

Miss Tourism Uganda 2026



KING ISAAC
AMURIAT
MAN OF TOURISM
INTERNATIONAL 2025

QUEEN NACHIAP
KEZIA CINDY
MISS TOURISM
UGANDA 2025

THEME

**AI CULTURE
& TOURISM**

DRIVING A SMARTER, MORE INCLUSIVE UGANDA

**14TH
EDITION**





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Theme:
**AI, Culture and
Tourism**

FOREWORD

I AM MY CULTURE

Board Chairperson
Marianne Mutagamba



Bridging Horizons: AI, Culture and the Human Heart
Welcome to the official souvenir magazine of the Miss Tourism Uganda Grand Finale. As we gather to celebrate the pinnacle of beauty, intellect and heritage, we find ourselves standing at one of the most fascinating crossroads in human history.

This year, our theme: "AI, Tourism and Culture" challenges us to look forward, daring to imagine how cutting-edge technology intersects with the timeless traditions of the Pearl of Africa.

Embracing the Digital Frontier

Artificial Intelligence and digital innovations are fundamentally reshaping how the world experiences Uganda. From virtual tourism expeditions and smart-destination mapping to AI-driven global marketing campaigns, technology allows us to project the breathtaking landscapes of our national parks, the rhythm of our indigenous dances, and the warmth of our hospitality onto screens across the globe in milliseconds.

Algorithms can optimize travel, decode languages and open new economic gateways for our youth.

Yet, as we embrace this digital evolution, we must remember a fundamental truth: A machine can map a route, but only a human heart can feel the journey.

The Core of Our Heritage

Culture is not merely a static artifact to be digitized or archived in a database; it is a living, breathing pulse. It lives in the laughter shared around a village fireplace, the intricate storytelling of our traditional textiles, the communal preparation of our diverse cuisines and the direct eye contact that welcomes a stranger as family (Jamboor Okwoleega).

The true magic of Uganda's tourism does not lie solely in high-definition pixels or automated itineraries. It lies in authentic human connection, the genuine smiles of our people, the personal exchanges between a traveler and a local guide and the shared emotions of experiencing a sunset over the River Nile or the mist-veiled peaks of the Rwenzoris.

"As technology accelerates our reach, our humanity must anchor our depth. Algorithms can inspire a visit, but human connection creates a belonging."

A Call to Our Cultural Ambassadors

To our remarkable finalists gracing this year's stage: you are the embodiment of this delicate balance. You are tech-savvy digital natives who harness social platforms and modern tools to tell Uganda's story, yet you remain deeply rooted in the values, grace and ubuntu of your ancestors. You prove that modernization and cultural preservation are not mutually exclusive, but rather partners in progress.

As you flip through the pages of this souvenir magazine, we invite you to marvel at the innovation shaping our future, but more importantly, to reconnect with the soulful human stories that make Uganda truly the Pearl of Africa.

Enjoy the read, celebrate our queens and keep the human connection alive!

Warmly,
The Editorial Board
Miss Tourism Uganda Souvenir Magazine

A Tribute to Hon. Maria Mutagamba:

THE MOTHER OF MISS TOURISM UGANDA



As we celebrate the grandeur, culture and beauty of the Pearl of Africa in this edition of the Miss Tourism Uganda Magazine, we pause to reflect with profound reverence on the visionary who made it all possible: the late Hon. Maria Mutagamba.

Though she departed from us in 2017, her spirit remains inextricably woven into the fabric of this pageant, the tourism sector and the countless lives she touched.

A Visionary Founder and Trailblazer
Hon. Maria Mutagamba was a titan of public service, a dedicated conservationist and a passionate champion of Uganda's natural and cultural heritage. Recognizing the untapped potential of Uganda's tourism industry, she looked beyond traditional economic sectors and envisioned a platform that could use beauty and intellect to tell the true story of our homeland.

In founding Miss Tourism Uganda, she created more than just a competition. She built a national institution designed to empower young women to become cultural ambassadors, conservation advocates and leaders of tomorrow.

A Gentle Mother and Mentor

Beyond her formidable political career and ministerial achievements, Hon. Mutagamba will forever be cherished for her deeply maternal warmth. To the young women who passed through this pageant, she was not merely a founder or a patron; she was a gentle mother.

She listened with patience and offered guidance with unwavering grace.

She nurtured confidence in the timid and channeled the ambition of the bold. She treated every participant as her own daughter, instilling in them the values of dignity, resilience and patriotism.

Believing in the Youth

Hon. Mutagamba possessed an unshakeable faith in the potential of Uganda's youth. At a time when young people were often sidelined in national development, she actively gave them a chance. She opened doors that were previously locked, trusting the younger generation to carry the torch of national pride, tourism marketing and cultural preservation. Her legacy is alive in every young woman who steps onto the Miss Tourism stage with a dream in her heart and a vision for her community.

"A great leader plants trees under whose shade they may never sit. Hon. Maria Mutagamba planted a forest of opportunity, and today, a generation of empowered young women stands tall in her honor."

Legacy Etched in the Pearl of Africa
As our queens proudly wear their sashes and travel the length and breadth of Uganda promoting our heritage, they walk the very paths that Hon. Mutagamba paved with her dedication, vision and boundless love.

Though we miss her physical presence, her gentle smile and her inspiring words, her legacy echoes in every success story born out of this platform.

Rest in eternal peace, Mama Maria.
Your dream lives on.

A LIFE LIVED SHORT, BUT A LEGACY THAT WILL LIVE LONG

Eulogy for His Majesty Rukirabasaija Omukama Oyo Nyimba Kabamba Iguru Rukidi IV

There are some people whose lives we do not merely witness we grow alongside them. For my generation, His Majesty Omukama Oyo Nyimba Kabamba Iguru Rukidi IV was one such person.

I was born in 1993 and just two years later in 1995, a little boy of only three years was placed upon the throne of Tooro. From that moment, King Oyo became a part of the story of our generation. We watched him grow.

We watched the little boy being carefully groomed for the enormous responsibility that had been placed upon his young shoulders. We watched him move through childhood, adolescence and eventually adulthood. We watched the transformation from the little King the world marveled at into the man, monarch and leader that Tooro came to know.

And perhaps that is why his passing feels so deeply personal to every single one of us. We did not simply know of King Oyo. We grew up with King Oyo. We watched a generation's King become a man.

At only three years old, he inherited a throne and a responsibility far beyond his years. Yet somehow, through the years, he grew into it. His life became a remarkable journey of learning, leadership, discovery and service. He carried the history of Tooro while also looking towards its future.

He was a King who understood that leadership was not only about the throne. It was about people, meeting them where they were, whether in moments of celebration, sorrow, development, culture, sport or ordinary life. He had a warmth that allowed people of different walks of life to feel that they could cross paths with their King.

He loved his people and he loved the things that made Tooro and Uganda beautiful.

He loved tourism the landscapes, the heritage, the stories and the possibilities that existed within the land he called home. He understood that tourism was not simply about places it was about people, culture and identity. He loved farming, understanding the dignity

of working the land and the importance of agriculture to the future of his people. He loved family. And above all, he carried a deep appreciation for God, from whom he believed his life, his responsibility and his blessings came.

"I am the King of Tooro but I know my boss is the King of kings!"

His life was tragically short but it was not small. Thirty-four years! A lifetime that by ordinary measure should have had so many more chapters. More journeys. More dreams. More laughter. More coronation anniversaries. More conversations. More plans for Tooro. More opportunities to watch the little boy become the elder statesman.

But perhaps the measure of a life is not only in its length it's in what it leaves behind and King Oyo leaves behind a generation that remembers growing up with him. He leaves behind a people who watched him mature. He leaves behind a Kingdom whose story he carried for more than three decades. He leaves behind young people who saw in him the possibility that tradition and modernity could exist together that one could honour where they came from while still dreaming about where they were going.

He leaves behind memories and memories are sometimes the most enduring monuments.

Our generation mourns one of our own. We mourn a King who belonged not only to the history books but to the childhood memories of an entire generation. For those of us born around 1993, King Oyo was almost a mirror of time itself. As we moved from childhood into adolescence and adulthood so did he. We watched him grow as we grew.

And now, painfully, we find ourselves having to say goodbye to someone we had quietly imagined would always be there. Our generation has lost a leader of our era.

And for those who knew his passion for football, we also mourn a staunch Arsenal Gooner. Perhaps



somewhere beyond this earthly realm, the King has already found the greatest pitch of them all.

But today, there are no rivalries.

No goals to celebrate.

No trophies to debate.

Only gratitude.

Gratitude that we got to witness your journey.

Gratitude that we got to see the little King become a man.

Gratitude for the years you gave to your people.

Gratitude for the dreams you carried.

And gratitude for a life that, although cut short, left an imprint far greater than its years.

Amooti otutiire ibumba kanwa!

Omukama Oyo Atulize!

Enkuba etutiire!

Engoma eyejumikire!

Entale echuulile!

Omukama Aihire omukono Mungabu!

Gutusingire kimu Agutamba!

The crown has been handed onward, but the memories remain with us. May God receive you with mercy, Your Majesty.

May the ancestors of Tooro receive their son.

May the people you loved find strength. And may the young people whose generation grew up watching you carry your story forward.

Rest well, Amooti!

You were born into a crown.

You grew into a King.

You became a symbol of a generation.

And you leave us with a legacy that will continue to speak long after the drums fall silent.

Written by:

Omukurungo Kati

Karungi Immaculate Kamara Akiiki

Mwijukuru wa'babiito na'bagaya

Mwiha wa'basiita.



Editorial Team

From the CREATIVE DESK

Telling Uganda's Story. Preserving Its Heritage.
Imagining Its Future.

At Smiles Creative Arts, we believe great stories have the power to connect people, preserve culture and create new opportunities for Uganda's tourism industry.

As we celebrate the 14th Edition of Miss Tourism Uganda, under the theme "AI, Culture & Tourism," we recognize the growing role of creativity and technology in telling Uganda's story to the world.

Uganda is more than its wildlife and spectacular landscapes. It is its people, kingdoms, traditions, music, dance, fashion, cuisine, crafts, languages and the generations that continue to preserve them.

Technology, particularly Artificial Intelligence, gives us new ways to document, preserve and share these stories. A young person with a smartphone can record an elder's knowledge, document a cultural practice or showcase a community experience and help it reach audiences far beyond Uganda.

