

"Search for sponsorship almost got me sodomised"

Tonny Sekabira went through an experience that gave him lessons and a story that he will forever live with. He told Regina Nalujja.

"I cannot keep it a secret anymore because every day I see boys lured into sodomy for money or sponsorship," says Tonny Sekabira, an assistant coach for the UPDF Boxing Club.

This, he says, before going into a narrative about a search for money and an opportunity to actualise a dream that almost landed him in the same predicament.

"My dream was to set up a vocational school for orphaned and street children in Bombo and Kampala. Orphaned at just nine years, I struggled alone for most of my life. I left my home in Buliwe when I was 12 and headed to Busia to forge a living.

I got involved with smugglers and learnt to survive by smuggling radios, sugar and soda to Uganda and Kenya.

With Uganda Revenue Authority always around the corner though, life was not promising so I returned home.

There, I tilled people's land and worked on construction sites to combine resources with relatives who were willing to help me get an education.

I eventually ended up joining Uganda Peoples' Defence Forces in 1991, and after seven years, I joined the UPDF Boxing Club. One thing I always wanted to do was to help other children who grew up struggling like me, to give them hope."

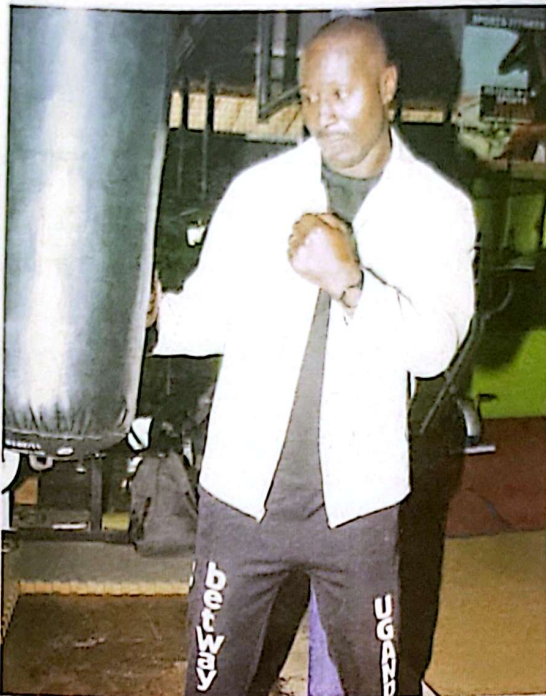
So, in 2013, Sekabira decided to start up a vocational school for orphans but he did not have money.

However, he had hope that kept him waiting "for opportunities to make my dream come true".

Stranger with a similar passion

In 2015, during VISA preparations to travel for a sports coaching course abroad, Sekabira got into a conversation with one of the foreign officials at the VISA office.

"He convinced me that he shared a similar interest to



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SEKABIRA'S AGE. HE HAS MANAGED TO FORGE A LIFE THROUGH BOXING DESPITE BEING ORPHANED AT NINE YEARS.

The UPDF boxing coach claims he was fondled by a diplomat who had promised to fund his project. PHOTOS BY ABUBAKER LUBOWA

Who is Sekabira?

Tonny Sekabira was born in 1981 in current Buliwe District. He was orphaned at nine years before moving to current Busia District where he forged a living through smuggling.

In 1991 Sekabira enrolled into the UPDF where he started a career in boxing in 1998 before going to Italy to study a boxing course. Currently, he is the assistant coach for the UPDF Boxing Club.

aid needy children and promised to help with financing my dream. He said he would have no problem coming up with the estimated Shs103m. I was excited," he narrates.

The two agreed to meet in Bombo to discuss the finer details of the project, which he "insisted we do before I leave for my study trip".

On the D-day, the gentleman, whose details have been left out, turned up in Bombo on a motorcycle and rode together with Sekabira to a hotel in Kampala.

"We had a bite and continued to Kawempe where we met a young man, handsome, well groomed and possibly in his early 20s. My acquaintance introduced the young man as one of his best friends," he narrates.

"We did not waste any time at this place. We rode off and continued to his residence in Nsambya, Kampala."

At his home

At his home, I noticed that something seemed strange. For instance, although he was a diplomat, there was no security or workers in the vicinity and his vast compound was so empty.

"He told me he was not married, had no children and had no plan of getting a family."

Inside the house, a statue of a naked man with his genitals erect in one of the corners startled and confused Sekabira as he scanned through an album in the living room whose content was just nothing but pornographic photos.

"Before I could process what I was seeing, my host returned from another room to join me and started touching me."

Things were heading in the wrong direction and to Sekabira, it was confusing and beyond what he had expected.

"My first instinct was to hit him and run away but I remembered he had opened his front door with his palm to let us in so I would not be able to get out."

Besides, Sekabira was in a strange place and with

a high profile man who perhaps had a gun or security guards around to arrest intruders.

As this ran through his mind, Sekabira's host had started to fondle his genitals and attempting to unzip his trousers.

"I knew I had better chances of surviving this by mental and not physical strength. So, I touched his hand and assured him I liked what he was doing."

But he lied to him that he had recently been battling a fever and diarrhea so it might be better if he returned on another day so they continue what they had started.

"I would have said anything to get out of the house safely."

Making my escape

"Fortunately, he fell for it, made me promise to return and said we would go to Nairobi for a vacation. He handed me Shs500,000 for upkeep until our next meeting when he said he would have the Shs103m I needed for the project."

The moment he let me out of the house, I jumped on the first boda boda I met and took off. I switched off my phone and did not switch it on again until I left for my studies."

Such incidences have become common, especially among young sportsmen who are desperate for any opportunity to get ahead.

And as such Sekabira learnt that when you are desperate you need to be more alert, because not all chances that come your way are productive.

Advice from counsellor

Stephen Langa, a counselor at Family Life Network, says it is important for people to have standards and values below which they should not stoop.

According to Langa, there are people who bend so low and breach their values to get what they need.

"Being desperate for money has been a way through which homosexuals have penetrated into different places. You do not have to reduce yourself to a nobody however needy you may be."

Therefore, Langa advises, that whereas it might be difficult to know what character a person is, it is important to know how you can free yourself in case you get trapped in such a scenario.

"Many people convince themselves that they will get out after the first time but locked in there up to when they are damaged either physically or emotionally."

Most homosexuals, he says, use money or threaten violence. Some recruit victims to addictive consumables such as drugs, which, when they get addicted can barely afford on their own.

"They [homosexuals] have an unexplainable wealth and are usually too generous. Be alert because they tend to use money as a trap, especially to