

Institute of Certified Public Accountants of Uganda (ICPAU), a body that regulates the accountancy profession in Uganda, turns 25 next week. Like the Law Council (for lawyers), Medical Council (doctors), ICPAU is an Act of Parliament. From a mere 79 members in 1992, the body has grown by leaps and bounds. Now boasting of more than 2,000 members, ICPAU has revolutionised the accountancy landscape in the country. John Masaba spoke to the ICPAU CEO Derrick Nkajja about how the body has managed to navigate the challenges to reach this important milestone

**Q** As you mark your silver jubilee, can you briefly tell us what ICPAU's mandate in Uganda is?

Our major mandate is to regulate the standard of accountancy in Uganda. We prescribe and regulate the conduct and practice of accountants. In doing so there are a range of things we do. One of those is through exams, which helps us to sieve the best out of the pool of those who join the profession every year. We also have disciplinary component to rein in on errant accountants. In addition, we have a quality assurance board, which assesses the quality of practitioners from time to time.

#### Must everyone become a member to practise accountancy?

No. But if you have to become an upright member, you must become a member of ICPAU. By becoming a member of ICPAU, it means you are willing to abide by the laws and code of ethics of the land. It means you are committed to ensuring that you do not bring the profession to disrepute. But some people do not want to play by these rules. We are seeing many becoming members of foreign associations because they know those bodies will not come to Uganda to investigate in case of misbehaviour. So they can get away with wrong doing. That is why you have seen many cases of fraud in the media involving accountants lately.

#### Can they gain credibility in Uganda, even without being members of ICPAU?

Yes! But in the end it is the society where they operate that pays the price.

#### What is the difference between CPA Uganda and CPA Kenya? Can graduates of both courses practice in either

# ICPAU has changed accountancy work



ICPAU Chief Executive Director Derrick Nkajja addressing journalists at Uganda Media Centre last Monday  
Photo by Shamim Saad

**WE HAVE BECOME A STRONG FORCE AND HAVE EARNED THE RESPECT OF THE GOVERNMENT. WE HAVE SUBMITTED TO THEM PROPOSALS ON FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT**

cannot succeed unless you steal. The other challenge is the low intake of accountancy services in the country. We have a big informal sector, and this affects the professional growth of accountancy. The accountancy profession thrives on formality.

#### What are ICPAU's achievements over the last 25 years?

The biggest has been in increasing our membership. From only 79, we are now over 2,000 members. We have become a strong force and have earned the respect of the government. We have submitted proposals to them on good financial management which have been adopted.

#### What have you set yourself to achieve in the next five years.

We are going to look at some areas of our mandate that we have not exploited. We are looking at how to regulate the profession in order to meet modern demands of the profession. You may graduate today but realise your knowledge is no longer applicable because technology has changed.

#### countries (Uganda and Kenya)?

The difference between the two is that the accountant attempted the professional accountancy exams of that country. However, the competence is much the same. This is because our profession is unique from others in that we (accountant's world over) are members of the International Federation of Accountants (IFA). IFA ensures that standards of accountants world over are the same.

What changes is the jurisdictional application of what somebody has studied. For example, Uganda has a different tax system. So some people may struggle if they do not localise some aspects of what they have studied to what is here.

#### You have been accused of making it very difficult for new members to join because your exams are very difficult. How can you have fewer than 50% of those who sit your exams failing? Does that mean Ugandans are not smart enough?

I do not know how you would feel being treated by a doctor who barely passed their exams at school. It is the same with accountancy. Not all of us are called to become accountants. You may have the craving, but did you pass the exam and nobody stopped you from

#### becoming an accountant?

Accountancy is practical so you must prove in class that you will stand the test of time outside it.

We prefer that people pass so that they can be relied on when they go out there. We prefer to send people out there who can be useful to the economy. People are saying that for years, less than 50% of those who sit pass our exam.

But they are not looking at other professions like medicine which put roadblocks at the preliminary stages. Unlike medicine; we give everyone a chance join for as long you can pass the exam. You may have failed math at O' level but that does not stop us admitting you.

#### You said in 2015, that ICPAU would do something to help the situation. What is the progress on this?

We have done many things. We have ensured that most accountancy institutes across

the country are accredited and checked for their competency to offer training. We also ensure they have the right training materials. We are also thinking about attaching our students to professional accounting institutions. We have done a pilot scheme for internships and next year, we shall be rolling it out.

We have a number of people who prefer to call themselves accountants while they are not because they have not gone through the right training. However, these are the kinds the public uses, because they are cheap to hire.

In regard to corruption, the public should understand that corruption cannot be completely stamped out because our accountants are a reflection of the society they come from.

If anyone else is behaving in a certain way, how do you expect the accountants to behave in a different way?

#### We rarely hear about those you have punished.

We have, only that we do not publish our disciplinary cases in the media. Even this year there are two people we have deregistered. One was working with *New Vision* and other with Uganda Revenue Authority.

But it is not only the accountancy where there are problems. Our society glorifies wrongdoing. And that is a challenge on our accountants. It has become norm that you

**Congratulations**

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CERTIFIED PUBLIC ACCOUNTANTS

The Management and staff of Midland & Company wish to congratulate CPA on its 25 years of existence.

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**Happy Celebrations**

**CELEBRATING CPA UGANDA 25 YEARS**

**Mukasa, Yiga & Company**  
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We are proud to associate with the Institute of Certified Public Accountants of Uganda (CPA) as they celebrate 25 years of existence.

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