

## Empower Her

# Namagembe: Operations brain behind four school campuses

From managing attendance across campuses in Uganda and Rwanda to resolving operational emergencies in real time, Jane Namagembe's work as chief of operations quietly powers a network of international schools, where precision, speed, and coordination define every day.

BY GLORIA IRANKUNDA

Jane Namagembe's days do not unfold the same way. One morning may begin with reviewing attendance reports across campuses, while another is quickly overtaken by an urgent call about an operational issue miles away. The unpredictability is constant, and so is the need to respond.

"There is no typical day in a school," she says. "Each day is different. You can plan your work, but something urgent may come up and you have to respond."

Once she is settled at her desk, she opens her notebook, reviews her tasks, and logs into systems that hold together a network of schools.

Within minutes, she can tell how many children are present in class in the Kigali campus, what lunch is being served in the Bunga campus, and which operational issue needs urgent attention in the Kisaasi campus.

It is a role that demands precision and constant vigilance. As the chief operations officer of Acorn's Group of International Schools, Namagembe ensures that all four campuses function well.

Her work, though largely behind the scenes, is the engine that keeps classrooms running, teachers supported, and parents assured.

### Shaped by discipline and ambition

Namagembe's path into operations began at home, under the influence of her mother, Sarah Kirabo, the proprietor of Lungujja Progressive Schools, who believed deeply in professional excellence.

"My mother was very result-oriented and determined. She wanted all of us to have professions," she recalls.

Namagembe pursued a Bachelor of Business Administration, majoring in procurement and logistics, a course that became the backbone of her career.

"Once I got into the procurement field, it shaped how I think and how I work," she shares.

### Starting out

Namagembe's career spans more than a decade, beginning in 2015 when she joined the Inter-Religious Council of Uganda as an intern. From there, she steadily built her experience across sectors.

She worked as a procurement administrator at SolarAid, moved into administration at Asigma Advisory, and later joined her mother's school, Lungujja Progressive Schools, as a school administrator. That experience, she says, prepared her for the future.

"I give credit to my mother for giving me that opportunity," she says. "That is



where I first understood how schools operate."

Her journey continued at VFS Global, a visa application services company working with embassies and government authorities, where she rose to the position of deputy manager in administration. There, she honed her ability to manage systems, processes, and large-scale operations.

### Coordinating operations across campuses

In August last year, Namagembe took on her current role as the chief operations officer at Acorn's Group of International Schools. She now oversees four campuses, three located in Kampala and one in Kigali, Rwanda.

Her responsibilities cut across administration, procurement, finance, and daily school operations. She ensures that policies are aligned, systems are functioning, and processes are consistent across all locations.

"Operations and procurement work hand in hand," she explains. "My background in procurement and logistics helps me streamline processes, manage

Chief Operations Officer of Acorn's Group of International Schools Jane Namagembe. PHOTO/GLORIA IRANKUNDA

suppliers, and ensure we are getting value for money."

She reviews emails and system dashboards, tracks attendance, monitors admissions, and checks operational updates from each campus.

From something as routine as meal planning to emergencies such as infra-

structure breakdowns, she is expected to respond swiftly.

"You might be at one campus and then you are called about an issue in another," she says. "You have to understand what has happened and find a solution immediately."

Overseeing multiple campuses comes with its own complexities, especially when they operate in different countries.

Namagembe credits the role of technology in helping bridge the distance. Through digital platforms, she remains connected to teams across campuses, ensuring coordination even without physical presence.

From organising events to ensuring safety standards, every decision must align with local authorities and requirements.

In Uganda, this may involve working with area security officers. In Rwanda, the regulations can be even stricter.

"Each location has its own regulations. What works in one place may not work in another. You have to understand each location's needs and systems separately," she explains.

### Precision in a demanding environment

Namagembe describes herself as someone who values doing things the right way at the right time.

It is a trait that aligns closely with the leadership style of her chief executive officer (CEO), whom she describes as detail-oriented and hands-on.

"She can even notice a missing full stop in a sentence," Namagembe says with a smile. "That level of attention to detail makes our work better."

This shared approach has created a working environment where accuracy is expected and quality is pursued consistently.

Having worked in different sectors, Namagembe notes that education stands apart. Unlike other industries, it demands constant engagement and emotional investment.

"This is a service industry," she says. "You are dealing with children, parents, teachers, and staff. Everyone expects value."

In education, the impact is immediate and visible. A delayed bus, a system failure, or a miscommunication can affect an entire school day.

"You can be called at any time," she says. "You have to be proactive and ready to respond."

### Guiding values

Throughout her journey, certain values have remained constant. Integrity, teamwork, and commitment to a shared vision are at the core of how she leads.

"Schools are run by passion," she says. "You have to love what you do and the people you serve."

She believes in delivering value to clients, which in this case includes not just parents but also students and staff.

### Women at work

Namagembe is also passionate about supporting women in their careers. In her current workplace, she is surrounded by female leaders, from the CEO to department heads.

"We work closely as women and encourage each other every day," she says.

She emphasises patience and persistence in her journey, adding that success does not come at the same pace for everyone.

"Do your best, even when no one is watching. Good work will always be identified," she advises.

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