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Uganda: Blind Busuulwa Defies Odds to Pursue PhD

Isaac Khisa 31 January 2010

Kampala — They say disability is not inability and 40-year-old Abdul Busuulwa has taken this adage to a new level by pursuing a doctorate despite being blind.

Busuulwa was born blind in a family of five in Mukono District in 1970, but this did not deter his appetite for education.

He is currently pursuing a doctorate in Sustainable Development at the University of Twente in Netherlands, and says he is likely to become a lecturer in a Ugandan university or a senior consultant on development.

"After my PhD, there is a possibility to teach in any of our universities or do consultancy services because my field is a bit new in Uganda," says Mr Busuulwa.

He told Daily Monitor that he is likely to specialise in research.

Mr Busuulwa attended his primary school at St Bishop Willis Demonstration School in Iganga District between 1979-1986. Between 1987-1993, he got his O Level and A level education at Iganga Secondary School, from where he qualified to go to Makerere University on government scholarship. In 1996, he graduated with a degree in Mass Communication.

Two years later, Busuulwa enrolled for a post graduate diploma in Community Based Rehabilitation at Ugandan Management Institute under the sponsorship of Norwegian Association of Disabled.

A few years later, he pursued a Masters degree in Human Resource Management at the same institute after getting tuition from the Australian Scholarship programme.

However, he says things have not been smooth all along.

"I grew up in a poor family with problems of lack of school fees but God helped me that the problems were solved through assistance," Mr Busuulwa said at the recent launch of the Ford Foundation scholarship launch at Hotel Africana.

After his undergraduate education, he pursued a career in journalism, working with Weekly Post and The Crusader where his managing editor was Dr George Lugalambi, the current head of Mass Communication at Makerere University.

It may be unrealistic to expect a blind person to gather, write and edit stories, but Mr Busuulwa was able to do that. He says he was and still is capable of gathering any information from anywhere just like it was when he was a journalist.

The confident husband and father of one says people should not associate disabled people with disability.

"When people see a disabled person on the street, they associate him or her with all kinds of inabilities, not knowing that they can also perform," he said.

In 1999 and 2000, Mr Bosulwa worked with Uganda Association of the Blind and the National Union of Disabled Persons in Uganda.

He urged people with disability to pursue life with vigour by stopping feeling sorry for themselves.

"The disabled people should believe in themselves because if they believe that they are incapable, then they are becoming their own

enemies," he told Daily
Monitor last week.

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