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# **THE ROAD TO 2016: CITIZEN'S PERCEPTIONS ON UGANDA'S GENERAL ELECTIONS**

**Findings of A Survey Conducted in 18 Districts of  
Uganda**

**Commissioned by Human Rights and Peace Centre  
(Huripec) and Kituo Cha Katiba (KcK)**

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## General Introduction

This report documents views generated from citizens during a survey conducted in different districts across Uganda. The survey is part of several activities being undertaken under the project, *The Road to 2016: Citizens' Perception on Uganda's Forthcoming 2016 Elections*. The project is implemented by the Human Rights and Peace Centre (HURIPEC) of the School of Law, Makerere University and Kituo Cha Katiba: Eastern Africa Centre for Constitutional Development (KcK). The project seeks to contribute towards Uganda's democratic process by providing a critical assessment and evaluation of the pre-election conditions and its potential contribution of the 2016 election. The project had different components but this specific report is from the Survey; one of the activities of the project.

The survey aimed at achieving the following specific objectives:

- i) To provide a forum for Ugandans to air out their views on various key issues relating to elections in general and the upcoming 2016 general elections in particular.
- ii) To examine the relevance of citizens as bearers of rights in elections in Uganda.
- iii) To provide up-to-date analytical information about the pre-electoral process.

The survey was split into 2 teams. Team One comprised: Dr. Ronald Mayambala Kakungulu, Ms. Anne Kiiza and Ms. Isabella Abalo; and Team Two: Mr. Peter Magelah Gwayaka and Ms. Joyce Freda Apio.

The first part of this report is written by team one which visited the districts of Lira, Soroti, Hoima, Luweero, Sembabule, Kampala, Kayunga and Mbale. In each of the districts, 2-3 Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) were conducted with citizens and 4-5 officials were interviewed as key informants. The officials included Registrar Electoral Commission, Police, Chief Administrative Officer (CAO), and a Local Council Representative at the district. The report is arranged in themes.

The second part of the report is written by another team which visited the districts of Iganga, Busia, Amuru, Nebbi, Ntungamo, Rukungiri, Kanungu, Kasese, Kapchorwa and Nakapiripirit. The key informants they interviewed included district officials (LCV Chairpersons, Chief Administrative Officers (CAOs), District Police Commanders (DPCs) and District Registrars of the Electoral Commission (EC)). FGDs were conducted with representatives of political parties, persons with disabilities, business associations, youth and women groups at urban and local levels. A total of 25 people participated in the FGDs in each district visited.

## **SURVEY FINDINGS: PART I:**

**Lira, Soroti, Hoima, Luweero, Sembabule, Kampala, Kayunga and Mbale**



*Team one members with respondents during the survey*

### ***Citizen's awareness on importance of elections***

In all the districts the team visited, citizens knew the importance of elections. There was a slight difference in the level of understanding between the village and town dwellers. Therefore, generally Ugandans know the meaning of elections. Some defined elections as a time when the people are given an opportunity to choose the leaders they want. Others said they elect to exercise their rights by choosing the leaders they want and fulfill their responsibility as citizens. Others said it is choosing someone who has capability of being a good leader despite one's political affiliation.

Almost all the citizens interacted with vote and they were interested in exercising this right. Unfortunately some felt that in Uganda voting is a waste of time. They said, *we vote one candidate, and they announce another (Hoima village Girl and man)*. In case of Kampala they said, *we no longer think voting makes sense. Remember that it is the Electoral Commission which decides who wins not us. When we voted Kasibante, after a week he was removed from Parliament*. Citizens also wondered why they vote. *We voted the Lord Mayor and he too was removed from office.* (Kampala, FGD2). They vote candidates to represent them in parliament, but these parliamentarians do not attend sessions (Hoima Village). The sense of resignation was felt from the respondents. One old lady (disabled) in Arua village said she will not vote. She asserted that she does not see why she should waste her time to be caught up in violence. In the last election, this same lady claimed she was picked by a candidate who took her to vote, but she was abandoned after voting.

Some citizens however think that even when they vote and things do not go the way they should- rigging happens and the right candidate does not go through, the process of elections sometimes leads to improvements. They said, *you see when Besigye shouted in 2001, he shook the tree and for us we picked the fruits. Taxes were removed, medicine was provided etc* (Sembabule Village middle aged man). In other words, if there was no democratic process of elections, certain things would not change. And another member in the same group revealed that „if you want to get something from this government, you oppose it“. In other words the government can only hear or react to a certain language –that is opposing it. It is possible the government fears competition.

Some citizens did not seem to know the role of certain leaders. They expect them to construct and repair roads, ensure there is medicine in hospitals, pay school fees and find jobs for their children. Some citizens also think that leaders themselves do not know what they are supposed to be doing. *How can a candidate MP aspirant or Councilor stand in front of people and tell them that they are going to fix roads? Is it the work of a councilor or MP to fix a road?*“ One Mzee (old man) in Kampala pointed out that our leaders no longer go for political offices to serve, but instead the candidates go there to eat and serve

people selectively. *Institutions have died mainly because we have incompetent leaders. Look at the cooperatives, they used to be vibrant, they are now dead because we have leaders that do not know what they are doing.*

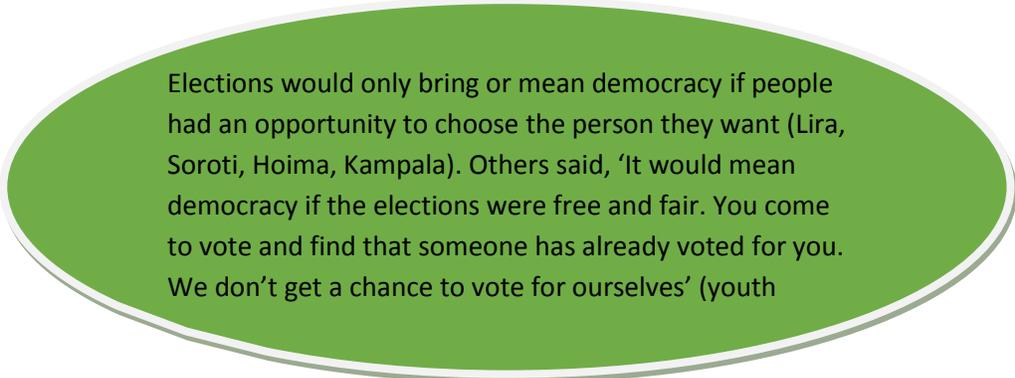
However, some officials and other ordinary people stated that the only way candidates can win an election is by telling lies. People want to hear someone talking about service delivery. *Voters want to be told what they want to hear and not what they should be told.* (Official, Soroti). Because of lack of social services, the only hope they have is to tell those that they call their representatives. Unfortunately, service delivery is beyond them (leaders). They can forward the views of the people but they cannot force government to be effective. Actually one said, *for us who are in opposition are even worse. We cannot get services provided to our constituencies because it is a way of punishing us.* (Kampala)

This has led to a conclusion that elections do not make sense in Uganda. Because government has rendered citizens hopeless, some only vest their hope in leaders. As a result, they end up listening and taking in lies. Those who are good at telling lies and splashing money at the time of elections win the election. The citizens' major question is; *what happened to civic education? Why are we leaving citizens to do things they do not understand? Is it intended?* (Lira town, Soroti town, Kampala)

### ***Citizen's views about the link between elections and democracy***

Citizens both urban and rural understand what democracy means, but they believe that there is no democracy to talk about in Uganda. Asked whether elections bring democracy in Uganda; citizens even laughed at the question because they think that there is no democracy in Uganda. Others think democracy is still in its infancy. The only worry they have is how long this infancy will last. The Kampala group was quick to state that in developed countries when a candidate loses an election they concede defeat and work with government or their party. In Uganda, if one loses an election, they become enemies with government forever and vice versa. *Instead of government learning from the opposition, they fight, and we the grassroots suffer. Even us the voters we become enemies forever.* There is no democracy in Uganda (Kampala, Mbale town).

The respondents also argued that there is no democracy because some categories of people have been stopped from engaging in politics. For example religious leaders are being denied the chance to participate in issues that concern the country. Are they not citizens? On the other hand however, some citizens think that there is democracy because they have been given a chance to exercise their right to vote. The bigger percentage said:



Elections would only bring or mean democracy if people had an opportunity to choose the person they want (Lira, Soroti, Hoima, Kampala). Others said, 'It would mean democracy if the elections were free and fair. You come to vote and find that someone has already voted for you. We don't get a chance to vote for ourselves' (youth

This means that democracy has been hampered by vote buying, intimidation, rigging and violence. Because of this, Ugandans cannot claim that elections necessarily bring democracy. Democracy is also said to be undermined by the commercialization of politics in Uganda; where those who wish to lead buy their way to office (*Luweero, Mbale, Soroti town*).

On the question of the key determinant of choice of leaders and whether the FGD felt elections are still necessary, many of the respondents expressed in elections. The most affected group in this category were mainly the youth and persons with disability (PwDs) who felt very strongly that elections do not serve any meaningful purpose in Uganda (*Kayunga, Mbale, Sembabule, Luweero town*). On the other hand, the elderly seemed to be a little more content with the system albeit pointing out a few weaknesses in the existing electoral processes (*Lira, Soroti, Hoima rural, and Luweero rural*).

On the pertinent issue of credibility of leaders, and whether respondents would re-elect current leaders, the respondents gave varying answers even within the same FGD. On the whole, most respondents, and especially the elderly and the PwDs, stated that they would re-elect those leaders who had performed quite well in their respective roles (*Hoima, Mbale, Kayunga, Soroti*). Some elderly o in *Luweero rural, Mbale rural and Kayunga* still believe President Museveni is doing well. They cited bringing peace as major reason to support their opinion. They do not want to get disorganized again. This view was mainly strong in *Luweero*. However, the youth seemed to always agitate for change in most of the FGDs except for a few that had NRM mobilizers. The youth maintained they would not re-elect the current leaders because of corruption and deteriorating service delivery (*Kampala, Lira, Mbale, Luweero town*). In *Soroti town*, the 2 members who were supporting the NRM were put to task and actually ended up failing to defend the regime. In *Arua*, it was hard to understand who supported the current regime. All members of the FGD seemed tired of the National Resistance Movement (NRM). They said „the system is rotten“ (elderly members).

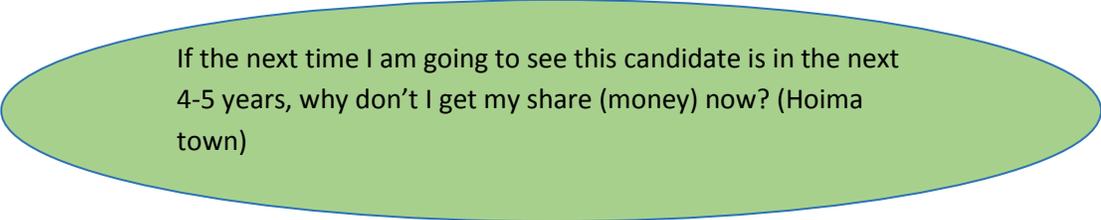
### ***Vote buying, Intimidation and violence***

About vote buying, respondents were wondered why the team asked the obvious. They said, *if you are Ugandans you should know this*. Vote buying has been institutionalized and is exercised by all candidates starting from the top (Lira, Soroti, and Mbale). It is hard to stop because it starts with the incumbent. For example youth in Mbale were given 170 million to leave Mbabazi and join Museveni (Mbale town). Votes are bought in form of money, soap, salt, alcohol etc. It was also revealed that in Erute South constituency, each voter had recently been given UGX 50,000 to influence their vote. In the city however, it was argued that vote buying takes a relatively different trend. Boda boda riders can be bribed with motorcycle tyres and helmets, while the other urban poor may take alcoholic beverages and airtime. Even the polling assistants of „poor“ candidates may be bought off (Ntinda Kampala). „A hungry man observes no taboos“, (Soroti town). Money automatically influences the vote with the biting poverty in the villages (Lira town). And some respondents noted that *“you can “take somebody”'s money and you don’t vote for him or her; that would be betrayal of the highest order,”* (Soroti Village).

Citizens expect these items (bribes) close to elections. In the coming elections it has been said *that this is a time to get rich. You either get rich now or never*. This is mainly because 2016 is bringing 2 giants – Museveni and Mbabazi. *We are not happy with police which stops Mbabazi from coming to us. He is bringing money*. (Hoima, Lira). People confess that they also look forward to getting money or other items. Some argue that those items influence their voting pattern. Some people may think that a person who gives them a bribe is the one who will deliver than one who does not (*akuba amalusu*) (Kampala, Soroti rural). Poor people may not lead well and if you have no money you cannot influence anything (Hoima). But the mature Ugandans feel sad when they see what young people are doing. It was stated, *young people only think about money but not the future. How do you sell the country for 5000 Uganda shillings? (Soroti, Lira) For us during 1960s we were the ones contributing money for the candidate rather than expecting from the candidate. That means that voting made sense because you would vote a candidate that is competent as opposed to voting because of money (Lira)*.