But technology should amplify culture—not replace it.

The modern tourism ambassador is therefore more than a representative. They are a storyteller, cultural ambassador, communicator and bridge between Uganda and the world.

At **Smiles Creative Arts**, we are proud to contribute through **photography, videography, design, branding, digital communication, live production and visual storytelling**, helping people, brands, institutions and destinations communicate with creativity and impact.

"AI can help us amplify the story. Creativity can make it memorable. Culture gives the story its soul."

The future of tourism belongs to destinations that embrace innovation while protecting the authenticity of their heritage.

Uganda has always had the stories.
Now we have more ways than ever to tell them.

Smiles Creative Arts
Creating. Capturing. Communicating.



www.smiles-ca.com



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AI, CULTURE AND TOURISM



NATIONAL TEAM



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Stake Holders
Liason and
Projects lead



PR and Comms:
Saina Musasizi



**Karungi Immaculate
Kamara**
Grants Associate and
National Coordinator
Little Mr & Miss Pearl
of Africa International



**Eddy Ochaya
Bosmic**
Cluster Heads
Coordinator



Sophia Kiwanuka
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Branding



Olala Winter
Security



Kawooya Allan Henry
Production
Coordinator



Zakia Lucky
Miss Tourism
Uganda Trainer
and Designer



Rianne Bateeze
Miss Tourism
Uganda Trainer



Marlene Josey
Man of Tourism
International
Trainer



Yunik Elijah
Man of Tourism
International
Trainer



**Awekonimungu
Shamirah** – Miss
Tourism Uganda
Assistant Trainer



**Abaho Jackline
Abigail** – Miss
Tourism Uganda
Assistant Trainer



Charity Alaba
– Chaperone
Miss Tourism
Uganda



Giulio Molfese
– Profiling
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**Madshots (Allan
Hector)**
– Bootcamp
Photographer



**Nalwanga
Bernadatte**
– Matron



Cissy Nambi
– Nurse



Phiona Nantege
– Lead Marketing



Jaira Kalungi
– Marketing
Representative



Adikin Anna
– Marketing Officer



So Excel
– Digital Marketing

JUDGES

1



Umar Muwonge
Lead Judge

He is a tourism development and quality assurance professional at the Ministry of Tourism, Wildlife and Antiquities, and a focal person for Explore Uganda domestic tourism campaigns. He also leads Ngara Destinations and serves on the Tourism Clubs of Uganda board.

4



Queen Nguna Sandra
Judge - Miss Tourism Uganda

Sandra Elizabeth Nguna Ssesazi is a Ugandan model, former Miss Tourism Busoga (2019) and former PRO of Miss Tourism Uganda, recognised for promoting Busoga's tourism, heritage and attractions, including the Source of the Nile

2



Fernando Kamugisha
Judge - Man of Tourism International

He is a Ugandan model, show producer and inclusion advocate, best known as CEO of The Kids Fashion Runway, using fashion to empower children and promote the inclusion of children with disabilities

5



Mr Masaba Stephen
Judge - Miss Tourism Uganda

He is a Ugandan conservation and tourism executive who served as Director of Tourism and Business Development at the Uganda Wildlife Authority (UWA), where he was involved in tourism development, wildlife-product marketing and strategic partnerships supporting Uganda's domestic and international tourism

3



Loice Namara Kalamuka
Judge - Man of Tourism International

Loice Namara Kalamuka is a prominent Ugandan pageantry professional contributing to partnerships and the organisation's evolving tourism and cultural initiatives.

ARTISTS



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Co Mc Tash Hubby



Patrick Salvado
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REMARKS BY THE MINISTER OF STATE FOR TOURISM, WILDLIFE AND ANTIQUITIES AT THE GRAND FINALE OF MISS TOURISM UGANDA

Hon. Susan Nakawuki Nsambu –
State Minister Ministry of Tourism Wildlife & Antiquities

The Colleagues from the Cabinet and Parliament, Your Royal Highnesses and Cultural Leaders,

The representatives from MTWA, UTB, UWA and other agencies in the sector, The Organizers and Visionaries behind the Miss Tourism Uganda Foundation, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen.

A very warm welcome to you all.

It is a distinct honor and pleasure to stand before you tonight at this magnificent grand finale of Miss Tourism Uganda. Tonight, we are not just celebrating beauty; we are celebrating the very soul of the Pearl of Africa. I want to extend my heartfelt gratitude to the organizers who, year after year, work tirelessly to ensure that our heritage, our landscapes and our cultural identity are elevated to the national and global stage through pageantry.

This year's theme, "AI, Tourism and Culture," positions us at a critical and exciting crossroads. We are living in a digital renaissance and the intersection of technology and heritage is where the future of Uganda's tourism lies. Artificial Intelligence is completely reshaping how travelers discover the world. From smart travel itineraries to AI-driven virtual tours that can project the majestic roar of a Murchison Falls lion or the intricate rhythm of the Bakisimba dance across the globe, technology is our new frontier. However, AI is merely a tool; culture is the soul. We must use AI to tell our own stories authentically, ensuring that as we digitize, we preserve the unfiltered beauty of our 56 distinct tribes and cultural institutions. Our Miss Tourism finalists tonight are the perfect bridge, they are dynamic and fiercely rooted in their cultural heritage.

I want to commend Miss Tourism Uganda for introducing to this family the "Man of Tourism Uganda" initiative. For years, pageantry has leaned heavily toward

empowering the girl child, which was necessary. But to build a balanced society and a thriving tourism sector, we cannot leave the boy child behind.

Men dominate many operational sectors of tourism, from tour driving to conservation rangers on the frontlines putting their lives at risk to protect our wildlife. The Man of Tourism initiative is a deliberate masterstroke. It provides a structured platform for young men to become active champions of conservation, cultural preservation and hospitality. It will redefine the role of young men in leadership, foster responsible masculinity and create a formidable brotherhood of tourism advocates working side-by-side with our queens. To our men, this is your call to action: step up, champion the Pearl and lead from the front.

This brings me to the profound impact of the Miss Tourism Uganda on our nation, particularly on our youth and employment. Youth unemployment remains one of our biggest developmental challenges. Tourism is an exceptional economic driver because it cannot be outsourced; it relies heavily on human connection, creativity and hospitality.

Miss Tourism Uganda has evolved from a pageantry platform into a powerful youth empowerment incubator. It equips young women across all sub-regions with leadership, entrepreneurship and public speaking skills. Beyond the crown, these contestants become regional ambassadors who spark local value chains. They drive traffic to local eco-lodges, promote craft markets and inspire youth-led travel agencies, tour guiding businesses and digital content creation hubs. By empowering the youth through tourism, we are creating sustainable, dignifying jobs. Furthermore, this pageant is a cornerstone for domestic tourism. For a long time, tourism was viewed as an activity reserved for foreign visitors. Miss Tourism has completely flipped that narrative. Through regional search activations, these ambassadors highlight hidden treasures in Teso, South Western, Buganda, West Nile, Ankole, Karamoja,

Tooro, Bunyoro, Rwenzori, Busoga and across the country. They invite Ugandans to explore their own backyard, boosting local economies and fostering national unity. When a young person posts about a hidden waterfall or a cultural site on social media, thousands of young Ugandans are inspired to pack a bag and travel. That is the essence of domestic tourism. Through our unified national brand, "Explore Uganda, The Pearl of Africa," we invite the world to not just look at our country, but to experience it. Tonight, the young woman crowned will carry a great responsibility to share that experience with the world and inspire both domestic and international travelers to discover the hidden treasures of our land. We want to ensure our tourism sector is competitive, smart and deeply rooted in who we are.

As the Ministry of Tourism, Wildlife and Antiquities, we remain fully committed to supporting initiatives that position Uganda on the global stage and Miss Tourism Uganda is a key initiative we support and I pledge our continued support.

I extend my heartfelt gratitude to the Miss Tourism Foundation, the parents, the sponsors and the partners. Your investment is shaping the future leaders who will navigate Uganda's tourism and cultural landscape.

To the contestants, whether you leave with the crown tonight or not, you are all winners. You are the bridge between our glorious past and our digital future. Use your platforms/sashes responsibly, innovate boldly and always carry our cultural pride with you.

Let us celebrate our beauty, embrace innovation, protect our heritage and continue to shine the light on the Pearl of Africa.

Thank you very much. For God and My Country.



CHIEF GUEST'S REMARKS AT THE 14TH EDITION OF MISS TOURISM UGANDA

Rotarian **Daniel Mukasa Ddamulira**
District Governor Rotary District D9214

It is with great honour that I join you as District Governor of Rotary International District 9124 at the 14th edition of Miss Tourism Uganda, held under the inspiring theme, "AI, Culture and Tourism."

This occasion is much more than a celebration of beauty and talent. It is a powerful platform where innovation meets heritage, technology meets tradition and the voices of young people help shape the future of our nation.

To all the contestants, I extend my heartfelt congratulations and commendation. You have gone through a demanding and often gruelling journey, yet you have emerged with resilience, grace, confidence and determination.

Your courage to stand before the nation, represent your communities and showcase Uganda's rich cultural heritage is a testament to the strength and potential of our young people. You are not simply contestants in a competition; you are ambassadors of Uganda, custodians of our culture and role models for perseverance and excellence.

This year's theme is particularly relevant to the Uganda we are building.

Artificial intelligence is transforming the way we communicate, create, learn and share information. When used responsibly, AI can help us tell Uganda's story to the world in ways we could never have imagined.

Imagine our cultural heritage being digitally preserved for generations to come. Imagine our tourism destinations being experienced virtually by people thousands of kilometres away. Imagine young Ugandans using technology to promote our music, languages, crafts, food, traditions, wildlife and historical sites to a global audience.

That is the opportunity before us: to embrace technology without losing our identity.

Uganda has a story worth telling and we must use every responsible tool available to tell that story boldly.

As Rotary, we believe that young people are not merely leaders of tomorrow. They are leaders today. Our responsibility is to create platforms where their talents, ideas and energy can translate into meaningful change in our communities.

Rotary International has a long-standing commitment to humanitarian service in Uganda, supporting initiatives in education, healthcare, peacebuilding, economic development, environmental sustainability and community empowerment.

I therefore see tremendous potential for collaboration between Rotary and platforms such as Miss Tourism Uganda.

Together, we can empower young people to champion causes that go beyond the stage: preserving our cultural heritage, protecting our environment, promoting responsible tourism, supporting education, advancing health and creating opportunities for communities.

