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More than 500 village health teams (VHTs) operating in Kampala have appealed to the Kampala Capital City Authority (KCCA) to lobby the Government for a minimum wage, citing the growing demands of their work in an urban setting and the strain of serving on a purely voluntary basis.

The VHTs made the appeal during a meeting with KCCA executive director Hajati Sharifah Buzeki at Bat Valley Primary School on Tuesday.

They said while they play a critical role in community health surveillance, sanitation and disease prevention, their welfare has remained largely unaddressed.

"Our allowances take too long to reach us, yet we continue working every day," Grace Mary Kemiyoondo from Kisenyi said.

She said the irregular and delayed facilitation makes it difficult for VHTs to sustain their work, especially in an urban environment where transport and living costs are high.

Kemiyoondo also emphasised the need for uniforms to help VHTs be easily identified in the communities they serve.

# VHTs petition KCCA over remuneration

PHOTO BY FRANCIS EMORUT



KCCA's Buzeki (left) interacts with Mariam Namayanja, the senior private secretary to the President (Parish Development Model monitoring), at Bat Valley Primary School in Kampala on Tuesday

"When people see us in uniform, they know who we are and why we are there," Kemiyoondo said, adding that proper identification would improve trust, safety and co-operation during community engagements.

Mohammad Mbazira, another

VHT from Kisenyi, called for tighter monitoring of waste collection vehicles to ensure proper disposal, warning that mismanagement of garbage contributes to disease outbreaks in the already-vulnerable communities.

## KCCA TO FIND SOLUTIONS

KCCA executive director Hajati Sharifah Buzeki said while VHTs are volunteers, KCCA recognises the value of their work and is open to exploring ways of appreciating their contribution.

"I have promised them that KCCA is going to discuss this matter with the Ministry of Health and see how far they can manage to give them a remuneration. It may not be a salary, but any form of appreciation for the work they are doing for us," Buzeki said.

Mbazira also raised concerns about the welfare of VHTs, particularly the lack of health insurance, despite years of service.

"We work for many years on the frontlines of community health, but we have nothing to show for it," Mbazira said, adding that providing hospital

insurance cards would protect VHTs and improve their motivation.

Speaking during the meeting, Buzeki acknowledged the concerns raised by the VHTs, particularly those related to identification and motivation, saying some of the issues fall within KCCA's immediate mandate.

"We know that VHTs do voluntary work, and they have said they are not identifiable by the community because they have no uniform. That is something we can handle," Buzeki said.

She said KCCA is currently in its budgeting cycle and will plan for some of these interventions, including support tools that enable VHTs to work more effectively in the field.

On the question of remuneration, Buzeki said the matter requires broader engagement with the central government, particularly the Ministry of Health, under which VHTs operate.

"Since community health workers in the districts are being remunerated, KCCA can have this discussion with the Ministry of Health and be guided on this," Buzeki said.

During the engagement, Buzeki also presided over the distribution of statutory documents, including KCCA client charter and strategic plan, to VHTs and local council leaders.