

# WINNER TO FRONT SIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING IN ALL SCHC COUNCILLOR WHO DEFEATED MINISTER IN PWD MP RACE SETS PRIORITIES

By Paul Kiwuwa

Tuesday, February 3, 2026 will forever remain a special day for Robert Ssewagudde, a councillor from Busukuma division in Wakiso district.

On that day, Ssewagudde was among the five winners of the people with disabilities (PWD) Member of Parliament electoral college polls that were held at Kevina Gardens in Nsambya, a Kampala suburb.

Among the candidates that Ssewagudde defeated is disability affairs state minister Hellen Asamo.

The PWDs electoral college comprised 730 delegates drawn from 146 districts, with each district represented by five delegates. According to the Parliamentary Elections Act, five national elective positions are reserved for PWDs, including one seat for a female representative.

While the process was praised for being well organised, it was also overshadowed by allegations of voter bribery.

One of the most vocal complainants was minister Asamo, who allegedly had witnessed unprecedented voter bribery during the exercise.

"Some candidates gave each delegate sh500,000. This level of commercialisation of politics is unprecedented," she said.

Despite these concerns, Asamo, who has represented PWDs in Parliament since 2011, commended the Electoral Commission for overseeing the exercise.

For the national female PWD slot, the incumbent, Laura Opori Kanushu of the NRM, sailed through unopposed,

while the remaining four slots were competed for by nine people.

The nine included Asamo, Ssewagudde, Joyce Okenyi Acan, Bumali Mpindi, Alex Ndeezi, Nyamukashi Eunice, Achayo Rose, Yona Waswa and Gabriel Kato.

The top four were Acan, who secured 602 votes; Mpindi (560), Ssewagudde (530) and Ndeezi (275). Ndeezi of the NRM is the longest-serving PWDs MP, who has been in Parliament since 1996.



Asamo: PWD minister

he said.

Ssewagudde said he has been a leader in the PWD movement since 2004.

"I always tell people not to judge PWDs by physical appearance, but by their abilities and potential," he emphasised.

As a leader with hearing impairment, he says his lived experience journey gives him a deeper understanding of the challenges faced by PWDs.

### PRIORITIES IN PARLIAMENT

Ssewagudde said he will focus on addressing unemployment among PWDs, despite many being qualified professionals.

"PWDs are often overlooked in government departments and NGOs. This must change," he said.

Ssewagudde also plans

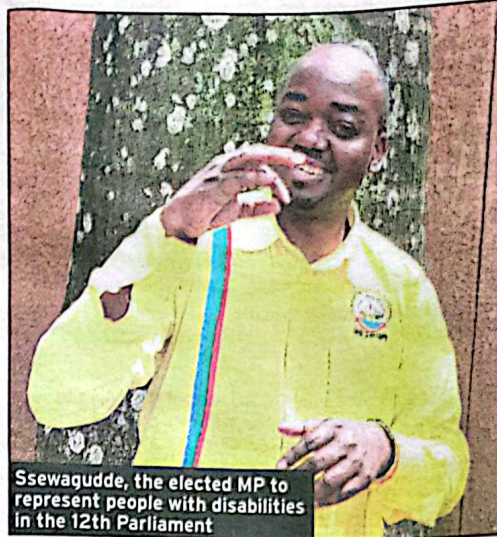
### BETWEEN THE LINES

Minister Asamo raised allegations of voter bribery during the voting exercise despite being praised to have been well organised.

### A HARD-FOUGHT FOR VICTORY

Unlike the rest who were incumbents, Ssewagudde was the only newcomer. He described his victory as a product of faith, determination and years of grassroots service.

"Competing against four incumbents was not a bed of roses. It was a hard-fought contest. I did not have money like other incumbents. PWDs knew me as someone who has sacrificed a lot for their rights,"



Ssewagudde, the elected MP to represent people with disabilities in the 12th Parliament

### WHO IS SSEWAGUDDE?

Through a sign language interpreter, 34-year-old Ssewagudde said raising from a village councillor to MP is no mean feat.