Let us make tourism not only a means of showcasing Uganda's beauty, but also a vehicle for sustainable development and lasting impact.

To the organisers of Miss Tourism Uganda, I commend your vision, commitment and dedication. You have created a platform where young Ugandans can discover themselves, develop confidence, celebrate culture and embrace innovation.

To the contestants, I encourage you to remember that the competition does not end when the crown is placed on one head.

Your real journey begins when you leave this stage.

Carry the lessons you have learned. Use your influence responsibly. Let your voices reach beyond this competition. Be champions of your communities. Be protectors of Uganda's heritage. Be innovators. Be compassionate leaders. And wherever your journey takes you, remember that true beauty is found in the impact we make in the lives of others.

As Rotary, we stand ready to partner with platforms that invest in young people and strengthen our communities.

Together, we can transform challenges into opportunities, preserve our heritage while embracing innovation and turn the dreams of our young people into reality.

Uganda is blessed with extraordinary people, a rich culture and unparalleled tourism potential. Our responsibility is to ensure that

the Uganda we showcase to the world is also a Uganda whose people are empowered, whose environment is protected and whose future is sustainable.

As Rotary, we stand ready to work with platforms like Miss Tourism Uganda to empower young people and build a brighter, more inclusive and sustainable Uganda.

Let us embrace AI, celebrate our culture, promote our tourism—and together, create lasting impact.

Thank you and God bless Uganda.

Rotarian Daniel Mukasa Ddamulira is a passionate humanitarian, educator and seasoned leader who has dedicated over two decades to community service, particularly through Rotary, education and church leadership.

A long-serving member of the Rotary Club of Mengo, Daniel has held several leadership roles, including Club President, Country Fund Coordinator, Assistant Governor and Chairperson of the 98th District Conference and Assembly (DCA). He is a Major Donor Level Two to The Rotary Foundation and regularly supports club projects, fostering a culture of generosity and service within his family.

Professionally, Daniel is the founder and director of St. Mark's College Namagoma, a premier private secondary school established in 2003. Before entering the education sector, he worked as a Mission Economist at USAID/Uganda, Senior Economist at the Bank of Uganda and Lecturer at Makerere University. He also served in the banking sector with the Cooperative Bank.

Daniel holds a Bachelor of Statistics from Makerere University, a Master's in Economics from the Institute of Social Studies in The Hague and a professional certification from the Chartered Institute of Management Accountants (CIMA) in London.

In the religious space, he has held key positions within the Anglican Church, including Head of Laity and Treasurer of the Gayaza Archdeaconry and has contributed to the Namirembe and West Buganda Dioceses at Council and Synod levels. In education, he sits on boards of prestigious schools including Gayaza High School, Our Lady of Africa Schools, St. Mary's College Lugazi, Pride Academy Mpigi and Rotafield Schools and chairs the Private School Owners SACCO.

He also serves the Buganda Kingdom as Board Chairman of Mwanyi Terimba Ltd and holds the honorary title Omukungu wa Kabaka.

Daniel is married to Lady Canon Alice and together they champion values of faith, service and community from their home in Namagoma.

A professional portrait of Juliana Kagwa, CEO of the Uganda Tourism Board (UTB). She is a Black woman with her hair styled in a bun, wearing a black blazer over a pink lace-trimmed top. She has her arms crossed and is smiling at the camera. The background is a solid grey-blue.

Overview by CEO UTB Juliana Kagwa

Juliana Kagwa, the CEO of the Uganda Tourism Board (UTB), champions the integration of artificial intelligence (AI) and digital technology to modernize and scale Uganda's tourism sector. Key Applications of AI and Tech in Uganda's Tourism AI-Powered Matchmaking: Implemented at events like the Pearl of Africa Tourism Expo (POATE 2026), AI is used to connect international buyers and local exhibitors months ahead of the event to optimize business engagements. Data and Engagement: Kagwa emphasizes that AI and digital tools enhance deep data analysis, visitor tracking, targeted marketing, and

customized customer engagement. Destination Storytelling: UTB leverages digital platforms and AI-driven insights to spotlight regions with rich potential, such as Eastern Uganda (highlighted during World Tourism Day events in Mbale), turning scenic beauty and cultural heritage into marketable global narratives. The "Digital Tsunami": Kagwa calls for moving past traditional limitations by utilizing real-time digital ecosystems, content strategies, and young creators to transform Uganda from a "well-known secret" into a high-impact economic driver.

The Door That Was Always Open: Our Time with HON. MARTIN MUGARRA

For every queen who has worn the sash that reads Miss Tourism Uganda, there is a story of a door that was opened, a phone call that was answered, a hand that guided her when the lights were brightest and the journey was most uncertain.

For the Miss Tourism Uganda family, that hand for a very significant season was that of Hon. Martin Mugarra Bahinduka the former Minister of Tourism Wildlife and Antiquities.

As we celebrate our 14th Edition, we pause to say THANK YOU! For the Support, Guidance and Belief in the Miss Tourism Uganda Family. We thank you not because it is customary to thank a leader when he leaves office but because your support was never customary. It was personal, consistent and deeply felt.

Many saw a Minister. We saw a mentor. From the moment you assumed office, you understood what Miss Tourism Uganda truly is. You never treated us as just a pageant of beautiful faces. You understood that we are custodians of culture, ambassadors of heritage and storytellers of Uganda's 56 tribes. You reminded the country that tourism is not just about the mountains and the gorillas but about the people who give those places meaning.

You accorded us access. In a world where young women often struggle to be heard in high offices, your door was always open. Whether it was at the Uganda Media Centre as seen in this very photo, at the Ministry, or at our regional launches from Ankole to Tooro to Busoga, you showed up.



You did not send a representative when you could come yourself. You stood with us, you listened to us and you spoke for us.

You accorded us guidance. You challenged us to move beyond beauty and to build purpose. You encouraged our queens to go beyond the runway and into communities, to plant trees, to support conservation, to promote domestic tourism, to speak our mother tongues with pride.

Under your stewardship, Miss Tourism Uganda felt apart of the Ministry family not just a stakeholder.

On behalf of every Miss Tourism Queen who has worn barkcloth with pride, every Miss Tourism Queen who has greeted the world, every Miss Tourism Queen who has danced for her culture, every queen, every runner-up, every regional coordinator and every little girl and boy who now dreams of being Miss Tourism Uganda one day thank you, Hon. Martin Mugarra.

Thank you for believing in us. Thank you for defending culture as tourism. Thank you for your kindness, your counsel and your unwavering support. We wish you success, grace and greater heights in your next assignments. The door of the Miss Tourism Uganda family will always be open for you, just as yours was always open for us.

With deepest appreciation,
Miss Tourism Uganda Family



A Moment with the Miss

1. What inspired you to contest for Miss Tourism Uganda?

My biggest inspiration was my love for Uganda's diverse cultures, especially my roots in Karamoja. I wanted to challenge stereotypes, celebrate our heritage and show young people that culture is something to be proud of. Miss Tourism Uganda gave me the platform to tell that story while promoting tourism and community development.

2. How has Miss Tourism Uganda affected your life?

It has transformed me in many ways. It has built my confidence, strengthened my leadership skills, expanded my network and given me opportunities to work with different organizations and communities. Most importantly, it has taught me that a crown is a responsibility to serve.

3. Have you found the opportunities you were looking for?

Yes and even more than I expected. The platform has opened doors in tourism, cultural promotion, public speaking, charity work and international representation. It has allowed me to grow both personally and professionally.

4. You're a beautiful girl; don't you get many advances from men?

Of course, compliments and attention come with the platform, but I believe beauty should always be matched with character and self-respect. I value genuine relationships and I maintain healthy boundaries while staying focused on my goals.

5. How did you handle the contest and school?

It required discipline and proper time management. I created a schedule, prioritized my academic work and made good use of every available opportunity to study. It wasn't always easy, but determination helped me balance both successfully.

6. How did it feel when you didn't win the main crown?

Naturally, it was disappointing at first because everyone enters hoping to win. However, I realized that purpose is bigger than a title. The experience taught me resilience and the opportunities that followed proved that sometimes your journey is more important than the crown itself.

7. How did you start charity?

I've always believed that leadership means giving back. I started by identifying challenges affecting vulnerable communities, especially children and young people and working with friends, partners and organizations to provide support. Even small acts of kindness can make a meaningful difference.

8. How does it feel to represent Uganda at the international level?

It is an incredible honor and a huge responsibility. I carry not only my personal dreams but also Uganda's culture, tourism potential and the hopes of many young people. Every opportunity to represent my country reminds me to be an excellent ambassador.

9. What is your role as Miss International Uganda?

My role is to promote Uganda's beauty, culture, tourism and positive image internationally while advocating for causes that empower young people and communities. I also encourage cultural exchange and inspire young women to believe in their potential.

10. What impact has the crown had on you and the country?

The crown has given me a stronger voice and greater responsibility. Personally, it has challenged me to become a better leader. For Uganda, it provides another opportunity to showcase our rich culture, tourism attractions and the talent and resilience of our young people on the global stage.

11. Do you refer to yourself as a *slay queen*? Who is a *slay queen* to you?

I don't define myself by that label. For me, confidence and elegance go beyond appearance. A truly empowered woman is educated, respectful, hardworking and uses her influence positively. Looking good is wonderful, but substance and purpose are what truly define a person.

12. Are you in a relationship?

I prefer to keep my personal life private. Right now, I'm focused on my responsibilities, my career and serving through my platform.

13. Do you use any drugs?

No, I do not. I believe in maintaining a healthy lifestyle because I understand that young people look up to me. I encourage everyone to make choices that protect their health and future.



Queen Nachiap Kezia Cindy
Miss Tourism Uganda 2025

14. What are your favorite Ugandan songs?

I enjoy a variety of Ugandan music because it reflects our diversity. Some of my favorites include songs by artists like Azawi, Joshua Baraka, Irene Ntale, A Pass and Levixone. I also enjoy traditional cultural music from different regions because it keeps our heritage alive.

15. Any advice for the youth out there?

Believe in yourself and never underestimate where you come from. Stay focused, invest in your education, embrace your culture and don't be afraid to dream big. Success comes through consistency, discipline and resilience.

