

Monitor scholarship ignites dream

BY ISAAC MUFUMBA

Off Lugalambo Trading Centre, the earthen road winds through the Mehta Group's sugarcane plantation to Buvunya village, about 10 kilometres from Lugazi town.

Here, in what was meant to be a residential house, is Monitor Junior School.

"You are welcome our visitors. This is Monitor Junior School. Our motto is We Build The Nation," the pupils welcome us in unison.

"The paper that builds the Nation" was *The Monitor's* slogan and driving spirit in the early years. It was taken up by the founder of the school, Mr Emmanuel Masumbuko, one of the hundreds of students who have over the last 25 years of *The Monitor's* existence benefited from its Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) policy.

In what appears to be a justification of the saying by the Greek Philosopher, Plato, that "Good actions lend strength to ourselves and give strength to others", Mr Masumbuko, bearing in mind what *Daily Monitor* had done for him, sought leave from his paid job at Mayuge Sugar Industries where he had been working as the Public Relations Officer.

He sold his car in order to raise funds to turn what was meant to be his country home into a school that not only provides a service, but also enables children from impoverished families and those affected by HIV/Aids to access education.

The school has only a nursery section and four primary school classes with a student population of less than 300 pupils, but still offers the vulnerable and less privileged a helping hand.

"This week we sent away those who have not yet paid fees, but there are those ones you are not going to chase because if you chase them they will not come back," he said in an interview recently.

How do they manage?

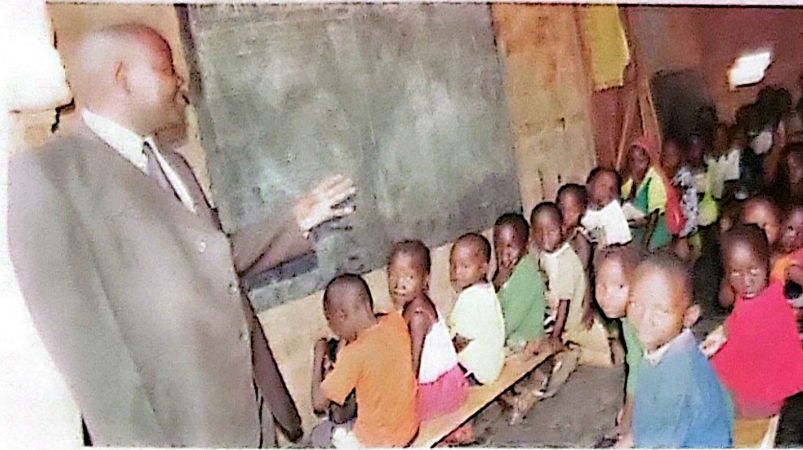
"We squeeze the little resources which we have so that those ones who pay at least cater for these ones," he says.

Mr Masumbuko's actions are inspired by his own story. In June 1993, barefooted and clad in his best wear, a torn uniform dating back to his days at Lugazi East Primary School, he was escorted into the office of the Editor-in-Chief of *The Monitor* along Dewinton Road.

Mr Wafula Oguttu, who was the paper's Editor-in-Chief was horrified.

"The Boy was in rags. His shirt and pair of shorts were torn. He had no shoes. He was in a terrible shape," Mr Oguttu says as he looks back at the events of 1993.

Given that he could not afford to raise money to buy a needle and a thread to sew up the uniform which had served him well the previous year as he prepared for the Primary Leaving Examinations (P.L.E.), it would be



Big dream. The Director Monitor Junior School Mr Emmanuel Masumbuko, with some of his pupils. (PHOTO BY DENIS EDUMA)

Vision. Mr Masumbuko's sights are on growing Monitor Junior School into an institution of academic excellence, but also one that will give the disadvantaged and vulnerable hope.

Israelmore Ayivor. The Ghanaian author and inspirational speaker, once said: "Someone needs your actions to inspire his actions. Never forget, your little broken cake is someone's daily meal! Care to share your little cake!"

LCI chairman, which he had on him.

Those he had wrapped in an old dirty polythene bag, akin to those that many an old village folk are inclined to keep their most precious documents.

Emma Masumbuko had sat for his PLE in 1992 and passed in Division I. He was on the admission list of Manjasi High School, but with the first term of what was meant to be his Senior 1 halfway gone, he had not gone to school as the family could not raise the school fees.

His plight had been brought to Mr Wafula's attention by a nurse attached to the Uganda Tea Corporation's Estate in Kasaku, but Mr Wafula had not been prepared for what he was to see.

"I think he had given up hope on ever going back to school," says Mr Oguttu.

After a brief interview, Waf, as he was popularly known, introduced him to the newspaper's other honchos, Mr Charles Onyango-Obbo, Mr David Ouma Balikowa, Mr James Serugo and Richard Tebere before handing him over to journalist Dismas Nkunda to pen his story. They then had meal at the nearby Sadinia Restaurant.

On June 18, 1993, the life changing story, "those with teeth don't get the meat" was published. It highlighted Masumbuko's plight and also called on members of the public to come up and partner with the paper in helping him go to school.

Ms Tecla Kinalwa (RIP), who was by then the Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Local Government, rose to the challenge, but like good adherer to the teachings of the Bible, which in Matthew 6:3 teaches that "But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing," she insisted that there would be no publicity around what she was doing.

Habits do die hard. One of the habits that Mr Masumbuko seems to

and the world lives on.

Similarly, Waf may not be the Editor-in-Chief of the newspaper any more, but the support that he and the newspaper rendered are still very much alive.

Mr Masumbuko graduated in 2003, had a stint at *Daily Monitor* and KFM until 2006 and then left for the Sugar Corporation of Uganda (SCOU) as a Public Relations Officer.

Cognizant of where he had been, he had dedicated some of his time at the *Monitor* to highlighting the plight of those who had been like him. By the time he left, a number of disadvantaged children had been helped.

One has since become a medical doctor thanks to funding from the Non-Government Organisation, International Needs Uganda, and another has since become a civil engineer thanks to the help from the East African Development Bank.

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The Ghanaian Author and Inspirational Speaker, Israelmore Ayivor, once said: "Someone needs your actions to inspire his actions. Never forget, your little broken cake is someone's daily meal! Care to share your little cake!"

Yes, out of one little touch, one scholarship, a dream has come. And it is one that is being pursued.

to gain admission to Makerere University for a bachelors' degree in Mass Communication, but once again did not have the resources to enable him pursue the dream.

By then Ms Tecla Kinalwa was the State House Comptroller. She quickly helped him get a State House Scholarship, but at the same time continued to work with *The Monitor* to ensure that his needs at the university were met.

Ms Kinalwa is long gone, but the support she rendered to Mr Masumbuko

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