On the other hand, others think that they can “eat” the money but vote the candidate they want. The elders highlighted Lango’s gallant leaders such as Dr. Okullu-Epak, who used to mobilize the masses often saying that *you can play with my stomach but not my mind*. Unfortunately, such people have reduced (Lira town). Others said, it depends on someone’s heart and their level of Christianity. Some are good Christians who may not want to “eat” your money and then fail to vote for you (Lira Village). Others are intimidated after receiving money or other items. *Sometimes they tell you that there are cameras that will be seeing you. You must vote rightly* and because of fear, people vote out of fear for their lives. While there are laws against vote buying, corruption has rendered the

laws irrelevant. In Lira they said, *even if you get someone buying votes and you report, as long as they are NRM nothing is done*. Citizens justify their need for money at the time of elections because that is the only time they see their leaders.

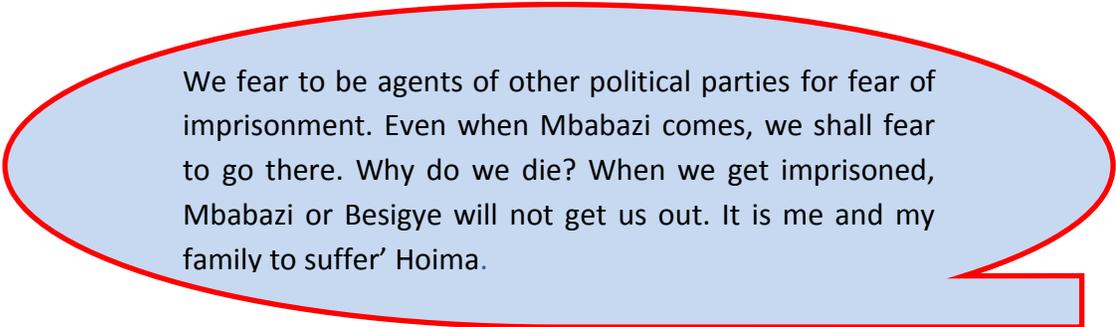


If the next time I am going to see this candidate is in the next 4-5 years, why don't I get my share (money) now? (Hoima town)

While all respondents including officials concurred that there is vote buying, all respondents from rural Mbale denied knowledge and the existence of vote buying in their community. They noted that aspirants only fix social or societal challenges like the infrastructure but never dish out money or items. They said *“we wish they could give us (items) during the campaigns.”* This is quite odd; it is different from the views raised by the FGD in Mbale town. It therefore raises question of whether there was some coaching or warning before the respondents were interviewed.

All Ugandans interacted were unhappy with service delivery in the country. Unfortunately, service delivery has a direct impact on the candidates whether councilor or MPs. One said, *at our health center here it is a crime to get sick on Saturday. You need to get sick on Monday or other days. But even then, you must fall sick after 11:00 am because that is when you see a nurse*. Another lamented, *„my child died at 10:00 am before we could see a doctor at the health center”* (Hoima). All these are from citizens who thought that if elections were free and fair, they would elect leaders that work for them (deliver services). Citizens think the reason some people may sell their country for a packet of salt or a piece of soap is because of poverty.

It was highlighted that intimidation plays a very big role in elections. *People are told that if they don't vote Museveni, there will be war*, (Lira and Soroti). Others feared to talk about the candidate they support for fear of being beaten and imprisoned, (Lira, Kayunga and Luweero).



We fear to be agents of other political parties for fear of imprisonment. Even when Mbabazi comes, we shall fear to go there. Why do we die? When we get imprisoned, Mbabazi or Besigye will not get us out. It is me and my family to suffer' Hoima.

Indeed, some respondents testified that they had registered as NRM party members to receive the NRM Party card as a way of getting favors from the government, including service delivery and jobs, for themselves and their children, (Kayunga, Mbale and Soroti).

Voters are intimidated to vote for a particular candidate during the elections. There is always massive involvement of the army in elections. In a way therefore, the voters get scared and even bad language is used to scare the voters (Soroti Rural). Other people support Museveni not because they want him but because they fear the repercussion of joining the other side. Actually the campaign language used now is; „*Olina kke wekoledde*” literally meaning, „*do you have any wealth? Then vote President Museveni to safeguard your wealth*” (Ntinda, Bukoto Kampala).

Citizens reported that military helicopters normally move around a day before elections. This intimidates people because they know that if they don’t vote Mzee (Museveni), there will be war (Luweero). Remember Museveni said he can bring insecurity in the north again (Lira). Insecurity is not only for the *wanainchi*, it also happens to candidates who contest against the will of government. When you aspire to contest, someone concocts a story that you are recruiting rebels and the whole squad will come for you (Lira). Others are intimidated in other ways, others are told that they could lose their lives and sometimes it is tried especially through road accidents (Kampala).

But one of the members of the FGD in Hoima town indicated that intimidation is in people’s minds and is not a reality. *When the opposition wins, it says it worked hard, but when it loses, it says there was intimidation. And moreover the opposition tends to misinterpret the law and that is why they are always in conflict with police.* This specific member however was a bit restless during the interview. Whenever he was around, members were not free to air out their views. But whenever he moved out, members would air out their views including those against the government. From the researcher’s observation, this person seemed close to the government in power. He even asked the researchers for an introductory letter.

Apart from intimidation, a lot of violence happens around the campaigns and elections. That is the time for *Kiboko* squad. It was reported that there was Lira-Kiboko squad. *Kiboko* squad was a language used mainly in Lira and Soroti. There is always heavy deployment of military and machinery on polling day, even people were ordered to remain indoors after 5:00pm in 2011 (Mbale). It was reported that sometimes there are planned accidents and the people normally affected are the opposition. However, one of the members in the Kampala group highlighted that this is two way. Sometimes if there is a

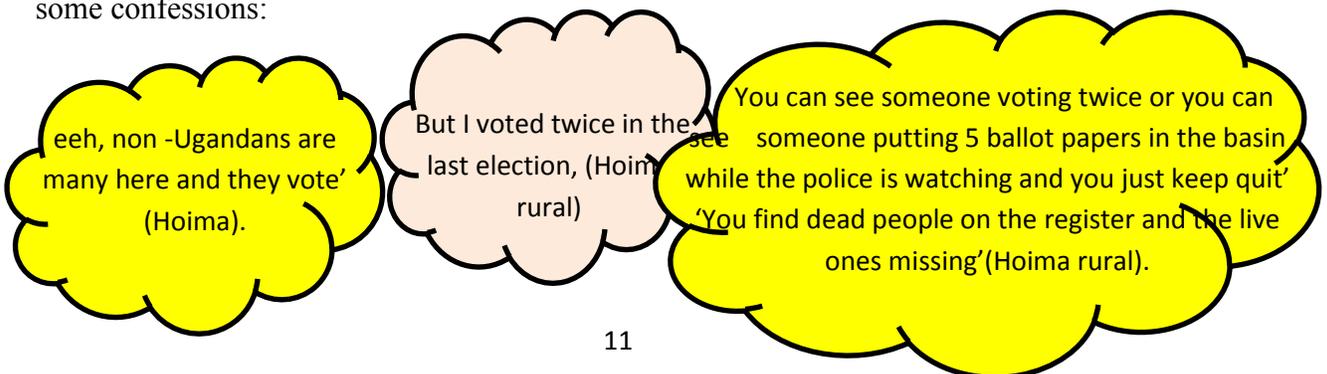
gathering of opposition wearing e.g Besigye T-shirts, and someone putting on a Museveni T-shirt joins them or passes by, he may be beaten. But the Kampala group emphasized that even when that happens between the voters, opposition is harassed by the police and military more than the ruling party. „Why do the police take sides?“ In Lira, when Besigye was announced winner, 4 people died, others were beaten by police. People think this is intended. In Kayunga District, an official, blamed the youth for the military deployment during elections because the youth are stubborn and never take instructions from the police. They normally say: „*Tetujja kuvaawo okujakko nga militare yezze*“ meaning „we won“t leave this place until the military (police) comes.“

Besides the public, sometimes elections cause chaos in homes. If a wife supports a candidate different from the husband’s, it can bring violence at home (Sembabule). Some wives do not vote for their (own) husbands when they stand. In Hoima village, one candidate got two votes. He confirmed it was his friend who cast the second vote because the friend accompanied him to vote. He was sure his wife did not vote for him. And this caused violence at home. While electoral violence occurs in the community, it also does in homes because of gender dynamics.

### ***Rigging***

Rigging compromises democracy but yet in Uganda it is not unusual. People had this to say; *the electoral commissioners are selected by the president. What do you expect? (Lira, Luweero, Hoima, Sembabule and Soroti)*. As already hinted some people come to vote and discover that someone else has already voted for them. Others come to vote and do not find their names on the register inspite of having previously checked and confirmed that their names are on the register. Others claimed that when they go to vote, they are told to move to another center, which they reach and are told to move to another one, so they give up. Moreover, this happens in villages where travel is difficult and the distance between polling stations is long. People end up giving up on voting because of the confusion in the register. Some respondents think it is deliberate while others think it is the responsibility of the voters to check before elections.

The cleanup of the register was also questioned. *Names of non-Ugandans (Rwandese) were on the register in the last election, (Lira). Even when you report, nothing is done.* Here are some confessions:



All these are confessions from Ugandans. It seems rigging has been institutionalized. *Sometimes the ballot papers counted exceed the number of votes cast (Hoima, Mbale town).*

Citizens were concerned that when the ballot papers are printed, no clear order seems to be followed. *„You find that the bus (NRM) will either be at the top or at the bottom. It becomes easy for someone to see where your hand is going. And once you finish voting, you get intimidated and you may think that there are cameras. „If one person tells other voters, then others will vote a candidate against their will because of fear;“* (Lira town). It was also revealed that there are ghost polling stations e.g. Forest Nursery in Mbale had and still has 2 polling stations yet it has a population of about 20 people only. Citizens argued that elections are meaningless because of such rigging. They argued that elections can only make sense if the EC is independent. In Sembabule in 2011, *some of the polling stations closed by 9:00 a.m.* The polling officers stayed at the polling station but they were not working. They claimed voters had voted in one hour and finished. So, most people did not vote because others (not known) had voted in the place of the rightful voters. Citizens were wondering whether this is normal.

Citizens were also concerned about what happens between the time they vote and the time results for presidential elections are announced. *Why are presidential results not announced at every district for easy follow up?* (Sembabule). Others revealed that on the polling day, power (Umeme) is switched off (Lira). Citizens wondered whether this is intended to steal votes, or whether power (Umeme) fears votes.

Citizens were concerned about the polling stations in the military barracks. Citizens think that these tend to distort the outcome of the vote. The military barracks being restricted areas makes it very difficult for the opposition candidates to access them during the campaign period (Lira). It is also questionable whether the military gets a chance to vote for the candidates they want. And citizens suggest that the president should resign before elections so that he is at the same footing with other candidates. He uses state resources to campaign and yet the other candidates do not access the same (Sembabule, Mbale). To the citizens, this is open cheating.

### ***Citizen’s awareness of the role of different institutions***

- ***Police***

Citizens (except for a few) that the research team talked to had no kind words for the police. *Police is militarized and we don’t know who police is and who the army is. We wonder what will happen when NRM leaves power* (Lira town, Hoima rural and urban).