16. Who is Nachap Kezia Cindy?

Nachap Kezia Cindy is a proud daughter of Karamoja, a cultural ambassador, tourism advocate, beauty queen and youth leader who believes in using her platform to create positive change. I am passionate about promoting Uganda's cultural heritage, empowering young people and representing my country with excellence wherever I go.

17. Tell us about your educational background.

I am a student at Makerere University pursuing a bachelor's degree of science in tourism and hospitality management.

18. Tell us about your ambassador role with Egypt Airways.

Serving as an ambassador with Egypt Airways has given me the opportunity to promote travel, tourism and cultural exchange between Uganda and international destinations. It aligns perfectly with my passion for tourism because travel connects people, creates opportunities and allows us to share Uganda's rich culture with the world while welcoming others to experience it.

A Moment with the Man of Tourism

1. What inspired you to contest for Man of Tourism?

I was inspired by my passion for tourism and culture and my desire to represent Uganda. I wanted to use the platform to showcase our culture and inspire young people.

2. How has the reign affected your life?

The reign has changed my life positively. It has built my confidence, expanded my network and given me opportunities to represent Uganda on different platforms.

3. Have you found the opportunities you were looking for?

Yes, I have. The reign has opened doors to networking, travel, partnerships, media exposure and personal growth.

4. What are your plans after the reign?

I plan to continue promoting tourism and culture, grow my charity initiatives and use my skills in technology and business to create opportunities for young people. I also plan to pursue a Master's degree.

5. How did you handle the contest and school?

I managed both through discipline and proper time management. I planned my schedule carefully and remained committed to my studies and responsibilities as Man of Tourism International.

6. How did you start charity?

I started by helping people in my community in small ways. With time, I realized that even a small act of kindness could make a big difference.

7. What was your role as Man of Tourism?

My role was to promote Uganda as a tourism destination, showcase our culture and heritage, encourage responsible tourism and empower the boy child to believe in himself and pursue his goals.

8. What impact has the crown had on you and the country?

The crown has made me more confident,

responsible and purpose-driven. It has also given me a platform to promote Uganda's tourism, culture and heritage locally and internationally.

9. Do you refer to yourself as a slay king?

I appreciate fashion and looking good, but I would rather be known as a gentleman who represents his culture and makes a positive impact.

10. Are you in a relationship?

No, I am currently single and focused on my career, projects and personal growth.

11. What local hidden gem in your Country do you want the world to visit first?

I would recommend the Nyero Rock Paintings in Kumi. They are an incredible part of Uganda's heritage and deserve more international attention.

12. What are your favorite Ugandan songs?

My favorite Ugandan songs include Omulembe Gwa Kirya by Maurice Kirya, What Do I Know by Joshua Baraka and Nassanga Remix by Kalifah Aganaga.

13. Any advice for the youth out there?

I encourage young people to believe in themselves, stay disciplined, keep learning and never be afraid to start small. Your background does not determine your future.

14. Who is Isaac Amuriat?

Isaac Amuriat is a proud Etesot from Ngora District, the first Man of Tourism International from Uganda, a systems administrator, model, culture advocate, fashion enthusiast and graduate.

15. Tell us about your educational background.

I started my education at Public Trust Junior School in Kisugu. I then attended St. Kizito Senior Secondary School – Bugolobi for O-Level and A-Level. Later, I pursued a Bachelor of Business Computing at Makerere University Business School and graduated with a Second Class Lower.

My education equipped me with skills in technology, business, communication and problem-solving.

16. Tell us about your trip to Egypt.

My trip to Egypt was one of the highlights of my reign. I had the opportunity to represent Uganda, connect with tourism stakeholders and experience Egyptian culture and tourism. I am especially grateful to EgyptAir for supporting my journey with a Business Class ticket.

17. What was your hardest challenge during your reign and what did it teach you?

One of my biggest challenges was balancing my responsibilities, studies and different engagements. It taught me discipline, patience, resilience and effective time management.

18. How do you plan to bridge cultural gaps and encourage mutual respect between tourists and local communities?

I plan to promote cultural exchange and responsible tourism. Tourists should learn about and respect local customs, while local communities should be empowered to proudly share their culture and benefit from tourism.



King Isaac Amuriat
Man of Tourism International 2025



08

AI, CULTURE & TOURISM:

REIMAGINING UGANDA'S DESTINATION STORY THROUGH THE 2026 MISS TOURISM UGANDA & MAN OF TOURISM INTERNATIONAL JOURNEYS

In a world where technology is rapidly re-shaping how people discover, experience and remember destinations, tourism can no longer exist separately from innovation. Artificial Intelligence is changing the way stories are told, cultures are documented, destinations are marketed and travelers make decisions.

For Uganda, this presents an extraordinary opportunity. The 2026 Miss Tourism Uganda and Man of Tourism International journeys are emerging at a time when the country is seeking to position its tourism story not only through its landscapes and wildlife, but also through its people, cultures, creativity and technological imagination.

The 14th and 2nd Editions respectively built around the theme "**AI, Culture and Tourism**," offer a powerful reflection of how technology and heritage can work together to tell a more compelling African story. Where Artificial Intelligence Meets Heritage.

At first glance, Artificial Intelligence and culture may appear to belong to completely different worlds. AI represents algorithms, data, automation and the future. Culture represents heritage, traditions, languages, music, dance, food, stories and the wisdom passed from one generation to another.

But the two can complement each other. AI can help communities document endangered languages, digitize cultural archives, create immersive tourism experiences, translate local stories, analyze visitor behavior and connect destinations with audiences around the world.

The technology does not have to replace culture. Instead, it can become a tool through which culture is preserved, understood and introduced to new generations. This is where the 2026 Miss Tourism Uganda and Man of Tourism International journeys become particularly significant.

Their crowns are not merely symbols of beauty or achievement. They can become platforms for storytelling, advocacy, innovation and destination promotion.

From Ambassadors to Digital Storytellers

Traditionally, tourism ambassadors have represented destinations at events, international competitions and public engagements. Today, the role is expanding. A tourism ambassador can be a content creator, cultural storyteller, digital advocate and innovation champion.

Through social media, artificial intelligence tools, digital storytelling and immersive content, a single tourism

ambassador can introduce a Ugandan destination to audiences far beyond the physical borders of the country.

1. A visit to a cultural site can become a digital story.
2. A traditional dance can become an educational experience.
3. A local craft can become a global conversation.
4. A Ugandan culinary tradition can become a tourism campaign.
5. A community tourism experience can reach a potential traveller thousands of miles away.

The 2026 journeys therefore demonstrate a new understanding of tourism advocacy: the ambassador is no longer simply visiting destinations; the ambassador is helping destinations speak. Culture becomes the Heart of the Tourism Experience.

Uganda is blessed with extraordinary natural attractions, from the Rwenzori Mountains and crater lakes to national parks, forests and the source of the Nile. But behind every destination are people and cultures that give those places meaning. The future of tourism cannot simply be about asking visitors to see Uganda. It must invite them to experience, understand and connect with Uganda. This is where culture becomes a tourism asset.

The 2026 Miss Tourism Uganda and

Man of Tourism International journeys can shine a spotlight on Uganda's diverse cultural heritage from traditional institutions and indigenous knowledge to music, dance, fashion, food, crafts, storytelling and contemporary African creativity.

AI can then provide new ways to package and share these experiences without losing their authenticity. The opportunity is enormous: technology can amplify the cultural voice, but the community must remain the author of its story.

Taking Uganda Beyond the Traditional Tourism Narrative

For decades, Uganda's international tourism identity has been strongly associated with wildlife.

The mountain gorillas, chimpanzees, savannah and spectacular landscapes remain critical pillars of the country's tourism economy.

But Uganda is much more.

It is the story of kingdoms and traditional institutions.

It is the story of more than 50 indigenous communities and their unique identities.

It is the rhythm of traditional drums.

It is the craftsmanship of local artisans.

It is Ugandan cuisine.

It is fashion inspired by African heritage.

It is the warmth and hospitality of its people.

It is adventure, sports, wellness, faith, agriculture, music and creative enterprise.

AI, Culture and Tourism conversation creates space for Uganda to tell this broader story. And the Miss Tourism Uganda and Man of Tourism International platforms provide human faces through which that story can travel. The Journey Is the Message!

The power of a tourism ambassadorial journey is not only in the final destination. It is in the journey itself.

Every visit becomes an opportunity to ask:

What makes this place special?

Who are the people behind this experience?

What cultural story does this destination carry?

How can technology help us preserve and share it?

And how can tourism ensure that the people who own these stories benefit from telling them?

These questions transform tourism from sightseeing into meaningful engagement. The 2026 ambassadors therefore have an opportunity to travel Uganda differently not merely as visitors but as curators of experiences and champions of communities. Their cameras, phones and digital platforms become windows through which the world can discover Uganda.

AI Must Serve People, Culture and Tourism. The excitement around AI must, however, come with responsibility. Technology should not turn culture into a commodity stripped of meaning. Artificial intelligence-generated content must be approached carefully, particularly when representing indigenous communities, sacred traditions and historical narratives.

The principle should be simple:

AI can help tell the story, but it must respect the people whose story it is. This means involving communities, cultural institutions, historians, tourism professionals, young innovators and local creatives in the development of digital tourism experiences.

It also means ensuring that young people are not simply consumers of technology but become creators who use AI to document and promote their own heritage. A New Generation of Tourism Leadership perhaps the most important element of the 2026 journeys is the message they send to young Ugandans.

Tourism is no longer simply a career in hotels, travel agencies or tour operations. The tourism economy of tomorrow will require coders, filmmakers, photographers, designers, storytellers, data analysts, entrepreneurs, conservationists, cultural researchers and digital creators.

AI creates opportunities for young people to participate in tourism in ways that previous generations could not have imagined. A young Ugandan with a smartphone, creativity and access to AI tools can potentially create content that introduces a village, cultural practice, attraction or community enterprise to a global audience.

That is tourism innovation!

From Crowns to Impact

The 2026 Miss Tourism Uganda and Man of Tourism International journeys should therefore be viewed as more than pageantry. They represent an opportunity to demonstrate what modern tourism leadership can look like. The crown becomes a platform. The journey becomes a classroom.

The destination becomes a story. Culture becomes an economic and educational resource.

Technology becomes an enabler. And the ambassador becomes a bridge between heritage and the future. Uganda's Tourism Story Is Ready for Its Next Chapter

The intersection of AI, Culture and Tourism presents Uganda with an opportunity to move from simply marketing destinations to building a more intelligent, inclusive and culturally grounded tourism ecosystem.

