

BY GERTRUDE MUTYABA

LWENGO. For several residents of Lwengo District, the mention of former district chairperson George Mutabaazi evokes memories of a strict leader who led with an iron hand.

During his decade-long tenure, Mr Mutabaazi became known for enforcing community participation in Bulungi bwa nsi [communal] activities and sanitation campaigns, at times caning residents who failed to construct pit-latrines or maintain hygiene standards.

While his methods were controversial, some residents credit his administration with instilling a sense of community responsibility in a district that once ranked among the most underdeveloped in the Greater Masaka area.

Now, a new generation of leadership is emerging in Lwengo.

Mr Abasi Kizito, a 30-year-old member of the Opposition National Unity Plat-

form (NUP) party, has taken over the mantle.

Mr Kizito garnered 21,670 votes, narrowly defeating the ruling National Resistance Movement (NRM) party's Joseph Lubega Bazonoona, who garnered 21,195 votes. Forum for Democratic Change's Mudashir Mpagi got 154 votes, while independent candidate Deus Kiberu secured 153 votes.

Mr Kizito's victory makes him one of the youngest district chairpersons in the country and marks his first entry into elective politics.

The new district leader said several residents doubt his ability to lead, citing his age and limited experience in public administration.

"Many people believe leadership positions should only be occupied by older and more experienced individuals, but the Constitution gives young Ugandans the chance to lead and prove their worth," he explained.

Mr Kizito said he did not expect to defeat more seasoned politicians, especially in his first attempt at elective office. However, he attributed his victory to the trust voters placed in his message of accountability and unity.

Although new to mainstream politics, Mr Kizito said he gained leadership experience during his time at Makerere University, where he held several leadership roles.

Lwengo District, carved out of Masaka District in 2010, has frequently been

dogged by political disagreements and accusations of poor service delivery. The district comprises six sub-counties and four town councils and continues to face major development challenges, including poor road infrastructure, limited access to clean water, and weak health services.

Mr Kizito said his administration will prioritise transparency, prudent management of public resources, and improving service delivery.

"We cannot continue returning unspent funds to the centre in Kampala when our communities still lack clean water and good roads," he stated.

Mr Kizito added: "My focus will be on ensuring every shilling allocated to the district benefits the people."

One of the persistent challenges in some parts of Lwengo is the sharing of water sources by humans and livestock,

a situation residents said exposes them to waterborne diseases. Mr Kizito pledges to work with technical staff and development partners to improve access to safe water. The outgoing district chairperson, Mr Ibrahim Kitatta, who vacated the seat to contest for the Bukoto West parliamentary seat but lost to the incumbent Muhammad Ssentayzi, urged Mr Kizito to build on the progress already achieved in the district.

"The people spoke, and their decision must be respected," Mr Kitatta said, adding: "Leadership comes with many challenges, especially in fighting corruption and ensuring government programmes are implemented effectively."

He cautioned the young leader against complacency, adding that managing a council with competing political interests would require patience and negotiation skills.

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