

By Sarah Nabakooza

Women have been urged to formalise their businesses and take up leadership positions as a pathway to strengthening Uganda's economy and improving urban management.

It is estimated that women own roughly one in three businesses in Uganda, achieving high participation rates, but often operating smaller, less profitable enterprises than men. The top three sectors for women-led businesses include wholesale and retail trade at 33.8%, accommodation and food services at 22.3% and agriculture, forestry and fishing at 12.3%, according to the trade ministry. However, businesswomen face challenges, such as failure to access credit, mainly because of operating informally.

This call to formalise businesses was made by Hajat Sharifah Buzeki, the executive director of Kampala Capital City Authority, who was speaking at the Women's Month celebrations at the head offices of Uganda Registration Services Bureau (URSB) in Kololo yesterday.

Drawing from her experience, managing Kampala, Buzeki emphasised that the work women do, especially those in informal sectors, plays a critical role in how cities function. She noted, however, that

Women urged to formalise businesses

PHOTO BY BRIDGET AHURIRA



Kainobwiso gifts Buzeki during the Women's Month celebrations at Uganda Registration Services Bureau offices in Kololo, yesterday

much of this contribution remains under-recognised due to a lack of formalisation.

"The work these women do goes a long way. However, the benefits are greater when businesses are formalised. Formalisation improves organisation, increases market

efficiency and opens doors to opportunities that many women are currently missing."

She noted that formalising enterprises not only strengthens compliance and accountability but also enables women entrepreneurs to access financial services, government

UNETHICAL CONDUCT

Kampala Capital City Authority executive director Sharifa Buzeki cautioned against unethical practices in the workplace, warning that pursuing dishonest shortcuts can have lasting consequences.

programmes and wider markets.

Buzeki used the platform to encourage women to believe in their abilities and actively pursue leadership roles across sectors.

"Women must continue to believe in their abilities. We make up a significant part of the population and should be able to shape the world around us," she said. "Do not hold back, fellow women, take up leadership positions and make your voices count."

She further stressed the importance of solidarity among women, urging them to support and uplift one another in both professional and personal spaces, adding that collective progress is essential for sustainable

development.

URSB EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S TAKE

At the same event, Mercy Kainobwiso, the registrar general and executive director of URSB, emphasised the bureau's role in enabling women to transition from informal to formal business operations.

Kainobwiso noted that URSB has made significant strides in simplifying registration processes to ensure that more entrepreneurs, especially women, can formalise their enterprises with ease.

"Our focus is to make business registration accessible and efficient for all Ugandans," she said. "When women formalise their businesses, they gain visibility, credibility and the opportunity to scale beyond informal limitations."

She encouraged women to take advantage of URSB services, saying formalisation is a critical step toward sustainability and long-term growth. "Formalisation positions your business to access partnerships, financing and structured markets," Kainobwiso added.

She also echoed the call for women to step into leadership, noting that their participation in decision-making spaces is essential for inclusive development.