

# NSSF advocates for supplier diversity and long-term partnerships

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The National Social Security Fund (NSSF) is urging suppliers to transcend traditional bidding practices by embracing innovation, sustainability, and long-term collaboration. This initiative is part of NSSF's strategy to reposition procurement as a catalyst for inclusive economic growth.

At the 10th Suppliers Forum, held recently at the Sheraton Hotel, the Fund convened suppliers, policymakers, regulators, and business leaders under the theme Powered by Diversity, Driven by Shared Growth.

NSSF Managing Director Patrick Ayota emphasized that supplier relationships should be based on shared expectations and outcomes, highlighting that delivery extends beyond contracts to fulfilling agreed-

upon value.

"We have developed a model where suppliers align with our objectives, allowing them to say, 'I will supply this to you,'" he stated.

Ayota also outlined the institution's long-term transformation agenda, which aims to expand its membership to 15 million by 2035 from the current 3.5 million, a goal referred to as "50 per cent coverage." He expressed the ambition to grow the fund to Shs 80 trillion, noting recent financial growth, with assets increasing from approximately UGX 26 trillion in June 2025 to Shs 32 trillion within 11 months. "Interestingly, our target for Shs 80 trillion was Shs 53 trillion until two months ago, but we decided to be more ambitious," he added.

Beyond institutional strategy, the forum underscored the evolving nature of procurement systems in

Uganda. Moses Ojumbo, Director of Performance Monitoring, highlighted that public procurement is increasingly seen as a mechanism for inclusive growth rather than merely the acquisition of goods and services. "Procurement is increasingly recognized as a lever for inclusive growth, where public spending supports local enterprise, innovation, job creation," he remarked.

Ojumbo emphasized that no single supplier can fulfill the diverse requirements of public procurement, asserting that a variety of providers is crucial for enhancing efficiency and competitiveness. He noted that although the majority of contracts are awarded locally, a small percentage of international suppliers represent a significant portion of the total contract value, a scenario he described as structurally imbalanced and

economically risky.

Chief Procurement and Disposal Officer Dan Mugula supported this perspective, highlighting that the supplier forum is designed to foster trust, transparency, and long-term partnerships between the NSSF and its suppliers. "Procurement is no longer merely a transaction; it is a long-term engagement within the ecosystem," he stated.

Mugula further explained that the forum, now in its 10th edition since its inception in 2016, has developed into a platform for continuous learning, enhanced accountability, and stronger collaboration with stakeholders. He also mentioned NSSF's expanding investment interests, indicating that future involvement could extend into sectors such as energy and infrastructure, in alignment with government frameworks.