He was born in Mairy village, Kiwenda sub-county in Wakiso district. He is a disability rights advocate who lost his hearing at the age of seven after a severe malaria attack.

"I was not born deaf," Ssewagudde says. "I lost my hearing at the age of seven due to malaria."

He says his mother, Brenda Nakitende, a coffee farmer, played a pivotal role in his education.

"My mother saved proceeds from coffee farming to pay my primary school fees, while my father Samuel Kitaka Mufumba later supported my secondary education," he says.

Until his election to Parliament, Ssewagudde served as the male councillor representing people with disabilities at Wakiso district and was chairperson of the National Resistance Movement in Busukuma division.

to push for constitutional amendments to reserve at least 10% of presidential appointments for PWDs in positions such as resident district commissioners, permanent secretaries, cabinet ministers, and other public offices.

Inclusive education is another priority. Ssewagudde argued that children with disability continue to grapple with limited access to quality education due to poor implementation of inclusive policies.

"I will support initiatives that promote inclusive education so that children with disabilities can access quality learning

opportunities," he said. Ssewagudde also highlighted limited access to health services, particularly in private hospitals, where physical accessibility and sign language interpretation are overlooked.

"There must be stronger monitoring and enforcement to ensure health facilities are accessible to all," he said.

Ssewagudde pledged to push for the full implementation of sign language teaching in schools. Although approved by the Ministry of Education and Sports, sign language is rarely taught in Uganda.

"Inclusion will only become a reality when sign language is taught in all schools," he emphasised.



2011-2013: Bachelor of Education, Social Work and Administration

2009-2010: Master of Education, Highway College, Kampala, Uganda Advanced Certificate of Education

2004-2008: National High School, Ugar Certificate of Education

1996-2003: Bul Primary School, Ugar School For the Deaf

### BEYOND PARLIAMENT

Ssewagudde is the co-ordinator and executive director of Sign Alliance, an organisation advocating the rights of people with disabilities. Through his leadership, he has lobbied for funding to construct two primary schools for children with disabilities in Kotido and Kiruhura districts.

### OTHER ROLES

In 2026, with support from the gender and foreign ministries, Ssewagudde was nominated to serve on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities expert committee scheduled to sit in June in New York. He represents Uganda and Africa on the committee.

Currently, Ssewagudde serves as a board member of the Uganda National Association of the Deaf and is a member of the National Council for PWDs, where he monitors the implementation of the 2020 Disability Act.

Ssewagudde is also the chairperson of the National Union of Disabled Persons in Uganda, where he has served for eight years.

His advocacy has influenced parliamentary debates including reforms to the Teachers Bill to promote inclusive education.

Internationally, Ssewagudde is the former vice-president of the World Federation of Deaf Youth Section, becoming the first African deaf person elected to the role. He has travelled to various countries around the world to advocate for disability rights and received the Best World Leadership Award.



## UGANDA BUREAU OF STATISTICS

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### BID NOTICE UNDER OPEN DOMESTIC BIDDING

1. Uganda Bureau of Statistics invites sealed bids from eligible bidders for:

No.	Procurement Reference Number	Subject matter of Procurement	Bid Security
1	UBOS-DS/SRVCS/25-26/00462	PROVISION OF PRINT LEASING SERVICES FOR THREE-YEARS	UGX 2,000,000

2. The Bidding document(s) shall be inspected and issued at Procurement and Disposal Department, 1<sup>st</sup> Floor Room 1.1, Uganda Bureau of Statistics, Plot 9, Colville Street, P.O. Box 7186, Kampala, upon a payment of non-refundable fee of UGX 100,000/= (One Hundred Thousand Shillings Only) The method of payment will be by Banking through a BAF obtainable from URA website.

3. The deadline for bid submission shall be 11:00am on 10<sup>th</sup> March 2026

4. The detailed bid notice is available at the Entity's website at www.ubos.org and at www.ppda.go.ug

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR