

HOMES & CONSTRUCTION

COSTLY MISTAKES TO AVOID WHILE RE-ROOFING

BY BRIAN MAYANJA

At the beginning of this year, Henry Lubwama, a businessman, together with his six siblings, embarked on remodelling their parents' house in Muyenga, a suburb of Kampala.

Their parents built the house in the 1970s, but over the years, the roof had deteriorated. Whenever it rained, water leaked through the old iron sheets, many of which had rusted.

"Our plan was to replace the old iron sheets with clay tiles. We hired three roofers and bought new timber because the old one had weakened due to rain damage. Little did we know that the structure of the building could not support clay tiles because they are heavy," Lubwama says.

As soon as the roofers began installing the tiles, cracks started appearing in the walls.

"When I consulted my friend, who is an architect, he blamed me for not involving experts from the start. We had to reinforce the walls with iron bars to support the new roof. The work and costs doubled," he adds.

Construction experts say although replacing an old roof can give a house a fresh and modern appearance, homeowners should first consult architects and engineers to avoid costly mistakes.

WHY HIRE AN ARCHITECT

Dr Stephen Mukibi, an architect, says many homeowners rush into re-roofing projects without professional guidance, only to discover structural problems later.

"If you do not consult an architect, you may end up hiring unqualified roofers who install roofing styles that do not suit the building. In many cases, the structure may not support the new roof, or drainage systems may be poorly designed, leading to leakages," Mukibi explains.

Construction expert Muhammad Nsereko says structural integrity is one of the most important factors to consider before changing a roof. "The roofer must assess the strength of the walls and determine whether the bricks are still strong enough. Some walls may require reinforcement or replacement. You should never rush to remove an old roof without first inspecting the building," Nsereko advises.



Structural Integrity is one of the most important factors to consider before changing a roof



Muhammad Nsereko, expert

PERMITS ARE MANDATORY

Before remodelling a roof, homeowners must obtain approval from authorities such as Kampala Capital City Authority (KCCA).

Daniel Nuweabine, the spokesperson of KCCA, says re-roofing is categorised as a major renovation and requires a permit costing about sh200,000.

"If you remodel without a permit, it becomes illegal development. The owner is issued with a stop notice and may face prosecution if they continue with the works," Nuweabine says.

AGE OF THE BUILDING

Experts also emphasise the need to assess the age of the building before changing the roofing style.

Godfrey Sempugu, a construction



In cases of re-modelling an old roof, the structure may not support the new roof



CONSTRUCTION EXPERTS SAY ALTHOUGH REPLACING AN OLD ROOF CAN GIVE A HOUSE A FRESH AND MODERN APPEARANCE, HOMEOWNERS SHOULD FIRST CONSULT ARCHITECTS AND ENGINEERS TO AVOID COSTLY MISTAKES.

expert, says many houses built over 50 years ago have weak bricks and lack reinforced beams.

"Old buildings often require more than roof replacement. Some walls may need rebuilding or strengthening with iron bars before installing a heavier roof," he explains.

Even newer houses may require re-roofing due to poor-quality materials.

"If low-quality timber or iron sheets were used, they can easily be damaged by rainwater," Nsereko adds.

Shell houses that remain incomplete for years are also

vulnerable because exposed roofing materials are damaged by insects and harsh weather.

NEIGHBOURHOOD LOOK

Lubwama's family chose clay tiles partly because neighbouring homes in Muyenga had similar roofs. Nsereko says many modern residential areas such as Kira, Lubowa and Najjera favour versatile coloured iron sheets in black, green or red.

"It is not a written rule, but homeowners often choose roofing styles that blend with the standards of the area," he says.

Real estate dealer Enock Kamya says roofing also affects property value and rental demand.

"A modern roof attracts tenants and buyers. When clients see an old roof, they fear the building may not be safe," Kamya explains.

FASHION, FUNCTIONALITY

Experts warn homeowners against copying roofing styles seen abroad without professional advice.

"You may admire a roof style overseas, but an architect must first determine whether it matches the design and strength of your house," Nsereko says.

He adds that the most popular roofing styles in Uganda today are hidden roofs and hipped roofs, where all four sides slope downwards towards the walls.

RAINWATER HARVESTING

Some homeowners are now remodelling roofs to improve rainwater harvesting.

Vincent Senyonga, a plumber, says quality metal roofing, proper slopes and well-installed gutters improve water collection efficiency.

"The plumber must ensure that gutters, joints and valleys are properly sealed to prevent leakages and direct water into storage tanks," he notes.

COSTS VARY

Experts say there is no fixed cost for re-roofing because expenses depend on the size, design and condition of the building.

Godfrey Mukasa's family in Lungujja, Rubaga division in Kampala, remodelled their roof at sh25m.

"It was costly to hire experts and buy materials, but we do not regret giving our home a fresh and modern look," Mukasa says.