

By Bruno Nandala

PASSION FOR EDUCATION DRIVES INEKU TO HARD-TO-REACH AREAS

Most investors base their decisions on the purchasing power of a community, aiming to minimise financial risk and maximise returns. Judith Ineku, however, takes a sharply different approach. For her, the value of investment is measured not in profit margins, but in the number of lives positively transformed.

Ineku is driven by a deep desire to effect community transformation through social entrepreneurship, with a primary goal of delivering affordable, essential services to those often excluded from the mainstream, profit-driven market.

It is against this backdrop that she ventured into improving the quality of life for underprivileged children through education, deliberately targeting hard-to-reach districts. For the past two years, her foundation has been establishing nursery and primary schools in Katakwi and Kapelebyong districts. She runs IJB Junior School, Katakwi and St Jeremiah Nursery and Primary School in Acowa sub-county, Kapelebyong.

Ineku's vision extends beyond these initial investments, with plans to develop secondary and tertiary institutions focused on science and technology to empower learners with knowledge and skills for the future.

"When we set out to transform less advantaged communities, our technical team considered several sectors, including agriculture and health, but education emerged as the priority," she said. "Northeastern Uganda is home to communities that lack services in almost every aspect of life. We believe that empowering them through education lays a foundation for addressing other essential needs."

CHALLENGES ON THE GROUND

Katakwi district has 78 primary schools and 10 secondary schools. Infrastructure, staffing and regulation issues continue to affect learning outcomes. The district faces a shortage of over 700 qualified teachers, with teacher-to-pupil ratios in some schools reaching 1:91, well above the national average of 1:45. Many classrooms are overcrowded, forcing learners to study under trees.

NOTE
WE HOPE THE CHILDREN WE EDUCATE TODAY WILL BE INSPIRED AND EMPOWERED TO EDUCATE THE NEXT GENERATION.

Kapelebyong faces similar challenges. According to its District Development Plan (2020/21–2024/25), the adult literacy rate stands at 60.2%, below the national average of 72.2%.

"These challenges compelled our swift intervention," Ineku said. "The infrastructure and quality services

our foundation is providing not only improve learning environments, but also serve as confidence-building examples to attract other investors to the region."

IMPACT AND EXPANSION

The schools currently draw learners from Teso and Karamoja regions, with a combined enrolment of 1,600 pupils. Within five years, this number is expected to rise to 3,500 as additional classrooms and dormitories are built, with teacher-to-pupil ratios

maintained at 1:45. By 2028, secondary schools will open, allowing students to continue their education without seeking new institutions.

"Our goal is to create a positive spiral of education," Ineku explained. "We hope the children we educate today will be inspired and empowered to educate the next generation, gaining



Ineku, district leaders and residents during a celebration at IJB Junior School, Katakwi

CALL FOR PARTNERSHIP

Despite significant personal investment, Ineku acknowledges that the full realisation of her vision requires collaboration with other partners. School fees are set at a 60% discount to ensure affordability, yet many parents still cannot afford to enrol their children. Ineku hopes compassionate sponsors, particularly for girls, will step in to fill the gap.

"Although we are investing billions in these projects, our approach is rooted in social entrepreneurship. Success is measured by lives transformed, not financial returns," she said, appealing to both local and international partners.

knowledge and skills to support themselves and their families."

LOCAL IMPACT AND COMMUNITY RESPONSE

While commissioning St Jeremiah

Nursery and Primary School in Acowa sub-county, Kapelebyong, district education officer Stephen Olinga described the initiative as the largest social development investment the area has received.

"Madam Ineku could have invested in Kampala or Wakiso, but she chose our region. This school and others under her plan will create markets for local produce, construction materials and generate both casual and professional jobs," he said.

Katakwi district chairperson Geoffrey Omolo expressed hope that investment in education would reduce poverty levels.

"Families here survive on subsistence farming. When young people gain knowledge and skills, they can engage in commercial farming and entrepreneurial ventures, boosting community purchasing power," he said.

Omolo made the remarks during a celebration at IJB Junior School-Katakwi, where the school was ranked among the district's top 10 after just two years of operation.

The Rev. Fr. Matthew Tinkamanyire from Mother of God Catholic Church, Akajikaji parish, Kapelebyong, urged local governments to ensure consistent access to water and electricity for these schools, supporting their long-term sustainability.

According to the National Household Survey released last May, poverty levels in Katakwi and Kapelebyong stand at 49%, well above the national average of 16.1%. By Ugandan standards, those living below the poverty line survive on less than \$1.77 (sh6,600) per person per day.



Judith Ineku