

Rotarian Owori was passionate

By Taddeo Ewambale
and Martin Kituli

The late Sam Frohisher Owori, a Ugandan who had risen through the ranks to become president-elect of Rotary International, had big dreams. Owori died unexpectedly at the age of 76 on Friday as a result of post-operative complications from planned surgery in the US. His term as Rotary's 108th president (2018-2019) was to begin on July 1, 2018.

When he was nominated Rotary International president for 2018-19 on October 1, 2016, Owori outlined his vision in a few words, pointing out the areas where he wanted the organisation to act.

His main area of focus would be on growing the membership database in Africa and he had set a target of having one million people joining the organisation in Africa, whose population is about 1.2 billion people.

Owori promised to champion several initiatives, including maternal and child health plus the go-green campaigns aimed at maintaining the environment and education.

"In my one year of office, I will increase the number of Rotary clubs in Africa to over 30,000 or even more; plant over five million trees on the continent and help the needy," he stated in May to a group of Rotarians gathered at Serena Kampala Hotel.

Owori felt that many Africans had a wrong perception that Rotary is an organisation for people of wealth and privilege. He was passionate about getting the poor to join it.

He wanted leaders to ensure that more women and youth join Rotary clubs and play active roles in its activities. He also encouraged leaders to embrace social causes, including environmental conservation, agriculture and the provision of safe drinking water to communities.

By press time, a team of Rotarians in Uganda were deliberating on Owori's funeral arrangements. His body is expected to be flown home from the US on Saturday. Mid-March, President Yoweri Museveni hailed Owori for partnering with government in areas of water and sanitation.



Kimberly Kasana, the president of Rotary club of Kampala Maisha, Rotary Club of Kampala president Geoffrey Kitakule, past Rotary Club District 9211 Governor Jayesh Asher and Owori during the establishment of Maisha at Kitakule Hotel Kampala on May 28. Photo by Lawrence Mulondo

BETWEEN THE LINES:

At the time Owori served Rotary in Uganda as district governor, the number of clubs swelled from nine to 89 over the course of 29 years.

health and education after a meeting at State House, Entebbe.

"I met the president of Rotary International, Mr Sam Owori. He briefed me about Rotary's activities in Uganda. He is hoisting Uganda's flag high," the President said in a tweet then.

Tributes

Two days after his death, Rotarians and leaders from Uganda and beyond paid glowing tributes praising Owori for his leadership qualities and contribution to charity and development.

The Prime Minister, Dr Ruhakana Rugunda, tweeted: "Deeply saddened by the sudden death of Ndugu Sam Owori, president-elect @ Rotary International. Big loss to Rotary fraternity and Uganda. RIP"

Owori was due to be installed

head of the international service organisation in Canada in June next year.

The outgoing president of Rotary International, Ian Riseley, hailed Owori as an 'outstanding and hardworking Rotarian'.

"In this difficult time, I ask you to keep his wife, Norah, the Owori family and Sam's millions of friends around the world in your thoughts," Riseley said in a statement.

In a statement to Rotarians, Kenneth W Mugisha, District Governor Rotary District 9211, which comprises Tanzania and Uganda, said: "This (death) is indeed a painful blow and tragic loss for all of us who knew and worked with him."

"Sam was the epitome of Rotary and his humility and dedication to serving humanity endeared him to many - both at home and within the global Rotary fraternity. Indeed, it was this exemplary service that got him elected to the highest office in Rotary."

Emmanuel Katongole, the past district governor for Rotary District 9211, which comprises Tanzania and Uganda, described Owori as a selfless leader.

"He was a simple man, approachable and took on

any responsibility as long as it involved serving the community," Katongole said in an interview with New Vision.

Within the organisation, Owori Katongole recalls, Owori helped grow the membership of the service organisation. Uganda has the second-largest number of Rotarians in Africa, after Nigeria.

Owori was the first Ugandan to hold the position of director at Rotary International and that of trustee at Rotary Foundation.

