

# School Sports



**Divine Support.** Rt. Rev. Moses Banja of Namirembe, flanked by the She Cranes, Gayaza Junior staff along with children. PHOTOS/ABDUL-NASSER SSEMUGABI

## She Cranes inspire Gayaza future stars

**Competition.** The event started at the infant campus in Jjungo on March 7 and climaxed at the mother campus in Gayaza, where Angola retained their overall trophy on 1,440 points, followed by Zambia on 1,348 points, Algeria on 1,321 and Ghana on 1,103.

BY ABDUL-NASSER SSEMUGABI

### WHO BOSSSED THE DAY

1. Angola: 1,440 pts
2. Zambia: 1,348 pts
3. Algeria: 1,321 pts
4. Ghana: 1,103 pts

**R**uth Meeme, who played for the She Cranes at the 2015 and 2019 World Cups, started playing netball at Makerere University Primary School when she was only in Primary Four.

Now jointly coaching Gayaza Junior School's netball team alongside She Cranes mate Rachel Nanyonga, Meeme sees her younger self in these aspiring netballers.

"Children have a variety of talents, but sometimes you need special people to discover those talents, hence my big thanks to Future Stars, who are helping in that regard," the retired centre player said after a demonstration game at Gayaza Junior's sports day on Saturday.

Future Stars is a dynamic sports programme dedicated to identifying and nurturing raw talents in various sports disciplines, through expert training and mentorship both on and off the field.

"By seeing us play, these girls learn skills and look up to emulating us,"



**Change.** Children in relays during the sports day.

Meeme said. "According to the games I have watched so far, there's a big improvement because when we started coaching them they lacked basic skills like footwork, catching, etc."

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One of the centre players from Jjungo had the same diminutive stature as Meeme's when she started playing. "But she had the speed, good passing and feeding skills, and held the ball, where necessary. She can become a very good player in the future."

After five futile attempts in a game that mixed parents and She Cranes' Firdaus Namulema, Linda Muzigo, Viola Asingo, Malisera Akello, among others, Gayaza head teacher Sarah Tebugulwa Kizito came off the bench to score two goals for Team A, drawing loud applause and vuvuzelas from the crowd.

"I thank Future Stars for bringing the She Cranes. It's an inspiration to the pupils and the entire congregation including teachers, parents and guests in the need to prioritise sports in our edu-

### POPULAR SCORER

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cation system," Kizito said.

She also commended Future Stars for introducing girls' football, badminton and board games like chess and scrabble.

To the parent who commented negatively about sports in a WhatsApp group, the head teacher said: sports is part of our curriculum. "And I'm 100 percent sure that children who do sports have even a higher chance of performing better in class, because sports fosters sharing, confidence, concentration, leadership and critical thinking," she said, adding that the She Cranes trot the globe because of sports. Next year, they will be in Sydney, Australia for the 2027 World Cup.

Prim Ritah Nyanzi, the Wakiso district education officer, who was the chief guest, echoed the head teacher's call to embrace sports "because the coordination you have seen on the pitch supports the child in the classroom, at home and everywhere." She also commended Future Stars for nurturing leaders and "stars who will replace the She Cranes when they retire."

### Three-pronged approach

Since last year the Future Stars project born some success stories including Gayaza Junior winning overall gold on 102 points at the Dove Junior Chess Championship; finishing fourth at the Africa Youth Scrabble Championship in Nairobi behind Nigeria, Kenya, and Ghana; making the quarterfinals of the National Schools and Buganda Schools badminton championships and hosting Adekoyejo Adegbesan, the president Pan African Scrabble Association (Panasa). The Nigerian pledged more support for scrabble development in Uganda.

But the Gayaza head teacher said parents are key players in this journey of fostering dreams and building champions. "It's a team thing. The school needs the commitment of the child and that of the parent," Kizito said. "The parent must share and support the child's sporting dream."



**Show Me The Way.** Head teacher Kizito (in white pants) scored two goals in a demonstration netball game with the She Cranes. 7. She Cranes head coach Rashid Mubiru (in yellow) was the umpire of the day.