

Govt loses up to 50% of drugs supplied

MBARARA

By Abdulkarim Ssendendo

The National Drug Authority (NDA) has closed 75 drug outlets and impounded 250 boxes of assorted medicines worth sh70m during a week-long enforcement operation in the southwestern sub-region.

Speaking at a press conference at the NDA regional offices in Mbarara city, the authority's public relations manager, Abiaz Rwamwiri, said the affected outlets were operating in unauthorised, substandard and unlicensed premises.

He added many of the drug shops were employing unqualified personnel to handle and dispense medicines.

"Such practices pose serious health risks, including treatment failure, misuse of drugs and the development of antimicrobial resistance," Rwamwiri said.

The operation targeted illegal drug outlets, leading to the arrest of one individual, Ronald Atwine, who was found in possession of government medical supplies and unclassified drugs at his shop.

Rwamwiri identified Atwine as the proprietor of Katamba Human Drug Shop in Ibanda district and said he will be



NDA spokesman Rwamwiri

charged with illegal possession of government medical stores.

"This enforcement action aligns with NDA's mandate to protect and promote public health through effective regulation of human and animal medicines, as well as other healthcare products," Rwamwiri said.

He also urged all operators of unlicensed premises to immediately cease operations until they meet the required licensing standards.

UP TO 50% OF DRUGS LOST

Rwamwiri revealed that the Government is losing between 40% and 50% of drugs supplied to public health facilities, largely due to theft.

He said much of the stolen medicine is diverted by health workers in government facilities, noting that the vice is widespread across the country.

"It is highly concealed. We need to deploy extensive intelligence to break this chain. There is a lot of money involved in this illegal practice," he said.

Over the past five years, Rwamwiri noted that the authority has recovered drugs worth more than sh50b. However, he added that this represents less than 10% of the total quantity believed to have been stolen.

Alfred Akali Ayom, the NDA's senior inspector of drugs enforcement, advised operators whose drugs were impounded to report to the Southwestern Regional Office in Mbarara for guidance on compliance.

Richard Kirigwajjo, the NDA's regulatory officer for southwestern, called on district authorities, particularly those responsible for human and animal health, to take a leading role in combating the illegal sale of drugs and the operation of unlicensed outlets.

Responding to concerns about persistent non-compliance, Rwamwiri said the challenge is driven by the high demand for medicines and the significant profits involved in the illicit trade.

The Authority also reminded drug shop and pharmacy operators that the 2026 licensing cycle for new applications and renewals is currently ongoing.

Members of the public have been urged to purchase medicines only from licensed pharmacies and drug shops and to report suspected drug-related crimes.