*The army cannot and can never act like police. Police is supposed to be calm and keep law and order but the army (by the nature of their training) is violent. Unfortunately, the police commander is an army man and so are the police officers. 70% of DPCs are military officers masquerading as policemen, (Lira town, Soroti town). The violence we see is not a mistake; it is just how the army behaves (Kampala, Sembabule). We see the army recruiting people when it is close to elections. Like now there are names that have been forwarded for training" (Sembabule). It is unfortunate that the military gets involved in elections. They should not even vote. How do you expect military and police to vote objectively? (Lira and Soroti).*

Citizens think that the institution of police does not exist. *It is a gone case and just personal property of Museveni (Kampala, Mbale, Lira and Soroti). The Kampala respondents said that instead of police keeping civilians safe, it is now a keep NRM safe force. Police is like a woman, they work on orders (Sembabule). This suggests that police as an institution is not independent and most citizens do not understand the role of police in Uganda. The police is one sided Have you seen how police is stopping Mbabazi and Besigye from campaigning? How come Museveni's supporters are allowed to do anything? (Hoima, Lira, Sembabule). There is nothing to do to police because we do not pay it (Sembabule Village youth). Citizens think that police needs overhauling. They said that even Primary 7 drop outs are recruited. Such people cannot understand the law. Police officers try to bend the law. Yet you cannot bend the law, you can only break it (Lira)*

The police are also associated with crime preventers. Crime preventers are supposed to help police. Citizens think that instead of crime preventers preventing crime, they end up becoming crime creators (Hoima rural). *Even the police have put people on „bunkenke" (tenterhooks). People fear police (Luweero). Police which is supposed to protect people are now feared. When we see police, we think of tear gas and beatings. What else can we expect from police? (Kampala). In a Kampala FGD (Bukoto), the respondents noted that the police is totally off-track.*

- **Electoral Commission (EC)**

Citizens have lost hope in the Electoral Commission (EC). *As long as the electoral commission is still chosen by the president, there cannot be free and fair elections. EC is dead, it should be buried. Citizens are crying out for an independent EC not only in name but argue that the institution needs an overhaul. It does no good to just change the name without changing the appointing authority (Lira, Mbale, and Luweero). Citizens pointed out that the state is a one-man's show (The President). He tends to dictate on what should be done, and sets the terms and conditions for the EC Commissioners who usually want to please their appointing authority.*

The citizens reported that Ugandan EC is super when it comes to rigging. *Ugandan EC was sent to Kenya to cheat votes* (Sembabule rural). Corruption at the EC was also pointed out by a youth who cited an incident in the previous elections where money (meant to bribe the EC polling officers) was delivered in a flask disguised as tea (Lira town). An elderly respondent observed *at the polling stations that the [EC] registrars are independent and professional but the problem is with Prof. Kiggundu* (the EC Chair). Citizens made suggestions aimed at improving the EC. Some suggest an elected EC with representation from different parties. Others suggested a body that can come from a different country to carry out the exercise (Sembabule rural). In the same group however, others disagreed that if outsiders come to manage elections they would not know who Ugandan is and who is not. They also argued that it would mean we (Ugandans) are paying our money to non-Ugandans for a job that we can do ourselves. This was a spirit of nationalism exhibited by rural Ugandans.

Another view was that the EC has not played its role when it comes to voter education, (Mbale, Lira, and Soroti). All the respondents in this rural sub-county were of the view that voters are not well sensitized and most of them (voters) are green on issues related to the register (Mbale). Generally no or little sensitization has been done about the cleanup of the voters' registers and mobilization to turn up for the display for the voters register (Soroti rural).

- ***The Uganda Human Rights Commission (UHRC)***

The UHRC is not very popular among citizens. Actually some citizens do not know what it does. For those who knew the UHRC, it was reported that the UHRC „comes-out“ late and usually merely to ask „what happened“ long after the security and *Kiboko* squads have caused mayhem. For example it was reported that in Katakwi District during the Usuk County bye-elections, there was a lot of violence and the UHRC came to ask what happened (Soroti Rural). *Why does the UHRC come to us when it is too late? What does it help us? And when they come and ask questions, what do they do? We never hear their intervention* (Luweero and Soroti Village).

### ***Views from different Institutions about elections***

- ***Police***

Police was happy with their work during elections. The police argued that they deploy a police officer at every polling station and tried to do their best. *Police has to make sure that no voter puts more than one ballot paper in the box and make sure that no one runs*

*away with the box.* They affirmed that their job is to keep law and order. *If the citizens do not abide by the law, they will be forced to do so.* Most of the police officers talked to, had not supervised an election in the areas they were currently located. They had been transferred. The research team managed to talk to police at least in every district. Some of the police officials were not sure whether they should talk to the researchers. Some avoided the researchers, but alternatives were obtained. This was mainly because of fear of their jobs. Indeed one asked whether the researchers had talked to the Resident District Commissioner (RDC) and whether the RDC was comfortable with the research agenda.

Most police officers think that elections deliver democracy. They argued that since no one is coerced to vote, people chose the leaders they want (Lira, Sembabule). *Elections are normally fair because we do not hear complaints* (Lira). Police also reported that there is transparency during vote counting, and whoever wins elections is the one declared (Mbale). Since the police believe that the elections are free and fair, most of them believe elections deliver democracy. However, some of the police officers think that democracy needs a lot of improvement. *We have a lot to improve especially people's perceptions because some politicians take politics as a matter of life and death (a job) they don't go with a spirit of serving the people* (Kayunga). *Citizens vote because of the influence of other people but not because they know why they vote. Some leaders themselves do not know what to do. For example the woman MP of Mityana was working on the road. She must have gotten a lot of loans yet that is not her job* (Sembabule). Since neither people nor their leaders do not know their role it means democracy is still far in Uganda.

The police are aware of vote buying. But the police say their hands are tied because proving the buying is difficult. And the police argue that vote buying influences choice of candidate because, most people vote on that basis. *In these elections, it's all about money. The voters know how much the MPs earn, and they expect to eat some.* The police confessed that even when the police want to arrest those who engage in vote bribery, coming across such evidence is quite difficult because neither the receiver nor the giver of such a bribe is willing to testify against the other. Besides, vote buying has been normalized. When Mbabazi was stopped in Jinja on his way to the consultative meetings in Mbale, the *wananchi* „blamed“ the police for having stopped him because Mbabazi was going to give them (the voters) money. The police are therefore left in a very big dilemma.

The research team was interested in understanding the role of crime preventers because the *wanainchi* said a lot about them. Police reported that crime preventers are not members of the police (force). Constitutionally, any person can undergo military training. The skills of having to know how government works and patriotism are very important. The aim of training crime preventers is to have a crime free society. Where the police manpower is insufficient and where a crime would (otherwise) go undetected, a crime preventer would

report such a crime and that is why the government them. Others pointed out that crime preventers were also recruited to promote government programs. However, it was reported that these crime preventers are normally given yellow T shirts. This means they are not working for government but NRM. Asked about the role of the military during elections, most police argued that the reason the army takes part in the elections is because there are few police officers. *They cannot cover the whole country. Military comes in to beef up police; sometimes they are just on standby.*

In Luweero, police reported violence in the last elections. When the results were announced, it was believed there was rigging. The election was between Democratic Party (DP) and NRM contestants. It was observed that violence normally occurs when groups of people fail to concede defeat and therefore violence is incited by politicians themselves. Police in Luweero think that if the EC invested in electoral education, people might understand why they vote and that in an election there is always a winner and a loser. *You cannot behave like Northcote that we either win or they lose. That is not proper (police Sembabule). There is also need to guide the media on what to report. Some people discuss politics when they do not know what they are talking about (ignorance).* The official suggests that sometimes the incidents of violence the media reports are not true.

When violence breaks out, the youth and women are usually the most affected. Some women get threats from husbands that: *if you don't vote for so and so you will see.* People fight and when they do, its reported and the case taken up, investigated and prosecuted for example in Bufumbo, the Forum for Democratic Change ( FDC) and NRM supporters fought and the police took the one who started the fight to court (Mbale). Violence was reported by police in some areas but the police claimed it is normally controlled.

The police reported that the biggest challenge they have is when people and some political parties do not follow the law and guidelines. *When we force them, they misunderstand us (Luweero). People are not educated, you tell them one thing, and they do another. Some people come to campaign at the polling station and yet campaigns should stop 2 days before elections. Candidates are supposed to inform police the motive of their gathering and number of participants when they are carrying out consultations. There are places that are gazetted where candidates may not hold rallies. And because police are law enforcers, they cannot allow anarchy! ,For example police was escorting Sejjusa but on the way, he parked cars in the road. It was inconveniencing traffic. When they are tear gassed, people shout that police is inconsiderate". I know that some officers make mistakes but that does not mean that all police is like that (Sembabule).*

The police are hoping for a peaceful election in 2016. *Once this issue of Museveni and Mbabazi is sorted out, I do not expect any problem. I want to assure you there will be no*

*violence. Even if it means training at night. The good thing we have enough security, (Sembabule). Whatever this meant, it seems to incite militarization of elections and that the President must win the election. While some officers claim that there cannot be violence, some police officers seem to foresee violence emanating from the recent misunderstandings between Mbabazi and Museveni. To this end, the police are trying to encourage people to play mature politics and for all candidates shall have leveled ground to access their voters. While some officers think that those who were stopped from consultations like Amama Mbabazi did not follow the law, others feared to comment. To the researcher, they feared because they did not believe in what happened. And some confessed that political parties have equal chance but not equal opportunity, in essence, that the ruling party has an upper hand, and will do what it takes to stay in power.*

The need to protect one's job and cover up wrong doing was found to exist not only among bureaucrats but police as well. They think that as long as you "are eating", you should not make noise even when things are going wrong. One said, *Look at stupid Lukwago. Instead of working with Musisi and become part of that success, he is making noise and is thrown out of office.* The message means that leaders need to keep quiet as they eat. „Morals are dead, and if leaders have no morals, they cannot offer what they do not have“ (police).

Some members of the police expressed no hope in The Democratic Alliance (TDA). *I had thought that the alliance would do better but they are now all confused for example the Democratic party (DP) have like 50 members only and are still divided thus people are choosing to be with the "Devil they know" the NRM.*

### ***Electoral Commission***

The Registrars in the different districts knew that their job is to ensure free and fair elections. They have what they call an election cycle, which starts with demarcation of electoral areas. If new districts, parishes or villages are created they are confirmed as new units. The demarcation of electoral areas is then followed by the registration of voters. The registration of voters countrywide was this time based on the mandatory registration for national identity cards (IDs), which was done for all citizens of 16 years and above. The assumption was that all those citizens who were aged 16 (years) at the time of registration would automatically qualify to vote in 2016. However, one Registrar reported that this would not be the case (not all registered for IDs were 18 years by the time of display) since, the registration, verification and display of the voter's registrar had strict time lines to be observed according to the national election laws. Indeed, the closing date (otherwise known as the "cut-off" date) for verification of voter's names on the register was May 11,

2015 a year from the date of commencement of the mandatory national registration for the national IDs.

The display of the voters register is normally done for 21 days and clean up exercise follows. For the 2016 election, this was expected to end by the end of July 2015. It is expected that once the register is displayed, all registered citizens are supposed to checkout their names properly. It is they (*wanainchi*) that are supposed to help the EC clean the register. They are supposed to report any deaths, non-Ugandans, ghost voters and the under age from the voters register at each polling station. Voters whose names are reported to have been deleted from the register are given a natural justice period of ten (10 days) to confirm the deaths and non-citizens. The requirement is that one person can only recommend one deletion. The Parish Tribunal comprised of five (5) members: with one (1) or two (2) women; prominent elders of integrity, sign the form(s) recommending the deletion. It was interesting to note that sometimes it happens that some people may aim at deleting others just because they are opposing their candidate. It is because of this, that the tribunal was put in place and provision for 10 days for natural justice made. Fortunately, it was reported that lately death certificates were introduced (Luweero). This was expected to be helpful to prove deaths. However, the biggest challenge the EC faces is that most voters do not check their names and end up missing to cast their vote. But it is also true that some people still do not find their names on the register on polling day because of challenges within the EC (Luweero).

Another pivotal role played by the District Registrar is nomination and harmonization of the campaign programme exercise for the various candidates in the contest. Harmonization of the campaign programme usually involves the candidates themselves through their authorized agents. Campaigns are supposed to stop forty eight (48) hours (two days) to the polling day to allow for distribution of polling materials at their respective polling stations. The regulations for campaigns indicate that they must be conducted only between 7 am to 6 pm for the security of the candidates and their supporters. However, such regulations are never followed by the candidates. They campaign till late. They campaign even do so heavily on the eve of the polling day. Some even campaign on the polling day. Decrying this, EC Registrars observed, *unfortunately our hands are tied. We cannot do anything. We can only rely on police.* (Lira, Soroti and Sembabule).

It is also the role of the EC to recruit polling officials. And these officials usually reside in the same villages to help the EC identify the residents or non-residents of that particular village. Applications for these officials are normally open to everyone with Ordinary "level certificate. It is a free exercise and has nothing to do with the party one belongs to. When finally the voting kicks off on polling day, the Registrar and polling officers have to supervise the election process, do the tallying and serve as Returning Officer to declare the

election results for all election results for District/Member of Parliament. It is only presidential results, which require tallying at the national level. During the post-polling stage, the Registrar, acting as the Returning Officer, has a duty to publish the election results after declaring a winner and to gazette the candidate in the Uganda Gazette before the eventual swearing in of such candidate. It is at this stage, that any aggrieved candidate (loser) who seeks to challenge the election of a candidate can then come in to challenge the same.

Registrars reported that each polling station should have a police officer. These police constables at polling station are normally armed and military may come when necessary. But the military does not put on uniform. One Registrar confirmed that in 2011, there were armed army men in Palisa. Others say there are normally police constables and the army only come in when there is violence for example in Lwemiyaga. But otherwise, the army should not take part in elections. All political parties have a chance to put an agent on each polling station to observe what takes place. Each agent is given the results of the polling station for verification. It is only political parties that do not have enough money to pay their agents that may not have an agent on every polling station. Political Parties (PP) that have money may have several agents at one polling station.