The world is increasingly discovering destinations through digital platforms before ever setting foot on their soil. Uganda must therefore ensure that what the world discovers online reflects the richness, authenticity and diversity of what exists on the ground. The 2026 Miss Tourism Uganda and Man of Tourism International journeys can help lead that conversation. Because the future of tourism is not about choosing between technology and tradition. It is about using technology to ensure that tradition has a future. And perhaps that is the greatest promise of AI, Culture and Tourism:

"When innovation meets heritage, culture does not disappear into the future it finds new ways to travel there."

AI. Culture. Tourism. One journey. A thousand stories. One Uganda ready to tell them to the world.



By **Keith Duncan Musumba**

Deputy Minister for Tourism, Tooro
Kingdom

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POATE 2026: A New Tourism Ambition.

Wanderlust, investment and the business of turning Uganda's tourism potential into opportunity

There are moments when a tourism exhibition becomes more than an exhibition. POATE 2026 was one of them.

Held from 21–23 May 2026 at Speke Resort Munyonyo under the theme "Wanderlust – It's Your Time to Thrive," the 10th Pearl of Africa Tourism Expo brought together Uganda's tourism ecosystem and the international market in a powerful convergence of business, culture, investment and destination storytelling.

With hundreds of exhibitors and international hosted buyers from across the world, POATE 2026 demonstrated that Uganda's tourism industry is moving beyond simply showcasing attractions towards creating business opportunities, partnerships and investment.

At the centre of this transformation were the many stakeholders who make tourism possible – the government, tourism institutions, tour operators, hotels, airlines, travel agencies, investors, conservation organisations, cultural practitioners, creatives, media, technology innovators, telecom companies and local communities. Their presence underscored a fundamental truth: tourism is not the responsibility of one institution "it is an ecosystem."

One of the most promising frontiers is MICE Meetings, Incentives, Conferences and Exhibitions. Uganda's growing capacity to host international conferences and major events creates an opportunity to turn business travellers into leisure travellers. A delegate may arrive for a conference and stay longer to experience Uganda's wildlife, culture, adventure, cuisine and heritage. With Uganda preparing for AFCON 2027, the potential is even greater. Football can bring visitors through the door, but tourism can give them reasons to stay.

POATE 2026 also reinforced the need to broaden Uganda's tourism narrative. The country is far more than its famous wildlife. It is the Nile, the Rwenzori, forests and crater lakes;

kingdoms and cultural heritage; music, film, fashion, food, crafts and community experiences. Culture is increasingly not just something to preserve, but an economic asset capable of creating livelihoods while keeping heritage alive.

Technology presents another frontier. The modern traveller discovers destinations online long before arrival, making digital storytelling, artificial intelligence, online booking, quality content and accessible destination information increasingly critical to Uganda's competitiveness.

For investors, this evolving landscape presents opportunities across accommodation, transport, MICE infrastructure, adventure tourism, eco-tourism, cultural experiences, wellness, culinary tourism, creative industries and digital tourism platforms. The opportunity is not merely to build more facilities, but to create distinctive, accessible and sustainable experiences that visitors can discover, book and remember.

Ultimately, the power of POATE 2026 lies beyond the exhibition halls. A conversation can become a partnership; a partnership can become an investment; an investment can create a tourism product; and that product can create jobs and livelihoods.

"Wanderlust – It's Your Time to Thrive" was therefore more than a theme. It was an invitation to travellers to discover Uganda, to investors to look closer, to businesses to innovate, to communities to value their heritage and to Ugandans to believe more boldly in the economic power of their country.

The Pearl of Africa is not short of stories, attractions or opportunities. The next chapter is about connecting them to the world.

POATE 2026 made the invitation clear: Uganda is ready to be experienced, invested in, shared and remembered.

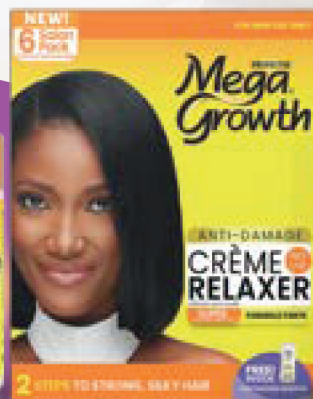
Written by:
Karungi Immaculate Kamara
Miss Tourism Uganda





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NEW
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The QUEENS



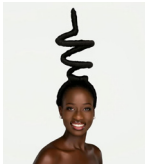
Name: **Ahereza Mary Princess**
Age: **23**
Region: **Southwest Region**
Profession: **IT specialist**
Advocacy: Cultural preservation through travel.



Name: **Amutuheire Queen Lynn**
Age: **20**
Region: **South Western Region**
Profession: **Tour Guide**
Advocacy: Championing responsible travel to protect our rich biodiversity, including our sacred forests and unique wildlife.



Name: **Ariango Dorcus Osega**
Age: **23**
Region: **Teso Region**
Profession: **Student**
Advocacy: Use of animations and digital storytelling to preserve Uganda's tourism and cultural heritage.



Name: **Atim Patricia Prosper**
Age: **21**
Region: **Northern**
Profession: **Radio Presenter & Film Maker**
Advocacy: Documentation of Ugandan Heritage & tourism using AI tools



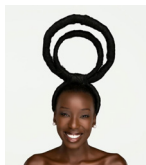
Name: **Amutuheire Patricia**
Age: **19**
Region: **Ankole**
Profession: **Student**
Advocacy: Rooted initiative.



Name: **Aber Zita Lourdes**
Age: **24**
Region: **West Nile**
Profession: **Visual Designer**
Advocacy: When tourists visit Uganda, they carry home our crafts and souvenir and watch our traditional culture.



Name: **Awilli Lynn**
Age: **24**
Region: **Karamoja**
Profession: **Student**
Advocacy: Inclusivity of the Persons With Disabilities in Tourism and daily life through utilisation of AI tools.



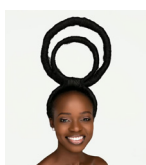
Name: **Anyeko Vicky Omara**
Age: **21**
Region: **Karamoja**
Profession: **Student**
Advocacy: The Voice of Culture in the Digital Age – Championing the use of Artificial Intelligence



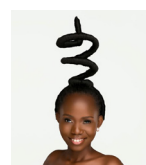
Name: **Amoyo Esther**
Age: **25**
Region: **Teso**
Profession: **Lawyer**
Advocacy: Discovery and documentation of hidden gems in Uganda to provide various options for the tourists



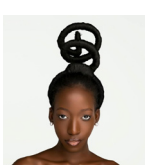
Name: **Ainomugisha Bronia**
Age: **22**
Region: **Ankole**
Profession: **Actress**
Advocacy: Aiming at reviving and promoting our rich cultural history through films and stage plays.



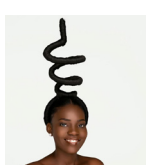
Name: **Bongonyinge Harriet**
Age: **23**
Region: **Northern Region**
Profession: **Hospitality professional & entrepreneurial baker**
Advocacy: promoting culture and tourism through education, technology through films and stage plays.



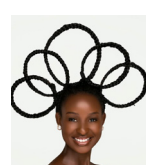
Name: **Biira Claire Lukogho**
Age: **21**
Region: **Rwenzori**
Profession: **Enrolled Nurse**
Advocacy: Bringing our elders wisdom to the world and documenting using AI



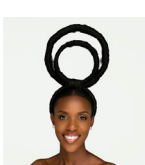
Name: **Ecweikin Leticia**
Age: **20**
Region: **Teso region**
Profession: **Student**
Advocacy: Smart Heritage, informative, scannable, AI interactive QR codes at tourist sites.



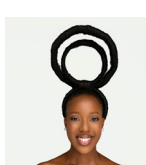
Name: **Kasuswa Jane Martha**
Age: **22**
Region: **Eastern Uganda**
Profession: **Student**
Advocacy: Using AI and Digital platforms to promote Uganda's destinations



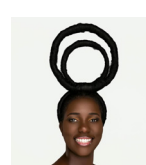
Name: **Kajumba Gorret Abwooli**
Age: **21**
Region: **Tooro**
Profession: **Student**
Advocacy: Restoring cultural norms into AI programs



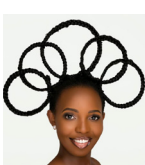
Name: **Kaganzi Felishia Timbigamba**
Age: **19**
Region: **Bunyoro**
Profession: **Student**
Advocacy: Using technology to positively impact our rich cultures through tourism as a media to the world.



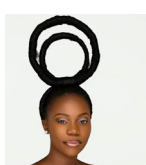
Name: **Kansiime Joy Nyakato**
Age: **20**
Region: **South West**
Profession: **Student & Entrepreneur**
Advocacy: Bridging our elder's wisdom and the youth's innovation



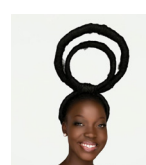
Name: **Kabahuma Mackline Akiiki**
Age: **23**
Region: **Tooro**
Profession: **Student**
Advocacy: Using AI to promote food security in Uganda



Name: **Kebirungi Mellan Amooti**
Age: **23**
Region: **Tooro**
Profession: **Student**
Advocacy: Women Empowerment



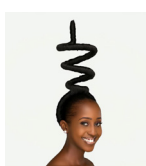
Name: **Kabakam Mary**
Age: **23**
Region: **Rwenzori**
Profession: **Student**
Advocacy: Smart Eco- Tourism Villages : goal is to use AI to help local communities become cleaner.



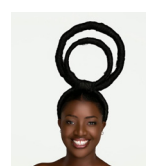
Name: **Matinyi Laetici A**
Age: **22**
Region: **Eastern**
Profession: **Surveying Student**
Advocacy: Engaging the youth and educating them on how to use Artificial Intelligence to conserve.



Name: **Melissa Bridget Atim**
Age: **22**
Region: **Northern Region**
Profession: **Student**
Advocacy: Leveraging artificial intelligence to document heritage for youth education, showcase local beauty.