Katongole paid tribute to Owori as a man who championed support for the Uganda Heart Institute, the Uganda Cancer Institute, as well as through projects in maternal health, water and literacy.

Katongole appealed to the Government to honour Owori's vision by implementing projects in the areas that he was passionate about.

The state minister for works and transport, Gen. Edward Katumba Wamala, described Owori's death as "a big shock and a loss to us the Rotary family and

Wamala described the deceased as a very calm and composed man, who was friendly with everyone, even in his prestigious positions. "He was a person who never got easily excited. He handled every situation with a calm demeanor and never carried himself with a sense of pride,"

Katumba said.

According to Wamala, Owori's new position in the organisation was to raise Uganda's profile and would have promoted tourism.

The former district governor of Rotary district 9211, Jayesh Asher, who lives in the US, said: "It's tragic that we lost such a great leader who was happy to have a chance to produce a Rotary International president."

Family accolades

Sam and Norah, who have been married since 1979, had three sons and three grandchildren.

He held numerous positions both within the organisation and outside. He was the chief executive officer of the Uganda Institute of Corporate Governance (UICG).

Previously, he was executive director of the African Development Bank (AfDB) and Commercial Bank Ltd. (CBL) and director of Uganda Development Bank.

Owori served as corporate secretary of Bank of Uganda (BOU). He also served as member and chairman among them FAULU (U) Ltd (now Opportunity Bank) for African Family Studies.

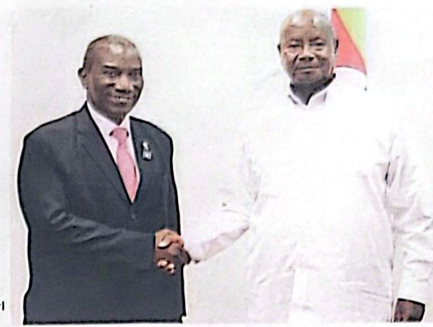
about youth, environment

Mulago Hospital Complex, Mukono Theological College and the Kampala City Council.

At the time of his passing, he was the vice-chairperson of the Hospice Africa Uganda and member of the board and chairperson of the audit committee of PACE (Programme for Accessible Health, Communication and Education) in Uganda.

Owori held various master's degrees in law and business management from Harvard Business School and California Coast University in the US, Leicester University in England and IMD (IMED) Business School in Switzerland. He also studied banking at schools in New York city, US; Oxford, England; Tokyo and Osaka in Japan.

President Museveni with Owori



A MAN OF SERVICE ABOVE SELF

"Service Above Self" is the mission statement of Rotary International (RI) which aims at providing: service to others, promoting integrity and advance world understanding, goodwill and peace. To the Rotarian family, Owori defined the values above.

Owori was a member of the Rotary Club Kampala for 38 years. Since he joined the Rotarian family in 1978, Owori had served

several roles in the club from regional Rotary foundation co-ordinator, regional RI membership co-ordinator, RI representative to the United Nations Environment Programme and UN-Habitat, as well as RI director.

At the time he served Rotary in Uganda as district governor, the number of clubs swelled from nine to 89 over the course of 29 years. He also chaired several

humanitarian committees within Rotary including International PolioPlus committee, the Drug Abuse Prevention Task Force, the Audit Committee, Rotary Foundation's finance committee and a trustee of Rotary Foundation.

Owori and wife, Norah, were benefactors of the Rotary Foundation and major donors and Paul Harris Fellows.



Owori, flanked by his wife (second-left) planting a tree during his visit to the SOS Children's Village. He had vowed to plant five million trees. Photo by Wilfred Sanyal

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Gen Edward Katumba Wamala, state minister for works and transport Owori handled every situation with a calm demeanor and never carried himself with a sense of pride.



Ian Riseley President of Rotary International In this difficult time, I ask you to keep his wife, Norah, the Owori family and Sam's millions of friends around the world in your thoughts.



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EULOGIES