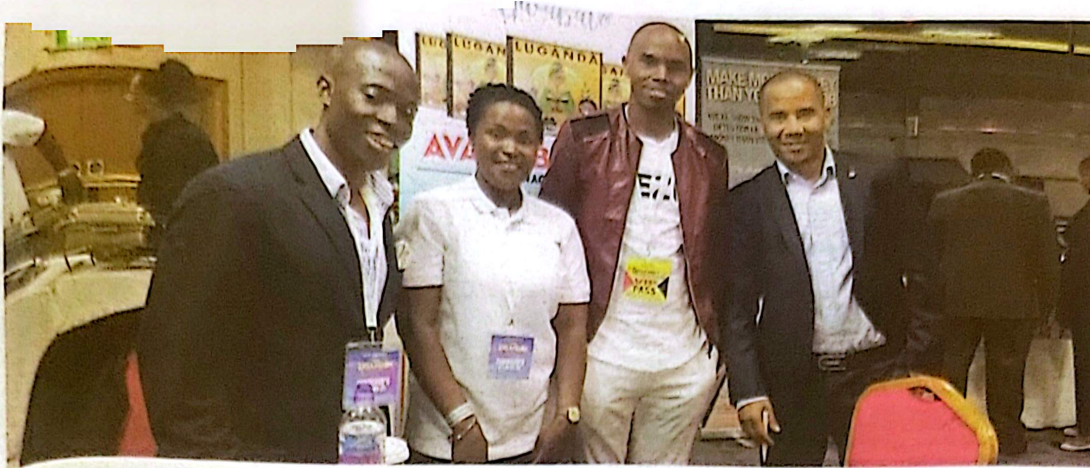




Diana Kabira (2 Left) and a group of Ugandans at the Uganda Convention in UK recently. COURTESY PHOTOS

Diana Kabira: Ugandan teaching Luganda in London

BY ESTHER OLUKA
eoluka@ug.nationmedia.com

In a YouTube video, a mass of young voices chorus Luganda rhymes repeating after a feminine voice.

In the video, the female tutor, spotting a black pair of trousers over a coffee brown blouse and sneakers, gets along so well as children chorus a Luganda nursery school rhyme "sisi...lwagenda mu kibiira...sisi...okonogaayo ebibaala...cici..." loosely translated to "we went to the forest to get fruits".

This is Diana Kabira Lwanga, a 35-year-old Ugandan who has become a sensation on a number of Uganda's social media platforms for teaching young children in the UK, a dominantly English speaking county, Luganda.

Kabira, who lives in Hampton Town off River Thames in London, is married to Ibrahim Lwanga, an engineer.

Teaching Luganda, she says, started as a simple idea but has now become a source of income for the mother of four.

Starting out

"My husband grew up in Sweden. We met in London while on holiday. We started dating and later married which forced him to relocate to London, UK," she says.

In 2006, Kabira started on a journey searching within herself for a career path that would later hook her up in an unexpected territory.

"I realised that children of Ugandan descent living here [London] lacked identity. They seemed lost and did not know exactly where they belonged," she says.

This was the start of an idea that would later morph into tutoring young children into understanding their language, culture and traditions.

"I spoke to my husband about writing and recording child themed songs in Luganda

Learning points

As a child, Kabira learnt through a well preserved family background where older people would tell stories during evening hours.

"We would sit on the veranda and listen to our uncles tell stories. Apart from stories we would sing and recite poems, among things," she says.

This inspired her into storytelling and singing at school and church, where she picked a number of songs that she currently teaches other children in London.

Family background

Diana Kabira was born to Jessica Eva Lubwama, now a retired nurse and the late George William Wandera Kabira.

She is the only child from her parents but has a number of stepbrothers and sisters.

in the diaspora. I also had this idea of translating English nursery rhymes to Luganda," she says.

Her husband supported the idea and it has since become not only a subject of discussion among Ugandans but a source of income for Kabira.

"This gap [for identity among Ugandan children living in the diaspora] pushed me to embark on this project," she says.

Currently, Kabira is a teacher at Suubi Academy, a learning facility in West London, where she teaches Luganda every Friday as an after-school programme.

Her role is to mentor and teach children between six and 18 years about their language, traditions and culture.

She also runs a private project - Mukwano Gw'abato - that among other things, brings both parents and children together to learn Buganda culture through sharing stories, playing games and learning about Buganda norms.

Kabira picked inspiration for her Mukwano Gw'abato project from Ezeza Omuto, a presentation that used to air on now defunct

"I loved watching her programme as a child. I would even imitate the way she spoke to children," she says.

Apart from Kabira's initiative there are other loose groupings such as Bakiga, Luo and Basoga associations, among others, that promote respective cultures in UK.

Kabira attended St Aloysius Primary School in Kayunga District for her early education before moving to Naalya Senior Secondary School and Bugema Adventist Secondary School where she completed her secondary education in 1999.

She later joined Makerere University and graduated with a Bachelor's of Arts in Arts in 2004.



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