ROTARY HONOURS MPAGI FOR OUTSTANDING COMMUNITY SERVICE

By Richard Ategeka

The Rotary Club of Muyenga has honoured veteran educationalist and corporate leader John Mary Mpagi with the prestigious vocational service award in recognition of over three decades of his professional excellence and community service.

The accolade was presented on February 25, during celebrations to mark the Rotary Vocational Service Month at Hotel International in Muyenga, Kampala. In his remarks, Alex Bwomezi Mugume, the president of the Rotary Club of Muyenga, said the award is among the most selective recognitions.

"It is very hard to get an accolade. You don't just wake up and say you deserve it. Candidates are vetted among outstanding professionals, who are doing great for society," he explained.

Barbara Baguma Mugadu, the chairperson of the Vocational Service Award Committee, noted that the recognition honours individuals who exemplify integrity, ethical practice, leadership and mentorship in line with Rotary's motto of Service above self.

Muadu urged young professionals and Rotarians to use their professions not merely to build careers and live comfortable lives, but to transform communities.

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COMMUNITY TRANSFORMATION

Mpagi, who joined Rotary in 1989, dedicated the award to his mentors and the communities he has served.

"This award belongs to the people who trained and mentored me," he softly said, adding that Rotary should continue prioritising communities where the need is greatest.

Much of Mpagi's work has been concentrated in Kabule and Kabira villages in Kyotera district, formerly part of Rakai district, an area historically affected by HIV/AIDS. Through partnerships with Rotary clubs in Canada and the UK, Mpagi mobilised resources to support St Paul Kaaso Primary School in Kabira, which was established to educate orphaned children.

The support included textbooks, desks, dormitory beds, solar power, piped water, a school truck and expanded classroom infrastructure. The school currently enrols more than 700 pupils, including 70 orphans. Its alumni include doctors, lawyers, teachers, nurses and clergy, as well as a PhD graduate from the National University of Singapore.

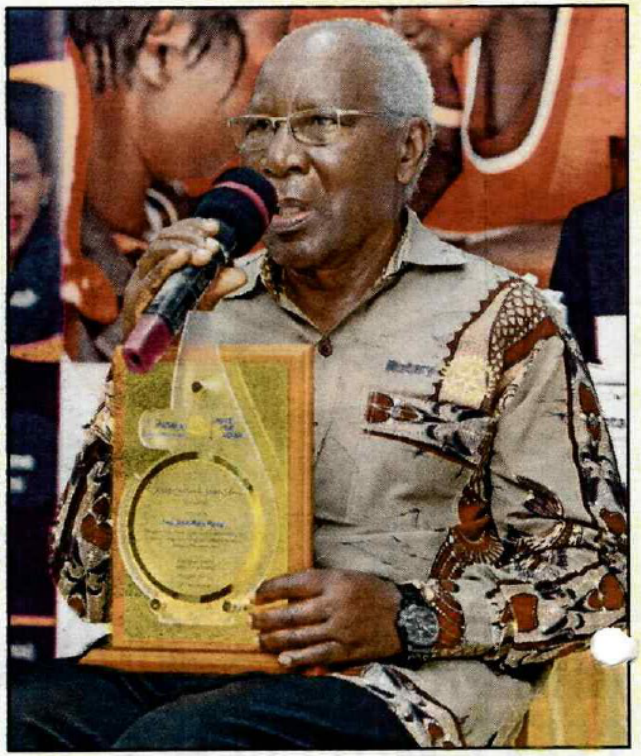
TESTAMENTS

Dominic Mukwaya Kalinzi, the school's founder, credited Mpagi with mobilising international support that enabled disadvantaged children to complete their education.

Phionah Kanyange, now a lawyer, studied at St Paul Kaaso as an orphaned child and directly benefited from Mpagi's initiatives.

"When we were young, they brought us scholastic materials we had never seen in the village," she recalled, adding: "We were the first school to have sports jerseys, musical instruments, piped water and a school truck. That gave us quality education and shaped who we are today."

She noted that Mpagi personally mentored many children. "He knew us by name. We looked up to him for inspiration. He truly deserves this award."



Mpagi gives a speech after receiving his award at Hotel International in Muyenga, Kampala, on February 25

BEYOND EDUCATION

In Kabule, Mpagi supported a tomato farming initiative aimed at boosting household incomes and contributed to the construction and expansion of a maternity ward. Through Rotary global grants, funding was also secured for hospital beds and water tanks.

He also served as board chairperson of Katalemwa Cheshire Home for over five years, where he mobilised global grants to equip an orthopaedic workshop that produces assistive devices for children with disabilities.

In environmental conservation, Mpagi partnered with Rotary colleagues in Canada to secure a $30,000 (sh107.8m) global grant to plant 70 acres of pine trees, thereby ensuring sustainable harvesting and replanting.

Before dedicating much of his time to community initiatives, Mpagi worked at Shell Uganda Limited, rising through the marketing department. He later served as President of Rotary Club of Muyenga (1996–1997) and Assistant Governor of Rotary District 9200 (2001–2002).

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