

Mbale Schools Band

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Mbale Music Centre, Maluku, Mbale

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STATEMENT

Philip Monk
Founder, Mbale Schools Band

During the last week or so, allegations have been made against me that have caused me great distress and that I have had to take very seriously. For the record, these are the facts.

I first came to Ugandan as a tourist in 2003. It was my first visit to Africa. I was warmly welcomed and enjoyed my time here so much that I decided to visit regularly. After more than 20 visits, I began to realize that I could resign from my job as an I.T. Manager in the U.K. and spend the rest of my life making a real difference to people in need and to those who would appreciate some assistance with the basics of life. I became one of the thousands of foreigners, missionaries, or investors who decided to make Uganda their permanent home.

I knew from the start that I could only live in Uganda if I had a real charitable purpose in being here so I began an extensive consultation period with the local community and tried my hand at a number of projects as I slowly learnt about Ugandan cultures and traditions. In collaboration with a local NGO, I brought funds from the UK through my charity and used the money to drill boreholes, constructed health clinics in the villages, and supported various humanitarian projects.

I am a musician and music teacher so, with the approval of the local communities and parents, I also saw an opportunity to create and organize a brass band program. It's what I knew.

Through my work, I was lucky enough to meet His Excellency, President Museveni, who offered his congratulations on my efforts and encouraged me to continue.

I also created a local community farm (because I knew about farming from my childhood) and was supported in my efforts by Ahamada Washaki who, at the time, was LC3 of Bunkhoko and who is currently the Resident City Commissioner (RCC) of Mbale.

I eventually decided to concentrate on three main areas of activity: child sponsorship; healthcare assistance; and a music program.

Over the next few years, I supported the healthcare needs of as many children as I could afford. I paid for hundreds of malaria treatment courses, dozens of medical operations, I personally took six children to Mulago Cancer Hospital and was at their bedside holding their hands when they passed away.

I used my UK contacts to find as many sponsors as I could who would be willing to pay 40,000/= a month to support school children in their education and with their scholastic needs.

The sponsorship program was a great success and we have so far helped more than 500 children with their school fees. Over 50 of our sponsored pupils have passed Senior 4 or 6 and have been helped with vocational training to date. We have supported 8 nurses to complete their studies and qualifications, and helped very many others to succeed in business and in employment. One sponsored child, Bernard Wanzala, is in his final sixth year of studying to be a doctor and qualified surgeon at Busitema University. We have four other sponsored students currently at University.

Our music program has been a success beyond my wildest dreams. We started in 2008 with the kind permission of the Director, Mr. Herbert Mulekwa, at Highway School in Sironko, and I donated a full set of 30 instruments to the school that were used by Mr. Mulekwa to make a brass band to accompany the President's campaign during the 2011 campaign.

In 2011, while the Highway School band was away, I started a new band in Mbale called Mbale Schools Band, finding players from local schools in the area. Within a few years many senior players wanted to start their own bands after they left school and I bought instruments to help them succeed in starting bands in Busia, Namabassa, Iganga, Jinja, Bukedea, Kapchorwa, Luweero and elsewhere.

As you would expect, we had to overcome huge challenges: so many instruments were stolen, children were attacked on their way to band practice, transport problems. e.t.c.

The band continued to develop and improve. Our breakthrough moment came in 2016 when we released our first video on Facebook and it was watched by 5,000,000 people online! We were an international sensation!

Since then Mbale Schools Band has gone from strength to strength; the players and I have simply created the most famous and popular brass band in the world on Facebook. More than twice as popular as any other band – even in the UK! Here in Mbale!

I knew Ugandan children had talent. I just had to get them instruments and organize them. But our greatest achievement has been to change the perception of young Africans around the world. It's a good news story from Africa – in musical circles we are hugely popular. We even played the first public brass Ugandan band and music concert at the National Theatre in 2019.

