



Giving.
Kalungi (R) and a volunteer serve home needs and inset is a soccer match. PHOTOS/G. KATONGOLE

Kalungi leads Christmas Outreach for slum children

BY GEORGE KATONGOLE

THE NUMBERS GAME

- 200+**: Children supported
- 2**: Kampala slums reached (Kivvulu, Katanga)
- 15**: Uganda Cranes caps
- 200+**: Senior club appearances
- 2006**: Year Kalungi moved to the USA
- 2018**: Year he retired from pro football

KAMPALA. Former Uganda Cranes defender Henry Kalungi over the weekend led a Christmas outreach for children from the Makere Kivvulu and Katanga slums, as the Henry Kalungi Foundation fed and gifted more than 200 youngsters at Buganda Road Primary School grounds.

The children received a meal before being given clothing and shoes donated through funds and items raised by Kalungi's friends in North Carolina, United States. The event also featured cake cutting and entertainment activities, including dance challenges. Young footballers in attendance were taken through basic football and life-skills guidance by the visiting team.

Speaking at the event, Kalungi said the outreach was informed by his own background and the need to support children growing up in vulnerable communities.

"I understand the challenges these children face because I grew up in similar circumstances. The aim is to give them hope and remind them that their background does not limit their future," Kalungi said.

The function was attended by Kalungi's former coach Abdallah Mubiru, currently the head coach at Entebbe UPPC and former Uganda Cranes left-back Godfrey Jjajja Walu' Walusimbi.

Mubiru described the initiative as timely. "It is encouraging to see former

players return to support the communities that shaped them. This kind of gesture can have a lasting impact on young people," Mubiru said.

Walusimbi urged established footballers to remain connected to their roots. "Players who have succeeded should always find ways of giving back to the communities that raised them. It helps inspire the next generation," he said.

Staying strategic

The outreach is part of the Foundation's annual Christmas programme targeting young people living in some of Kampala's largest informal settlements.

The Foundation conducted a similar activity in Bulemeezi, where elderly people received gifts while youth groups were provided with sports equipment, also sourced through support from Kalungi's network abroad.

The visit coincided with ongoing efforts to develop sports infrastructure in the area, where two football pitches have already been levelled as part of plans to establish a community stadium.

Kalungi also revealed plans to establish a Uganda-based branch of Alpha Soccer Academy, which he currently runs in North Carolina, USA. The academy is intended to serve as a development pathway for young Ugandan players, incorporating structured training, exposure opportunities and player transfer programmes linking local talent to opportunities overseas.

Foreign envoy

The event attracted visitors from abroad, including Shaun Toole, who attended with his daughter on his second visit to Uganda.

"Being part of this has been a humbling experience. It shows how sport can connect people and communities," Toole said.

Kalungi, born on November 25, 1987, in Kampala, is a former professional defender. He moved to the United States in 2006 to attend Winthrop University, where he made 56 appearances, was named team MVP in 2006 and earned multiple conference and regional honours.

He went on to enjoy a lengthy professional career in the United States, featuring for clubs including Richmond Kickers, Carolina RailHawks and Charlotte Independence, making over 200 senior appearances across competitions.

