

After 10 years, Lubega graduates with Architecture degree

BY RASHUL ADIDI

KAMPALA. In a story of resilience, patience and unwavering determination, 29-year-old Yunusu Lubega has graduated from Makerere University with a Bachelor of Architecture degree after a decade-long academic journey.

For many students, university education follows a predictable timeline. But for Lubega, what is typically a five-year Bachelor of Architecture (B.Arch) programme stretched into ten years, shaped by financial hardship, academic setbacks and personal challenges that repeatedly tested his resolve.

Yet on graduation day, surrounded by his proud parents, Lubega described the milestone not as delayed success, but as a hard-earned victory.

"This is a family achievement; there were moments when even relatives doubted whether I would finish, but I kept believing that graduating was possible," he said.

A dream born from uncertainty

Lubega joined Makerere University in 2016 at a time when his family was facing financial constraints. With no confirmed sponsor and limited resources, he began campus life unsure whether he would complete even his first semester.

Relief came weeks later when he secured support under the government Students' Loan Scheme, renewing his hope.

"I joined campus without full assurance that I would continue studying," he recalled.

"When I was announced as a loan beneficiary, that moment gave me confidence that I could finish," he added.

Although he is the son of a builder and had long been fascinated by construction sites, architecture was not his initial career plan. His mother had envisioned him becoming a doctor, prompting him to study Biology, Chemistry and Mathematics (BCM) in secondary school.

However, Lubega later switched to Mathematics, Economics and Fine Art (MEA), a decision that introduced him to architecture — a discipline he says perfectly blends creativity and technical thinking.

"That change became a turning point; Architecture aligned with my personality and long-term goals," he said.

At Makerere University, the Bachelor of Architecture programme is widely regarded as one of the most rigorous courses. A core unit, the Architectural Design Portfolio, runs continuously from first year to final year and must be passed for a student to progress.

Failure in any semester means repeat-



Yunusu Lubega

ing the course with the class below, automatically extending one's stay at the university.

Lubega encountered his first retake in Year One, Semester One — a setback he says nearly half of his classmates experienced. Another followed in Year Two, gradually stretching his academic timeline.

"That is why many people describe Architecture as hard," he said. "It is not impossible, but it demands consistency, discipline and resilience."

His academic journey was further disrupted in 2022 when he and seven oth-

er students were suspended following clashes between residents of Miruka Hall and University Hall.

Lubega maintains that the suspension was widely misunderstood and insists it was not the primary reason for his prolonged stay. "One night after a hall event, a misunderstanding happened between students," he explained. "I was trying to calm the situation, but things escalated beyond my control."

The suspension forced him to pause his studies at a time when many of his original classmates were graduating — a period he describes as emotionally draining.

"People started calling me 'Nana' (grandfather) because I had stayed long," he said with a faint smile. "At one point, I seriously considered quitting."

To support himself during the extended academic period, Lubega turned to graphic design, using his creative skills to earn income for tuition and daily expenses.

He also remained active in campus life, participating in student leadership and maintaining friendships that helped him stay motivated during difficult moments.

After returning to campus in 2023, he repeated his third year, passed the crucial Architectural Design Portfolio and steadily completed his remaining requirements.