All was well and as I approached my 70th birthday we had closed my UK charity and created a small Ugandan CBO. I had handed over the management of the band to Ugandans including Martin Odong (General Manager) and Siliver Wamono (Musical Director). In truth, the band does not need a lot of management and we only have the two part-time staff above. We practice twice a week after school and once on Sundays. We don't need teachers as the older players teach the beginners. Although my health is poor (I have severe heart disease), I was enjoying a happy retirement and being cared for by my Mugishu wife, Beatrice Nabushawo. I was well-known in the community and I like to think that I have tried my best at playing my part in impacting village lives where I live.

Then on June 1st I received an unexpected phone call from Mbale police telling me that a UK foreign NGO called Brass for Africa, based in Kampala, had opened a case against me alleging that I had created some pages criticizing their activities on Facebook. This was news to me. These Facebook pages included *Brass for Africa no Accountability*, *Brass for Africa – making things worse for us*, and others.

I had heard of this organization but was not in regular contact with them. I had never met any of their Ugandan staff or teachers.

I was not too worried about the case that Brass for Africa had brought against me concerning the FB pages because I knew it was nonsense. But I was annoyed. How could I have been charged with 'Offensive Communications' without any evidence? Especially as it was not obvious that the pages had even been created in Uganda. I knew that I had done nothing wrong and that there could be no evidence against me. Sure enough the police, my lawyer (from Katende Associates in Kampala, and the State Attorney confirmed that the case was without any merit or evidence and it was dropped.

Having been on the receiving end of on-line abuse myself I also knew that if you don't like something on Facebook you only have two choices: 1) report the page to FB and ask for it to be taken down, 2) if FB don't agree with your complaint you have to win the argument against what has been said about you through facts and logic – just like a politician or any other social commentator. A page is almost impossible to be 'offensive' without being taken down by FB if it is.

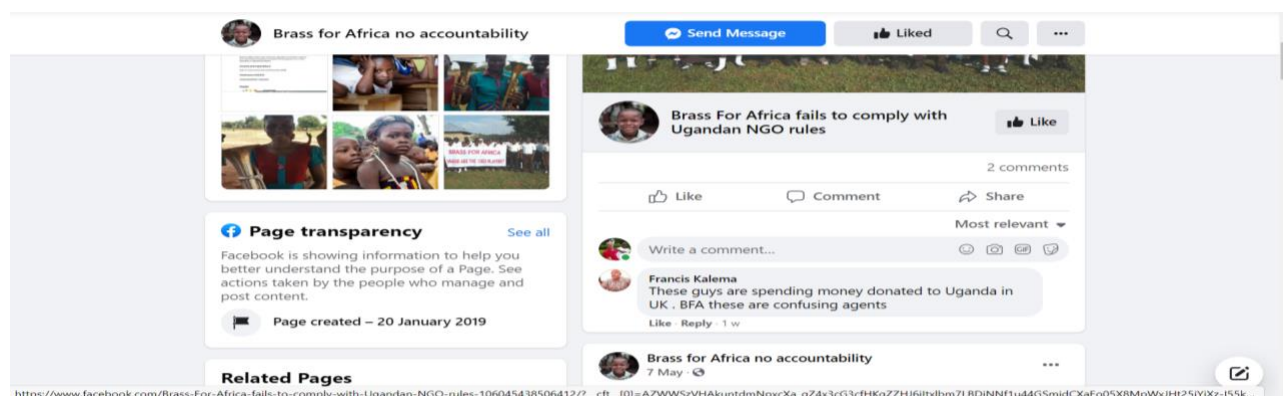
However I did check Brass for Africa's accounts at the UK Charity Commission website <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/charity-commission> (all UK charities have to publish their accounts online), and was surprised that Brass for Africa had income of over £1,000,000 (*Uganda Shillings Six Billion*) in the UK over the last 6 years. I thought it strange that I had not seen any Brass for Africa student brass bands performing in public in Kampala. It seemed a lot of money to be spending on trumpet lessons to me, especially as they were claiming that they had 1,000 'beneficiaries' in their program. It also seemed weird that they were claiming that they were teaching Ugandans 'life skills'. Do we really need foreigners to do that! Are we still a colony?

Imagine my surprise two months later when I was called by the police to tell me that three ex-players from Mbale Schools Band had signed witness statements alleging that I had committed various offences while I was Director of the band and that they had seen me creating the pages against Brass for Africa!

