

After 16 years of growth and reform under Ibrahim Kaddunabbi, IRA finds itself at a defining crossroads,

where questions of succession and credibility now threaten to overshadow a remarkable success story.

# IRA at a crossroads: A 16-year success story meets its toughest leadership test

## Succession |

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For more than 16 years, Insurance Regulatory Authority (IRA) has steadily transformed one of the country's most underdeveloped financial sectors into a trillion-shilling industry.

Today, however, IRA finds itself navigating what may be the most consequential governance challenge in its history, and how it emerges from the dispute is the question many Ugandans are waiting to see answered.

At the centre of the storm is former IRA chief executive officer Ibrahim Kaddunabbi Lubega, whose contract expired on May 31, but whose status remains the subject of an ongoing court battle.

The dispute has exposed an unusual contradiction at the heart of the insurance regulator.

Nearly three days after the expiry of his contract, Kaddunabbi still holds out as IRA's chief executive officer.

Even on its website, as of yesterday morning, despite the increasingly public dispute over who legally controls the regulator's top office, Kaddunabbi is still listed as the chief executive officer.

Yet at the same time, a June 1 cease-and-desist letter from Dentons, acting on behalf of IRA accuses Kaddunabbi of unlawfully holding himself out as the chief executive officer and demands that he immediately stop interfering with the operations of IRA.

In the letter, Dentons says Kaddunabbi had entered IRA premises on June 1 and convened what it described as an unauthorised assembly of staff while presenting himself as the chief executive officer.

Dentons characterizes the conduct as "corporate trespass", an unlawful usurpation of statutory authority and a flagrant abuse of judicial process.

Yet Dentons also escalates the standoff by warning that the former chief executive officer is under active CID investigation over alleged financial and administrative impropriety and could face civil and criminal consequences if he continued to act outside the law.

Denton maintains that Kaddunabbi ceased to hold executive authority upon the expiry of his contract on May 31 and instructs that no stakeholder should recognise any directive or decision issued by him as chief executive officer thereafter.

It also demands that he "immediately cease" from entering IRA's premises or interfering with its administration, staff, or operations.

Dentons anchors its position on a May 29 ruling by Justice Joyce Kavuma, who held that the question of whether Kaddunabbi's contract should be renewed was the substantive matter before court and could not be determined through interim orders.

The judge observed that "renewal of contract is done by the executive and not the court", while preserving the status quo pending a full hearing of the case.

The same court documents show that government had already moved to establish interim leadership at IRA.

In a letter dated May 30, Permanent Secretary and Secretary to the Treasury Ramathan Ggoobi appointed Dr Protazio Sande acting chief executive officer for six months, effective June 1, or until a



Ibrahim Kaddunabbi Lubega (left), whose contract as IRA chief executive officer expired on May 31, and Dr Protazio Sande (right), the director of strategy and market development who has been appointed acting chief executive officer amid an ongoing leadership dispute. PHOTO/FILE

**Appointed 'I hereby appoint you (Sande) as acting chief executive officer of IRA for ... six months, with effect from June 1 or until a substantive chief executive officer is appointed.'**

substantive chief executive officer is appointed.

"I hereby appoint you as the acting chief executive officer of IRA for a period of six months, with effect from June 1 or until a substantive chief executive officer is appointed, whichever occurs earlier. By copy of this letter, the chairperson of the board is directed to ensure that the board issues you (Sande) with a performance agreement containing appropriate targets," Ggoobi wrote in a Monday letter.

The IRA board yesterday reaffirmed its support for Dr Protazio Sande's appointment, arguing that his substantive role as director of strategy and market development positions him to ensure continuity of operations and the effective execution of the Authority's mandate.

In a statement, board chairperson Keto Nyapendi Kayemba said the board was confident that Sande's expertise, leadership, and institutional knowledge would provide stability at the regulator and sustain the growth trajectory of Uganda's insurance sector during the transition period.

The result is a public confrontation that has cast a spotlight on governance at an institution long regarded as one of Uganda's most successful regulators.

Sources indicated that Kaddunabbi's legal team had served IRA with additional court filings. However, the contents of the documents were not immediately available.



## The Kaddunabbi years

Whatever the outcome of the legal battle, few industry players dispute that Kaddunabbi's tenure coincided with one of the most remarkable periods of growth in Uganda's insurance sector.

When he took office, the industry was still relatively small and struggling to deepen penetration.

Industry performance reports show that by the end of 2015, total gross written premiums for both life and non-life insurance stood at approximately ShS563.46b, with non-life insurers accounting for ShS464.26b and life insurers contributing ShS99.2b.

