



# **Voter Registration and the Electoral Process**

**Paper Presented at The Workshop for Field Officials**

**By**  
**Charles B. Nsimbi**  
**Ag. Head Voter Registration Dept.**

**Imperial Botanical Beach Hotel, Entebbe**

**5<sup>th</sup> January 2006**

## **1.0 Introduction**

The Electoral Commission is mandated under Art. 59 (3) and 61 (e) of the Constitution of the Republic of Uganda (1995) to compile, maintain, revise and update voters' registers.

The Electoral Commission Act, 1997 (as amended), Sect. 18(1) requires the Commission to compile, maintain and update the voters' register on a continuing basis.

Joe C. Baxter (2002) says nothing will bring an election into disrepute faster than major problems with the electoral lists. In democratic societies in the world voter populations are taken as comprising of all citizens who have attained majority age. This age ranges from 14 years in some Middle Eastern countries, 16 years in Scandinavia, 18 years in most of Western Europe, America and Africa including Uganda to 22 in some eastern block countries.

While it is the responsibility of the Electoral Commission to put in place facilities for registration of voters, it is the duty of every Ugandan aged 18 years and above to register as a voter for public elections and referenda (Art. 59(2) of the 1995 Constitution). It is important to note that it is not mandatory for one to register as a voter or even to participate in the electoral process.

During the national registration exercise under the Photographic Voter Registration and Identification System (PVRIS) conducted countrywide in August/September, 2001, the Commission, using parish registration teams, registered 8.2 million voters out of a total of 10.7million eligible voters.

## **2.0 The Electoral Process**

The election cycle consists of the following major components;

1. Registration of voters
2. General Update of the Voters' register
3. Voter Education Campaign
4. Display of the Voters' Register (mandatory 21 days)
5. Nomination of Candidates and Campaigns
6. Polling Day
7. Declaration of results

### **3.0 Registration of Voters**

The Commission, after registering eligible voters afresh in August 2001 and in accordance with the provisions of the Constitution and the Electoral Commission Act, 1997 (as amended), has since August 2003 been registering voters on a continuing basis at District level. In this regard, the Commission trained all District Registrars, their Assistants and the rest of the staff in district election offices, equipped them with cameras and other registration materials for that purpose. They then drew programmes and conducted registration of voters in their respective districts (**see Appendix I**). This exercise captured 100,971 new voters within 19 months increasing registered voter population to 8.3 million or 72.8% of the projected current voter population of 11.4 million eligible voters as per Uganda Bureau of Statistics (UBOS) figures.

### **4.0 The Update of Voters' Register**

Results of the 2002 population and housing census, projected eligible voters to be 11.4 million, that is to say, 44% of the total population of 26 million as of June 2005.

The Commission updates the register both on a continuous basis and prior to any general elections in accordance with sect. 21 & 24 of the Electoral Commission Act, 1997. The purpose of the update is to add on to the register newly eligible voters and those that may have not registered before.

For this election cycle, the Commission has conducted two general updates of the register;

- Between 7<sup>th</sup> March and 8<sup>th</sup> April 2005 in preparation for the Referendum on Political Systems,
- Between 29<sup>th</sup> September and 30<sup>th</sup> October 2005 in preparation for the general elections.

The growth in voter population is tabulated below;

**Table 1: Voter Population per General Election and Referenda Since 1980**

Type of Election and year Held	Registered Voters
Multiparty Elections (1980)	4,880,484
Constituent Assembly Elections (1993)	7,186,164
Presidential and Parliamentary Elections (1996)	8,495,422
Local Council Elections (1997/98)	9,129,131
Presidential Elections (2001)	10,775,836
Parliamentary Elections (2001)	10,570,412
Local Government elections (2002)	8,194,707
Referendum 2005	8,524,230
Display Register (Dec '05 – Jan '06)	10,604,402

## 4.2 Problems Encountered

### 4.2.1 Unquantifiable Problems

Voter apathy as reflected in turn up for elections is on the increase. This, coupled with the fact that voter registration is not compulsory in Uganda, is responsible for the perceived low turn up for registration of new voters in the run up to the possible referendum. Indeed figures for voter turn up during past polls show that not all registered voters turn up to vote, less so for referenda.

There is also a culture where prospective voters turn up for registration in the last 2 days of the exercise, whatever its duration.

### 4.2.2 Significant Underlying Problems

The Electoral Commission faced a number of constraints in preparation for the referendum. These include the following, among others;

- i. Late enactment of laws e.g the Referendum and Other Provisions Act, 2005, the Presidential and Parliamentary Acts, 2005 and the Local Government (Amendment) Act 2005. The late enactment of the enabling laws leads to the late release of funds;
- ii. A very tight timeframe within which the Commission has to undertake the referendum activities;

- iii. Generally, inadequate funding leading the Commission to depend on existing local government administrative structures and personnel for its field activities;
- iv. Low morale of Electoral Commission field officials owing to meager allowances payable and arrears still owed.