Name: **Michelle Kembabazi**
Age: **23**
Region: **South western**
Profession: **Teacher & entrepreneur**
Advocacy: Creating a digital platform that inspires youth to use their talents and skills



Name: **Mucureezi Milfat**
Age: **20**
Region: **Ankole Region**
Profession: **Student**
Advocacy: Equip Uganda's youth with AI skills through my Organization: Junior Eco Organization Uganda



Name: **Muhindo Patricia**
 Age: **19**
 Region: **Rwenzori region**
 Profession: **Civil Engineer**
 Advocacy: Training youth in every community on how to interview the elders with their phones on the tool AI in order to promote tourism and culture



Name: **Nanyang Brenda Lopeyok**
 Age: **24**
 Region: **Karamoja**
 Profession: **Student**
 Advocacy: Environmental Conservation specifically Tree planting in Karamoja and Women Empowerment



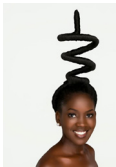
Name: **Nosha Maluk**
 Age: **23**
 Region: **Metro Région**
 Profession: **Student**
 Advocacy: Advocacy for change in all ways.



Name: **Nakibuuka Evelyn Abooki**
 Age: **21**
 Region: **Bunyoro**
 Profession: **University Student**
 Advocacy: exploring how artificial intelligence can preserve indigenous heritage, map local heritage sites.



Name: **Nabukeera Janet Atwooki**
 Age: **24**
 Region: **Bunyoro**
 Profession: **Student**
 Advocacy: To use AI to promote sustainable tourism, protect Uganda's environment and preserve culture



Name: **Nabasumba Rahmah**
 Age: **19**
 Region: **Buganda**
 Profession: **Student**
 Advocacy: Preserving traditional languages through storytelling.



Name: **Nakubulwa Vivian**
 Age: **26**
 Region: **Buganda Kingdom**
 Profession: **Actress**
 Advocacy: Aiming at reviving and promoting our rich cultural history through films and stage plays.



Name: **Noeline Mandu**
 Age: **21**
 Region: **Eastern Uganda /Mugisu**
 Profession: **Student, Entrepreneur and lifestyle influencer**
 Advocacy: promoting Uganda's hidden tourism destinations, cultural heritage.



Name: **Nabasirye Flavia**
 Age: **23**
 Region: **Buganda Kingdom**
 Profession: **Student**
 Advocacy: Using AI Tools to preserve culture and Promote tourism through my project the smart Tourism Guide.



Name: **Namaganda Mutoni Grace Karen**
 Age: **21**
 Region: **Metro region**
 Profession: **Student & Entrepreneur**
 Advocacy: Championing environmental conservation



Name: **Nakibi Gertrude**
 Age: **23**
 Region: **Buganda Kingdom**
 Profession: **Student**
 Advocacy: Using AI to promote culture, tourism and sustainable community development through Ewaka C. Village.

The KINGS



Name: **Davis Sserugo Ssempijja**
 Age: **22**
 Role Model: **Derrick Ssenyonyi, Ezike Kelvin and Damson Idris**
 Profession: **Tourism student**
 Advocacy: East African Unity



Name: **Gajjule Sedrick**
 Age: **22**
 Role Model: **My Father**
 Profession: **Tourism Student | Tour guide**
 Advocacy: Sign language Safaris- Africa Edition



Name: **Privilege Elijah Munabi**
 Age: **19**
 Role Model: **Nelson Mandela**
 Profession: **University Student**
 Advocacy: AI is for the better



Name: **Prosper Auther Makayi**
 Age: **23**
 Role Model: **Aliko Dangote**
 Profession: **Marketer /Public Speaker**
 Advocacy: AI for cultural conservation



Name: **Sssemakula Henry**
 Age: **23**
 Role Model: **My Mother**
 Profession: **Student**
 Advocacy: Empowering needy youth and children through wildlife conservation and community tourism



Name: **Ssesolo Sulaiman**
 Age: **25**
 Role Model: **My Mummy**
 Profession: **Business Management and Model trainer**
 Advocacy: A girl child to stay in school



Name: **Tumwine Titus**
 Age: **21**
 Role Model: **Late Kofi Annan**
 Profession: **Law Student**
 Advocacy: Promote Sustainable and Inclusive Tourism through Cultural Preservation



Name: **Tusabege Timothy**
 Age: **24**
 Role Model: **Dr Lilly Ajarowa**
 Profession: **Enrolled Nurse**
 Advocacy: Healthy heritage, smart tourism

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Half page	21x14.5	1,474,000
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Quarter page	8.5x12.4	772,200
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2 Page branding/advertorial	A4	4,000,000

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DURGA PUJA IN KAMPALA

Where Bengal Meets Uganda: A celebration of heritage, devotion, music, food and community

Every year, usually in September or October, Kampala comes alive with the colours, music, flavours and traditions of Durga Puja. Thousands of kilometres from India, the festival has found a welcoming home in Uganda.

The story of Durga Puja in Kampala dates back to 2008, when the Bengali Association Uganda (BAU) began organising the celebration. By 2018, it had reached its 11th consecutive year and grown into an important gathering celebrating devotion, Bengali heritage and Uganda's multicultural spirit.

Durga Puja honours Goddess Durga and celebrates the triumph of good over evil. In Kampala, prayers, rituals, music, dance, food and community gatherings bring Indian heritage and Ugandan culture together.



The Magic of Dhak and Shankho

No Bengali Durga Puja feels complete without the powerful rhythm of the



Dhak, the traditional drum of Bengal. Its unmistakable beats evoke autumn, Puja pandals and the arrival of Maa Durga.

The Shankho adds another dimension to the celebrations. Its auspicious sound accompanies prayers and creates a festive, devotional atmosphere. Together, the Dhak and Shankho form a recognisable soundscape of Bengali Durga Puja.

Five Days of Celebration

The main celebrations unfold through Saptami, Ashtami, Navami and Dashami. Saptami includes the sacred Nabapatrika ceremony, while Ashtami and Navami bring further prayers. The transition between Ashtami and Navami is marked by Sandhi Puja, a sacred 48-minute period.

The Rhythm of Dhunuchi Nach

As evening falls, the atmosphere becomes more vibrant with Dhunuchi Nach. Dancers carry traditional earthen



incense burners called dhunuchi and move rhythmically to the beats of Dhak.

The fragrance of incense, rhythmic drumming and graceful movement make Dhunuchi Nach a memorable experience, combining devotion with cultural performance.

A Taste of Bengal

Food is inseparable from Bengali celebrations. During Puja, families and friends come together to enjoy traditional dishes, sweets and festive offerings.



Narkel Naru is a traditional coconut sweet prepared with coconut and jaggery or sugar. Rasogolla is another beloved Bengali favourite. Sharing food and sweets allows visitors to connect with Bengali culture through taste and hospitality.

Bijoya Dashami: A Farewell to Maa Durga



The festival reaches its emotional conclusion on Bijoya Dashami, the fifth and final day.

One of the best-known traditions is Sindur Khela, when married women offer vermilion to Goddess Durga and share it among themselves while exchanging wishes for happiness and prosperity.



Sindur Khela — a cherished Bengali tradition associated with Bijoya Dashami.

In 2021, **UNESCO** inscribed "**Durga Puja in Kolkata**" on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, recognizing the festival's combination of religion, art, traditional Bengali drumming, craftsmanship, public installations and community

participation.

Bengal in the Heart of Uganda

In October 2026, Durga Puja will once again bring the spirit of Bengal to Kampala. The celebrations are set to take place at the Arya Samaj Premises in Kololo, where the Bengali Association Uganda continues its tradition of bringing people together in a vibrant celebration of faith, culture and heritage.

For visitors, the festival offers a chance to experience a living Bengali tradition in a distinctly Ugandan setting. The Dhak and Shankho, colourful clothing, food, music, dance and community celebrations create an experience that is both familiar and wonderfully different.

Durga Puja in Kampala is more than a religious festival. It is a celebration of heritage, friendship, devotion and cultural diversity—a place where Bengal meets Uganda and different cultures come together in harmony.

Shubho Durga Puja.

Written By — Liya Dhara, Y- U 2. Aga Khan Primary School, Kampala. Uganda. East Africa



Shubho Durga Puja.
Written By — **Liya Dhara**, Y- U 2.
Aga Khan Primary School,
Kampala. Uganda. East Africa





SPORTS TOURISM

Beyond the Finish Line: How Uganda's Marathons Are Turning Sport into Tourism, Culture and Community Development

There is something powerful about running. What begins as a personal challenge, a fitness goal or a cause can become something much bigger when the route takes runners through vibrant cities, beneath mountains, beside crater lakes and across communities rich in culture and history.

It becomes tourism.

Uganda's 2026 sporting calendar is demonstrating the growing power of sports tourism as a tool for destination branding, domestic travel, healthy living, cultural preservation, community mobilisation and economic opportunity. From the Fort Portal City Marathon and Rwenzori Marathon to the Rotary Cancer Run and Kabaka's Birthday Run, running is increasingly connecting people not only to causes and competition, but also to places, cultures and communities.

The Fort Portal City Marathon offers a striking example of destination-led sports tourism. Set against the spectacular landscapes of Tooro, with its crater lakes, tea plantations, cultural heritage and proximity to major natural attractions, the race can become an invitation to experience Fort Portal beyond the finish line. A runner can stay longer, explore the region, taste local cuisine, visit cultural sites, buy crafts and share the beauty of Tooro with the world.

The Rwenzori Marathon presents a similarly powerful experience, placing runners in the shadow of the legendary Mountains of the Moon. Here, sports becomes a gateway to mountain adventure, wildlife, culture and community experiences. Instead of simply telling visitors that western Uganda is beautiful, the marathon allows them to experience its beauty with their own feet.

The Rotary Cancer Run adds another dimension: purpose. By bringing communities together around health, wellness and the fight against cancer, it demonstrates how sport can create social impact while strengthening the appeal of a destination. Similarly, the Kabaka's Birthday Run shows the powerful intersection of sport, cultural identity, heritage, health and community solidarity, transforming mass participation into an expression of collective pride and purpose.

Together, these events reveal that Uganda's sporting calendar can become a powerful tourism platform. A marathon route can become a cultural route; a race village can become a marketplace; and a runner can become a tourism ambassador.

The economic possibilities extend far beyond registration fees. Visitors require accommodation, food, transport, guides, entertainment and souvenirs, creating opportunities for hotels, restaurants, tour operators, artisans, photographers, wellness providers and community enterprises. The real measure of success should therefore go beyond participation numbers: How many visitors stayed? What did they experience? How much did they spend locally? Which businesses benefited? And how many will return?

This makes data and collaboration essential. Tourism authorities, event organisers, local governments, communities, the private sector and academia can work together to measure visitor behaviour and economic impact, turning sporting events into evidence for tourism investment and destination development.

