Healthcare workers operating in Kigali have been urged to join the fight against corruption. The call was made by Abbas Mukama, the Deputy Ombudsman in charge of fighting corruption on December 20, 2024, duing a training workshop.

The Deputy Ombudsman urged healthcare professionals to stay alert in the fight against corruption and highlighted the critical role they play in maintaining integrity within the healthcare system.

Mukama reminded attendees of the protection provided under Rwanda's Anti-Corruption Law No. 54/2018. The law shields individuals who report corruption in good faith, offering them immunity from criminal liability. "If you come forward with evidence before the crime is committed, you will not be punished," he said.

Abbas Mukama, the Deputy Ombudsman in charge of fighting corruption

He emphasized that failing to report corruption makes people complicit in the crime. "If you see corruption and don't act, you become part of the problem," he warned. Healthcare professionals, he said, must be the "eyes" of the government, helping to detect and prevent corruption.

Despite Rwanda's healthcare sector having low corruption rates, around 0.50%, Mukama stressed the importance of ongoing vigilance. "Corruption, even at low levels, undermines the progress we've made," he said. The health sector, he explained, is key to national development and the country's Vision 2050 goals. Keeping it free from corruption is essential to achieving these targets.

Mukama also addressed ongoing challenges in the health system, such as patients paying for health insurance but being forced to buy medicine elsewhere. He acknowledged that this issue involves several government bodies, including the Ministry of Health. "We are working on solutions to ensure that medicine is available in all healthcare facilities," he explained.

During the workshop, healthcare workers pledged to remain vigilant and committed to fighting corruption. Uwizeyemana Rachel, a pharmacist at Nyarugenge, said, "We will share this knowledge with our colleagues to ensure equal treatment for all patients." Kubwimana Pascal, a pharmacist at Kacyiru, added, "We've not faced corruption here, but we are always alert."

Recent findings by Transparency International Rwanda show that while 18.5% of people encounter corruption in healthcare, only 8% report it. Fear of retaliation and uncertainty about where to report are major barriers. Despite this, Rwanda’s anti-corruption framework remains strong and continues to guide efforts for a fairer society.

Mukama’s message was clear: “Fighting corruption is everyone’s responsibility. It starts with you.” He called on healthcare professionals to act with integrity, ensuring that Rwanda’s healthcare system remains focused on the well-being of its people.