The link between democracy and elections has been hampered by apathy alongside voter fatigue in the context of northern Uganda. Also the people think that politics does not “put food on the table”. This belief has been mainly fueled by the Non-Government Organization (NGO) culture of: transport refund, soda and other refreshments, etc. People would rather go to their gardens than attend to important activities such as voter sensitization which offers nothing. Furthermore, the elite shun voting on the polling days as they find the idea of lining/queuing up to vote, quite cumbersome. People seem to have no interest in voting and voter education. This may mean that elections do not matter to the people of Uganda. And therefore we may not easily conclude that elections bring democracy. Others think that elections deliver democracy because people are free to decide on the leaders they want through voting. The EC only conducts civic education when there are workshops, radio talk shows. For example in Kayunga it was reported that it was being done on Sauti radio station. But most EC officials think the education offered is not enough. Moreover, even radio shows are in the morning or at hours that are not convenient for rural people.

Registrars confirmed that vote buying and selling is very real. The person who wins the election should be good, but should also have the money. It (elections) is largely about money exchanging hands as opposed to issues. *It is a cancer. And it is likely to stay with us for some time. The Presidency itself promotes this, at each gathering; the President will always give out money in the name of facilitation.* It is hard to distinguish „facilitation“

from vote buying. All the monies distributed during the campaign time come in the name of facilitation but its (actual) intended purpose is to influence the vote (outcome). So it all turns out to be vote buying and bribery. The bribery takes the form of goods such as salt, sugar, soap, usually 2 to 3 days to the polling/election day. In the night, the voters are told *not to close their doors* "to allow safe passage of those goods. All the footpaths leading to the polling stations are mainly „littered“ with people distributing money in the notes of UGX1000, 2000, 5000 and 10,000/= depending on the „wäght“ of the prospective voter with massages of „vote so and so. He or she is the one who has given us the money. (Soroti, Kayunga). In the end, an unpopular candidate all of a sudden becomes „popular“ and wins the election. The vote swings/changes overnight. The vote is swayed by the money. Exchange of gifts automatically influences the outcome of the vote. Otherwise if candidates/aspirants were giving out these goodies and reap nothing, the practice would have long stopped.

*Vote buying is illegal but the powers of EC are limited, we give guidelines but they are not followed. Intimidation sometimes happens. Even EC officials are intimidated sometimes by candidates. The EC can only rely on police but sometimes the police do not act. For some, the police is very helpful when needed“.*

There was a narration of another form of rigging called creation of or „giving political corridor“. It is a specialized mechanism whereby the forces – the police and other security agencies – have a well-designed way of leaving a particular candidate or his or her agents to „ruin“ in at the polling stations unabated. The security forces are aware. This person is going to give goodies but will deliberately create a „security vacuum“ by saying that they need to urgently run to place X to „save“ an urgent security threat and will be back „shortly“. Hours and hours go by before the security forces return and meanwhile the havoc goes on at the polling station or area where they should legitimately be. In some instances, the police may just leave behind a „skeleton“ staff/manpower that cannot do much. They will always tell the EC that they (police) have intelligence information that chaos was likely to erupt at point A or B and that heavy deployment was needed compared to where they are or supposed to be (which is quite calm). The claim for „reinforcement“ is not genuine nor does it ever materialize. It is all a gimmick and ploy to rig in favor of a particular candidate who has already bought or paid them. This is a narration of how rigging happens.

However one of the Registrars noted that despite the widely talked about vote buying and selling, most and much of this talk is not true. He gave an incident in which a „voter“ called his office „complaining“ about massive rigging and vote bribery in the constituency (Hoima). This is the only official that seems not to have heard or seen vote buying. Asked whether the giving out of materials such as sugar, salt, etc in essence affects the vote

outcome, the Registrar was rather cagey about the issue, and simply stated that *the practice (vote buying and selling) is not that rampant and in effect since the voting is by secret ballot, it can't be affected by the exchange of materials.*

Most Registrars (except for only a few) think that elections have been free and fair. They argue that the public yearn for elections means they have confidence in the respect and respect for institutions that conduct elections. Most of the EC officials have no fears about the next elections, except in Sembabule where supporters of Sekikuubo are expected to stir violence because of the last experience. Some officials had experienced violence in areas they have worked but others claim they had not. They expect free and fair elections. *We shall do our best and we do not expect violence but you never know what may come up. It is in God's hands (Sembabule).* On how to avert electoral violence, one Registrar, noted that the strong collaboration between the police, the EC and other security agencies would help avert any violence. Also in a bid to avert election related violence and general lawlessness during the election/campaign period, the EC with the help of the police managed to get an officer in charge of election related offences including violence or threatening violence.

The research team was interested in knowing the role of the military during elections. *As long as we have the persons who manage the forces/the commanders of these forces as participants in the elections, with the Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces, His Excellency the President, still interested in retaining that seat, the armed forces will always interfere, albeit contrary to the law".* As to a solution, one Registrar had this to say: *We seem to be in a helpless situation but a concerted effort if genuine from all the stakeholders can be helpful. The masses also need to reassert their powers and reclaim their lost power. The laws are sufficient; the only missing link is that of implementation. The court system also needs to be speedy and efficient, not this business of disposing off election petitions at the end of the term (five years).*

The EC and the accredited institutions give voter information and because of this, high voter turn up is expected in some areas (Kayunga). However, other officials pointed out that the information is not enough. They claimed that accredited NGOs are not doing enough to deliver proper voter education and civic rights awareness. Methods of voter education need to be revised because this has led to quite a number of invalid votes. People do not know if it's their right to ask for another ballot paper when the one given is spoilt. This means that citizens do not know their rights or what they can or cannot do. It is interesting to note that the EC blames NGOs for not giving enough education. The question is; who is in charge?

The EC did not express any particular challenges except the need for remuneration of the EC staff to be commensurate to or near that of the politicians. Good remuneration for EC staff will help prevent incidents like the giving of „political corridor“ to certain candidates. *The payment of the referee and [that of] the player should be good.* Low pay has led to compromise of certain polling officers and assistants to the extent of allowing the use of „sign language“ such as scratching the head, or beard, or coughing, or the giving out of more ballot papers to voters to tick a particular candidate once the polling officers or assistants have been bribed.

- ***Chief Administrative Officers and Local leaders' representatives (CAO)***

Most CAOs indicated that they had played a little role in as far as elections were concerned. They stated that their role in elections was taken up by the District Registrar. The CAOs role now is indirect. However some CAOs like police feared for their jobs and sometimes contradicted themselves. However some were able to give their views of about current developments. Others were not willing to speak. Some think that *the best thing to do in Uganda is to watch from a distance because when you take part you can be misunderstood. If you try to do the right thing you could be left alone.* Such statements reveal a lot that is not said.

CAOs are part of the security committee. They provide or help police with cars and other logistics and support the EC. The EC is thin on the ground and therefore needs help. In Luweero, the CAO believes there is no violence during elections and that all political parties have the same chance to participate. He had no fears about the 2016 elections because candidates were moving around the country freely. He expected free and fair elections but called upon candidates to follow the law. Some CAOs reported that people vote but have lost hope. *When Museveni says that he is the only person with a vision to lead this country, then people leave nature to take its course. The system is not honest. People vote but figures are changed“.* *The problem we have in Uganda is that we have failed to blend authority with common sense. We have politicians but not leaders. Human rights (HR) are on paper but not actual. We do not see human rights in Uganda. Human rights activists are also constrained. Who can listen to you with HR if you are not in power?“*

About democracy, some thought the subject was subjective - depending on the observer. The imperfections notwithstanding, some believed elections (in Uganda) still bring a huge relief. For it is only through elections that the voters can renew the mandate of their leaders. Similarly, with the campaign manifestos, the pressure from the opposition and the „alternative solutions“ that they seek to offer to the voters (if elected into office) all help to galvanize on government“s programmes. Others thought that „when you see the reason

why people vote, it may not be because of what they expect in a leader but what the candidate has offered. People have lost trust in leaders. All categories of Ugandans are using lip service. Even churches organize fundraisings when it is close to elections". An example was given of the Bisaka religion in Hoima, where all members are forced to vote a certain candidate. *And almost all leaders have visited that place including the president. The winner takes the heart of the church leader and the rest of the members are forced to comply. Is this democracy?* Others think elections deliver 50/50 democracy, and others say „citizens of Uganda have got a raw deal". While one of the CAO's supports the current government, he contradicted himself by saying that Uganda's problems are problems of leadership. He said that 15 years of good leadership are enough to transform Uganda. The question is; how many years has this government been in power? This indicated that people see the problem but have to protect their jobs.

Most CAOs noted, *vote buying is the order of the day, there is no question about that.* There is even a lot of ballot stuffing. An example was given of Nakasongola where the number of people who turned out to vote was more than the actual population. These officials believe that logistics do influence people's choice of candidates because people are very poor and poor people have no choice. They argued that they cannot do much about vote buying, other than sensitize people. The problem is that its top- bottom (meaning it starts at the top).

Some CAOs believe there is no rigging during elections. One said he did not know anything about it and he referred us to the EC. But others confessed that they had heard complaints from some voters about missing names and those others had not received their national I.Ds. Some think the EC is attempting to do its work: *but you sympathize with them. There are many players.* This literally means that the many players interfere with their work. Even the timing of new constituencies raised questions among Ugandans.

Some of CAOs empathized with political parties. They believe opposition parties are competing with the government in power that can access all the services and resources. Yet, the opposition cannot afford to pay agents all over the country. *The one who has money can easily convert the agent of the one that has no money. There cannot be fairness in this.* On the other hand, there was concern that political parties are not playing their role. *They act as individuals not parties. The alliance they are creating means nothing. They are greedy. It is rare to find leaders who think about the country. They only think about themselves.*

The CAOs were asked whether they had heard or witnessed violence and intimidation. They said, *violence and intimidation have become part of us and we do not expect anything better in 2016; actually we expect it to be worse. It has already started.*

*Sometimes violence is not physical, it can also be psychological*". They highlighted the biggest challenge of Africa as over staying in power. When this happens, the leader has to use all means to influence the outcome of the election. One said, „we do not understand the role of military during elections. *It is also unfortunate that crime preventers are recruited around the time of elections. Are they part of police? Are they crime preventers or perpetrators?*” Some revealed having heard of incidents of heavy military deployment and intimidation of people. Some highlighted that already there is conflict about what the law is, and there are many divisions in NRM. All this seems to be heading to violence and when the elephants fight, the grass suffers. They also raised the conflict and duplication of work between security organs for example state house, police, military and president’s office, which makes differentiating the roles of these different organs complicated in Uganda.

Most of the CAOs interviewed expect free and fair elections. A few have fear of violence, inflation, a lot of death and expect the President to stay in power.

- **Local Council Representatives**

The research team aimed at interviewing the chairperson of the district. But in cases where the chairperson was not available, either the deputy chairperson or speaker was interviewed. The office of the speaker at the district is not directly involved in elections. It is only if there is a vacancy in council that the speaker writes to the CAO and the EC notifying them of the vacancy and therefore the need to organize a by-election (if need be).

On the question of elections and democracy in the country, local council representatives noted that despite a few challenges, elections had in most cases met the intended objectives save for the coercive state machinery. Some thought that there is democracy since people decide for themselves. They however highlighted some confusion: *For example Kigundu has already started displaying the register but the party primaries are not yet finished. This can confuse an ordinary Ugandan. And some even get confused by money. The youth for example are unemployed and any one can use them. Such confusion and hopelessness may undermine democracy.*

The politicians argued that vote buying is common but is hard to identify. It is underground and secretive. *In Uganda if you have no money, you cannot contest. My fellow councilors are not coming back to contest because they have no money. The money we put in the election cannot come back after getting the office. Some people sell their properties. We have nothing to do with vote buying because it comes from the top (Sembabule). The issue now is „Nfunilawa”? Meaning, (how do I gain from the election?).* They expressed concern that some citizens are compromised and have not used their

education well. They claimed the problem is money. *The electorate has failed to understand the role of their leaders, often mistaking them (leaders) to be the government that does everything from building hospitals and schools to constructing roads.* Another „fate“ facing politicians is that *the electorate wants to be told what they want to hear; and not what they should hear: otherwise you (candidate/aspirant) won't win.* And indeed, *many politicians have fallen „prey“ to the excessive demands of the voters to near bankruptcy.* On what should be done to end vote buying and selling, they emphasized the need for civic education. They disclosed that most local council representatives who wish to stand for political office but don't have money to bribe the electorate are sarcastically asked by the voters *why they (candidates) have joined politics, yet they (candidates) don't have money.* In Buganda, (Ssembabule, Kayunga, Luweero and Kampala); the voters would say *Atalina manyi taggwa ddalu*, he who doesn't have enough energy shouldn't run mad. Literally meaning, that since elective politics requires a lot of money to bribe voters; a candidate who doesn't have money should not bother (contesting).

