

Over 900 vendors register at Kampala City markets

KCCA says their duty is to ensure public safety, sanitation and orderly trade. They say the enforcement of the trade order is not arbitrary, but anchored in law.

BY SYLVIA NAMAGEMBE

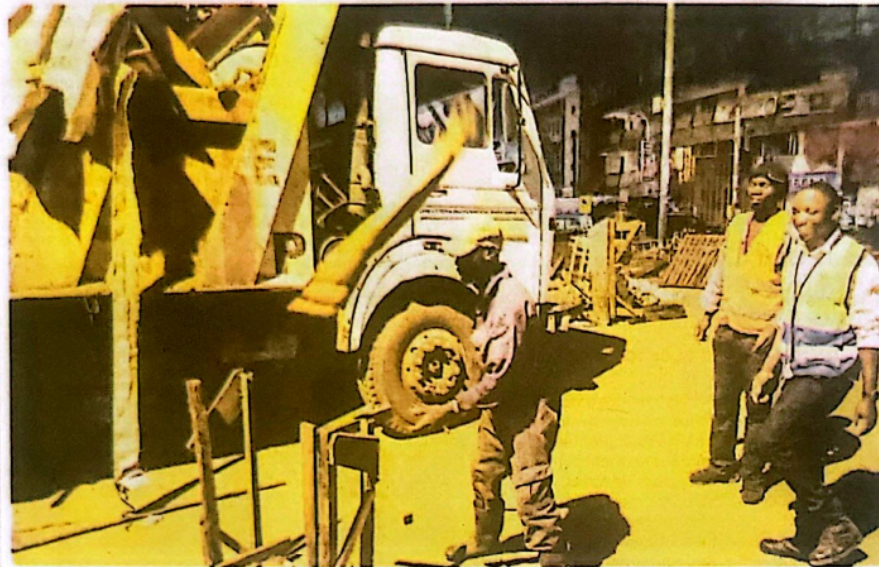
A total of 970 former street vendors have registered for market spaces following the ongoing enforcement operation by the Kampala Capital City Authority (KCCA), in a shift from street stalls to organised city markets in the capital.

Speaking during an address at the Uganda Law Society (ULS) yesterday, the KCCA spokesperson, Mr Daniel Nuwabine, said the registration marks significant progress in relocating traders from the streets into gazetted markets for formalised trade.

"By close of business on yesterday (Wednesday), we had 970 new registrations in our markets out of the 2,520 available slots," he said, adding that authorities are still compiling data on vendors who may have opted for private markets or spaces outside Kampala. However, Mr Nuwabine did not provide specifics of how many slots were taken in each market.

KCCA defended its operation as constitutionally grounded, citing article 40 of the Constitution of the Republic of Uganda which guarantees every person the right to engage in lawful economic activities, stating that:

"Every person in Uganda has the right to practice his or her profession and to carry on any lawful occupation, trade or business. With account of laws enacted by Parliament, to ensure safe and healthy working conditions, equal pay for equal work, and reasonable



Kampala Capital City Authority (KCCA) officials load remains of vendors on vehicles in Kampala City on February 20. Over 900 vendors have. PHOTO/IBRAHIM KAVUMA

working hours and holidays."

The spokesperson said the authority's mandate is further reinforced by the Kampala Capital City Authority Act, the Public Health Act and the Physical Planning Act, which empower KCCA to regulate trade, urban planning, sanitation and public order.

"Our duty is to ensure public safety, sanitation and orderly trade. The enforcement of trade order is not arbitrary; it is anchored in law. Kampala's daytime population rises to about 2.6 million people from 1.8 million at night, placing pressure on infrastructure and public spaces where we must accommodate trade without compromising mobility and sanitation," he said.

According to KCCA, prior to enforcement, assessments were conducted

across the city's 17 government-owned markets and 69 private markets to determine available space. KCCA-managed markets had a total of 2,520 va-

ULS STATEMENT

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cant slots, and additional capacity in neighbouring municipalities, which collectively have nearly 1,980 stores.

Beyond physical relocation, Mr Nuwabine noted that it has introduced digital alternatives for affected traders through its Global Trade Services Bureau to equip vendors with skills to sell goods using mobile platforms.

"We are creating alternatives, including a free one-week online trading course where people can learn skills to use their phones productively for business," he said.

Mr Nuwabine linked street vending to sanitation risks, saying removal of roadside stalls exposed blocked drainage channels and damaged sewer lines previously concealed beneath temporary structures.

"When structures were removed,

we discovered broken sewer pipes and blocked drainages. We have so far issued 15 nuisance notices to property owners to repair sewer systems uncovered during the operation. Public health must come first," he added.

While discussions are ongoing regarding the possibility of evening or Sunday markets, KCCA officials said such arrangements cannot undermine green spaces or disrupt traffic flow.

"We are studying whether evening markets make sense and Sunday markets to be placed in the green spaces that we are clearing. The authority is still looking at the next step on that but there will be no return to disorder," he added.

However, the Uganda Law Society urged caution in balancing enforcement with citizens' livelihoods. While recognising KCCA's mandate, the society emphasised the human and legal dimensions of evictions, questioning whether adequate safeguards exist for traders whose survival depends entirely on informal trade.

"Beyond policy directives and enforcement, it is crucial to examine the legal, economic, and social implications of decisions affecting thousands of citizens," said Mr Babu Ssali, the acting Secretary of ULS said. "How are their rights balanced against urban order? What remedies are available under the law?"

Mr Thaddeus Musoke Nagenda, the chairperson of National Entrepreneurs and Traders Association (NATE) said street vending persists due to high rents in arcades, insufficient start-up capital, weak authority enforcement, and excessive taxes.

"Many traders turn to street vending because formal markets are expensive and start-up funds are scarce. The utility bills and ever escalating rent is making the activity hard to get rid of," he said. "Solutions should include using connect markets on specific days, equipping traders with entrepreneurial skills, and creating government funds to help formalise their businesses."

Similarly, Issa Ssekitto of the Kampala City Traders Association (Kacita) argued that the enforcement of trade orders is legal and necessary. "Chasing vendors is not illegal. The government is not mandated to plan for street traders, as no one planned for traders to rent these shops," Mr Ssekitto said, supporting KCCA's relocation drive.

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