

# Cancer-causing creams, soaps flood markets

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**KAMPALA.** A range of cosmetic products containing hydroquinone are freely being traded in Kampala shops in spite of an obtaining government ban on their sale due to associated health risk, *Daily Monitor* has learnt.

Hydroquinone and other skin lightening creams and soaps containing organic and inorganic mercury, according to the World Health Organisation, cause kidney damage, skin rashes, discoloration and scarring and a "reduction in the skin's resistance to bacterial and fungal infections".

Other effects include "anxiety, depression or psychosis, the UN health agency says.

The Uganda National Bureau of Standards (UNBS) banned health and beauty products containing hydroquinone 18 months ago, but enforcement for compliance has been less-than-satisfactory.

UNBS has been adversely named in official correspondences to Trade Minister Amelia Kyambadde, copies of which the *Daily Monitor* has seen, as unable or



**Harmful.** Some of the cosmetic products that contain hydroquinone. Health and beauty products containing hydroquinone were banned in Uganda but traders continue to deal in them. PHOTO BY RACHEL MABALA

unwilling due to vested interest to stamp out the said products. The association of importers and distributors of cosmetic products petitioned the minister between June 2016 and August 2017 following reports that shops and markets in Kampala, Jinja, Mbale, Iganga and Mbarara were flooded with the potentially dangerous cosmetic products.

Lebanese and Nigerian nationals, who own shops and stalls in the city's Kikuubo and Cissy Arcades, reportedly dominate businesses in these

counterfeit goods.

When contacted yesterday, the market surveillance manager at UNBS, Mr Jackson Mubangizi,

## ADVISE

**Creams.** Dr Patrick Vincent Karuhanga, a medical practitioner in Kampala, said "creams with hydroquinone should only be used when prescribed by a doctor.

said despite prohibition of hydroquinone products, it still remains an issue to deal with.

"Every week we confiscate hundreds of cartons that could have ended up in the market. There was a time that we could seize between 300-500 cartons per week of such products," he said, adding: "What we have observed is that such products are now being sold in supermarkets. So it has moved from down town areas to supermarkets and that is where our energy is being focused."