

SHE HOPES TO BECOME A NURSE AND SERVE HER COMMUNITY

By Ibrahim Ruhweza

MOTHER TAUGHT BY SON EXCELS IN UCE

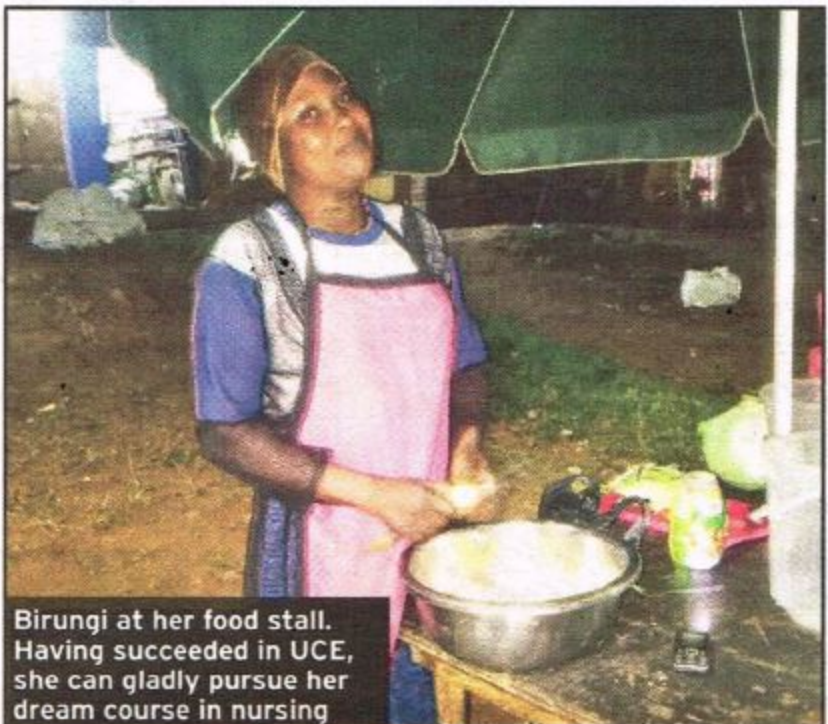
Khanifa Birungi, 46, a fast food vendor in Katooke town council, Kyenjojo district, has defied the odds after passing the 2025 Uganda Certificate of Education (UCE) examinations with 1B, 7Cs and 2Ds at Katooke Secondary School.

Birungi's success is even more remarkable considering that she was taught by her youngest son and classmate, Nasser Kabagambe, who coached her during evening study sessions at home.

For Birungi, these grades mark the culmination of a long and difficult journey that began when her husband left, forcing her to become the sole provider for her four children. Determined to keep them in school, she sacrificed her own education and survived by selling fast food by the roadside.

In 2020, she surprised her community by sitting the Primary Leaving Examinations and scoring aggregate 20, a performance that inspired her to enrol in secondary school the following year.

Returning to the classroom, however, was not easy. Older than most of her classmates and some of her teachers, Birungi endured



Birungi at her food stall. Having succeeded in UCE, she can gladly pursue her dream course in nursing



Iga, Birungi's son and teacher

whispers and ridicule from students who mockingly referred to her as "grandmother".

But she refused to be discouraged. Instead, she kept her focus firmly on her goal, reminding herself that she

was not competing with teenagers, but with her past. After spending long hours selling

food, she would sit down with Kabagambe to revise her books. Her son patiently guided her through mathematics and information technology, helping her grasp concepts she had once found difficult.

Her first-born son, Hakim Iga, who is a teacher at the same school, also supported her academic career, especially in information and communication technology and other subjects.

"At school, I saw him as my teacher. At home, he was my son. When it came to books, I respected him as a teacher," she said.

Birungi had long nurtured a dream of joining the Police force. However, after learning that she had exceeded the recruitment age limit, she redirected her ambitions. She hopes to train as a nurse, believing it will allow her to serve her community in a meaningful way.

The school headteacher, Agnes Nabitula, described Birungi as quiet, persistent and deeply committed to her studies, despite financial strains.