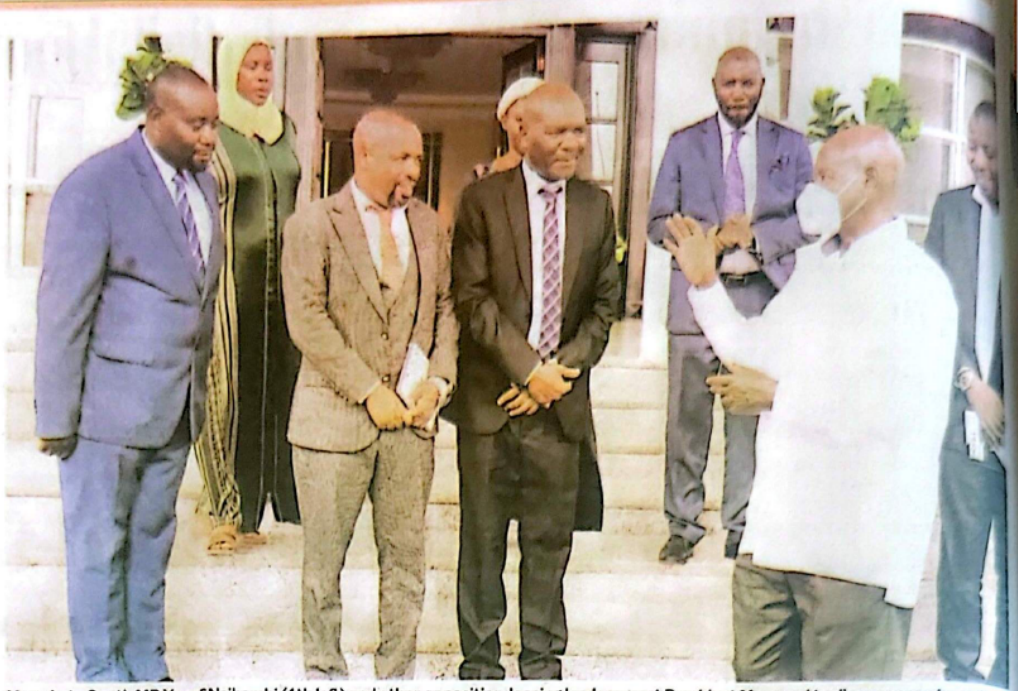
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Mawokota South MP Yusuf Nsibambi (4th left) and other opposition-leaning leaders meet President Museveni to discuss ways to curb political unrest and tribalism in Uganda at State House Entebbe. PHOTO/ FILE

From model village to political low: Nsibambi's bitter defeat

Despite always being involved in the rough and tumble of Ugandan politics, Yusuf Nsibambi had long been hesitant to throw his hat into elective politics. Derrick Kiyonga writes that having decided to contest the 2021 parliamentary elections, Nsibambi now finds himself at a political low, with many questioning his opposition credentials and loyalty.

BY DERRICK KIYONGA

Veteran law don Yusuf Nsibambi's response to losing Mawokota South constituency to National Resistance Movement (NRM) candidate Suzan Nakawuki has been two-fold. First, Nsibambi, a historical member of the Forum for Democratic Change (FDC), declared his retirement from politics. He also withdrew several forms of support he had previously provided to his constituents, including disconnecting a power transformer that had brought electricity to several villages—a move that temporarily paralyzed work and disrupted daily life in the area.

Nsibambi has been unapologetic about this decision. "I bought the transformer. Where the land in which the power-line goes through is mine. The poles are mine. They should tell me where they got the permission to get power from the transformer that I bought," he said. For Nsibambi, by voting him out, the electorate in Mawokota South had shown ingratitude.

"I have nothing to thank them [voters] for because they have done nothing for me. I bought garbage trucks that have been collecting refuse in all towns across Mawokota. I procured solar panels that have been used in towns throughout the constituency. I bought tractors that repair roads," he said.

He insisted that the voters' rejection justified his withdrawal of material support.

