

making money

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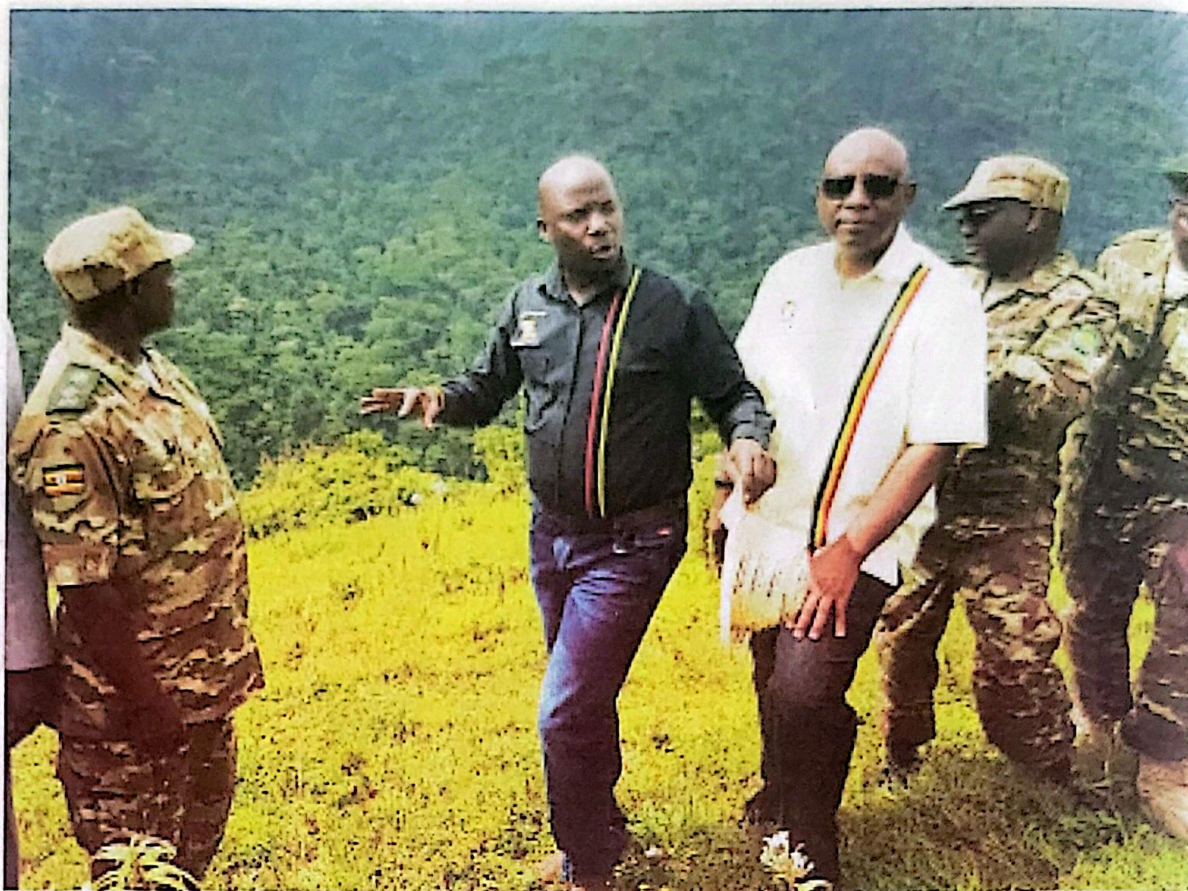
Capital. Ivan Batuma started his dream with Shs500,000 in 1990.

Batuma earns millions from tourists

Focus. From Shs500,000 goodwill capital from a friend, Ivan Mbabazi Batuma has built two multimillion resorts that host more than 100 tourists every month. He makes about Shs60m from the two resorts.

TAXES

Perfect. Batuma pays over Shs5m to local government for operational license.



Action. Batuma (3rd left) and state minister for Tourism Godfrey Kiwanda (C) tour Bwindi Impenetrable National Park recently. PHOTO BY ROBERT MUHEREZA

BY ROBERT MUHEREZA
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Ivan Mbabazi Batuma, 55, a resident of Murambo, Bubare Sub County, Rubanda District, believes that being focused on the targeted goals and objectives, hard work, honesty and integrity helped him to become successful in hardware business.

The Church of Uganda lay canon, started his first business with about Shs500,000 as capital but goodwill and getting supplies on credit helped him break through.

Starting

Batuma, who is a civil engineer, opted for self-employment with an objective of creating a job for himself and others.

He recalls it was in 1990 that he got his business foot off the ground.

"After my graduation at Makerere University, I did not seek government jobs like my colleagues but I opted to start a hardware shop in

Kabale town because my dream was to be a successful self-employed businessman. I wanted to create employment," he says.

He set up his shop and registered a construction company called Batcon (U) Ltd through which he applied for tenders in government institutions.

The shop was located opposite Kabale Police Station along the main street.

Batuma's shop was a one stop centre for builders given the fact it was fully stocked with building material such as nails, cement, iron bars, paint, and iron sheets among others.

From the hardware business, he would earn about Shs4m per month.

Service delivery

Shs60m

AMOUNT OF MONEY BATUMA MAKES PER MONTH FROM HIS BUNYONYI OVERLAND RESORT AND RUSHAGA GORILLA CAMP IN KISORO



In 1995, Batuma reveals he decided to close the shop to pursue higher dreams.

He says he invested his savings of about Shs10m and over Shs20m he got from the banks into a financial service and communication company which he named Highland Business Centre.