Some politicians denied ever witnessing or hearing about intimidation. However, others revealed that there is violence and intimidation. *When you contest against someone that the government wants, you get intimidated.* Another issue that was raised by Local government was that it has been left out in terms of facilitation. They said, *Parliament only thinks about itself and yet they do nothing. All the work is done by us who are with the people.* Yet, local leaders claimed that they interact with the people more than the parliamentarians. *It is hard politics when you meet with your voters all the time. Yet parliamentarians are paid quite well and the local leaders are forgotten.*

The leaders argued that if elections and politics are to make sense in Uganda, there is need for improved civic education. But more importantly, if unemployment is not sorted out, violence will not end in Uganda. It was recommended that government should listen to the youths and sort out the problem of unemployment and poverty.

### ***Citizen's views about political parties***

Citizens think that all political parties do not have the same chance or opportunity to compete favorably. *We see NRM the ruling party doing anything they want, but other parties are stopped from campaigning, beaten and imprisoned. The NRM does not give chance to other parties because they do not want them to tell us the failures of the NRM* (Hoima Rural, Sembabule rural, Arua urban). It was reported that buses and vans are provided to fetch people from their homes. It was also highlighted that you may not be surprised to find a police car also ferrying voters. But if FDC is caught, that one can be charged. Citizens asserted that NRM has more money than other parties and other parties may not be able to reach all citizens because of financial constraints. *The government has*

*decided to block the poor from contesting for political offices especially in NRM. The money they are charging is quite prohibiting (Luweero rural).*

Citizens of Uganda think that there is no fairness to different political parties before, during and after elections. One confessed, *I took part in elections in 2011 as a police constable, but the votes which were not for NRM most times were announced as invalid* (Sembabule village). The confession indicates that there is „day light“ cheating. Others confessed that mostly in Kampala, people who were not in the yellow book did not find their names on the register on their respective polling stations. This suggests that if you are not in the yellow book, you are not NRM and you therefore are denied a chance to vote.

### ***Citizen's expectations and fears in the 2016 elections***

All the citizens interviewed were apprehensive about the 2016 election mainly because of the contest between two bulls (Mbabazi and Museveni). They believe Mbabazi is a threat to Museveni so there was likely to be heavy deployment of the police and military to enable the incumbent regime safeguard itself power. People think there is likely to be a lot of violence or even war because Museveni has refused to leave power. *We do not see peace ahead* (Luweero rural). Another said,

For me I fear to disappear in the next election. They can decide to charge you with any crime and you disappear  
(Hoima Village)

Some were afraid of possible bloodshed and said, *unfortunately if the president fails to hand over power, all the people in the west will be looked at as one group and we may see genocide* (Lira town, Soroti town, Luweero rural). Others think it will be the same as it has always been. Meaning full of intimidation, violence and cheating. They remarked, *why should we expect anything better? It is the same people coming back and the same EC conducting the election* "There is already some sense of intimidation". *They have recruited 3000 crime preventers in every sub county. What are they for? How does someone know that another person is about to commit a crime? Why are they given yellow T-shirts if they are not for NRM?* (Lira, Soroti). Other voices:

'I am preparing to eat a lot of tear gas and I may not be allowed to attend rallies or campaign' (DP Leader Kampala)

If what we see between Mbabazi and Museveni is not Katemba (game), we hope for the worst (Kampala)

I don't expect anything better. Elections now bring more instability than democracy (Kampala).

It is true that most citizens are living in fear. *Our expectation is that the incumbent will not leave power* (Lira). *The disappointment of Ugandans has led them to utter out words of disappointment. Some said, „wedon't understand whether Museveni is a Ugandan. He has made us enemies with our own children* (Lira). This also came up because the elderly indicated that those who have children working for government have faced a challenge. Their children do not agree with their parents and actually may hate their parents for opposing the wrong things the government is doing. The elders' concern is that children of today only know President Museveni. They have never tested a better system. They have been hoodwinked to the extent of hating their own parents (Lira). The same anger came out in an FGD in Kampala where members were wondering if President Museveni is Ugandan. When they said this, they requested to stay anonymous so as not to be killed. But one said, *I don't think a Ugandan can do such a dis-service to his own people and country.*

Some citizens feared that some people will not be allowed to contest. *They can be hindered if the government prefers another candidate.* People are also worried about developments within the different political parties. They wonder who to trust. They quoted the chaos within NRM between Mbabazi and Museveni, the Democratic Party (DP), between Lukwago and Mao, UPC between Akena and Olara Otunu. All this confusion within parties was a puzzle to most Ugandans. Most of the respondents feared for their personal security during and after the elections lamenting of the likelihood of violence and bloodshed in the aftermath of the elections. They indicated that violence was currently being meted by the Parish Internal Security Officers (PISOs) and messages from were coming mainly from NRM leaning candidates who threaten thus: *If you don't vote wisely, you will experience war again.* Such intimidation worried the people and it was reported that some people were thinking of joining a military group (Kayunga).

Another concern among citizens was the anticipated high level of monetization of election because of the two giants (Museveni and Mbabazi). They said that both will dish out money and this may cause inflation (Hoima town). Most of the citizens mainly those who belong to the NRM hope for a free and fair election. They argued that *security is guaranteed.* Most of them, „expect“ *Mzee (President Museveni) to win and that their „man“ Eng. Kiggundu would do the „nædful“ even if the „worst“ was to happen. Mzee abewoo, let Amama Mbabazi wait for (2021-2026)* (Mbale rural). An elderly person expressed fear that the opposition might be bad losers and may cause chaos when they (opposition) eventually lose the 2016 general elections, (Mbale Rural). However, some of the citizens are planning

not to vote especially for LC1. The system of lining up behind a candidate to elect their leaders was not been welcome by the people. They fear to be hated or killed (Hoima, Luweero village).

### ***Recommendations***

These are recommendations from the respondents (citizens of Uganda). Citizens argue that it is a fundamental human right to choose a leader they want. But this cannot be possible with the current arrangement. They recommend that if elections are to make sense, the sitting President should resign so that he competes favorably with others. He uses state resources and the competitors cannot access the same. This leaves the competitors with no chance to win the election.

Citizens need an independent electoral commission. They suggested that if the elections were handled by people from outside Uganda, perhaps they could be impartial. Others suggest that the EC chairperson should not be appointed by the sitting president. *This person should be elected by Ugandans.* They also suggest that the EC commissioners should be people from different political parties rather than the current arrangement where all workers in the EC are NRM.

They suggest that institutions and structures like Electoral commission, the police and others should be working for Uganda rather than for the NRM. The senior citizens also cried out for civic education that they once had in the country. They wonder why it disappeared and whether the leaders benefit from citizens' ignorance. They called upon government to revive civic education in Uganda so that Ugandans can understand why they vote and what happens in their country.

They recommend that the government must change its priorities. It should look at the common person like teachers. It should provide medicine and pay doctors and nurses. *We are suffering. Our Uganda is so funny. A teacher who teaches in a certain school does not take her/his children to the same school. Does it mean that they do not teach well? The leaders we have do not go to government hospitals, yet they are the ones telling us to go there. Why?* In other words, to make our leaders accountable, they should use the services that they provide for the public. If this is done, the leaders will make sure that these services are better.

Citizens advise NRM to stop intimidating others. *It makes us lose hope.* However one member indicated that the opposition should also follow the law and keep peace (Luweero).

### ***Conclusions for the general report***

1. Most Ugandans seem tired of the current government. Those who still support the current government are either those that are directly benefiting from it, those that are intimidated, or those that do not know any other option.
2. Ugandans have lost hope in Uganda's institutions like police and EC. The institutions are not for Uganda but for NRM.
3. People with disabilities particularly in Hoima felt that they are left out. They said the system is unfair.
4. Women were generally quiet in meetings where they were mixed with men except women teachers. But whenever a separate meeting for women alone was held, they were active though not as vibrant as men. Suggesting that the culturally embedded culture of women giving men chance to talk manifested itself. More so politics is culturally a field of men and so women's participation was minimal. In particular, women in Sembabule rural literally said nothing. Women in Soroti town were also quiet. However, unlike the women in Soroti town who were quiet, the women who were interviewed in Katine sub-county in a rural setting were very vocal. This presents a sharp contrast between rural-urban/town women FGDs. The scenario in Soroti rural women FGD can best be explained by the fact that the women were separated from the male FGD and the two FGDs were conducted simultaneously. But interestingly, women local leaders in the villages were more vocal. For example women in Hoima Village and Luweero village were particularly active. Generally gender issues are determined by exposure and socialization. As indicated, women who are teachers or leaders were more active than the ordinary ones. But it is also important to note that gender dynamics also come with the kind of people one is interacting with. Generally women/girls in urban FGDs were not as active (except Kampala) because town FGDs had more informed people (men) than rural. Therefore women in town were out competed by men. It is also possible that women have nothing to say because they only follow what their husbands say or do.
5. In terms of regionalization, Luweero seems to fear the war so much especially the elderly. They think they had better support Museveni to avoid war. They do not want history to repeat itself. At the same time they think they have not benefited much from the government as it should have because of their role in the 1986 liberation war. Mbale had challenges with the then Mbabazi saga (when he was stopped from proceeding to Mbale). And as indicated in the report, the village FGD seem to have either been intimidated or coached on what to say.

6. Arua and Soroti are totally disappointed in this government mainly because they think they tested a better system under Obote 1. They also argue that they have been sidelined just because they do not support NRM.
7. Hoima which has consistently supported NRM 99% is now a little uncomfortable majorly because of how the compensation of land regarding oil has been handled. And also regarding employment of workers at the oil wells. People in Hoima argued that all workers that are at the oil wells are not „Banyoro“. They wonder how they (Banyoro) are going to benefit from the oil.

## **SURVEY FINDINGS PART II:**

**Districts of Iganga, Busia, Amuru, Nebbi, Ntungamo, Rukungiri,  
Kanungu, Kasese, Kapchorwa and Nakapiripirit**

## **Introduction**

This report is structured in sub themes namely; background and introduction; understanding elections; election management; election malpractice; independence of the EC and other state agencies; constitutional amendments; alliances and recommendations.

## **Understanding elections and democracy**

### *Understanding elections*

This survey sought to establish from the respondents their understanding of elections, and what election means to them as citizens of Uganda.

A majority of those interviewed understand elections as a process through which they exercise civic rights by voting their desired leaders into office, to represent the voices of the local people at a national level and ensure delivery of services to voters. In addition, many view it as a process where citizens get an opportunity to actively participate in political activities of their country. Specifically, many of the respondents view elections as a process where freedom of expression is realized because people are allowed to express themselves, criticize and hold their leaders accountable. In Iganga, for example, a comparison was made between the current government (NRM) and Obote's (UPC) government, where people are free to speak their mind, while in Obote's government, no one would speak ill of the President, least they faced the wrath of the security forces.

In many places especially the districts of Kasese, Rukungiri, Ntungamo, Busia and Nebbi some respondents felt election time is time to hold leaders accountable and at the same time ensure they "payback" for the time they have not been around. They noted that it is the time when leaders come to the citizens to explain what they have been doing, what they have failed to do and or what they plan to do.

In Busia, some respondents argued that conducting regular elections is a sign that the constitution is alive and being implemented.

If the constitution requires that presidential and parliamentary elections are to be organized every five years, and the state has since 1995 complied with this requirement, it is a sign of democracy in Uganda (FGD Busia).

Elections were also seen as an opportunity to exercise the constitutional right to vote and other political rights. This is because the Constitution of Uganda grants powers to the people, who must exercise it in accordance with its provisions. Some respondents in Amuru and Nebbi, described elections as an opportunity for assessment of both the government in power and other political parties' performance. This assessment can help improve performance of leaders. To them, it is therefore an opportunity for change, because those vying for elective positions must demonstrate their ability and how they will bring positive change in a particular area. In effect, whether or not an incumbent is re-elected is determined by whether or not he or she has been accountable for his or her time, and his/her strategies. In the event that the incumbent does not impress the populace, a new leader is chosen. Either way, elections are viewed by some as an opportunity for change. In Busia particularly, elections were defined as the free will to choose a leader.

However, a number of people in the FGDs in the rural areas largely considered election time as the time to make money from candidates vying for different positions. Many thought it was the time to "hold their leaders accountable" by making them pay back. This is because a lot of money circulates in the economy during campaigns. To them, business tends to boom during election time as a result of handouts from candidates. For example some respondents in Iganga and Busia observed that election time is the only time when contestants give cash and gifts to their people and after elections the elected candidates never return to the community.

