# WOMEN JUDGES CHAMPION EQUITY IN COURTS OF LAW

BY VISION REPORTER

For a long time in Uganda, the courtroom was a place where men dominated the bench. The judges, the senior lawyers and even the voices that carried the most authority in legal debates were overwhelmingly male. But over the years, that picture has slowly begun to change.

Today, women are stepping forward and claiming their place in the Judiciary, bringing new perspectives and quiet determination to a profession once seen as a man's world.

By early this year, women made up nearly half of Uganda's judges. That number alone tells a powerful story. Yet, behind it lies another reality; even with these gains, women still struggle to reach the very top positions in the Judiciary. Cultural expectations, stereotypes and the subtle weight of politics continue to stand in the way.

Still, many women push forward, determined to show that justice does not belong to one gender alone.

## JULIA SEBUTINDE

Among the most remarkable is Julia Sebutinde. Her journey from a modest Ugandan home to the world's highest court reflects courage and persistence. She was born in 1954 in Entebbe to a civil servant father and a home-maker mother. Growing up during uncertain political times,



Julia Sebutinde

including the turbulent rule of Idi Amin, Sebutinde developed a strong belief in the importance of justice and the rule of law.

She studied law at Makerere University, graduating in 1977, and later earned a master's degree from the University of Edinburgh in 1990. Sebutinde's legal career began as a state attorney before she became a High Court judge in 1996, handling complex cases including corruption investigations.



Catherine Bamugemereire

Her work later took her to the Special Court for Sierra Leone, where she served from 2005 to 2011, despite threats and skepticism. In 2012, Sebutinde made history as the first African woman elected to the International Court of Justice. Re-elected in 2020 and chosen as the court's vice-president in 2024, she remains guided by a simple principle: "I vote my conscience."

## BAMUGEMEREIRE

Inspired by her father, who served as a magistrate, Catherine Bamugemereire has grown into one of Uganda's most recognisable voices in the fight against corruption. Born in Mbale, she developed an early respect for the law by watching how seriously her father treated justice and public service.

Bamugemereire later studied law at Makerere University, earning her bachelor of laws degree in 1992, before obtaining a diploma from the Law

Continued on page 20