

# Nurses, midwives urged to get licences

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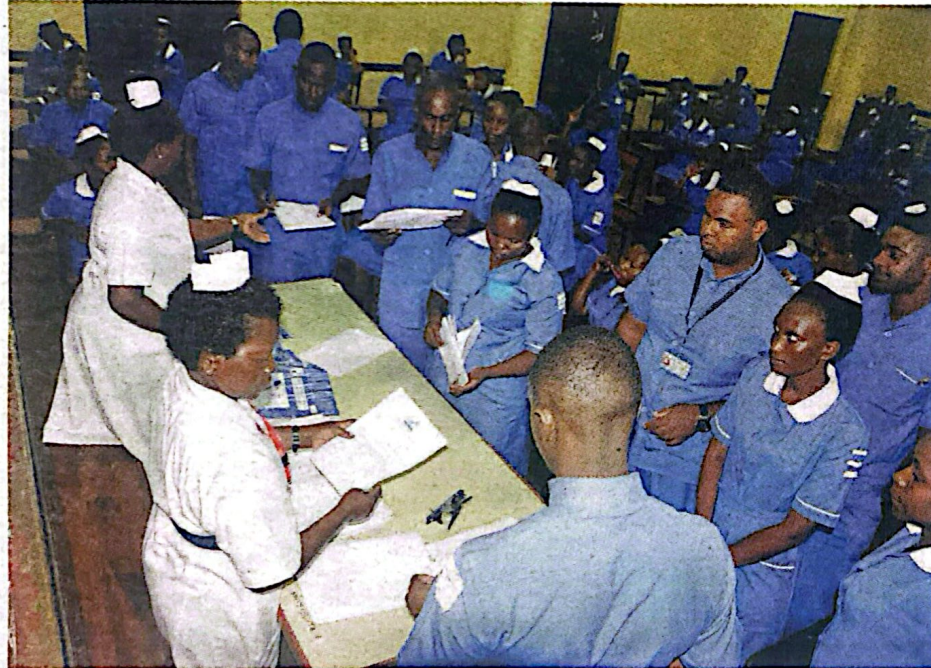
The Uganda Nurses and Midwives Council (UNMC) has expressed concern over nurses and midwives that continue to illegally operate in health facilities countrywide.

Unlike doctors who renew their practising licences annually, the law requires nurses and midwives to do so every three years. However, Rebecca Nassuna, the acting registrar of the council, said some of them have not taken this seriously.

Nassuna said of the 60,994 registered nurses and midwives in the country, only 44,021 have valid practising licences, meaning a total of 16,973 are working illegally.

She said: "Emphasis on having a licence is to ensure that a nurse or midwife who is going to handle a patient, in case of anything or them falling victim of circumstances, we can come in because they will be considered to be a genuine nurse or midwife. We have informed the local leaders to ensure the nurses working in those districts renew their practising licence or else stop paying their salaries".

"Now what is interesting is that we have 89 health tutorial institutions in Uganda as of October 2017 and with all these numbers, we only have



Candidates at Mulago School of Nursing and Midwifery handing in their scripts after sitting for their first examinations yesterday. Photo by Ashraf Kasirye

148 health tutors registered by the council to teach nursing, while only 78 are registered as midwifery health tutors."

Nassuna said even with the operationalisation of satellite centres in all regional referral hospitals where nurses and midwives are able to renew their practising licences, the council still faces this challenge.

She made the remarks during

the national briefing ahead of the 24th Uganda Nurses and Midwives Examination Board (UNMEB) final examinations. The briefing attracted examiners, invigilators, team leaders, among others. The exams began yesterday and will end on Friday. At Nsambya, Kibuli and Mulago nursing training schools, where *New Vision* visited in the morning, the exams started

on time at 9:00am.

A total of 6,837 candidates are expected to write the exams in diploma and certificate programmes in 63 UNMEB accredited examination centres. The board conducts both promotional and state final examinations annually.

The council, according to Nassuna, continues to face various challenges including fraud, forgeries, illegal training

Lucy Atim, a nurse and lecturer at Busitema University's nursing department, said much as they decentralised the system, many qualified nurses are not being recruited and end up on the streets doing their own things. "It is not automatic that when a qualified nurse renews their licence, they will have a job. So why should they bother to do so every three years?" she wondered. Renewal of licences for an enrolled nurse is sh50,000 and sh80,000 for a registered nurse.

## WHERE IS THE PROBLEM?

where people train in fake schools and only discover when they go for registration.

Nassuna said some institutions have failed to adhere to the admission criteria and are admitting students without entry requirements.

Safina Musene, the commissioner for technical and vocational education at the education ministry, described

the council's disclosure as "very unfortunate" and promised that action would be taken.

"We shall not tolerate any indiscipline, especially in this field because you know what being a nurse or midwife means. We shall reprimand all the culprits and they shall be answerable for their weaknesses," she said.

Musene said her department, beginning October this year, embarked on visiting all its institutions to check the human resource, classrooms, equipment used and the capacity of the hospitals where training is taking place to see whether the minimum standards are being observed.

The council is also in its initial stages of establishing a tracking system that will monitor nurses and midwives and their practice and subsequently have online registration and licensure for them, among others.

Helen Mukakarisa Kataratambi, the executive secretary UNMEB, urged the team to be vigilant during invigilation of the examinations.

Having received reports on exam malpractice that has become rampant, Mukakarisa said the board interfaced with affected candidates and that an official position on the matter will be communicated soon.