



# Why Sr Gladys Kachope chose classroom again

For the Rev Sr Gladys Kachope, teaching is not a job but a vocation rooted in faith and service. Even in retirement, her belief that every child can succeed has drawn her back to the classroom.

BY RAJAB MUKOMBOZI

**O**n January 16, 2024, Sister Gladys Kachope officially laid down her tools after 20 years at the helm of Immaculate Girls School, Nyakibale, in Rukungiri District. For many, that date would have marked the beginning of a well-earned rest, a gentle slowing down after decades of service.

No wonder the Nyakibale Immaculate Heart Old Girls' Association (NIHO-GA) appreciated her through a farewell party at Hotel Africana alongside a welcome for the new head teacher the Rev Sr Sabina Tumusiime.

For Sr Kachope, it became the start of something new.

Barely retired, the nun of Our Lady of Good Counsel quietly took up another assignment, this time as headmistress of Boni Consilii Girls' Vocational Secondary School in Isingiro District. The classroom, it seems, still needed her, and she could not look away.

"The spirit of service in me is deep," she says softly.

"It is selfless, it is rooted in dedication to God and the community. I still want to serve the children of this nation through teaching."

To Sr Kachope, retirement is not an ending but a transition. Serving God, she believes, often demands personal sacrifice, even when rest is deserved.

"Yes, officially I retired," she adds,

"but serving God means spreading love and light wherever you are sent. As long as I have life, I will continue to serve His people."

## A mother beyond the title

What has kept the Rev Sr Kachope in the classroom long after she could have stepped away is not ambition or obligation, but what she calls spiritual motherhood — a deep, enduring bond with young people she has nurtured over the years.

"I treat my students as my children," she says. "Watching them grow into responsible, God-fearing adults gives me so much joy."

That maternal instinct also fuels one of her strongest convictions: that no child is hopeless.

"Sometimes I feel deeply disturbed when colleagues or even parents say some students are dull," she says. "There is no dull child. It depends on how you handle them."

To her, a truly good teacher is not measured by the best student in class, but by the one left behind.

"A good teacher is one who lifts the last learner and helps them excel," she explains. "That is what motivates me is seeing every student succeed in life."

A visit to Boni Consilii Girls' Vocational Secondary School last term revealed this philosophy in action. Sr Kachope moves easily among her students, listening, laughing, and counsel-

Rev Sr Gladys Kachope with some of her students at Boni Consilii Girls' Vocational Secondary School Kyabirukwa in Isingiro District. PHOTOS/RAJAB MUKOMBOZI.

## TIP

### At a glance.

Born in 1968 in Mahamba Village, Kabarole District, Gladys Kachope attended Kiburara Primary School and later Immaculate Heart Girls' School Nyakibale in Rukungiri for her secondary education.

She went on to study at Makerere University, where she earned a Bachelor's degree in Education and a Master's degree in Education Administration.

She later earned a PhD in Education Administration and Planning from Mbarara University of Science and Technology (MUST).

ling, her authority softened by affection.

"Her love goes beyond being a headmistress," says Agnes Mugabekazi, one of the students. "She listens to us, encourages us, and makes us believe we can succeed. Some students come with problems from home or school, but she will always make time to counsel you. No student feels distant from her."

### Legacy that lives on

The success of the schools she has led continues to inspire her. Under her stewardship, Immaculate Girls School saw improved infrastructure, increased enrolment, strong academic performance, and harmonious relationships with church and government.

But it is the lives she has touched that matter most.

"My girls are everywhere; in religious life, in business, in different social sectors. They call, they visit, they thank me — not just for academics, but for shaping who they became."

That enduring bond keeps her going.

"In 2019, I received continental recognition through a teacher's award," she recalls.

"But the greatest reward is knowing I

made a difference."

### Challenges on a new path

Her new posting, however, comes with fresh challenges. Boni Consilii Girls' Vocational Secondary School serves learners from varied and often vulnerable backgrounds, including refugee communities.

"Many students struggle with school fees," she explains. "Private schools face funding challenges, and working in a refugee community means we must make many sacrifices to ensure these girls are supported." Still, she remains undeterred.

### Her two cents

As Uganda continues to reform its education system, Sr Kachope urges parents, school managers, and government to fully invest in the competence-based curriculum.

"This approach promotes critical thinking and understanding," she says.

"These are the skills learners need to survive and succeed in today's world."

For Sr Kachope, education is love in action and as long as there are children to nurture, retirement will have to wait.

### Who is the Rev Sister Kachope?

Born in 1968 to the late Dauda Kachope Muntukwona in Mahamba Village, Kabarole District, Sr Kachope's journey has been shaped by faith and education.

She attended Kiburara Primary School and later Immaculate Heart Girls' School Nyakibale in Rukungiri District for her secondary education.

She went on to study at Makerere University, where she earned both a Bachelor's degree in Education and a Master's degree in Education Administration. Her academic journey culminated in a PhD in Education Administration and Planning from Mbarara University of Science and Technology (MUST).

Her teaching career began at Mary Hill High School, where she served as a teacher before being promoted to deputy head teacher. In 2006, she was appointed headmistress of Immaculate Girls School, a position she held for two decades.

"Teaching was my childhood dream," she says.

Beyond that, she always wanted to serve her community and see people become better.

"Teaching is a vocation I will continue to enjoy for as long as I live."



Sr Gladys Kachope, the headmistress of Boni Consilii Girls' Vocational Secondary School in Kyabirukwa. PHOTO/RAJAB MUKOMBOZI.