

WAR AND BEING ORPHANED DID NOT HINDER HIS SUCCESS

BY RACHÉAL NALUBEGA

An orphan who beat all odds including a war troubled past was one of the Uganda Certificate of Education best performers with Aggregate 9. Santos Ukwang shares his trials and tribulations that he never let affect his education success.

"I lost my parents in 2001 at the age of six when I was about to start kindergarten. Unfortunately, it is also a time when there was instability in Lira, my home district where I was residing at that time.

At the time my parents died, Joseph Kony's Lord's Resistance Army soldiers had attacked my village but our elder brother took us to stay with him and his wife in Lira Town which was peaceful. He enrolled me into Lira Charity School, a refugee school that was started due to the existence of war that had displaced a number of people and destroyed schools we would have joined. But as I joined Primary Two, my brother and his wife separated. She used to support him financially, which meant there was no money available to take care of us anymore. So my brother asked our two uncles to look after us, the eight children. We were distributed among our uncles.

Luckily for me, the uncle that took me in and my other two siblings was a primary school teacher who emphasised the need for education, so he enrolled me in Irenda Primary School, Lira District. School fees here was shs6,000 per term which was affordable, but the education standard was in question for we would at times not study when a teacher had crops to harvest. We were also behind syllabus compared to other children's books I would read.

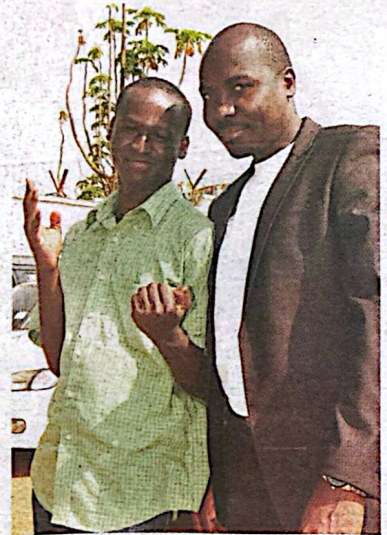
In 2004, one of my uncles, claimed Shs30million from my father's pension since my dad was a government teacher at the time of his death. This one I would say, was a ray of hope, but it was short lived. My other two siblings and I were relocated to a boarding school with a better education quality but this lasted for only two years that is up to my Primary Six and we were told the money was finished.

I was shifted from the expensive boarding school to Lira Police Primary School where I sat my Primary Seven and got Aggregate 8. This was a relief since I had thought my over changing of schools and instability in my Village would hinder my success. The only worry, I however had, was whether I would continue to secondary school.

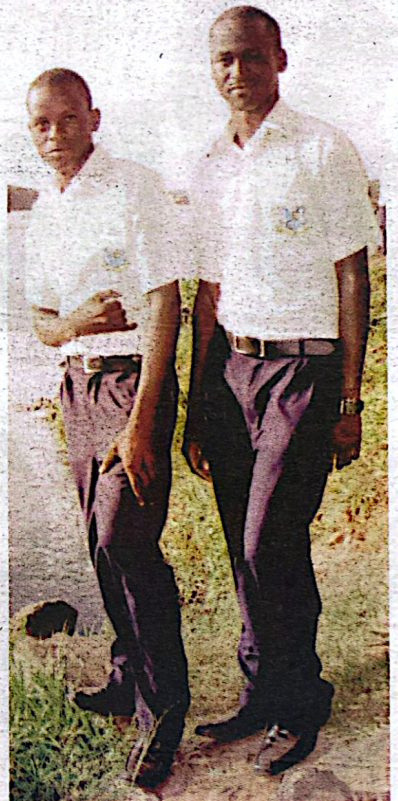
One of my brothers is a builder in Mukono, so when I talked to him about my fears which he obviously was aware of, he managed to talk to one of his friends, a secondary school teacher who helped request for a half bursary from the school he was teaching at, St Mark College, Namagoma. This came as a breakthrough for me. I was able to convince the school administration that I deserved a full bursary in my first one year stay at the school. I was punctual and performed exceptionally well which earned me a full bursary on joining my Form Two.

Since then, I have never looked back. I want to do Biology, Chemistry and Mathematics in A level which will enable me pursue my dream of becoming a surgeon so that I can bring change

to Uganda since the current surgeons do not meet people's expectations as many just fly out of the country for greener pastures.



Santos Ukwang shares his joy with his teacher after hearing about his results. Below, Ukwang with a friend while at school. PHOTOS BY ALEX ESAGALA



Ukwang's Physics teacher speaks.

"Ukwang's unstable background is one of the reasons he was compelled to work hard, he is humble, quiet God fearing and likes to learn more, he can never be gotten off side," Louis Luswata, Physics teacher, St Mark College, Namagoma.