

Nsenga; Engineer of the endgame

Early Genius. At four, he named himself an engineer. At six, he is already solving problems most children never meet - quietly, patiently, across a chessboard. Alpha Agaba Nsenga is not rushing the future; he is building it move by move.

BY INNOCENT NDAWULA

AT A GLANCE

Name: Alpha Agaba Nsenga

Nickname: Engineer Alpha

Born: June 5, 2019

Parents: Innocent & Grace

Agaba

Club: KTLCA (Kamwokya

Treasure Life Chess Academy)

Tournaments Played: 8

Medals: 6 (5 Gold, 1 Bronze)

First Medal: Kampala Chess Open, 2025

International Debut: East

Africa Juniors, Mombasa

(2026)

Fide Status: Officially listed

School: Kampala Quality

Primary School

In 2023, long before trophies and ratings, Alpha Agaba Nsenga made a declaration. He would be known as 'Engineer' Alpha. No prompting. No apology.

Just certainty. He told anyone, who would listen, with a calm confidence that felt older than his years. The main culprits to his self-acclaim were the loving Rotarians of Rotary Club of Kampala South who meet every Monday at Hotel Africana - Kampala as he was permanent furniture there with his father Innocent Agaba seemingly always having him company for the weekly fellowships.

Today, that same conviction has found a different blueprint - not in bricks or wires as an astute engineer, but on sixty-four black-and-white squares as a chess Grandmaster (GM) in the making.

Now six years old, Nsenga has become one of the youngest rising stars in Ugandan chess, a sport that rewards patience, imagination and emotional control - qualities rarely associated with toddlers. Yet Nsenga sits at the board with a stillness that disarms opponents twice his age. Nsenga does not fidget. He does not rush. He studies the board as if it is speaking to him.

"I love chess because it lets me build a plan on the squares, and it helps me concentrate," Nsenga says, matter-of-factly - like someone explaining something obvious.

Golden beginnings

In just eight national tournaments, Nsenga has collected six

medals - five Gold and one Bronze - competing across the Under-6 and Under-8 categories. His first medal came in 2025 at the Kampala Chess Open, a moment his handlers still describe as the spark that confirmed what they already suspected: one not under just a phase but one who is destined for bigger prizes.

At the Kampala Chess Festival in June 2025, Nsenga won a bronze medal in the Under-6 category, navigating the city's most promising young players with remarkable calm. At the Uganda National Junior Chess Championship earlier this year, he finished first runner-up in the Under-7 category. Nsenga has also often competed in Open categories - above his age bracket, unfazed by the size or experience of his opponents.

"Most children his age play against the clock, but Alpha plays against the board," explains coach Joan Ahereza. "His greatest strength isn't just his calculation; it's the confidence and patience he brings to every match - he isn't intimidated even by older players." Last month marked Alpha's first international assignment. Wearing Uganda's colours at the East African

Junior Chess Championship in Mombasa - Kenya, he competed in the Under-8 category - an age bracket above his own - and finished an impressive fifth. It was not the position that impressed officials, but the manner. No fear and certainly no rush. Just careful calculation against the region's best.

Today, Alpha is officially listed in the International Chess Federation (Fide) database, making him one of Uganda's youngest recognised rated prospects - a quiet but significant milestone.

Earlier imagination tales

Before chessboards and clocks, Nsenga was a storyteller. In 2024, a viral video titled 'Meet Bohrium - your AI-powered research companion,' introduced him to the public as a four-year-old with a vivid imagination.

Chess coaches now smile when they recall it. "That imagination is what creates candidate moves," one of his trainers that preferred anonymity explains. "He sees possibilities others don't." Nsenga, a son of Rotarians Innocent Agaba and Grace Agaba of the Rotary Club of Kampala South, is also a pupil at Kampala Quality Primary

POST-KATWE

Uganda's chess story to the world once had a single face on the big screens - Phiona Mutesi, the Queen of Katwe. Nsenga, a member of KTLCA that is also a ghetto club and has inspired a handful of national stars, represents a bold future of what lies in store. The post-Katwe era is defined by early exposure.

School. For the Agaba Nsenga family, the trophies matter - but not as much as the person Nsenga is becoming.

"As parents, we are most proud of how Alpha (Nsenga) uses the discipline of chess to build his own character," says his father Innocent, speaking alongside his wife Grace at their beautiful home in Kitala-Kanyanya.

"He approached the game with the same 'prophetic' certainty he had when he first named himself an Engineer, and we are simply here to provide the foundation for him to grow, one move at a time."

His journey is carefully nurtured under coaches; Ahereza and Patrick Mukasa of Kamwokya Treasure Life Chess Academy (KTLCA), while his siblings - Kaana Miriam and Abigail Ankunda - form a constant source of encouragement. It is a rare alignment: professional coaching, stable family support and a child who genuinely enjoys the silence of thought.

Beyond the board

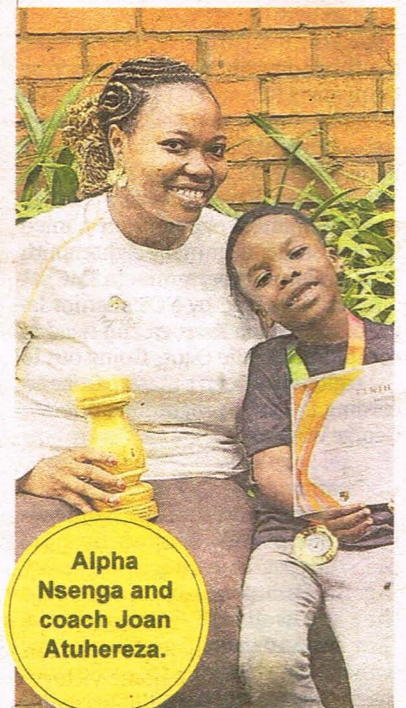
In 2025, Nsenga appeared on "Pablo and Kids" on NBS Television, sharing space with Uganda's King of Comedy, Kenneth "Pablo" Kimuli. The moment was lighthearted, but the message was serious - chess as a tool for discipline, thinking and national pride.

"This game teaches children how to think before they act," Pablo remarked during their televised encounter, back then. To put a lid on Nsenga's storyline thus far without waxing lyrical is that the young gun is not being rushed into greatness. He is being allowed to grow into it - calmly, confidently, one move at a time.

Uganda's future thinkers may already be seated at the board.



Partnership. Nsenga with sister Miriam Kaana with one of his first accolades in 2025. Below, Alpha Nsenga Agaba ponders his next move during a recent tournament. PHOTOS/COURTESY



Alpha Nsenga and coach Joan Atuhereza.

Age is just a number.

Nsenga taking on an older opponent - a trait that has been a mainstay of his journey.