Generally whereas majority of the respondents and FGDs saw elections as necessary for Uganda, a big number of them saw it as a process that must be undertaken for the sake of following the constitution without necessarily looking at its value. Quite a number of respondents saw it as a time to make money from contestants as opposed to choosing leaders who will represent and plan for them.

### ***Election as a means to deliver democracy***

The survey sought to assess whether elections in Uganda deliver democracy. There were varying opinions on this question. Some of the respondents in the different districts considered that even with all the challenges in Uganda's electoral processes, elections to a large extent deliver democracy. Many noted that at the end of the day the most popular person or the choice of the people wins an election. They observed that overall the people's choice is what reigns and this is in itself democracy. However, some respondents in districts such as Nebbi and Busia were quick to note that whereas elections in Uganda will ensure the most popular person wins the election, the most popular person may not necessarily be the best person to implement programs that will bring development to the people. In Busia, for example, FGD discussants noted that sometimes a person is chosen

on the basis of political party affiliation and not his/her manifesto or promise to deliver. This in the end results into poor service delivery and lack of development, which should otherwise have fostered democracy, according to them.

Some respondents and FDGs, especially in Busia, Iganga, Amuru and Nebbi, believe that democracy cannot be achieved in a country where there is prevalent vote buying, intimidation and sometimes fear. They noted that voter buying in the name of facilitation such as giving soap; salt or money was common in their districts. Others noted that intimidation was rife and free choice of the people was undermined.

Exchange of materials for votes has become the order of the day, because we voters look at MPs and politicians as people who are going to „eat“ and therefore, we demand for our share in advance (FGD Busia).

Another respondent in Kanungu noted:

You cannot win an election in this area (Kanungu) if you have not paid something. Everyone expects you to give them something and the one who gives most takes the day. People give soap, salt, sugar, matchboxes, waragi (local brew) or Bushera (local porridge) in order to be voted. That has become so normal that everyone is expected to pay something.

Other people blame the lack of democracy in the country on the absence of democratic principles to guide society. In this sense, the government is therefore a product of the same society and cannot give what it does not have.

Society shapes the conduct of government; a government cannot be democratic in a society that is not guided by democratic principles. Thus an election is a mere gimmick to show the outside world that Uganda is democratic.“ (FGD Urban Iganga)

Some respondents viewed lack of education and limited information on elections and its purpose, the main reason elections have failed to deliver democracy.

An informed society can use elections to achieve democracy and Ugandan citizens are a long way to get there (Amuru Respondent).

In Rukungiri, it was observed by some respondents that electoral democracy cannot exist in a militarized state. It was noted that presidential and parliamentary elections in 2001 and 2006 were characterized by heavy deployment of police, military, Internal Security Organization (ISO) and private security with guns, which was very intimidating. They equated the situation in 2001, to a state of war. And yet they fear that this may be nothing compared to the 2016 election. **‘In 2016, worse is anticipated if Amama Mbabazi is to stand’.**

In every election, there is heavy deployment of police and army, prior to Election Day people fight, they beat opponents, some are arrested, and others just disappear for days. The people in this area fear arrest, they fear the army. Tell me, after seeing your neighbor’s son being beaten by police or army, would you encourage your sons to go vote for your candidate. What we do is you keep quiet and stay home. If you are beaten or feel chaos may result, you do not even go to vote. That’s the only way to be safe and avoid regrets. (Respondent in Rukungiri).

In Rukungiri, Kanungu and Iganga, respondents pointed to internal political party fights (lack of internal democracy) as the biggest challenge to democracy. For example party primaries have been defined with blatant voter rigging, intimidation and violence especially within the National Resistance Movement (NRM). Some respondents accused a certain politician of taking all the NRM ballot materials (buckets) to his home during the 2011, NRM primaries in Mitoma District. They accused him of returning the materials two days later and announcing himself winner of the election. One Focus Group discussant who contested for LC III under NRM in Rukungiri testified thus:

During party primaries, you need to win, but party members won’t allow you. I was accused of being an FDC person even when I was contesting in NRM. Police and crime preventers were deployed to support my opponent. When I realized that I could not win in such a situation I got my boys, I trained them and gave them sticks (nkoni) and deployed them in places I knew the other person would cheat. I made sure am ready for war and if they were to steal my votes my boys would protect them (FGD Rukungiri).

There was a view that, there is more transparency during elections under the current government compared to past governments. *To a large extent, now people have the power*

*and ability to choose their leaders.* This is because people are now enlightened, they know how to choose leaders (Respondent in Kanungu).

Restoration of term limits for the presidency and re-instatement of term limits for all the elective positions would restore democracy in Uganda (Leader in Kanungu).

### ***Views from different Institutions about elections and their role***

The survey sought to gather from a number of institutions their understanding of and role in elections. The institutions include the Uganda Police, the Electoral Commission and the District Local Government Authorities.

#### **• *Uganda Police Force***

In most of the districts visited, the police was generally reluctant to participate as respondents and to outline their role in elections. Some of them cited the need to get clearance from the headquarters in order to speak on election matters, which they regarded as purely political matter (Iganga and Amuru). While in Busia the researchers were referred to the Resident District Commissioner (RDC) for all election related questions because they believe it is a security issue. In Kasese, the RDC first demanded a letter from State House to allow the survey to be conducted in the district.

In Amuru, the researchers faced the climax of resistance and were threatened with arrest. This happened when the NRM District Chairman, Amuru who on entering the DPC's office and found him with the researchers, complained about the focus of the research and the possibility of these researchers being *Mbabazi lawyers*.

I cannot allow these to happen here DPC. Mbabazi said, he has 500 lawyers and we have been seeing only a few speaking on TV, that means others are these people pretending to be researchers but spying for Mbabazi. I know lawyers, they are very clever people. I would rather die but cannot allow the survey to continue in Amuru, because, I am ready to die for Mzee. These things they are asking people, like the independence of electoral commission are things Mzee does not want! If you cannot arrest them, I will call the Regional Police Commander. (Chairman NRM Amuru).

The FDGs had to be stopped midway on the order of the DPC, who also withdrew the attendance list of the participants of the FGD.

In situations where Police Officers accepted to participate in the survey, the discussion was limited to short responses – *police work is to keep law and order*; further probes produced very little information.

However, in Rukungiri, Kanungu and Kasese, the police officers spoke a little more about their work and the challenges. They commended the good collaboration with the Electoral Commission (EC), which makes their work easy. They also noted that their work has been easy because people know what to do and which resulted in very little violence in their areas. In Kanungu, the police noted that even with the spilt up in the NRM, they believe there will be no tension and no violence, because Mbabazi's political interest had not in any way excited the populace in Kanungu.

We also watch the excitement and drama on Television as it happens in Kampala, Mbale and other places. It has not reached Kanungu yet (Respondent Kanungu).

Police officers in the districts visited complained about the limited number of trained electoral constables, which makes crime preventers join the police to play a role without proper training and qualification. In some areas officers complained of intimidation and orders from above during their work which sometimes renders them powerless and forces them to serve the interests of individuals. This was highlighted especially in areas where some current ministers originate and have constantly influenced the work of the police.

The researchers established that the police have set up a new department the–Political and Electoral Department– to handle all electoral matters and offences throughout the country. This new development is intended to ease coordination and election management. In Kasese, the head of the unit indicated that they enjoyed a good working relationship with the EC office at the district. Indeed, the researchers got an impression of a good working relationship between police and the EC in the district when visiting the EC Office.

On the other hand, some respondents described crime preventers and election constables as ill trained and lacking ability to understand basic civic issues. They observed that the Uganda Peoples' Defence Force (UPDF) lacked basic training syllabus for the crime preventers and only takes them through military drills and then deploys them.

What do they train these crime preventers other than giving them military skills? What do military skills help in preventing crime? Do these constables even know what a crime is, do they know the processes of crime or investigation. I think these are NRM people trained to protect votes. (Respondent in Ntungamo)

They noted that there are places which are peaceful and rarely experience any electoral violence. Those include the Sebei region, Ntungamo district, where policing has been easy during electoral process.

- ***Electoral Commission***

Generally the Electoral Commission District Registrars acclaim their work was one way of enabling citizens to exercise their political rights, albeit with challenges. This is because they believe elections have been largely free and fair which guarantees the choice of citizens' candidates. They believe elections deliver democracy despite the challenges faced.

Those elections have entrenched a culture of democracy in the country and that's why candidates who lose in the elections no longer go to the „bush“ to challenge the outcome of the elections (Respondent Ntungamo).

They pointed to limited funds to organize elections as their major challenge. This limits the coverage and adequacy of activities such as voter education and sensitization. They reasoned that voter education should be a continuous process conducted on an annual basis as opposed to the current practice where it is carried out prior to elections, once in five (5) years. This they argue would give the EC more time to plan and cover the wider populace and avoid the stampede that comes when elections are approach.

Respondents observed that so far, the pre-election process had been smooth in some areas. For example, in Kapchorwa, the turn-up during the verification of the voters register was commended as the EC registered a 98% success during this exercise. Majority of voters in Kapchorwa district are well informed and aware of all the electoral processes. They noted that, the only confusion had been with party elections where some voters had come to the EC Registrar's office to vote for their candidate in their party primaries.

Another notable challenge experienced by the EC officers reported during the survey is the ambiguity in the electoral laws. They noted that many times when people are arrested for displaying posters prior to the election period; they are released because it is not clear what they should be charged with.

Police officers call Registrars for advice on what charge should be preferred but I cannot help. I just tell them to release the person (Respondent Amuru).

The enactment of the Public Order Management Act was also highlighted as a threat to the work of the EC. „It is not clear how we should relate with this new law. For me, I will close my eye and only focus on the Presidential and Parliamentary Elections Act“ (Respondent Amuru, similar position in Iganga).

All violence related cases are referred to police and when the EC is sued, all support is provided to ensure that justice is secured.

We are human and any mistake is possible, so candidates can appeal if they are not satisfied with results (Respondent Iganga).

The majority of the EC Registers interviewed expect that the 2016 general elections will be peaceful. They have no fear, and believe they will deliver their work. They expressed confidence that should violence occur, the police would be there to intervene. They pointed out by-elections as the most challenging task in their work because the whole country’s focus is on one constituency or area. The pressure is always too much and this causes tension. Supporters of many political parties converge to gather support and many times conflict ensues. It was noted that despite the challenges, the EC still delivers its work.

Voter bribing was noted by the EC as common but difficult to prove in order to prosecute the culprits. The EC reasoned that this practice is occasioned by little or lack of understanding of the roles of leaders by voters on one hand and lack of understanding by leaders of their roles on the other hand. They emphasized that true democracy should start with the electorate and leaders understanding their roles. This calls for representation and accountability on the part of the leader, not paying school fees for voters’ children, paying hostels bills, and meeting burial expenses, which have over burdened MPs and other politicians.

Majority of people who were voted in office, where voted because they gave materials such as salt, sugar, soap and so on. But there are politicians, who command respect like Regan Okumu and Norbert Mao among others, who even without salt voters are still able to vote for (Respondent Amuru).

They acknowledged that different political parties are given equal space and considerations during the campaign programmes, except that the different political parties have different strengths and weaknesses. This determines their performances in the processes and how the EC coordinates with them. For example, some political parties have no offices,

structures or even addresses and operate seasonally which makes it difficult for the EC to coordinate with them.

Majority of the EC officials, whom the research team spoke to, were of the view that The Democratic Alliance (TDA) is a welcome thing as it would give stiff competition to the ruling government at all levels if one candidate per post was selected.

On the question of the independence of the EC, most of the Registrars affirmed that the EC is independent in doing its work, while some consider the question of „independence“ to be complex and not absolute. This is because whether an independent body is set up to appoint commissioners, „that same body making appointments get appointed by someone, so it’s a chain, which makes it complex“.

- Some staff of the EC recommends that in order to deliver free and fair elections, there ought to be a multi-sectoral approach because the EC alone cannot deliver free and fair elections. This, therefore, calls for more partnerships.
- They also recommend that the police should step up their work and District Internal Security Organisation (DISO) and RDCs should not be stakeholders in the electoral process, because they are partisan and their intervention always complicates the work of the EC.

### • **Chief Administrative Officers**

The CAOs generally noted that they have a limited role to play in elections. This is because the District Registrars manage all election matters. The role CAOs play now is mainly provision of logistical support. They provide cars and other logistics to support the EC. They also offer advice to the security committee of the district, of which they are part, on electoral matters.