The opportunity now is to think beyond individual races and build a Ugandan Sports Tourism Circuit—linking destinations through distinctive sporting events and the experiences surrounding them. Fort Portal can connect running with Tooro culture and crater lakes; Kasese with the Rwenzori and mountain adventure; Buganda with heritage and community; while other regions can build events around their own unique landscapes and identities.

The future is not simply about bigger races, but deeper experiences.

A race should leave more than footprints on a road. It should leave income in communities, pride in culture, inspiration in children, opportunities for entrepreneurs and unforgettable memories for visitors.

The Fort Portal City Marathon, Rwenzori Marathon, Rotary Cancer Run and Kabaka's Birthday Run have shown that sports can promote destinations, celebrate culture, advance health, mobilise communities and drive economic opportunity.

The next step is to connect these possibilities deliberately.

Because the visitor who comes to Uganda to run should not leave with only a medal. They should leave having tasted our food, heard our stories, met our people, experienced our cultures and explored our landscapes.

The finish line should not be the end of the journey. In the Pearl of Africa, it should be the beginning of discovering Uganda.

Run Uganda. Experience Uganda. Discover the Pearl of Africa.

Written by:
KARUNGI IMMACULATE KAMARA
Miss Tourism Uganda





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The Little Mr. and Miss Pearl of Africa International Initiative is a vibrant celebration of various cultures, heritage and generational potential. Designed to engage school going children aged 3-12 of all nationalities, this initiative provides a platform for children to express their talents, creativity and pride in their various national identities.



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- Unity and Inclusivity

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Njabala — Njabala

The Girl Who Never Learned A legend from the Kingdom of Buganda



Once upon a time, in a village nestled among the green hills and banana groves of Buganda, there lived a hardworking man and his wife. They were a devoted couple, well-respected in their community and their greatest joy came the day they welcomed a baby girl into the world. They named her Njabala.

Njabala grew up to be the most beautiful girl anyone in the village had ever seen. Her parents treasured her above all things, for she was their only child. They adorned her with fine jewellery and the prettiest bark-cloth dresses. They let her roam freely, laugh loudly and play in the rivers and banana plantations without a care in the world.

But it was her mother, above all, who wrapped her in a cocoon of love so tight it would one day become a trap.

Tradition in Buganda called for girls to learn early — to fetch water from the well, to cook millet and groundnut stew over firewood, to till the garden, to carry pots gracefully on their heads. Girls her age rose with the sun and returned with calloused hands and full hearts. But Njabala did none of these things. Her mother would not allow it. "She is too beautiful for such burdens," she would say, shooing away anyone who dared ask Njabala to lift a finger.

And so Njabala grew up in a life of bliss — and ignorance.

Then, as life in Buganda's stories often does, fate arrived without warning.

Njabala's father, a hunter by trade, went out one morning into the forests of a neighbouring village in search of game. He never returned. Search parties were sent out. Days turned to weeks. The villagers concluded, with heavy hearts, that he had fallen into a ditch or been taken by wild animals. He was gone.

The loss broke Njabala's mother completely. Grief swallowed her appetite, hollowed out her strength and she fell gravely ill. Before long, she too passed from this world, leaving Njabala utterly alone.

The village elders, seeing the beautiful young woman left without family or provision, convened and made their decision: Njabala was ripe for marriage.

A man was found for her — Mubiru, a man of some standing in the village. Njabala was wedded and went to her new home, only to discover that she was his third wife. His first two wives received her warmly and, for the first three days, made her life very comfortable. They cooked her food, washed her clothes and attended to her as a guest.

"Not bad," Njabala thought to herself, settling in easily. But the honeymoon ended.

On the fourth day, Mubiru summoned Njabala. He showed her the bush she was to clear and cultivate into her garden. He showed her the pots she was to cook with. He explained the days of the week she was responsible for preparing meals for the household. Her co-wives watched and nodded. It was simply how things were done.

Njabala stood there, beautiful and lost.

She did not know how to light firewood. She did not know how to balance a clay pot on her head without dropping it. She did not know how to winnow grain, tend a fire, or season a stew. Every time she cooked, the food burnt. Every chore she attempted ended in disaster. Pots cracked. The garden lay untouched. Smoke filled the house without any food to show for it.

Her co-wives laughed. Mubiru grew furious. He beat her and demanded she do better. Njabala wept and wept and in her weeping she did what the Baganda say a desperate child always does — she called out to her mother.

She sat in the garden and sang a mournful song, blaming her mother for the suffering she now endured. "Maama, come and see what you have done to me. You loved me but you left me helpless."

Then something extraordinary happened.

The ghost of her mother rose from the earth.

The spirit, unable to bear her daughter's suffering from the other side, appeared in the garden and began to dig. The ghost worked tirelessly, turning the hard soil, clearing the bush, planting seeds — all while singing

softly to Njabala, urging her to watch and learn:

"A woman must know how to work. I failed you, my daughter. Watch me now. Learn."

For days, the mother's spirit returned and laboured in secret. The garden bloomed. The household ran. Mubiru was astonished. He praised Njabala, brought her gifts and elevated her above his other wives. She became his favourite.

But Njabala, still a child in many ways, sat and watched while her mother's ghost did the work.

One evening, Mubiru returned home earlier than expected.

He walked toward the garden, expecting to find his beloved third wife busy at work. Instead, he froze.

There in the fading light, a ghostly figure was bent over the soil, digging furiously — while Njabala sat nearby, idle, watching.

Terror gripped him. He turned and ran, shouting for the neighbours. Men and women came with sticks and torches. The ghost vanished. And the villagers, shaking with fear and anger, turned on Njabala.

"Witch! Witch! Witch! Go and never return!"

They drove her from the village.

And so Njabala walked away — beautiful, homeless and alone — carrying everything she owned on her back, with nowhere to go and no skills to survive on her own.

The story ends there, in the dust of the road, with a young woman bearing the consequences of too much love given in the wrong way.

The lesson the Baganda drew from Njabala's story has echoed through generations: that true love prepares a child for life's hardships, not from them. A mother who shields her daughter from every difficulty does not protect her — she leaves her defenceless. Work is not punishment; it is dignity. And the skills passed from mother to child are among the most sacred inheritances of all.

Njabala's name became a byword in Buganda — a cautionary song sung to children, a warning whispered to overindulgent parents and, in more recent times, a mirror held up to ask: whose neglect are we really talking about?



Folk Tales & Oral Stories

from West Nile Used to Teach Children Cultural Values

West Nile is home to several distinct peoples — primarily the Lugbara, Madi, Alur, Kakwa and Jonam — each with their own oral traditions, though with overlapping themes and shared values. Storytelling was traditionally done in the evenings around a fire (enjara), led by grandparents and elders. The setting itself was part of the lesson: sitting still, listening and not interrupting were the first things a child learned.

How Stories Were Told

Lugbara proverbs and oral wisdom, locally known as E'yo O'beza, were passed down by grandparents, parents and other relatives to younger generations through stories, parables, idioms and simple phrases, usually around a bonfire. The storytelling session often included riddles, call-and-response and children repeating key lines — making them active participants, not passive listeners.

The Major Story Themes and Examples

1. The Hare as Trickster — Wit Over Strength

Across West Nile communities, the hare (ozo in Lugbara) is the most beloved character in children's stories. The hare is small and physically weak but survives and thrives through cleverness. Stories involve the hare outwitting lions, hyenas, and elephants. The lesson is not that trickery is admirable — the hare sometimes suffers consequences too — but that intelligence, observation and patience are a community's greatest survival tools. Children were meant to identify with the hare: small, young, seemingly powerless, but capable. One Lugbara proverb encapsulates this directly: O'bi'biasi eto ma jo ve ra — "Because of copying, the hare's house got burnt." The moral: be yourself. There are fuller story versions of this where an animal tries to imitate the hare's tricks without understanding them and suffers for it — teaching children the value of originality and self-knowledge.

2. The Greedy Baboon / Greedy Animal Stories

The Lugbara proverb Nyatu li odjimata — "Too much eating cut the baboon" — comes from a story where Odji (a baboon figure) sits on a tree picking ants one by one, but greed makes him jump to catch the whole swarm at once and he falls.

The lesson: do everything sparingly and not greedily.

This story type — the greedy creature who loses everything — is one of the most common teaching tools in West Nile. It is used to teach children to share food, take their portion without grabbing and not covet what belongs to others. In many households, this story was told specifically before meals.

3. The Origin Story of Mount Wati (Lugbara)

According to Lugbara myth, the founding ancestor of the Lugbara people settled near Mount Wati after being excommunicated from east of the Albert Nile. He saw smoke rising from near the mountain, approached and found a woman cooking. He made her his wife — and from this union the Lugbara tribe began.

This origin story is told to children to teach several values at once: the importance of perseverance after exile or hardship, the centrality of family as the foundation of society and respect for the mountain itself as sacred ancestral territory. It also frames marriage and household formation as a civilising act — smoke from a cooking fire signals humanity, community and belonging.

4. The Hill of Ojuqua (Madi)

Legend among the Madi tells of a small hill called Ojuqua. One day, a huge flock of birds began roosting on it, spending their days consuming people's crops and returning to the hill to sleep at night. The people began to hate and curse the hill for bringing these destructive birds to the land — and one night, a rumbling was heard and the people awoke to find Ojuqua was simply gone.

Children are taught through this story that the land listens — that how you speak about your environment, your home and even inanimate things has consequences. It also teaches communal responsibility: the birds were a shared problem that required a shared response. The disappearance of the hill is left mysterious, reinforcing the idea that the world holds forces beyond human control that must be respected.

5. Stories of the Stepmother and the Neglected Child

Across all West Nile communities, a recur-

ring story type involves a child — often a girl — who is mistreated by a stepmother, wanders into the bush and encounters a supernatural being or helpful animal that rewards her goodness and hard work. She returns with gifts; the stepmother sends her own biological child to get the same gifts, but that child is lazy or rude and returns punished or empty-handed.

This is one of the most important moral teaching stories because it covers multiple values simultaneously: obedience, hard work, kindness to strangers and the idea that goodness is always ultimately seen and rewarded even when humans fail to notice it. The Lugbara proverb Ayia ma ndu yo — "There is no other mother" — reflects the deep cultural weight of maternal figures and family bonds in these communities.

