

# CANDIDATE SAYS MOVE COULD DELIVER LONG-TERM BENEFITS

PHOTO BY PONSIANO NSIMBI

By John Masaba

The National Unity Platform (NUP) presidential candidate, Robert Kyagulanyi aka Bobi Wine, has promised free university education as part of his plan to prepare young people to drive the country's economic growth.

He made the pledge during a rally recently at Ssaaza Grounds in Masaka as he continued his hunt for votes ahead of the 2026 general election.

According to the 2016 Africa Higher Education Student Survey Project, nearly 30% of students enrolled in Ugandan universities drop out, largely due to financial constraints.

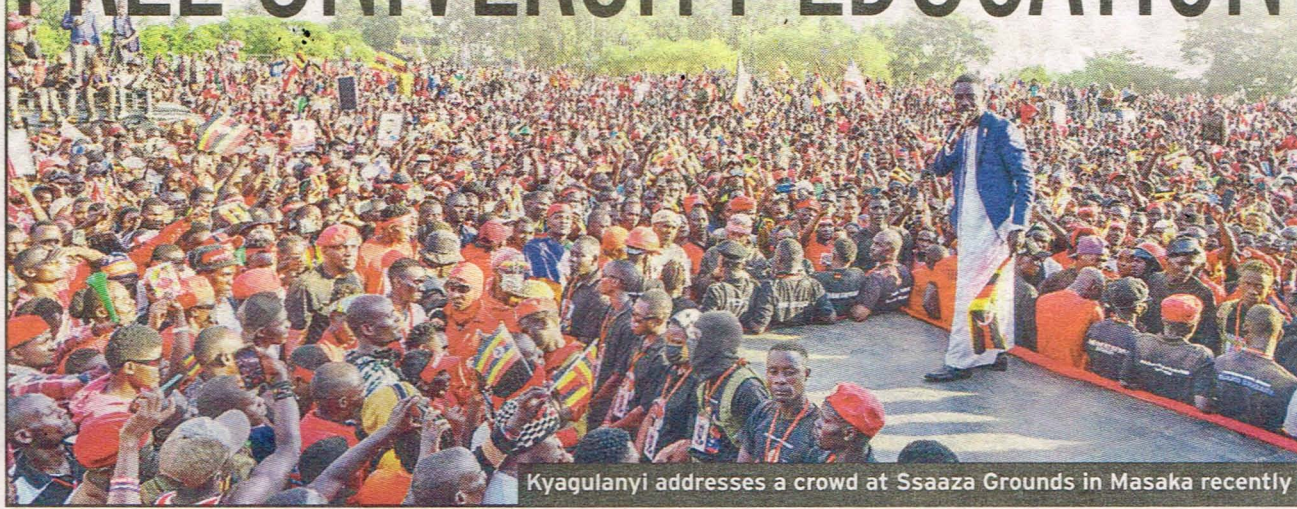
Kyagulanyi said his proposal seeks to remove the financial barriers that lock out thousands of qualified students from poor families.

"At university, our learners will study for free. This arrangement existed before and can be revisited because the money is there – it is just being stolen," Kyagulanyi said, adding that higher education has become a privilege for the rich rather than a right for every child.

Kyagulanyi, who has also previously promised free education at lower levels and free meals for learners, said investing in university education would deliver long-term economic benefits.

Kyagulanyi also spoke about his plans to revive the local

## NUP'S KYAGULANYI PROMISES FREE UNIVERSITY EDUCATION



Kyagulanyi addresses a crowd at Ssaaza Grounds in Masaka recently

economy, saying Masaka was once a thriving city, but has experienced decline due to what he described as 'negative' policies, including high taxes.

He said under his government, industry players – particularly those in agro-processing – would benefit from reduced taxes.

"Increasing taxes has made it difficult for many of you to operate, yet you are known for hard work and creativity,"

### TROUBLE-FREE CAMPAIGNS

Kyagulanyi arrived in Masaka at about 11:00am after travelling from his home in Magere, Wakiso district. Although there was heavy security deployment, it was the first time in five days that his campaign activities proceeded without tear gas, signalling a lull in tensions.

Kyagulanyi said.

He further pledged to repeal the National Coffee (Amendment) Act, 2024, which did away with the

Uganda Coffee Development Authority.

While the Government says the law is intended to improve the coffee sector, Kyagulanyi

argued that it was designed to capture the coffee trade, at the expense of smallholder farmers.

### VOTE PROTECTION DEBATE

Kyagulanyi also campaigned at Kyajubira in Kimaanya-Kabonera, where he urged supporters to remain near polling stations after voting to prevent ballot stuffing and electoral fraud – a position that the Electoral Commission (EC) chairperson, Justice Simon

Byabakama, has said is illegal.

Kyagulanyi said he was not asking voters to remain inside polling stations, but to stay within the permitted distance.

"I am a lawyer, and the law allows voters to stay 20 metres away," he said.

Kyagulanyi said election transparency benefits all contestants.

"If there is a thief nearby, the best thing is to lock your door. That benefits everyone," Kyagulanyi said.

He also urged voters to support not only his presidential bid, but also the NUP candidates contesting.

He introduced the party's flag-bearers for next year's general election: Patrick Kuteesa for Kimaanya-Kabonera MP seat, Gyaviira Sssebiina Lubowa for Nyendo-Mukungwe, and Rose Nalubowa for the Masaka Woman MP seat.

### WHAT VOTERS SAY

Sharon Kyohiire, a mother, called for improvement in health services.

"You have to travel a long distance to get services like immunisation, sometimes to Bukoto or Kyamuyimbwa. The bodaboda fare to Kyamuyimbwa is sh7,000 and sh5,000 to Bukoto, which many parents cannot afford," she said.

Agnes Nabowa called for increased access to safe and clean water, saying the high cost of tap water forces residents to rely on unsafe sources.