

A young boy, Mbinda, is shown working on the engine of a Toyota car. He is wearing a green shirt and a purple shawl. He is using a yellow tool to work on the engine. The car's hood is open, and the engine is visible. The Toyota logo is on the front grille.

# Mbinda the 13-year-old motor vehicle mechanic

**BUDDING ENGINEER:** Much as customers are skeptical about his skills due to his age, Mbinda continues to surprise them.

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# Mbinda the 13-year-old motor vehicle mechanic

BY FRED MUZAALU

## Briefly tell us about yourself

**M**y name is Joseph Mbinda. I am 13 years old and a Primary Five pupil at Mugema Church of Uganda Primary School in Kayunga Sub-county, Kayunga District. I am a young motor vehicle mechanic in Kayunga Town.

## How long have you been a motor vehicle mechanic?

It has now been one year since I started working as a motor vehicle mechanic. However, I spent a whole year training as a mechanic. My elder brother, who is also a mechanic, recognised my interest and offered to teach me. Through his mentorship, I gained hands-on experience at a garage in Kayunga Town where he works. I was trained on the job, primarily during weekends and holidays.

## You are still in school, why did you accept to learn this work?

Yes, I am still in school, but my parents were struggling to pay my school fees. When my brother suggested I learn motor vehicle mechanics with him, I thought it could help me earn some money. That way, I could help pay for my school fees and other things I need, so I do not have to rely only on my parents.

## During the one year you were under training, what challenges did you face?

I faced two main challenges. First, it was hard for me to become friends with the older men at the garage. At first, it was hard for me to talk and joke with them because I was much younger. But after some time, they became my friends and now treat me like one of them. Second, lifting heavy car

parts was very difficult for me. Things like tires and shock absorbers were hard to move because I was not strong enough yet. Even now, some parts are still hard for me to lift.

## But when do you do this work?

I only do this work on weekends and during school holidays, like right now. I really like working with cars, but I do not want to miss my classes unless I absolutely have to.

## What type of vehicles are you good at repairing?

I repair all saloon vehicles such as Toyota Premio, Spacio, Wish, Noah and some trucks. I am not yet an expert at repairing buses and big lorries. However, with time, I will also learn how to repair them.

## About how much do you earn in a day?

I earn about Shs20,000 a day but when there is a lot of work, I can even get Shs60,000 a day.

## What has been your biggest earning in a day?

It was Shs75,000 in June last year. That day I got a lot of vehicles.

## Are customers biased to work with you because of your age?

Yes, sometimes they are. A lot of customers don't believe I can fix their cars well just because I'm young. But once I finish the work and they see it is done right, they are always surprised and tell me I did a great job.

## Do your teachers know that you are a mechanic?

I do not think so, because none of them has ever seen me working on cars. Also, I have not told them about it.



## QUICK NOTES

**Parents names:** Mr Leuriano Mawera and Ms Nasim Nakimbugwe of Kaazi Village in Kayunga District.  
**Best colour:** Red  
**Best food:** Matooke and Fish.  
**Football Club I support:** Liverpool FC.

## What have you gained from being a mechanic?

I have saved some money which I use to pay my school fees and also buy personal requirements.

## What do you want to use your savings?

I want to start my own garage in future after completing Primary Seven. I want to be independent.

## Does this mean you want to pursue a career in engineering?

Yes, I want to be a

professional motor vehicle mechanic with a big garage.

## What are your best subjects?

English and Science.

## Any last word to fellow children?

My advice is to always work hard and try to learn a skill you enjoy such as fixing things, drawing, or playing a sport. That way, even if school feels tough sometimes, you can still become really good at something you love and maybe even earn from it one day.