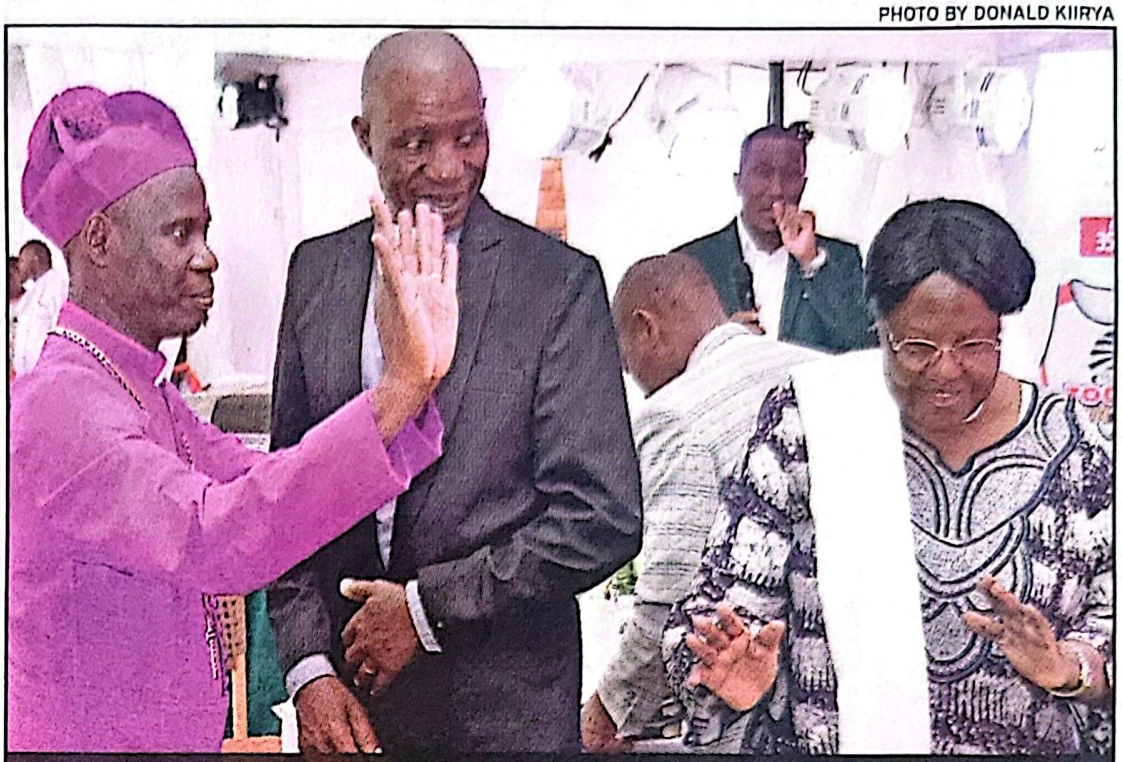
NUTRITION VITAL FOR SPORT

By Donald Kiirya
In Buikwe

PHOTO BY DONALD KIIRYA



Busoga Diocesan Bishop Rt. Rev. Grace Lubaale (L) prays for the Director General of PIBID-BIRDC and designated UOC Nutrition Ambassador, Rev. Florence Isabirye (R)

A coalition of religious, sports, and corporate leaders has launched a massive fundraising drive targeting sh4.47b to combat early childhood malnutrition and sponsor Ugandan athletes heading to Africa Youth Games due in Dakar, Senegal.

The initiative was unveiled during the Olympic Day-Tooke Run breakfast meeting at the Presidential Initiative on Banana Industrial Development (PIBID) and Banana Industrial Research Development Centre (BIRDC) offices in Njeru on May 22.

Out of the targeted amount, sh2.5 billion will be directed toward establishing a sustainable national nutrition legacy, while sh1.97b will fund the upcoming Olympic Day-Tooke Run on June 20 in Bushenyi.

The Run, with 5km, 10km and 21km categories, under the theme "Move, Learn and Discover for Nutrition-Care" is expected to attract participants from across the country in a nationwide campaign promoting nutrition awareness, fitness and athlete support.

Speaking at the event, the Bishop of Busoga Diocese, Rev. Grace promised land to pilot large-scale banana production in partnership with PIBID-BIRDC.

"We are waiting for your technical expertise so that we will become the leading diocese in growing bananas," Bishop Lubaale stated, emphasizing that the church must lead by example in transforming local economies.

The Bishop made a personal contribution of sh1m toward the cause and urged political leaders to provide legislative backing to local innovations rather than relying solely on political rhetoric.

"Knowledge is in the university, not in parliament. Politicians need to work with the people with knowledge, give them political backing, and then the people will get rich," Bishop Lubaale said.

He challenged institutions to replicate the value-addition success of the dairy sector in crops like matooke (bananas) and cassava to unlock a sh500b national economy.

The director general of PIBID-BIRDC and newly designated Uganda Olympic Committee (UOC) Nutrition Ambassador, Rev. Prof. Florence Isabirye Muranga, revealed that the project is a deliberate response to the alarming rates of stunting in the country.

According to national indicators, stunting among children under five stands between 25% and 29%, while anemia affects nearly half of Ugandan children and over 30% of women of childbearing age.

"Besides Karamoja, the Busoga region is one of those heavily affected by malnutrition, and therefore we hope to focus our attention toward it," Prof. Muranga stated.