

Nurses' union sacks general secretary

By Violet Nabatanzi

Members of the Uganda Nurses and Midwives Union (UNMU) have suspended their general secretary.

Paul Bukenya was suspended after being accused of lack of effective communication and not being a team-player.

Bukenya was suspended during a UNMU executive meeting at their offices in Mulago, Kampala on Thursday.

According to a source, the motion to suspend Bukenya was moved by Naguru Hospital's principal nursing officer, Vanice Katusiime and seconded by retired senior principal nursing officer, Florence Aceng.

The members had a secret ballot where the majority voted Bukenya out. Emmanuel Mufumba, an executive member, replaced him.

Bukenya speaks

Bukenya told *New Vision* that the

main agenda of the meeting was to review their constitution and prepare for a delegates' conference but wondered how his suspension was smuggled in.

He rubbished the allegations, saying the reason for the suspension was because he had put in place internal financial controls for accountability.

"If you need funds, you should go through a process to get them. I wanted to ensure that there is value for money. There is nothing I did without us sharing. In case I was to do a financial transaction, I would not sign alone, I always copied in my boss. These allegations are baseless," he added.

He alleged that the union chairperson, Justus Cherop Kiplangat, used to make unnecessary financial demands yet he did not want to give accountability.

"If donors give us money for nursing activities in the country, they should be able to implement



Paul Bukenya speaking to *New Vision* about the nurse's union decision to sack him. Photo by Godiver Asege

those activities," Bukenya noted.

"The chairperson, some members of the executive and officials from National Organisation of Trade Unions (NOTU) used to hold secret meetings aimed at having me out," he alleged.

"Can you imagine I have been asked to stand aside without any formal communication by the chairperson. In addition, I have never been warned," Bukenya said. Bukenya has been in office for five months.

He took over after the suspension of his predecessor, Joyce Lucy Atim, in September. Atim was suspended over mismanagement of funds.

Chairperson speaks

When contacted, Kiplangat denied the allegations, saying it is the

general secretary who is meant to handle cash and give accountability.

"It is the responsibility of the general secretary to withdraw money. I am only given money for fuel and it is him to account for it," Kiplangat said.

"In 2003, the nurses decided to form a union and put in place an interim leadership for five years. Along the way, they split. The then general secretary went with the papers of the union, while the larger group remained in office. Both of them claim to be leaders of the union.

"It was until 2017 when I came into office that I mobilised the two groups to sign a memorandum of understanding to put an end to the conflicts between the two groups," Kiplangat said.