

Absa KH3 Run scales new heights for girls' education



Good cause. Absa MD, David Wandera, flanked by Customer Experience Director Helen Basuuta Nangonzi (L) & Hashmaster Alice Gitta Oketcho (R) and partners at the launch of the 2026 Absa KH3 7 Hills Run. PHOTO/COURTESY

Education Drive. What began as a city run has steadily grown into one of Uganda's most impactful education drives, with the Absa KH3-7 Hills Run returning on April 26 with a renewed focus on keeping the girl child in school - using sport, community and corporate purpose as tools for lasting change.

BY INNOCENT NDAWULA

AT A GLANCE

Event: Absa KH3-7 Hills Run

Date: April 26, 2026

Venue: Lugogo Cricket Oval

Distance: 21km (Seven Hills)

Target: 8,000 participants

Funds raised since 2023:

Shs900m

Girls supported: Over 21,900

The Absa KH3-7 Hills Run is no longer just about conquering Kampala's historic hills. It has evolved into a growing movement aimed at keeping the girl child in school, with organisers targeting 8,000 runners when the 2026 edition returns to Lugogo Cricket Oval on April 26.

Launched in 2023 in partnership with the Kampala Hash House Harriers, the run has registered consistent growth - not only in participation but in impact - raising Shs900m in three years to support girls' education across Uganda.

"This isn't just about running," said Absa Bank Uganda Managing Director David Wandera during the launch

at Absa Bank Uganda's head offices in Kampala on Monday. "When we keep a girl in school, we are investing in stronger families, stronger communities and a stronger country."

Steady growth

From Shs200m in its maiden year, the run raised Shs300m in 2024 and Shs400m in 2025, a trajectory that mirrors the event's growing influence. According to the organisers, more than 21,900 girls have directly benefited so far through education and empowerment programmes.

Wandera noted that the numbers represent more than financial success.

"Each year, we see more runners, more partners and more girls staying in school. That consistency is what gives this initiative real meaning," he said.

Purposeful partnership

The 21km run traverses Kampala's seven historic hills—Kibuli, Nakaseero, Old Kampala, Namirembe, Rubaga, Lubiri and Nsambya—offering participants a demanding but symbolic jour-

ney. For Alice Gitta Okecho, the Hash Master of Kampala Hash House Harriers, the Absa partnership has added deeper purpose to a run that dates back to 2000.

"We started the 7 Hills Run to promote healthy lifestyles, especially in the corporate world," Okecho, who is also a former Lady Volleyball Cranes international, said. "But partnering with Absa transformed it. Every kilometre now translates into hope for a girl who might otherwise drop out of school."

Rising stakes

Participation has climbed steadily from 5,500 runners in 2024 to 6,250 in 2025, with organisers confident of hitting the 8,000 mark this year.

Beyond fitness and philanthropy, incentives are also growing. The top two male and female finishers who complete all seven hills will earn slots in South Africa's annual Run Your City Series, while Bakayima has added land titles for the best male and female seven-hill finishers.

Where the money goes

Funds raised are channelled to organisations directly addressing barriers to girls' education, including Baylor College of Medicine's DREAMS programme, Amref Health Africa, Windle International, World Vision, Nyaka AIDS Orphan Project, Katalamwa Cheshire Home and Smart Girls Uganda.

WHY EDUCATION?

Why Education. Educating the girl child remains one of the most effective ways to break cycles of poverty, improve health outcomes and strengthen communities. The Absa KH3-7 Hills Run has positioned itself as more than a fundraising event - using consistency, partnerships and measurable growth to turn sport into a sustainable education tool.