"They showed that I'm nobody. I donated lights to the people of Bunjakko [landing site], but they gave me only nine votes. I have nothing to appreciate them for," he said. "They are not the ones who gave birth to me. They didn't educate me. Places like Nkozi, where I grew up, gave me their votes, and I will take care of them like babies."

Crossing lines: Meetings with Museveni

The second move has been more politically controversial. Nsibambi has begun engaging with President Yoweri Museveni alongside a number of politicians, including Latif Ssebaggala Ssengendo and Moses Kabuusu, both long-time opposition figures. While some observers speculate that Nsibambi is seeking positions in government or trying to recoup campaign investments, he insists his meetings are for national dialogue.

"I have been meeting President Museveni even before now. This year alone, I have met him twice. We want to engage Museveni on issues affecting the nation. We want to see how we can eliminate tribalism, reduce political violence, tackle political imprisonment, and calm the political unrest," Nsibambi said.

Nsibambi's openness about meeting Museveni has drawn criticism from opposition veterans. Dr. Kizza Besigye likened Nsibambi to Kikonyogo Kanoonya, a National Resistance Army (NRA) fighter who surrendered to Obote's army when the going got tough. "Oyite Ojok had cornered us in the Luweero jungles. He even dropped leaflets imploring us to surrender, believing we were losing the war. Kanoonya surrendered, thinking we had lost. I have nicknamed my friend Yusuf Nsibambi, Kanoonya," Besigye said.

FDC fallout

Nsibambi's five-year tenure in Parliament has also been marked by tension within the FDC. A long-time ally of Dr Besigye, he chose to remain aligned with Nathan Nandala Mafabi and Patrick Oboi Amuriat instead of joining Besigye's People's Front for Freedom (PFF). In splitting from FDC, PFF leaders accused Nsibambi's group of mishandling funds, a claim he denies. Besigye explained: "I investigated and found the money was received in instalments at the request of the recipient. Part of it was held in dollars to preserve value during the election period. There was no intention to misappropriate funds."



Yusuf Nsibambi, fresh from his Mawokota South loss, meets President Museveni to discuss ways to curb po-

Despite the fallout, Nsibambi insists that forming a new political party was the wrong move. "I think we should stay within the party and cause reforms. We can't leave the party we started to these people [Nandala and Amuriat]," he said.

Nsibambi's relationship with Besigye dates back to 2005 when the Opposition leader was charged with rape. Nsibambi, along with late Sam Kalega Njuba, Wandera Ogalo, Kiyemba Mutale, and Ladislaus Rwakafuuzi, secured Besigye's bail before Justice James Ogalo, enabling Besigye to campaign in the 2006 presidential elections.

Before venturing fully into politics, Nsibambi was a rising star in the business and legal worlds. At 24, he became company secretary at Greenland Bank, a prominent financial institution in the 1990s, which later collapsed after a controversial acquisition of the Ugandan Commercial Bank (UCB). Nsibambi maintains that insider lending could not have

While lecturing Law at Makerere University, he taught future leaders, including Norbert Mao, Jacob Oulanyah, Maj Gen James Mugira, and the late Brig Noble Mayombo. Despite his political connections, Nsibambi had long been wary of elective politics.

"I realised that many politicians are job seekers. There's a deliberate attempt to devalue leaders and leadership in this country. Many leaders are selfish, self-serving, or conmen," he told the media in 2016.

Model village dreams

Before entering Parliament, Nsibambi had focused on development projects in Nkozi, Mawokota South. He and a group of friends established a model economic village using poultry farming as the launchpad.

"We are offering 100 to 200 chicks per family, with about 140 families registered. We provide model chicken houses, chicks, guidance, and medicine. Each farmer will open a bank account with Centenary Bank. We expect a total of 50,000 birds in the village," Nsibambi explained.

"We will have a central egg collection and sales point. Once a farmer reaches 500 birds, they can manage independently.

> **Nsibambi**
>
> **Bitter.**
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