The three men that had signed the statements were Isaac Nangoye (whom I have not seen or met for the last four years); Innocent Wodonya (whom I have not seen or met for nearly six years); and George Mutambo) whom I had not met or seen for seven years! All three had one thing in common: they had all been expelled from the band for serious misbehaviour and misconduct. Their statements made all sorts of allegations against me that were complete lies. It was obvious to everyone concerned that they had some ulterior motive for what they were doing.

However, they made a big mistake when they lied in their witness statements. They claimed that I was involved in creating Facebook pages like Brass for Africa – Big Lie Series.

But what they did not understand is that Facebook displays the creation date of every page prominently and that the pages that they explicitly accused me of creating are all dated in 2019, 2020, or later. This is many years after I met any of them and proving totally and conclusively that they could not have seen me involved in any of these pages and that they had lied in their statements. I think people will know why. See the left hand column of this screenshot below for an example.



But things became disastrous for me when suddenly on Monday 18th October I was alerted to the fact that Nangoye and Wodonya were touring radio stations in Eastern Uganda making terrible allegations about me in public, including that I am a homosexual, that I am sodomizing boys, and other disgusting acts. They were accusing me of fraud, sexually abusing girls, stealing from sponsored children and basically, anything that they could think of. They also released all these allegations to bloggers to post online.

Many of the radio stations and bloggers published the lies and by the end of the day I was in a media storm! Almost none of the radio station presenters or bloggers had bothered to check the facts, hear my version of events, or investigate the background of the criminals who were trying to destroy me and our youth band. To my relief, at least some serious and professional journalists held off publishing until they had more background, evidence, and had at least spoken to me. The first man to my rescue

was Andrew Irumba of the online Newspaper, The Spy Uganda. He took the trouble to visit our Music Centre in Mbale, speak to the parents and players and was shocked to find the whole allegation was nonsense. Parents and former players came rushing to vouch for me – some of them in tears at the wickedness of the false accusations that the men were attempting to frame me with. Read his story at <https://www.spyuganda.com/investigations-ugandan-girls-coached-by-ex-mbale-schools-band-to-falsely-accuse-british-pensioner-philip-monk-of-child-molestation-homo-sexuality-make-u-turn/>

The three men continued to make awful allegations to anyone who would listen until my lawyer and I arrived at Mbale CPS on Thursday 21st October and opened a case for Criminal Defamation (no. 107/21/10/21) against the three of them.

By the end of a terrible few days, I began to realize that the people behind this malicious attack on me and the band were probably rich foreigners based in Kampala who didn't like what was being said about them on social media, and who had failed to destroy me through the legal system and were using methods outside of it.

The background of the three men making fake accusations about me is:

1. Isaac Nangoye

I expelled Nangoye from Mbale Schools Band on 2017. Earlier in the year, I had had to go to the UK for a serious and major heart operation and, as the senior player and a graduate of UCU in Mukono he was a graduate I had made him acting manager and left him in charge.

On my return, I discovered that he had defiled and impregnated one of our junior girls in the band. So, obviously his position was untenable and he had to leave. The girl that he had impregnated, Fatuma Sera, was staying with her Aunty and Uncle in Musoto. The following year, Seera gave birth to a girl and her uncle opened a case for defilement at Mbale CPS (No. 1065/1018). Nangoye denied being the father to avoid punishment.

The previous year Nangoye had also been arrested for selling counterfeit currency at Bugembe Rd Police Station in Jinja (case No. 40/19/11/2017).

The following year, 2019, Nangoye was arrested for attempting to interfere and intimidate witnesses in another case involving Mbale Schools Band where someone had stolen instruments from the band.

2. Innocent Wodonya

In 2016 Wodonya was convicted at Mbale Magistrates Court of maliciously harassing and cyber-stalking me and sending offensive emails to the sponsors of the children in the band. He was sentenced to eight months in prison.

Instead of learning his lesson and showing any sense of remorse, he continues in his campaign against me and the band even though he left our organization nearly six years ago.

