

Regulators clash over licensing of drug shops

BY TONNY ABET

KAMPALA. A conflict has erupted between two key government regulatory bodies, the National Drug Authority (NDA) and the Allied Health Professionals Council (AHPC), over which institution has the legal authority to license and regulate drug shops in Uganda.

Speaking in an interview on Friday, NDA spokesperson Abiaz Rwamwiri described the AHPC's recent decision to begin licensing drug shops as a clear overreach.

Mr Rwamwiri warned that persons planning to open drug shops should not be misled into seeking licences from the AHPC, adding that any such premises would be closed.

The warning comes in direct response to a public notice issued by the AHPC. On January 8, the Council informed District Health Officers, Divisional Medical Officers (DMOs), and Principal Medical Officers (PMOs) that it had begun the registration and licensing of drug shops

operated by dispensers. The notice, signed by AHPC Registrar Peter Nyamutale, explained the legal basis for the move. "The Allied Health Professionals Council (AHPC) is a statutory body established under Section 2 of the Allied Health Professionals (AHP) Act, Cap. 296 to provide for the regulation, supervision and control of the allied health professionals and to provide for the establishment of a council to register and licence the allied health professionals and related matters," it reads.

"The AHP Act. Cap. 296 Section 28 (a) specifically provides for dispensers as cadres who can engage in private practice by managing drug shops, compounding and preparation of mixtures," it reads further.

Mr Nyamutale stated that the Council was now implementing this provision in line with Section 30 of the Act. "Specifically, the Certificate of Registration for an Allied Drug Shop was published in the Uganda Gazette on 26th September 2025 (attached), and the tool for assessment of allied



What NDA says.

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health units has been revised to accommodate drug shops," he stated.

The NDA swiftly countered. Mr Rwamwiri revealed that the Authority had written to the AHPC, demanding an immediate halt to the licensing exercise. In the letter, Dr Nahamya warned: "Your (AHPC) correspondences raise serious issues that are likely to create a risk of contravening public law and the established policy as it relates to the statutory role of NDA to licence entities involved in the retail sale of drugs to

the public." Dr Nahamya pointed out that while Section 28 (a) of the Allied Health Professionals Act, Cap 296, recognises dispensers as professionals who may manage drug shops and compound or prepare mixtures, this activity must be approved by NDA.

He cited a binding precedent: "This legal provision was interpreted by the Court of Appeal in the case of Cise Dispensers (U) Ltd versus NDA, Civil Appeal No. 20 of 2009, where the Court ruled that much as the Allied Health Professionals Council may licence an allied health professional to operate a drug shop in Uganda, the quality and regulation of the use of the drugs has to be approved by the National Drug Authority."

"Court further ruled that the purpose of the Allied Health Professionals Act is purely to regulate, supervise and control the allied [health] professionals," he added.

Efforts to obtain a response from AHPC Registrar Peter Nyamutale were unsuccessful, as he did not answer repeated phone calls.