A decade later, the industry had crossed the ShS2 trillion mark.

The IRA 2025 market performance report shows that total gross written premiums reached ShS2.024 trillion by the end of 2025, up from ShS1.764 trillion in 2024.

The industry added approximately ShS260.6b in new business in a single year, representing annual growth of 14.8 percent.

The longer-term picture is even more striking. Between 2015 and 2025, total industry premiums grew from ShS563.46b to ShS2.024 trillion, an increase of about ShS1.46 trillion in real value.

This represents cumulative growth of approximately 259.3 percent over the decade.

The expansion was driven by growth across both life and non-life insurance

businesses. By 2025, non-life gross written premiums had reached ShS1.002 trillion while life insurance premiums stood at ShS978.54b, underlining the increasing maturity and depth of Uganda's insurance market.

Industry participation also broadened significantly. More than 1.13 million insurance policies were in force by the end of 2025, reflecting a level of market uptake that would have been difficult to imagine a decade earlier.

It's these achievements that Kaddunabbi and those who advocate for him believe he deserved another term, which

## Key demands

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## Key figures

**259.3%**

Between 2015 and 2025, under Ibrahim Kaddunabbi Lubega, total industry premiums grew from ShS563.46b to ShS2.024 trillion, an increase of about ShS1.46 trillion in real value. This represents cumulative growth of approximately 259.3 percent over the decade.

**1.13m**

Under Ibrahim Kaddunabbi Lubega, more than 1.13 million insurance policies were in force by the end of 2025, reflecting a level of market uptake that would have been difficult to imagine a decade earlier.

could have extended his tenure as IRA chief executive officer to 20 years.

Even the board, in a statement issued yesterday, acknowledged the significant role Kaddunabbi has played in advancing insurance regulation, market development, and policyholder protection during his tenure.

Yet for all his contributions, the unfolding transition suggests that IRA is seeking to turn the page and begin a new chapter beyond the long shadow of Kaddunabbi's leadership.

## A test for institutional credibility

## Acknowledged

'The Board acknowledges the significant role Kaddunabbi has played in advancing insurance regulation, market development and policyholder protection during his tenure ...'

Yet the current dispute has shifted attention from industry growth to institutional governance.

The contradiction between Kaddunabbi's continued listing on the IRA website as chief executive officer, his successful court injunction against the board's decision not to renew his contract, and the position being advanced by IRA's own lawyers in court filings highlights the complexity and apparent inconsistency surrounding the leadership situation at IRA.

Dentons argues that Kaddunabbi's contract expired on May 31 and that any attempt to continue exercising executive authority amounts to unlawful interference with IRA's statutory functions.

Kaddunabbi, meanwhile, has chal-

lenged the process through which the board declined to recommend renewal of his contract, a matter that remains before the court.

Justice Kavuma's ruling did not renew the contract but instead preserved the status quo while the substantive application is heard.

That distinction has become the central legal battleground.

For a regulator whose credibility depends heavily on certainty, compliance, and respect for procedure, the dispute presents a delicate balancing act.

Insurers, brokers, investors, and policyholders alike will be watching closely to see whether the institution can navigate the impasse without undermining confidence in the sector it regulates.

After more than 16 years of largely uninterrupted growth and reform, IRA now faces a challenge that cannot be measured in premium volumes or market share.

Its greatest test may be whether it can resolve a leadership dispute while preserving the institutional credibility that helped build the insurance sector from a ShS563b market into a ShS2 trillion sector just within 10 years.

## What the law says

The Insurance Act, 2017, provides that the chief executive officer of IRA is appointed for a term of five years, renewable once, meaning the maximum tenure contemplated under the law is 10 years.

Any tenure extending beyond that period would require a lawful basis under the applicable legal and administrative framework.

Kaddunabbi has served as IRA chief executive officer since 2010, giving him a tenure of more than 15 years.

This has prompted questions about the legal mechanism that enabled his continued stay in office beyond the two five-year terms provided for under the Act.

The issue is less about Kaddunabbi's performance, which many credit for the growth of the insurance sector, and more about whether the regulator has complied with the spirit and letter of statutory term limits, which are intended to promote accountability, leadership renewal, and good governance in public institutions.



Under Kaddunabbi's leadership, the insurance industry grew from ShS563b in premiums in 2015 to more than ShS2 trillion by December 2025, a transformation that cemented IRA's reputation as one of the country's most successful regulators. PHOTO / FILE