

Mothering the abandoned: Namara mothers the forgotten

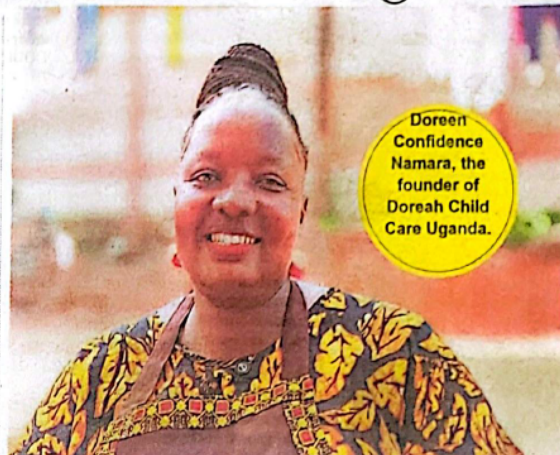
There were moments when Namara doubted her path. The more time she spent with the children, the stronger her bond with them grew. The more she cared for them, the more attached she became.

BY BETTY KAKULU

Doreen Confidence Namara is not only a professional teacher but is also the founder of Doreah Child Care Uganda. This centre provides care for children with special needs, including those suffering from Cerebral Palsy, Down syndrome, Hydrocephalus, epilepsy, Autism, sickle cell disease, and intellectual disabilities. The organisation's home is located in Gobe-ro, off Hoima Road, where construction of a permanent facility is still under way. The land was purchased with help from Sophie Mirembe, and the centre is a work in progress. Currently, there are only two makeshift kindergarten classrooms, with limited facilities, and the children who live here need more space to grow. The centre also includes a dormitory and kitchen, but there is much more to be done to make it a comfortable, permanent home for these children.

Where do these children come from?

The home currently cares for 17 chil-



Doreen Confidence Namara, the founder of Doreah Child Care Uganda.

dren, many of whom are orphans or have been abandoned. They have been brought to Namara by probation officers from Gomba, Nasana, Kampala, and other areas, as well as by concerned members of the community. Strangers, too, have arrived at her doorstep, bringing children they found wandering in the streets or abandoned by their families. While only three children have biological parents who placed them in Namara's care, many others were found in desperate circumstances and arrived with no one to claim them.

"When the children first arrive at the centre, they undergo full medical and neurological assessments to ensure they are not a health risk to the others. Some

children cannot speak or remember their homes, making it impossible to trace their families," she says. Despite the challenges, Namara and her team make every effort to reunite the children with their families, but often, they remain in her care.

A conversation with God

There were moments when Namara doubted her path. She would pray for guidance. "I told God that I needed to start a school. I had been a very good head teacher in some of the best kindergartens, but why these particular children? I delayed starting the school in the hope that I would get 'normal' children."

That delay cost her an entire term. She finally accepted her calling and opened

NAMARA'S JOURNEY TO CARE

Her path to caring for special-needs children was not always clear. Before starting her own centre, she worked as a teacher at Victorious Education Services, where she was trained to handle children with learning difficulties, particularly slow learners. She received additional training from specialists, including Dr Paul Eria Njuki, a leading expert in dyslexia, and gained invaluable insight into inclusive education.

Namara's passion for special-needs children deepened when she worked at Parenting Uganda, where she championed the inclusion of children with Down syndrome in mainstream classrooms. She learnt how important it was for differently-abled children to learn alongside their peers, a principle she later applied in her own center.

But long before all of this, Namara kept having this single dream that haunted her. The dream was filled with images of children in wheelchairs, neglected and abandoned by society. That dream ultimately became her calling. She started a school in Nasana focused on inclusive learning, specifically designed for children with disabilities. She walked door to door, asking parents to bring their school-aged children, but they all said they did not have any. However, some opened their homes and told her that the only children available were those with disabilities, particularly those with Cerebral Palsy, who had been hidden away due to the community's stigma over having children with disabilities.



Namara with some of the children in her care. She has developed strong bonds with them. PHOTOS/BETTY KAKULU.

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