In some districts (Busia and Ntungamo) CAOs were reluctant to speak. They considered elections a politically sensitive matter and do not want their voice to come out on the issue because of the neutral role they play as CAOs. *Imagine speaking ill of a candidate and then he turns to be the district chairman, how would you work?*

### • **Chairpersons LCV**

The research sought to understand the work of the Chairperson LCV and their appreciation of election issues in the respective districts. In some instances during the research, a vice chairperson or members of the council were met in the absence of the chairperson. Overall,

the LCV chairpersons noted that their major task around election is mobilisation and sensitization of the population generally on government programmes. This extends to electoral period, where voter education becomes part of the sensitization.

Some LCV chairs observed that the biggest challenge faced is the politicization of the process, where they are seen as canvassing for votes, yet their cause is genuine for the people. They noted some incidences of violence in previous elections in their areas of jurisdiction. For example, in Busia supporters burnt houses of political opponents during victory celebrations. Therefore, the LCV chairpersons have not been excluded from this dramatic violence either.

Several LCV chairpersons the research team talked to complained of voter buying, with some describing it as a „cancer“ which needs to be dealt with.

It is a burden on candidates at all levels to attend weddings, fundraising meetings, burials and so forth. This can push leaders to steal resources because; no one can have such monies to spend everywhere. If you do not appear, you do not get votes, you see the dilemma!

They strongly recommended that, a strict ban on demand or soliciting for money or fundraising be levied with a heavy penalty and strict law enforcers. Otherwise, the culture seems to be eating the Ugandan society away. They also recommended that the army should restrain from providing security during elections because the voters get intimidated. They strongly recommended civic education is allocated and adequate budget.

They fear that the internal political parties“ instabilities might escalate and risk the electoral process. Political parties should therefore sensitize voters on participation and management to calm the voters.

### ***Election management***

The survey sought to get perceptions and understanding of the roles and responsibilities of the EC in the management of elections. It also aimed at highlighting previous challenges in election management.

- ***Electoral Commission***

Respondents indicated that the core mandate of the EC is to organize; to ensure that they free and fair as well as to secure participation of all eligible voters. This includes

registration of eligible voters, display of the voter register, cleaning of the voter register to get rid of wrong or double entries, issuance of voter cards, recruitment of election officers, training, and delivery of election materials, counting and tallying votes and declaring of results. The respondents noted that while the EC has been doing its work, previous elections have witnessed a number of challenges including the following:

- i) Complaints of missing names on the voter register on the voting day, despite the names having appeared on the register. This disenfranchised some voters in Nebbi and Iganga districts. Respondents registered complaints that the current EC register will be grossly wrong if it is to be based on the National ID register which they say is a total mess.
- ii) Delay to display the voter register to enable voters to check and verify their names. By mid July, 2015, the voter register in many of the districts including Iganga and Busia had not yet been displayed. This made rectification of errors on the voters' register difficult.
- iii) Majority of the respondents complained that they had not received voter cards from the EC but instead received the national ID and the NRM party cards. It was therefore not clear to many respondents what they will use to vote, although they preferred the voter's card to the national ID. Many respondents said they have previously used the cards and some were not sure if the cards will have been issued by Election Day. The team noted that the process of distributing National IDs began the day the team was in Ntungamo and it was not possible to ascertain how many people had got the cards. However many respondents noted that they had registered for the national IDs. The team also noted that in the districts of Ntungamo, Rukungiri, Kanungu, Kasese and Busia the national IDs were being issued through the EC district registrars' offices. The fusion of roles between issuance of National IDs and EC roles did not seem to confuse the public.
- iv) Throughout the districts visited, there were concerns on limited voter and civic education to the populace by the EC. The EC officials noted that they have been running radio programs educating the public on the forth coming elections. They also noted that the process of voter education is based on the stages of elections for example registration and update of voter registers, nomination, campaigns among others. However respondents emphasized that the voter education was extremely limited. Most of the programme is done on radio as adverts or announcements asking people to take part in a particular event as opposed to explaining "why". Respondents also blamed the EC for not doing enough to educate the public about the role of different government agencies and what people should expect. For

example the EC was blamed for not telling the masses that *being in opposition is legal and part of the election process*.

- v) About the use of different media, respondents noted that radio; newspapers and TVs do not reach all people. This is mainly because many do not have access to these methods of communication, while a big number who listen to radio only look for news, announcements and entertainment and switch off during talk shows. They recommended that the EC should gather people under the tree, hold open forums and allow people to ask questions and seek clarifications.
- vi) The research also recorded late delivery of election materials. For example in Nabitende sub-county, Iganga District, the candidates for district councilor could not be voted for because election materials were not delivered on the scheduled date.
- vii) A number of respondents were concerned about the inadequate security during elections especially on the polling day. In the previous elections, most of the polling stations were manned by only two electoral constables, who they note is inadequate incase violence erupts. There was as well a concern that most constables are not trained or skilled enough to manage crowds and to manage election related activities. For example in Ntungamo one FGD discussant wondered whether these constables can tell between an election related crime and a normal way of doing things during an election. A case in point was where people solicit for votes at polling stations and the election constables are unable to do anything since they do not perceive this as wrong. Another example was given in Kanungu where candidates would bring the local porridge (Obushera) and serve it to people coming from elections. The porridge is said to be served within the premises of the polling station. In another incident a candidate brought a bull to a polling station and informed voters that it will be slaughtered for celebration of his victory.

In a related incident, it was noted that sometimes there is high deployment of UPDF officers and this instills fear among community members. Notable was the high deployment of solders in Rukungiri, Kanungu and Busia where respondents observed that this gives an impression that it is not safe to vote and some stay away. It was recommended that more police constables be trained and deployed. However a proper training syllabus for such constables be developed to ease and deal with crowd handling, and handling of election related matters.

- viii) The absence of proper identification systems was noted by respondents during the survey as a gap that can lead to election irregularities. The fact that in the last

elections there were no voter's cards and there is a possibility that some people may not have national IDs by the next elections was considered a major factor that may result into multiple voting and other irregularities. They also noted that the constant change of systems by the EC confuses voters. For example the change from lining up for LCs, to using secret ballots and voter's cards and later change to voting without cards and finally the requirement for National IDs may confuse the voters who may not be sure on how exactly they should identify themselves.

- ix) Some respondents noted that sometimes there is intimidation and suppression of presiding officers by candidates and their security, especially those from the ruling NRM party. It was disclosed that most of them claim they are very close to the president and therefore feel untouchable. On the other, some incumbent political leaders have been very chaotic. In Bugweri County for example, the FGD noted that, Hon. Abdu Katuntu, raided a polling station at Bumpingo Primary School and ran away with the ballot box and the police did nothing about it.
- x) There was also a concern that the amendments to the laws were coming in late. This was feared could affect the election process, because people including the police, presiding officers, candidates and voters would not be able to understand the law and its application, which could result in errors and omissions.
- xi) Another concern was the impending creation of new districts, cities and municipalities which would create new constituencies and therefore new electoral units during the coming 2016 elections.
- xii) While it was found that parish tribunals were working, they noted that they faced challenges because their decisions were sometimes not respected. They also complained of limited facilitation to parish tribunals to undertake their work which makes them prone to bribery (Ntungamo FGD). Some respondents contended that most members of the parish tribunals were all NRM leaning and do not seem to be working in the interest of the people but have hidden agendas.

### ***Election malpractices***

The survey sought to gather respondents' experiences on election malpractices. These include voter buying, rigging, multiple voting and intimidation. As earlier noted, voter buying defines the electoral process in Uganda. According to many respondents, it is an acceptable norm in politics and no one can go through elections without giving voters salt, sugar, soap and money.

We get our share because when MPs go to Parliament they become rich and forget about us. Look at this man Katuntu, we only see him during campaigns, we do not know whom they represent because they never consult us, (FGD, Iganga).

Rigging has been very common; people vote but sometimes the expected results differ because rigging starts very early. Some respondents accused the EC for aiding rigging especially for NRM candidates.

The biggest form of election malpractice mentioned was voter buying and facilitation which many FGD discussants saw as a normal thing that happens all the time. Voter buying takes different forms and methods including giving soap, sugar, salt, matchboxes etc. In Rukungiri and Kanungu districts, FGD discussants shared experiences where they were given soap and sugar and would be asked to count match sticks and share them. Another case said to be common was where candidates give out money and other things during church and school fundraisings especially at events held as elections approach.

There was also an issue of voter facilitation. Most respondents especially from the EC said the law was not adequate to apprehend those who buy voters in the name of campaign agent facilitation. This was evident in many testimonies of FGD discussants and the police. For example in Ntungamo many discussants testified to having been given UGX 20,000 (Twenty thousand shillings only) for lunch when the president visited Mbarara. They said buses were sent to town to ferry them to Mbarara after which everyone was given the money. A similar incident was said to have happened in Kasese during the president's visit. Many citizens however saw this as facilitation and nothing to do with electoral malpractices. On the other hand testimonies were given in Kasese where a candidate was found giving cash to individuals in a room and he claimed all were his agents whom he was facilitating to go and look for votes. This happened despite the fact that none of the said agents had an agent appointment letter.

Another common form of malpractice was monitoring voters to ensure that whoever was given money votes for a specific candidate who paid them. Some voters especially the elderly were said to be given persons to guide them during voting. These they claim are people who are usually sponsored by different candidates to ensure the person votes according to their interest and prior agreement.

## Independence of the EC and other state agencies

- ***Independence of the EC***

The independence of the EC came under question during the survey. The majority felt it is not independent and had a heavy leaning towards the ruling NRM party. Most citizens the survey team spoke to, do not trust the EC. They think it works for the interest of one person – the President. Some did not think the EC is independent because, according to them, it is under the command of the president through by the Uganda Police. Therefore, the demand for an independent EC is therefore very alive, if a free and fair election is to be secured in Uganda.

Some felt it was independent though working under difficult circumstances. The difficult circumstances considered here were the lack of civic awareness among Ugandans which makes it easy for the electorate to be manipulated. This was said to be the reason why Ugandans are not able to demand for their rights from the leaders they chose and why they are unable to effectively take part in the electoral process.

There are those who felt the EC has always delivered because results are declared immediately after counting and the results are a true reflection of events that happen.

The EC always declares results and the agents of candidates always sign the forms. We cannot say that they are cheated. (FGD, Kanungu).

I wouldn't base the independence of the EC on a single event of JPAM. The EC always delivers, even JPAM has never complained of the independence of the EC (FGD, Kanungu).

As an officer from the EC, I can say we always follow what we get from the field. The results as they are in the declaration forms is the way we present them and send them to headquarters, we have no control over the results.

Some respondents felt the EC has failed to do its work and faces challenges.

How do you expect the EC to effectively work in the face of a strong and overpowering police? The police have taken over all the decisions (FGD, Ntungamo).

The EC is not well funded, the always depend on districts to deliver materials, that is why polling materials sometimes reach late. They

do not have their own sources of funds. They depend on government to give them money for civic and voter education. If no money is given there will be no voter education. This means we will not have independent EC (FGD Nebbi).

Those who felt that the EC has not been independent gave examples such as the restriction of members of the opposition and letting NRM have its way. Most of the complaints regarding the EC's lack of independence relate to the way it has treated opposition politicians such as Kiiza Besigye and more recently Amama Mbabazi. Many respondents felt the response to former Prime Minister, Amama Mbabazi's consultations and his prevention from conducting consultations is a sign of failure by the EC to be independent.

Look at how they have been treating JPAM, they say he cannot consult, they say the party has not allowed him, yet for Museveni, he is free moving throughout the country" (Key Informant Rukungiri).

The EC has acted itself as if it is under the NRM and the police. I have watched on TV the police quote NRM law over national laws and the EC has failed to come on top of things, they have failed to call the police, the NRM and even the president to order. How can we say it is independent? (FGD, Ntungamo).

The EC works like it is under police. Imagine how the EC allowed Amama to consult and said he was free to go. Then Kayihura (IGP) said he (Amama) cannot go ahead because he is not authorized by the party. The EC has kept quiet and has done nothing. We cannot say they are independent. (Key informant Ntungamo).

Some respondents noted that the EC was interpreting the law to favor the incumbent. This was in relation to the recent legal response to consultations by Amama Mbabazi. They noted that initially the EC attempted to follow the law, but following a response from the police claiming consultations were illegal, the EC back tracked on its previous position which had allowed the consultations to be held. The EC was blamed for failing to prevail over the police and to stand its ground on electoral matters.

Some respondents reasoned that the fact that the EC has no independent budget and the fact that it relies heavily on district local governments and other government agencies to do its work is a sign of lack of independence.

- ***Independence of Police***

Majority believed the police is partisan and selectively applies the law. Some respondents believe that the Police is independent and is executing its work. They contend that it follows the law but it is at times the opposition that provokes it especially during demonstrations when required procedures are not adhered to forcing the police to intervene.

However it was noted that police has overstepped its role and decided to interpret the law in ways that favour the incumbent. An example cited is the requirement for notice to the police before holding a procession, which police has virtually interpreted to as a requirement for permission which is illegal. Overall, those who feel the police is executing its role lawfully, blamed the opposition for not following the law.

