

The Makerere Uninersity team representing Uganda at the moot court in Washington DC. PHOTOS/COURTESY.

How students raised Shs200m in 10 days to represent Uganda

Each student was required to pay a $10,000 (about Shs38m) visa bond. For five students, that meant nearly Shs200m, to be raised in just over a week.

BY EDGAR R. BATTE

They had to raise almost Shs200 million in just 10 days to represent Uganda at a simulated world court in Washington, D.C.

While the financial requirement was overwhelming for all, each individual had person challenges to overcome before appearing for the prestigious moot court. For Ian Weyaula Chemiat, one of the participants, was that he had never held a passport until weeks earlier. This would also be his first flight and he was worried about it, but when he finally took his seat, somewhere between the takeoff and the steady hum that followed, he settled. That flight, from Kampala to Washington, DC, was a journey across continents and a crossing, from what they had known into what they were about to become.

Chemiat travelled with Julius Ainomugisha, Philomena Acom, Isabel Akankwatsa, and Clare Nakawuka, five students from the School of Law at Makerere University, brought together by ability, curiosity, and a willingness to attempt something that felt bigger than them.

The idea had come months earlier, introduced by their lecturer, Dr Kabumba Busingye (PhD), who saw in them something worth testing. He told Chemiat about the then forthcoming Philip C. Jessup International Law Moot Court Competition, the most prestigious of its kind, where students from across the world gather to argue complex questions of international law before a simulated International Court of Justice. It was both exciting and intimidating. They chose to rise to the challenge, and began preparing in December 2025. It called for long hours in the library, debates that stretched late into the night, drafting and redrafting their memorial and more.

Short-lived excitement

By January, they submitted their work. Weeks later, they stood in Kampala for the national rounds, facing universities from across the country. They won, a victory that placed them on a different map. They would represent Uganda at the international rounds in Washington DC. But before they could argue law, they had to confront a big challenge. At the United States Embassy, their visas were approved, which quickly gave them relief but it seemed short-lived excitement.



Left to right: Isabel Akankwatsa, Julius Ainomugisha, Philomena Acom, and Ian Weyaula Chemiat, before setting off for the Moot.

THE JESSUP MOOT

The Philip C. Jessup International Law Moot Court Competition, founded in 1959, is the world's largest and most prestigious moot court competition in public international law. It simulates a fictional dispute between two countries before the International Court of Justice (ICJ).

The competition is organised by the International Law Students Association (ILSA) and draws participants from approximately 800 law schools across more than 100 countries. The winners advance to the international finals, held annually in Washington, D.C., in late March or early April. Often called the «Olympics of moot court competitions,» Jessup has remained a cornerstone of legal education for over six decades.

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