

The NTV story brought rest to Mr Ocheng and his family after more than a year of looking for their lost son, Jordan Omuse.

BY BETTY MUDONDO
& SHABIBAH NAKIRIGYA

For more than a year, Jordan Omuse's disappearance lingered as an open wound for his family, marked by uncertainty, quiet desperation, and a search that seemed to lead nowhere. Then, in an unexpected twist, a routine television broadcast on *NTV Uganda* last Friday (April 24) changed everything.

What followed was not just the resolution of a missing child case, but a powerful illustration of how chance, persistence, and the reach of media can converge to reunite a family long separated.

Mr Martin Ocheng, Omuse's father, said Omuse's mother, Gorreti Katusiime, had travelled from Tororo District to Kawempe in Kampala with three of their children: Omuse, Mary Racheal Alowo, and William Ajore, to visit him in Kampala where he works. Their first-born child had remained in Tororo.

"The visit, intended to be brief, took a tragic turn when Omuse disappeared just a week after their arrival," he said.

Omuse disappeared on March 16, 2025, at around 11am, during a period of heightened tension in Kawempe North following a highly contested by-election.

Mr Ocheng says the young boy became frightened after encountering security personnel and ran off in panic, disappearing into the confusion of the moment. It was only later that a neighbour reported seeing him run, but the chance to quickly trace him had already passed.

He adds that returning home without her son was not an option for Katusiime. She chose to remain in Kampala, clinging to the hope that he would be found, a decision that Ocheng says placed a significant burden on the family due to his unstable income.

"We had planned a short visit, but since then, my wife had refused to go back to Tororo without our son. As days

NTV story solves missing child case



Jordan Omuse with his father Martin Ochieng (right) and cousin, David Owuta (left) after their reunion at Sanyu Babies Home. PHOTO/BETTY MUDONDO

turned into weeks, and later months, the trail went cold, leaving the family with no confirmed sightings or credible leads," he says.

Desperation eventually drove Ocheng to seek help beyond formal systems. He visited prophets recommended by friends and even traditional healers

for answers, but none yielded results. He says for more than a year, the family has lived in a painful state of uncertainty, where each rumour of a possible sighting raised hope, only to end in disappointment.

For Katusiime, the emotional toll was particularly severe. She struggled to

HOPE AGAINST HOPE

Jordan Omuse's disappearance was reported at Kawempe Police Station on March 17, 2025, under SD REF: 89/17/03/2025. However, like many missing persons cases, progress was slow. Ocheng said efforts to follow up across different police stations were constrained by limited resources, while the cost of making public announcements further complicated their search.

come to terms with the loss, unable to return to the village without her son.

The breakthrough came unexpectedly. Last Friday, while watching *NTV Akawungezi* news segment on new regulations governing early childhood development centres, a relative noticed a child in the background who bore a striking resemblance to Omuse.

Although the appearance was brief, it was enough to trigger suspicion and immediate action. The relative alerted the family, prompting swift follow-up. Omuse's cousin, David Owuta, helped trace the footage and accompanied his uncle to the *NTV Uganda* offices to seek assistance in retrieving clearer images.

Further inquiries revealed that the footage had originated from an earlier feature aired on *Spark TV*, in which Sanyu Babies Home appealed to the public to help identify children under its care. Among them was a boy identified as Paul Barata, whose resemblance to Omuse was unmistakable. For the family, it marked the first credible lead in more than a year.

Contact was quickly established with Sanyu Babies Home, and arrangements were made for the family to visit and verify the child's identity. The encounter that followed was deeply emotional. Upon seeing his father and cousin, the boy immediately recognised them,

walked toward them, embraced them, and asked about his mother.

For Ocheng, the moment was overwhelming, as the reality of finding his son alive after months of uncertainty was almost difficult to comprehend.

Matia Kakooza, a senior social worker at Sanyu Babies Home, said Omuse was found in Nabweru, Wakiso District, shortly after his disappearance.

"A good Samaritan had spotted him alone and reported the matter to police, who later alerted the home," he said.

He added that the boy was described as traumatised and disoriented at the time. Efforts were made to trace his family based on the limited information he provided, including mentions of "Ntinda", but these attempts were unsuccessful.

"With no identification or immediate way of locating his relatives, the home took him in and temporarily named him Paul Baraka to facilitate his care," he said.

He added that for nearly a month, he barely spoke and appeared deeply distressed, but over time, he began to open up, mentioning names of family members and gradually adjusting to his new environment.

"He also learned Luganda, which helped him interact with other children. Attempts to place him in foster care did not succeed, as he consistently insisted that he had a family and wanted to return home," he said.

Mr Kaliisa added that Omuse's repeated desire to reunite with his parents remained a constant throughout his stay at the home.

"The reunification process followed procedures outlined in the Children's Act, including identity verification and coordination with relevant authorities to ensure the child's safety," he said.

Only after these steps were completed was the family allowed to take him home, guided by the principle that the best interests of the child must remain the primary consideration. Mr Kakooza also appealed to families of several other children at the facility to come forward and reclaim them. For Omuse's family, the reunion marks the end of a long and painful chapter.

The family is both overwhelmed yet relieved to return home together. Ocheng is thankful to Sanyu Babies Home for taking care of his son so well. He also thanked *Spark TV* and *NTV Uganda*, for their role in reuniting his family, saying it is unbelievable.