He was now dealing in a forex bureau, secretarial services and communication. The business centre would be located along Kabale-Kisoro highway.

"The shop was doing great in terms of profits. The banks came knocking offering big chunks of money. I seized the opportunity and decided to close the shop and try service delivery," says Batuma.

Answering the call of tourism

Thanks to his success with the Highland Business Centre, Batuma conceived an idea of investing the proceeds into hotel business.

"Highland Business Centre was bringing in the money. I decided to diversify and hotel business came into play. I discovered tourists who would drop by at my forex bureau needed accommodation," he said.

Tourists en route Bwindi Impenetrable

Business idea



Wekesa's take on parenting. My responsibility is to make sure you get your basics (not luxuries) and you will owe your children the same in future.

NOTE

Focus. "I did not seek a government job after graduation. All I wanted was self-employment," says Batuma.

quarter of the year is his busiest.

Expansion

With the money coming in, Batuma decided to diversify further.

"Bunyonyi Overland Resort has given birth to another camping site - Rushaga Gorilla Camp. I constructed it four years ago to cater for tourists who prefer catching the animals at the border," he said.

At Rushaga, Batuma has capacity of 40 guests a night. He charges \$200 for deluxe while economy guests part with \$60 per night.

From Rushaga, the lay canon pockets about Shs20m per month during peak time.

Employment

Batuma has more than 100 workers at both Rushaga Gorilla Camp and Bunyonyi Overland Resort. According to him, the least employee takes home Shs150,000 per month.

Challenges

High government charges in form of taxes, unreliable power and water supply, poor road network leading to the different tourist destination are the major challenges to his investment.

"Using a generator to run a tourist campsite is equally disturbing to the tourists because some of their gadgets require strong power supply," he said.

Taxes

He is also a law abiding citizen with tax returns of more than Shs5m to both local and central government.

wekesa's diary

Avoid parenting mistakes



Important: Pupils of Kazo Primary perform a scene from a play. PHOTO DENIS BBOSA

Recently, probably out of curiosity, my son asked me why I fly Economy Class when I travel with him and his siblings.

I realised that children need explanations about why we do certain things.

I told him that I make sure I do not fly Business Class if the flight is four hours or less and that I only fly Business Class if I'm traveling a longer distance and if when I arrive I immediately go for important meetings (must be meetings that can bring returns). When I fly Business, it's purely for getting better rest through good sleep so that I am attentive during those meetings (they are usually tough and tiring).

"But what makes you think that you should fly Business when travelling with your dad?" I asked him.

He replied, "I just want to know how people are treated in Business Class."

"That curiosity should inspire you to work hard enough to afford that experience," I told him.

"My responsibility is to make sure you get your basics (not luxuries) and you will owe your children the same in future. For extras, I make you work for them but in future (at 18 years and above) you will work full time for both the basics and extras, you will thank me then," I further told him.

That discussion reminded me of an encounter I had about three years ago while traveling to Europe. I flew Economy Class with a child of someone who has been connected or worked with the Government for a long time while his parent was in Business Class. On arrival in Amsterdam, the child (actually a young man of 25 years then) started shouting at his mother.

"Why did you fly me Economy Class? I have flown Business Class all my life."

The young man did not care who was

listening. The mother had her head facing down (with embarrassment). I decided to intervene. "Young man," I told him; "you should have respect for your mother and not shout at her and even worse in front of people. At 25, your mother and father should not be paying for even a taxi fare for you and I guess they sent you to Europe for first class education. What was your education for?" The young man listened to me partly because he knew me and of course he had seen me in Economy Class.

The lady told me that (as parents) they "made mistakes" with their children. "We gave them everything they wanted; needs are different from wants because we thought our children should not suffer like we did while growing up. Big mistake!"

My wife and I try to explain to our children why we do things the way we do them.

Children have high learning abilities, which parents tend to underestimate.

My children know I have to forego lots of stuff for certain things to happen.

We avoid luxuries and look for good deals even when I work hard and get fairly well-paid. We respect (not worship) what we have; our old cars are well-maintained, you do not find me hanging out.

Being in Kenya with my son (for the Motocross Championship) means foregoing certain things on my part and yes, it's part of the education he is getting (learning to compete, accepting defeat in competition, and respecting those who are better than him instead of being angry with them).

Even fighting to control a dangerous machine is purely part of life's learning.

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National Park and Lake Bunyonyi would make stopovers at Highland business Centre and Batuma would have a discourse with them. With several interactions with the tourists, he would in vain convince them to spend a night in Kabale town.

According to Batuma, the tourists preferred bush camping around Lake Bunyonyi to be able to catch its beauty before proceeding for mountain gorilla tracking.

"I saw a business opportunity. I had to look for bank loans to buy some pieces of land on Lake Bunyonyi so that I can provide a secure place for tourists that preferred bush camping and this is how the famous Bunyonyi Overland Resort on Lake Bunyonyi started. Besides, I was convinced I would have high paying clients," he said.

He said he took a loan from a leading financial institution and bought land on the periphery of Lake Bunyonyi.

Resort on Bunyonyi

After securing the loan, Batuma built a 20 roomed hotel, 20 cottages and 80 tents on a five acre piece of land overlooking the lake.

He also excavated five spacious caves. He says the resort can accommodate a maximum of 120 guests per night.

Batuma says exquisite rooms cost \$120 (Shs430,000), while the least goes for \$60 (Shs215,000) per night.

On average and in a good month, when tourists pour in in big numbers, Batuma rakes in Shs60m per month from the resort. The final



Some of the tents in the gardens at Bunyonyi Overland Resort. INTERNET PHOTO