FOCUS ON LOCAL BUSINESSES

PAKASA

Monday, May 25, 2026

STONE BY STONE: SSEMWANGA BUILT CORNERSTONE SCHOOL, HEALTH FACILTY

Social entrepreneurs are innovators who blend business strategies with a mission to solve some of society's most pressing challenges, such as unemployment, inequality, access to healthcare and education through innovative, sustainable and locally rooted solutions. Having grown up in abject poverty, Geoffrey Ssemwanga has a unique social entrepreneurship success story, which he narrated to **Umar Nsubuga**.



In 2018, Ssemwanga officially opened Cornerstone Daycare Nursery and Primary School with a few classes

During the school holiday break in Kalagala village in Kassanda district, the usually busy classrooms at Cornerstone Daycare Nursery and Primary School remain quiet, but construction workers keep moving around the compound, preparing for the next term.

Several kilometres away in Jemba village, nurses and doctors at Red Rose Health Centre attend to patients arriving from different communities.

Though the two institutions are located apart, they are connected by one vision — Geoffrey Ssemwanga's dream of transforming rural lives through education, healthcare and agriculture.

At only 36, Ssemwanga has overcome a childhood marked by poverty, uncertainty and the struggles of being raised by a single mother to become one of Kassanda district's most admired private investors.

Once unsure of completing primary school due to a lack of school fees, he now manages a growing school, a developing hospital and an integrated farm project that supports both institutions. His journey is built on sacrifice, patience, faith and a passion for changing village communities.



Ssemwanga, the proprietor of Cornerstone Daycare Nursery and Primary School

RAISED BY A SINGLE MOTHER

Ssemwanga was born and raised in Kalagala village in Namabaale parish, Kassanda district, under the care of his mother, Alice Nakalule.

Life was not easy. Raised by a single mother with limited income, he witnessed the daily struggles of survival. His mother worked tirelessly to keep him in school despite severe financial difficulties.

"My mother sacrificed everything for me. She struggled a lot to make sure I studied," he says.

The first school he attended was Namabaale Primary School, a government-aided school in the village.

Later, his aunt took him to stay with her in Mityana district, where he joined St. Francis in Wabigalo and completed Primary Seven.

However, after primary school, another major challenge emerged. His mother could not pay for his secondary school education.

THE NUN WHO CHANGED HIS LIFE

At a time when Ssemwanga feared his education had ended, a friend informed him about Catholic sisters in Kyengeza village in Mityana, who occasionally supported vulnerable children.

A recommendation changed his life forever. He met Sister Elizabeth, an Austrian nun connected to the Roman Catholic Diocese of Kiyinda-Mityana, who decided to support his education.

"She became like a parent to me. Without her support, I do not know where I would be today," he recalls.

Through Sister Elizabeth's support, Ssemwanga completed secondary school in Mityana before joining Kampala School of Health Sciences, where he pursued clinical medicine.

While studying, he interacted with several German friends connected

Continued on page 28

CamScanner