

ZIRIREMA'S HEART BEATS FOR VULNERABLE CHILDREN

PHOTO BY HERBERT MUSOKE

By Herbert Musoke

In a modest corner of Kyazanga town council in Lwengo district stands a small, but vibrant school, changing lives through inclusion and faith.

Founded by Valence Zirirema, Nakateete Inclusive Primary School is the fruit of a long journey of service and compassion that began in Arua, West Nile in 2009, where he served vulnerable communities under Youth With A Mission (YWAM), a non-government organisation.

She worked closely with families of children with hearing impairment to promote communication through sign language and foster their acceptance within communities.

BRIDGING THAT GAP

"When I returned home in Kyazanga after my stay mission in Arua, I realised the same challenges existed right here. Many families had children with hearing impairment, who could not access education or even basic communication support," Zirirema recalls.

Determined to bridge that gap, he founded the Kyazanga Discovery and



Zirirema with some of his pupils at Nakateete Inclusive Primary School in Kyazanga town council, Lwengo district. The school fees is sh30,000 per term, but barely paid

Learning Centre, an initiative empowering families of children with hearing impairment through sign language training and community awareness.

INCLUSIVE SCHOOL ESTABLISHED

Out of that vision grew Nakateete Inclusive School, established in 2021 to provide affordable education to children with hearing impairment from disadvantaged backgrounds.

The school fees is sh30,000 per term, but most parents can barely afford it.

Most of the children with hearing impairment are in the boarding section.

Zirirema received funding from well-wishers which enabled the construction of three permanent classrooms. Occasionally, well-wishers support a few pupils, but most of the financial burden falls on him personally. To get qualified teachers, he reaches out to different networks and seeks referrals for qualified Grade One teachers who can support the learners effectively. Despite limited resources, the atmosphere at

Nakateete is lively and filled with enthusiasm.

JOINING HANDS

Among the many touched by his work of caring for needy children, is his daughter, Hope Nyamwiza, who is now a sign language interpreter and advocate of children with hearing impairment.

"My father's mission shaped who I am. He showed me that inclusion is not about pity—it's about justice and opportunity," she says.

To sustain this dream, Nyamwiza and her friends

SUPPORT NEEDED

The founder Nakateete Inclusive Primary School located in Kyazanga, Valence Zirirema, appeals to philanthropists, well-wishers, and partners to support the education of vulnerable children he takes care of at his school.

For Zirirema, education is more than a service; it is a mission of hope, inclusion, and dignity for every child, deaf or hearing alike. He envisions establishing a vocational training centre where parents can gain skills to improve their economic stability, enabling them to support their children's education.

Zirirema also hopes to have teachers trained in basic sign language skills, making communication and instruction more effective and reducing reliance on interpreters and enhancing inclusive learning.

have launched a fundraising drive aimed at constructing two dormitories, equipping classrooms, and expanding support for pupils. Supporters can help by sponsoring a child, donating materials, or partnering through corporate social responsibility programs. "We may not build everything at once, but together we can build a future that lasts," Nyamwiza says.

CHALLENGES

With classrooms made of timber, semi-permanent dormitories, and little furniture, it is more of a venerable situation for the learners and teachers alike.

"Our structures are temporary and unsafe during heavy rains. We need proper dormitories and classrooms so children can learn in safety and dignity," he says.

The school has some basic teaching materials and classrooms; however, they are not adequately equipped to meet the standards of an optimal learning environment for children, especially those with hearing impairments.

There is only one teacher specialised in supporting learners with hearing impairment which is challenging since the pupils are spread across different classes.