Why doesn't Amama and Besigye follow what the police is telling them, are they above the law? They should follow the law as police enforces them. Remember police is enforcing order as it is trying to guide them (FGD, Kanungu).

The police is independent and forces the law as is, it doesn't matter whether the law is unfair or not. All they do is...enforcing it to the dot.(FGD Busia).

Police is neutral when it comes to enforcing other laws, however when enforcing political related laws, it tends to protect government.

The police was said to be independent when it comes to fighting crimes that have no political connection. In such cases, it was said that the police responds to most crimes albeit slowly and many times police officers ask for facilitation such as fuel, stationary, airtime in order for them to be able to investigate the crimes.

Police will do their best if the crime has nothing to do with politics. They always get to work if you have no politics in it.(FGD Ntungamo).

Police works on other offences other than politics, however they will ask for money. They ask for money to transport them and money to release suspects on bond everything nowadays is done by money. (FGD)

Some believed police is neither neutral nor independent. They blame it for always siding with NRM. Respondents identified a number of incidences where the police did not take a neutral stand. The police was castigated for working with criminal gangs such as the Kiboko squad and Kalangala Action Plan during elections to beat up members of the opposition and for interfering with free electoral processes. Some respondents noted that some of the police officers and leaders of the police are NRM Cadres.

I remember some time back the president told the nation that Kale Kayihura was an NRM cadre. Now if police is led by a political party cadre what do you expect. It definitely follows the party. (FGD).

„If you saw a list circulated recently showing the top police commanders“, they are all from the west (south west), all of them are NRM people.“ (FGD Busia).

„Police rarely follows the law; it actually doesn“t follow any law other than political propaganda. You see they have failed in all crimes. All political crimes, police has failed. Be it terrorism, Butayimba (iron bars), robbers etc. they only deploy to fight Besigye.“ (FGD in Nebbi).

„Police will take its time to come to your rescue, but if what you are dealing with political issues, they will send track full of people, teargas and everything. They will be there on time for as long as you are opposition. For the other crimes, no one really cares.“ (FGD Ntungamo).

Some respondents blamed the police for interfering with the work of the EC. They disclosed that the police undermine the work of the EC by claiming they are in charge of security and directing the EC on what to do. This has not only undermined the independence of the EC but has also resulted in abuse of the law by the police.

„Here is our experience, during a bye-election, there was a claim that we tampered with the results and the NRM candidate lost. The truth is we did not do anything, we followed the law. When Kale Kayihura came around for the elections he ordered that we get arrested. We were arrested and spent two days at the police. Our bosses from the EC all knew we had followed the law to the dot. In fact our chairperson and all commissioners were around during that period. However when the NRM candidate lost, she looked for an

excuse and claimed we had changed the results. The police did not investigate or even inquire to establish the truth. They just blamed us and arrested us. After two days we were released without any charge. We kept reporting to the police but finally the police let us free. We were lucky that the EC and all the bosses had seen what we were doing and were certain we had not tampered with the results.” (Key informant who preferred to remain anonymous).

- ***Independence of UHRC***

Majority of the respondents had not heard about the UHRC and many did not know what it does. Those who had heard about the UHRC said it was too far and hardly reached their area. Others failed to differentiate the UHRC from NGOs, which made securing response on its independence difficult.

“We see those human rights people, for example Save the Children, we’ve seen them in schools and I hear they do good work” (Focus Group Discussant in Kasese)

Many respondents felt the reason UHRC has not had an impact because it has not reached out to the people and is located far from the communities.

We hear about UHRC but it is located in Fort Portal, the rarely come this side. People in villages cannot access them. It is very difficult to know what they do or even to seek help from them. (FGD, Kasese).

I was told to go to UHRC when government evicted us. But again I asked how I can go to human rights (UHRC) which is a government body to complain about being evicted by government. They are one and the same. Who pays the staff of human rights (UHRC) isn’t it government. Aren’t they the same people that evict us. Maybe they can work if it is for private individuals. (FGD, Kasese).

We hear about human rights people on radio. They run radio programs but they never come to us. We even cannot reach them. They are in Mbarara which is very far for an ordinary person. (Respondent, Kanungu).

We cannot separate government from the UHRC they are the same people. They do government work, they report to government, they

are paid by government they are actually part and parcel of government. (Respondent Ntungamo).

- ***Independence of DPP***

Whereas the role of the Directorate of Public Prosecution (DPP) was not part of the focus of the research, a number of respondents felt the DPP plays a major role in elections through selective application of the law and the criminal law process. The DPP was said to be used by the ruling government to curtail the success of the opposition by making it difficult for them to reach out to the community. The most cited example was the role of the DPP in the charges relating to “Walk-to-work” demonstrations. Some respondents noted that despite the several charges brought against opposition leaders, the DPP failed to successfully prosecute a single charge even when it is the duty of this office to advise the police and ensure that the judicial process is not abused. Other examples given were charges brought against Kiiza Besigye of rape and the treason involving the Peoples’ Redemption Army (PRA) rebel group, which all did not succeed in courts of law.

The DPP has not been independent, look at how it has charged walk to work people. They know they commit no offence, they know they can’t succeed, but all they do is draw up charges to achieve political ends. (Respondent in Nebbi).

The DPP has never been independent, you remember all the cases against Besigye, from rape, treason etc. they never have evidence, they only want to disturb him and make him look a bad man. (Respondent in Busia).

The DPP is independent if they are dealing with cases that are not political. There they will work and be effective (Focus Group Discussant, Kanungu).

Some believe the DPP is independent but it is only let down by the police.

To be fair, the DPP is independent, if you know the criminal justice process, you will notice that the DPP depends on evidence from police and what police brings is what he takes to court (Respondent in Nebbi).

### ***Constitutional amendments***

Majority of the respondents had not heard about the constitutional amendments and were not certain if the amendments will affect elections. A few doubted the amendments will result in any change given they had come too late.

Majority of the EC respondents felt the amendments have come too late and it will be difficult to carry out adjustments and voter education on the new changes given the short period of time.

### ***Alliances and prevailing political environment***

Most respondents and key informants had not heard about the opposition alliances and therefore were not sure of their impact. Many said the alliances were limited to Kampala and therefore did not have an impact on the political scene of the country.

Those alliances are Kampala things, we just hear about them. For us in the districts, it is about the party, I belong to (FDC Chairman Busia).

### ***Fears and expectations***

On expectations about the forth-coming elections, majority of the respondents think the NRM will lead in the coming elections. Majority believed that President Museveni was still popular and the NRMO the most popular party. The reasons advanced for popularity of the NRMO party is because it has structures across the country, which have also been tested.

The NRM is still the most popular party and despite its failures we have tested it, we know we can improve it and we can engage it to improve. We are not sure of the other opposition parties, we have not seen them perform. (Respondent in Busia)

Look at our district, yes we have FDC offices, they are the biggest party but they are only at the district, they do not engage people in villages, you cannot expect them to win if they are not reaching the people in the communities.

Some respondents felt that the only reason it may be difficult for other parties to win the next election is because NRMO has used state machinery to make it difficult for the other

parties to compete and even win. These sighted cases of intimidation and harassment faced mainly by Kiiza Besigye of FDC and former Prime Minister who was stopped from consulting in Mbale.

It was also noted that in terms of election results, many people other than political parties might win at different constituencies depending on the strength of individual candidates. Respondents observed that elections in Uganda are more based on individuals and less on the political party, which is why people may vote one party for president and a different party for MP or LC levels. This was blamed on the individual merit system that was introduced by NRM and the lack of proper civic education. People still view candidates as individuals as opposed to their parties. They are more interested in what the individual will offer and less about the political party.

Overall, respondents said NRM will lead in the coming elections at all electoral levels, however some predicted stiff competition between NRM and other political parties at individual constituencies at parliament and local council levels.

Some respondents felt that the upcoming 2016 elections will not be free and fair given the present developments. The major concerns were around the unfair treatment of opposition leaders, which respondents believe does not present a leveled ground to ensure free and fair elections. Some feared that given the present police interference and lack of independence of the EC, opposition leaders and their supporters may resort to violence. Some noted that actually the ruling NRM was not ready to lose power whether at presidential or parliamentary level. For this reason, it was thought that, if NRM believes there is an opposition stronghold, it may deploy the army and other groups to cause confusion or to beat up the opposition. Some respondents noted that this was witnessed in the last elections in Jinja, Mbale, Sironko and Sembabule districts and there was fear that it could be witnessed again in the coming 2016 elections.

I personally think the elections won't be free and fair. Even though am an NRM member, if think the way they have treated JPAM shows that there will be attempts to influence the outcome. If really NRM and police think JPAM is not a threat, why don't they let him consult? Let them give him to us. We will decide whether he is a man enough to lead the nation or whether he can't manage and we fail him. They should not be choosing for us. (Key informant, Busia)

I still think what happened in the last NRM primaries will happen again here. I experienced this myself in the last elections, where I lost in NRM primaries and I was never given a hearing. I lodged a

complaint within the party commission; to date they have never given me a response. Around that time, the NRM office was burned with all the materials, nothing was done to help the situation. I decided to stand as independent after that, I won the elections but NRM was a key challenge. They do not want competition. I suspect the same things are going to happen not only to JPAM but to every person who will lose in primaries and decide to contest as an independent. They will be fought from within like it was for me. That will cause a lot of confusion (Key informant in Busia).

In this place most trouble came from NRM primaries. I personally had my Kanyamas to protect my votes. People here would vote several times and cheat. They would deploy soldiers and police to protect others and not us. That is why I had my boys to protect my votes (Focus group discussant, Rukungiri).

I think NRM primaries would be a big challenge. You see last time we had no ballot papers, we used manila papers and the stamp of the LC 1. It was easy to cheat and people fought over the vote. The LC III candidate took away the bucket that was being used as a ballot box. He returned it in the evening with ticked votes. Anyone could vote whether you are NRM or FDC, we had no proper registers. Provided someone in the village would identify you, you would be a voter. (Focus Group Discussant, Rukungiri).

My biggest fear is the breakaway of Amama, which is going to be like it always happens in Rukungiri where people get beaten and everyone is up in arms. They deploy the army and police and these intimidate people. They also use crime preventers to disorganize the opposition. The other day I was in Rukungiri and people were saying that you people of Kanungu are now going to taste teargas and other forms of violence. I fear this is going to be Kanungu's turn to face torture and election violence. (FDG Rukungiri).

This time (2016) it will be worse. The violence is still fresh in our memories, a few days ago, a family of 3 or 4 people was wiped away – killed in the night over election related violence when they (victims) got drunk and started shouting a given candidate of their choice in the NRM primaries and the quadruplet were slaughtered like goats in the night. Even voting cards can be merely grabbed from

the voters and the voter is left with no choice but to just vote for the intimidating side that will have grabbed his or her card. (FDG Nakapiripirit)

I fear a scenario where Amama, Besigye, Muntu and Ssejusa come together to fight Museveni. There we will have a real war. You see all these are part of NRM. They are insiders who have now turned against the party. They will disorganize the party and this will result in conflicts. We may see more teargas, more demonstrations etc.

### ***General recommendations***

- Voter education should be conducted comprehensively and continuously throughout the years. This should be beefed up with civic education because ignorance is the greatest cause of voter buying. The EC should collaborate with churches to communicate to the people and take advantage of public functions to have wider coverage because radios and newspapers only reach a few people.
- Change of government will cause change of guards and perhaps new policies can be introduced to address the common practice of voter buying. If one is to compare the economic status of people during Idi Amin's government to the current regime, it is clear that there is fundamental change and the standard of living is way better.
- Adequate time should be given to presidential aspirants to consult and campaign.
- Police should be independent and should train police officers who are going to police elections.
- A standard curriculum for crime preventers should be developed.
- The position of the EC Commissioner should be attained through a competitive process which would involve advertisement, interview and public vetting before appointment.
- Adequate time needs to be given for electoral reforms before electioneering.
- Freedom of expression needs to be enhanced for all.
- Laws to stop voter buying and fundraising by politicians need to be strictly implemented and heavy penalties inflicted on culprits on both sides (those receiving and giving bribes).
- Term limits should be restored for presidency and instated for all elective positions.
- Women representatives cover a very a big electoral area, instead, Uganda should consider having one woman and one man representing a constituency.
- Parliamentary budgets and funding should be managed by a different agency not by parliament itself.

- Constitutional amendments should be adequate to render elections free, fair and credible.
- Strict ban on demand and soliciting for money or fundraising be levied with a heavy penalty and strict law enforcers. Otherwise, the culture seems to be eating the Ugandan society away.
- The army should restrain from providing security during elections because voters get intimidated.
- Civic education should be allocated an adequate budget.