3. George Mutambo

I expelled Mutambo from Mbale Schools Band when I discovered that he had been waiting until I left work for the day and then taking our band bus without authorization and using it to drive around Mbale at night and collect fares even though he no driving permit, was under-age, and had very poor eyesight. Inevitably he crashed into a boda with passengers and then drove away before dumping the bus and taking off. Guess who had to pay compensation to the injured passengers.

Over the course of the four days, the allegations that they had made against me included various lies including:

- a) I have been sodomizing young boys and abusing young girls. Of all the malicious and ridiculous accusations and lies that these people have told about me this is the worst. Not one single parent, teacher, pupil or player has ever said any such thing or made any complaint. They have failed to produce even one ‘victim’ or one parent who has heard of such a thing. Indeed, some of the parents and families who I have supported for years were in tears when they heard of attempt to frame me. There was even talk of violence.

I can hardly manage walking up steps nowadays let alone abuse kids of my grandchild’s age. Can you imagine that if I had misbehaved in any way then I could have kept it a secret and that the kids would not have gossiped to each other! As a Mzungu, I am watched everywhere I go!

- b) That I only married a Ugandan woman to obtain Ugandan citizenship. The fact is that I have never applied for Ugandan citizenship and remain a UK citizen. Like many foreigners, I have a Ugandan Residents Permit having been married to a Ugandan national for the minimum qualifying period of five years.
- c) That I stole funds from my own charity to buy land for my wife. Under the Ugandan law and constitution foreigners cannot buy land in Uganda. Years ago our charity trustees decided to invest in property as an income-generating project so that we would not need to rely on donations forever. So we bought cheap land in villages outside Mbale City and are now in the process of transferring land to a Limited Company Charity Trust called Mbale Schools Band and are just waiting for the land titles to be confirmed.
- d) That I diverted funds from foreign tours and CHOGM events. The band was actually invited to a number of international events. But when I tried to raise funds for such a tour there was widespread opposition to the project from both with Uganda and abroad. People did not like the idea of us spending probably 100M shillings on taking the players on what would have been seen as an expensive holiday. In any case, we were told that we would not be able to obtain visas as the players were students and had no jobs. So we decided to instead the money

we had raised in Music Centre in Mbale as a place that we can use for rehearsals without paying rent.

- e) These men claimed that I asked them to buy SIM cards for my own use not realizing that during the years that they referring to, SIM cards were not even being registered as you could buy them at supermarket checkouts!

I could go and expose every lie against me for what it is. The bottom line is that these young men have been 'motivated' to frame me, destroy our band and spoil the educational hopes of young boys and girls.

In summary, this is what happened:

- i. Someone has created pages on Facebook criticizing the activities of Brass for Africa;
- ii. Brass for Africa don't like it even though they could have responded to issues raised on the pages but failed to do so;
- iii. They blame me despite never having created the pages;
- iv. They open an absurd case at police against me on June 1st under the charge of 'offensive communications.'
- v. My lawyer, the police and the State Attorney can see that the case will not succeed because there is no evidence and the case is almost closed;
- vi. In desperation, Brass for Africa brings 3 witnesses to sign statements accusing me of various bad things including creating the pages. But the 3 witnesses are all former players who have been expelled from the band for past serious bad behaviour;
- vii. It makes no difference to the case as the statements are obviously and provably lies;
- viii. In even more desperation the witnesses publish and release false statements to the media and conduct a tour of radio stations in Mbale, Iganga, Jinja, and Kampala to make unsupported and false allegations against me;
- ix. My personal reputation is destroyed and the educational hopes and dreams of many of our students are left in ruins as our sponsorship program is seriously damaged;

As far as I understand it, the Ugandan government has a policy of encouraging investors to help join with them in the development of the nation. I am one such investor in the youth of Uganda. But potential future investors will not be attracted to Uganda if they see innocent individuals like me being

accused of child abuse without a shred of evidence, and for those allegations to be aired in the media instead of through the proper and official procedures at the police and through the justice system.

I pray that justices prevails!

Philip Monk

28th October 2021