6. The Lazy Man Who Lost His Wife / Harvest

Work ethic is central to West Nile culture, which is predominantly agricultural. Stories for older children frequently feature a man who refuses to work the fields, offers excuses, or relies on others — and then faces hunger, abandonment by his family, or humiliation before the community. The Lugbara proverb Ata a'bu a ri, le mima nga azi raka mima nya ndo — "Even in the valley plantation, you must first work before you eat" — is often used as the moral conclusion to such stories: no work, no food.

What is Being Lost

It is worth noting that in modern times, due to formal education, communal fireside storytelling is no longer a widely celebrated activity — though elders still pass on wisdom in daily encounters. Many of these stories exist now primarily in the memories of people over 60. Very few have been written down in Lugbara, Madi, or Alur languages and fewer still in forms accessible to children. This is one of the strongest arguments for digital cultural preservation initiatives — the kind MTU's Digital Agenda could contribute to by archiving and amplifying these stories through modern platforms.



Ruhanga and the Three Sons

The Creation Legend of the Banyankole

In the Beginning

In the beginning, Ruhanga, the supreme creator, lived in the heavens with his brother Nkya. Ruhanga stood at the very centre of existence — the embodiment of truth, order and justice, not confined to any temple or idol but present in the cycles of nature and the moral harmony of all living things.

Nkya, who was younger and restless, complained that he was bored with everything being so normal and mundane. So Ruhanga created heaven and earth for his brother. He threw a stone into the air and it became the sun.

Nkya was pleased — but only briefly. He soon complained again about the relentless sun and the lack of shade. So Ruhanga moved the sun to the West and covered it with a cloud. Then, Ruhanga realised his hands were dirty and washed them and the water poured down to earth as rain. Nkya got drenched and complained again. Ruhanga told him to break branches, cut grass and make shelter — but Nkya had no tools. So Ruhanga took a rock and threw it to the ground and where it shattered, there appeared a knife, an axe and a hammer. Nkya went ahead and made himself a hut.

Still Nkya grew lonely.

Ruhanga created flowers, shrubs, goats and sheep. He also created cattle, which pleased Nkya immensely. He fashioned a bowl and showed Nkya how to milk the cows. He also created a creeper vine that provided food. Now Nkya had so many things to occupy him on the new earth and he was impressed. But tending to everything was a great deal of work.

So Ruhanga gave Nkya a son, whom Nkya called Kantu. In time the work

was still too much for Nkya and Kantu together and so Ruhanga gave him three more sons. There was confusion because all of them were called Kantu. Something had to be done — the sons needed names and names in Ankole tradition were not given lightly. They were earned.

The Test at the Junction

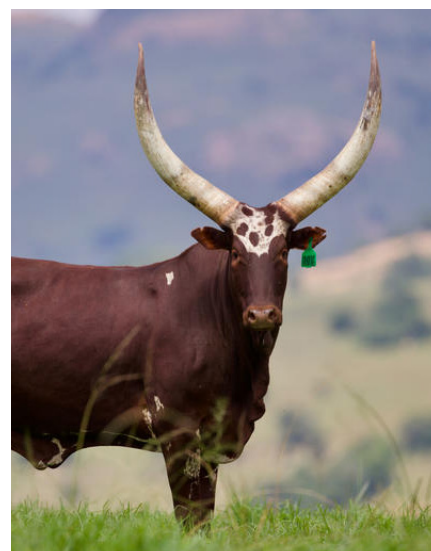
Ruhanga devised a means to test Nkya's sons and name them according to how they performed. For the first test, Nkya hid three items at a junction on a path far from home: a basket of sweet potatoes, strips of ox-hide and the head of an ox. He then sent his sons down the same path.

When the eldest son reached the junction, he saw the basket of sweet potatoes and, without a thought for his brothers, sat down and ate all the food alone. The second son spotted the strips of ox-hide and picked them up, recognising their use for tying cattle during milking. The youngest son, not wanting to be left out, carried the ox-head home. From how each son behaved at the crossroads, the father could see the shape of their hearts.

The Night of the Milk Pots

But Ruhanga was not yet finished. The greatest test was still to come. Ruhanga gave each of his three sons a pot filled with milk and instructed them to hold it on their laps throughout the entire night — not sleeping, not spilling, not wavering. It was a test of patience, discipline and devotion — the very qualities Ankole people saw as the measure of a man. Through the long, dark hours, the sons sat in silence.

By morning, the youngest son, Kakama, had passed the test with his pot perfectly still and full. He was



followed by the middle son, Kahima. Last came the eldest son, Kairu, whose pot had not fared as well. Ruhanga looked upon his three sons and rendered his judgement.

He decreed that Kairu and Kahima would serve their brother Kakama. Thereafter, Ruhanga ascended back to heaven, leaving Kakama — who was also known by his father's name, Ruhanga — to rule the land.

And so it was written in the stars of Ankole, long before kingdoms had names.

What the Three Sons Became

From that single night, the great social order of the Banyankole was born:

Kakama — the youngest, steadiest, most composed — became the ancestor of the royal line, the Omugabe, the king. His was the blood of leadership.

Kahima — disciplined and cattle-minded — became the ancestor of the Bahima, the noble pastoralists, the herders of the famous long-horned Ankole cattle. Their world was milk, movement and the lowing of great herds across the hills of western Uganda.

Kairu — the eldest, who had eaten all the food at the junction — became the ancestor of the Bairu, the cultivators of the soil, the farmers who tilled the red earth and grew the millet and sorghum that fed the land.

According to the Banyankole, Ruhanga had also created the first man — Rugabe — and the first woman — Nyamate — who were to fill the earth with their offspring. But it was the story of the three sons that ex-

plained not just where people came from, but who they were and why — and what their place in the world was meant to be.

The Sacred Drum

Long after Ruhanga returned to heaven, his presence on earth was felt through a most sacred object: the royal drum called Bagyendanwa.

The main instrument of royal power was Bagyendanwa, believed to have been made by Wamala, the last of the mysterious Bachwezi rulers. This drum was only beaten at the installation of a new king. It had its own special hut and it was considered taboo to shut that hut. A fire was always kept burning inside for Bagyendanwa, a fire that could only be extinguished upon the death of the king. The drum had its own cattle and was attended by companion drums.

To harm Bagyendanwa was to harm Ankole itself.

The Echo of the Legend

This myth of divine selection established not only the spiritual origin of leadership among the Banyankole but

also the sacred hierarchy of their society. For generations, elders told it around evening fires in the hills of Mbarara and Ntungamo — not merely as history, but as instruction. It said: patience is power. How you behave when no one is watching — at a lonely crossroads, through a dark and sleepless night — that is who you truly are.

It said: the youngest is not always the least. Wisdom does not follow the order of birth.

And it said, above all: Ruhanga sees.

Ruhanga was believed to be the maker and giver of all things — and it was believed that evil persons could use black magic to interfere with his good wishes and cause ill-health, drought, death, or barrenness in the land. So the Banyankole lived carefully, honouring the divine order, tending their cattle with reverence and remembering always the night three brothers sat in the dark holding their milk pots — and one held on until dawn.

This is the legend the Banyankole have passed from grandparent to grandchild for centuries, told in Runyankole on hilltop homesteads as the long-horned cattle settle for the night and the fires burn low.

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CONSERVATION, COMMUNITIES AND TOURISM: BUILDING A SHARED FUTURE

Dr. James Musinguzi – Executive Director
of Uganda Wildlife Authority (UWA)



For Dr. James Musinguzi the Executive Director of Uganda Wildlife Authority (UWA), conservation is not simply about protecting wildlife it is about creating a sustainable relationship between people, nature and tourism. His leadership vision places communities at the centre of Uganda's conservation story, recognising that protected areas can only thrive when neighbouring communities see tangible benefits from them.

Musinguzi argues that healthy ecosystems support tourism, while tourism generates revenue, employment and opportunities that can contribute to conservation. This relationship becomes particularly important for communities living alongside protected areas, who may experience the costs of human-wildlife conflict. Revenue sharing, employment, scholarships and livelihood initiatives are therefore important tools for building trust and encouraging communities to become partners and ambassadors for conservation.

At the same time, UWA is strengthening efforts to address threats such as poaching and habitat degradation through improved ranger capacity, intelligence, surveillance and technology. The Authority is also exploring investment opportunities within protected areas, including concessions for tourism facilities,

creating potential for greater private-sector participation in destination development.

Musinguzi also believes Uganda must broaden the tourism story beyond its iconic wildlife. Birds, plants, landscapes, archaeological sites, rock art and cultural experiences all offer opportunities to diversify tourism products and spread benefits across more communities. Storytelling through journalists, photographers, filmmakers and digital creators is an important part of bringing these experiences to the world.

Ultimately, his message is one of shared responsibility: Ugandans must first appreciate and understand their own natural heritage if they are to protect and promote it. When communities benefit, visitors discover meaningful experiences, investors find opportunities and conservation receives stronger support, tourism becomes more than an industry it becomes a pathway to protecting Uganda's natural heritage for generations to come.

People depend on the environment. Animals depend on ecosystems. Plants support life. Nature sustains livelihoods. He says, "We rely on each other. People need animals. Animals need the environment. We need the environment."



AFRICA'S FIRST ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE POWERED ROBOT UNVEILED

Ugandan technology foundation ZunoBotics unveiled Africa's first artificial intelligence-powered robot tour guide named Okello.

The innovation was presented earlier this year at the Miss Tourism Uganda 2026 launch and was developed entirely by a team of Ugandan engineers and innovators. Okello also referred to as the Gold Pearl Guide is designed to interact with tourists in multiple languages, currently supporting English, French and five Ugandan local languages with the ability to automatically detect and switch to a visitor's language in real time.

Beyond conversations, Okello is being programmed with comprehensive information about Uganda's tourism offering, including its wildlife, culture and attractions. AI can be practically applied to strengthen the tourism sector and the team is actively seeking partnerships and funding to expand the robot's capabilities across museums, tourism centres and major attractions throughout Uganda.





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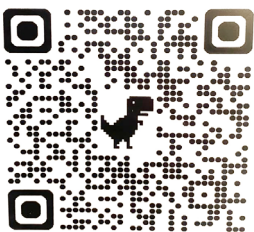


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- Company logo on the event's social media platforms
- Prominent logo placement at event
- Prominent logo placement on mobile bidding site
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- Ad on event program at event
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