ng in northern Uganda and generate 20 million bags by 2030, with 4 million bags coming from the north. As a result, nounced plans to establish a modern coffee production hub in serve the Acholi, Lango, Nile sub-regions. manager. "Often our farmers

# Visually impaired student defies odds to author books

Mpande, 22, lost his ght when he was under o years. The author of vo books so far, wants to become a lawyer.

BY DERICK WENANI

Mr Emmanuel Pande, a Senior Six vacationist, has amazed many educationists by authoring and publishing two books despite being visually impaired.

Born in 2004, Mr Pande, who sat for Senior Six at Iganga Secondary School last year, lost his sight at just one and a half years old due to an overdose of quinine administered for malaria.

"What inspired me to start writing is my life story. I was told I was born normal, but at one and a half years, I was taken to two different clinics for malaria treatment. They failed to give the correct prescription, and the quinine overdose affected my sight. To me, that is a step up because they say overdose kills, but by God's grace, it only took my sight," he said.

At the age of five, Mr Pande lost his mother. His father was largely absent, so his grandfather, Mr Charles Kenneth Mabonga relocated him from Kampala City to Nabumali Town Council in Mbale District.

He enrolled at Madera School for the Blind in Soroti City, where he completed his primary education, before joining Iganga condary School. He completed his da Advanced Certificate of Education (UACE) in 2025.

"My father was someone I could not rely on. So my grandfather took me in. When school started, he struggled to find the right school for me, but my aunt who had studied special needs education, helped enrolled me at Madera School for the Blind in Soroti, where I completed primary level," Mr Pande said.

He was introduced to literature upon joining Iganga Secondary School in Senior One. With support from his teachers, he developed a passion for writing.

Having offered Literature from Senior One to Senior Six, Mr Pande particularly enjoyed composition writing, which evolved into a desire to produce his own literary works.

"We used to do composition writing, and I would enjoy it. I often wrote four pages or more. With support from the English department at Iganga SS, I developed the idea of doing something bigger," he said.



Mr Emmanuel Pande speaks about his book titled *Attitude: A Master Key to Success*, at an education stakeholders' meeting in Mbale District last Wednesday. PHOTO/ DERICK WENANI

His first book, *Hundred Pieces of Gold*, is an anthology exploring themes such as wealth, leadership, artificial intelligence, change, human contribution, education, and time.

Last Wednesday, during an education stakeholders' meeting at Mbale District Council Hall, Mr Pande launched his second book, *Attitude: A Master Key to Success*.

The event brought together district officials including Chief Administrative Officer Angella Akurut, District Education Officer Sam Paddy Khaukha, school inspectors, and head teachers, among others, to discuss the previous year's performance and plan the way forward.

Mr Pande explained that he was inspired by his grandfather, who never neglected him.

"I came to believe that what holds destinies, efforts, missions, and visions together is attitude. Most parents don't bother taking children like us to school. I wondered what inspired my grandfather to take me to school from primary level, picking me up during holidays, and investing so much. I thought this book was the best way to appreciate him for his positive attitude," he said.

Mr Pande also credited Iganga Secondary School for providing facilities that enable special needs learners to acquire computer skills.

"At Iganga SS, they require you to learn computing. Braille is still rare in the country, so for teachers to mark my work, I would type on a computer or have someone write for me. But people are busy, so the best option was to learn typing. In O-Level, they provided me with a laptop, which I have used to type my books. I have mastered the keyboard," he said.

Besides writing, Mr Pande is a public speaking coach and serves as a debate adjudicator, having been an active participant in debates throughout secondary school. He now aspires to become a lawyer.

**02 BOOKS HE HAS AUTHORED**

### What others say about him

His grandfather, Mr Mabonga, said he sent Mr Pande to school because he values education.

"I had a challenge: my own father had no formal education but managed to take all of us to school regardless of gender. That challenged me, I who went to school up to diploma level, how would the public view me if I didn't take my own grandchildren to school?" Mr Mabonga said.

He appealed to parents in Uganda, especially in Bugisu Sub-region, not to neglect children with special needs.

"Let us take them to school because they are all God's creation. If possible, seek donors. There are organisations assisting such people. Even for Emma, one organisation has been partially paying his fees from O-Level to A-Level," he said.

Mr Gracious Paul Ludigo, an English Language and Literature teacher at Iganga SS, said Mr Pande's work adds to the school's achievements and is supported by its fully-fledged special needs education (SNE) department.

"We have a fully-fledged SNE department with braille, computers, and machines that enlarge text for low-vision learners. We identified Emmanuel in S.3 and knew he could be a good writer," he said.

Parents, especially in rural areas, still face challenges in enrolling children with special needs due to costs, scarcity of trained teachers, and limited schools.

Ms Joy Wamaluku, the Mbale District officer-in-charge of special needs education, said there are only 33 trained special needs teachers for 69 government-aided primary and 16 secondary schools.

"We have a few known schools like Mbale School for the Deaf (secondary), Makhai Primary with 75 special needs learners, and Bumbobi Primary, but we face low staffing," she said, urging schools to invest in inclusive infrastructure.

Ms Angella Akurut, the Mbale District chief administrative officer, described Mr Pande's achievement as an inspiration.

"We are seeing a boy destined for a greater future. As district administrators, I call on all of us to identify children with different talents and give them opportunities to excel. A child may not be academically bright but may have a talent worth nurturing," Ms Akurut said.

She also announced that the government plans to prioritise special needs teachers in recruitment to address staffing gaps, adding that more teachers in both primary and secondary level should pursue special needs training.

"Pande's story highlights resilience, the power of supportive education, and the importance of inclusive policies for learners with special needs," Ms Akurut said.

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