

Bitamazire: Legacy of education, integrity

BY the time you are reading this, former education minister Geraldine Namirembe Bitamazire will have been laid to rest in Butambala district. The education icon, who passed on aged 84 on the eve of the general election, has had glowing eulogies dedicated to her. Her life involved relentless dedication to education, integrity and service. As we bid her farewell, we celebrate the legacy filled with patriotism and the deep commitment to faith she leaves behind. Her journey teaches us that progress is rooted in both honouring the past and embracing the future.

Bitamazire, who is Uganda's longest-serving education minister, believed that education transforms lives, having spearheaded the rollout of the Universal Primary Education (UPE) programme in 1997, making schooling free for millions of children. It is through relentless advocacy that she earned the moniker: Mama UPE. Since she departed from the education sector, the Government has expanded this free universal education to the secondary school level.



EDITORIAL

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As the first Ugandan headteacher at Tororo Girls' School, Bitamazire shattered the glass ceiling for young women, proving that women could lead and excel. She also remained

incorruptible across decades in public service. Born in 1941, a time when society marginalised girls, she defied expectations, earning degrees from Makerere University and rising to a cabinet position.

Bitamazire is also remembered for her contribution to the Church and the country through her dynamic involvement in education, which shaped the minds of many Ugandans and gave young people hope through her wise counsel and educational initiatives.

Her death should be one where we celebrate her by honouring the countless lives she uplifted and the blueprint she left for the future leaders. Her life teaches us that societal advancement needs leaders who, like her, prioritise long-term vision over short-term gains; equity and access must be paired with quality.

To build a brighter future, we must first honour the giants who paved the way. Therefore, let Bitamazire's legacy inspire Ugandans to uplift others, uphold integrity and ensure education remains a beacon of hope.