

By Olivia Nakate

Uganda Athletics may have left the World Athletics Relays that took place from May 2-3 in Gaborone, Botswana, with lessons rather than medals.

The message was clear; behind the success, there is an enabling system built on trusting local coaches, rewarding performance, and talent development.

Winning global titles does not happen by chance. It requires a sustainable system that empowers coaches and athletes while also supporting emerging talent.

Uganda Athletics Federation (UA) general secretary Beatrice Ayikoru said there are important lessons Uganda can learn from Botswana's system.

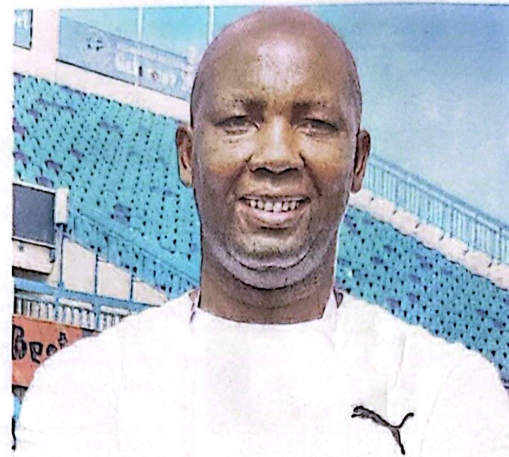
She acknowledged that Uganda now needs to invest more in sprinting, create stronger competition among athletes and clubs, and widen the talent pool for relay events.

"At the moment, we have a narrow pool of athletes to select from. Competitive relay events should become part of our regular programme," Ayikoru said.

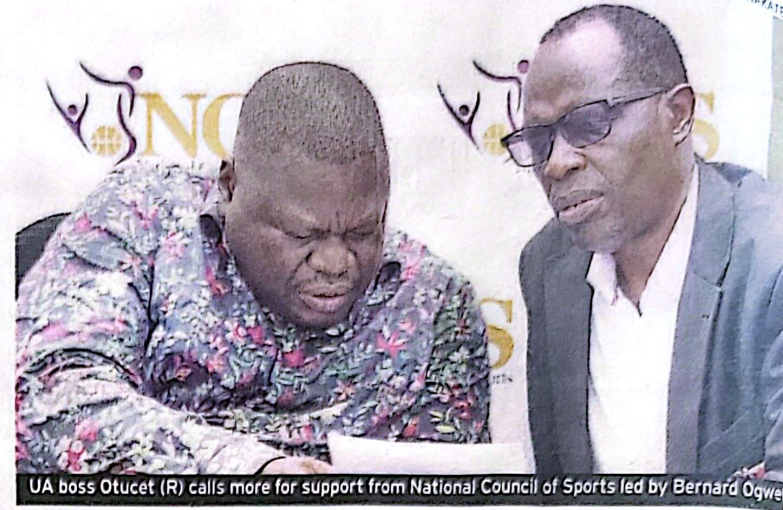
Haron Adoli is one of the notable sprinters Uganda currently has. He was part of the Uganda team that competed in Botswana. His times have gradually improved through international competitions, showing that he needs more support and funding to compete against top athletes and continue developing his talent.

"I hope whatever we are doing motivates not only athletes, but also stakeholders to invest more in athletics, especially sprints," Adoli said.

UA president Dominic Otucet says the federation is investing in coach development through education and international training opportunities. He, however, said limited funding affects



Theetso says Botswana rewards excellence with incentives



UA boss Otucet (R) calls more for support from National Council of Sports led by Bernard Ogwe

WHAT UGANDA CAN LEARN FROM BOTSWANA'S SPRINTING SUCCESS



the number of coaches who can travel with athletes to international competitions.

"It is unfortunate that when athletes are rewarded for good performance, coaches are never recognized, leaving one wondering whether athletes make themselves."

Speaking to Vision Sports, Botswana Athletics Association (BAA) vice president Oabona Theetso, who served as acting president during the World Relays, emphasised the importance of having a trusted team. Theetso stressed that empowering and rewarding coaches is essential. He noted that Botswana's top sprinters are coached by local trainers because the federation believes in them and trusts their

understanding of the athletes. "Botswana is one of the countries that rewards excellence well when it comes to performance incentives. Any athlete who wins an Olympic medal or reaches the podium is rewarded with a house and a car.

"We do not only reward athletes for good performances, but we also reward coaches. Coaches benefit from medal-winning bonuses, the Olympic Solidarity Fund, and athlete support funds. We believe in team performance, not just individual athlete performance," Theetso said.

He added that Botswana ensures athletes work with the right coaches and that coaches and their athletes travel with their athletes to competitions.

"We believe there is a strong relationship between athletes and their coaches. Interfering with

coaches means interfering with an athlete's performance," he added.

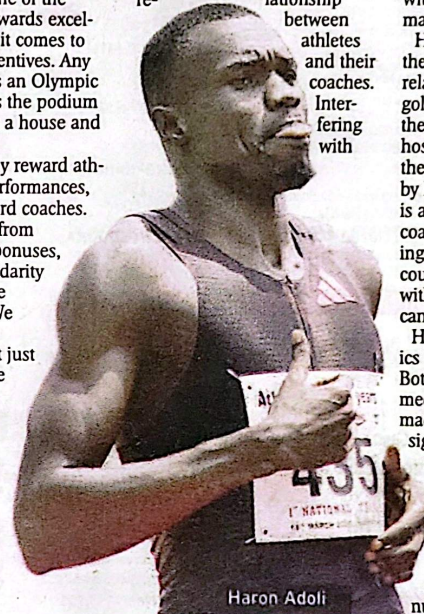
His words were reflected in the performance of Botswana's relay team when they secured gold in the men's 4x400m at the World Athletics Relays the hosted. Botswana did not win the men's 4x400m gold medal by luck. Behind the victory is a system that empowers coaches and ensures sprinting continues to grow in the country. They understood that without better coaches, there cannot be better athletes.

Hosting the World Athletics Relays was historic for Botswana, but winning a gold medal in the men's 4x400m made the moment even more significant. Botswana's success also highlights the importance of long-term planning and investment in athletics development. Their relay victory was not built in a single season, but through years of nurturing athletes, strength-

ening coaching systems, and creating opportunities for competition exposure. Uganda can draw valuable lessons from this approach if it hopes to compete consistently at the global level.

For Uganda, the challenge is not a lack of talent. The country continues to produce promising athletes across different disciplines, but many struggle due to limited support structures. Sprinters, in particular, require regular competition, and experienced coaches to improve their performance.

Without these, it becomes difficult to compete against nations with well-established systems. There is also a need for stronger grassroots programmes to identify young sprint talent early and guide them through structured development pathways. Schools, clubs, and regional competitions can play a major role in building a wider pool of athletes.



Haron Adoli