#### 4.2.3 Operational Problems

The underlying problems led to operational problems that included the following;

- i. Late Delivery of Materials,
- ii. Inadequate publicity of the Update Programmes,
- iii. Inadequate Equipment, Manpower and technical know how,
- iv. Inadequate voter education, and
- v. Late briefing of Field Officials and stakeholders.

### 5.0 Display of the Voters Register

The Commission displays the register prior to any elections in accordance with sect. 25 of the Electoral Commission Act, 1997. The purpose of the display exercise is to clean the register of persons no longer eligible to vote from a certain parish. These may include the following;

- The dead,
- The underage,
- Those who neither reside nor originate from the parish
- Those who are registered more than once either on the same register or on other registers, and
- Those who are not national of Uganda.

During the display exercise, the Commission uses various forms to record the above objections and effect the necessary changes after the parish tribunals have consented to the objections. The forms include;

- CLN 3 for mismatched images,
- CLN 4 for registered voters without voters' cards,
- CLN 6 for registered voters who are missing on the register, and
- CLN 9 for persons no longer eligible to vote from a certain parish

For this election cycle, the Commission has conducted two displays of the register exercises;

- Between 24<sup>th</sup> May to 13<sup>th</sup> June 2005 in preparation for the Referendum on Political Systems,
- Between 22<sup>nd</sup> December 2005 and 11<sup>th</sup> January 2006 in preparation for the general elections.

Please study **Appendix II** that is the guidelines for the display exercise that is currently going on and from which you will immediately get complaints.

## **6.0 Complaints Arising out of Voter Registration**

Lutalo (2003) says Voters' registers must be, for any election, **accurate** (correct, flawless, factual or exact), **reliable** (dependable, stable and secure) and **credible** (acceptable to the stakeholders for instance Voters, Candidates, Local and International Communities).

I would, however, like to mention some of the phenomena that affect the credibility of the register and from which you should expect complaints to arise.

- Multiple Registration;** There appears to be a school of thought that deems the update exercise as a fresh registration. Consequently, some people may have mistakenly registered more than once contrary to sect. 29 (f) of the Electoral Commission Act. This carries a stiff penalty. The Commission would like to appeal to persons in this category to take advantage of the display period to remove one of the registrations. After the Display exercise, the Commission shall use duplicate analysis to highlight those that will still appear more than once and the law will take its course.
- Missing Images;** For one reason or another, some returns do not have corresponding images. The Commission has redeployed retake teams during the display exercise to retake these missing images. Please advise any registered voter whose bio-data is on the register but whose photograph is missing to have his/her photograph retaken during the display exercise.
- Underage Registrations;** It appears some persons registered underage because they know that they will be of age by 2006. This is contrary to sect. 19(1) (b) of the Electoral Commission Act that stipulates the minimum age of registration as 18years. The Commission will not honor these registrations and these persons are requested to ensure that they remove their particulars from the register during the display exercise, failure to do this will mean deliberate breaking of the law and the Commission will proceed accordingly.

- iv. **New Administrative Units;** In accordance with the law, the Commission embarked on a re-organisation of polling stations in August 2005. As a result, the display registers are as per re-organised polling stations. The Commission has notified all stakeholders to take note. This area has the potential of creating confusion in the voting public if they do not ascertain their voting locations prior to polling day.
- v. **Missing Particulars;** This particularly refers to bio-data that may be missing yet the voter duly applied for registration. This often brings the majority of complaints. Missing particulars may occur due to the following;
  - The voter having been misplaced during capture,
  - The voter now belonging to another polling station due to re-organisation,
  - The voter's application form never reached the Commission for capture, and
  - The voter was removed from the register in a previous display exercise.

## **7.0 Conclusion:**

The procedure for receiving and dealing with complaints related to voter registration has been through the parish tribunals, the District Registrar, the Returning Officer and the Commission. You are now taking over the role from the District Registrar. You should familiarize your self with the Electoral Commission Act, 1997 especially sect. 29 that details offenses related to voter registration. You should understand the difference between offences created by the act and objections enabled by the act. You are starting your duties in the middle of the electoral process but you will be expected to perform like veterans. Please make use of the District Registrars and the Returning Officers who are already familiar with the situation but always remember that your schedule of duties is yours and yours alone to fulfill.

**Thank you and God Bless you.**

<b>Appendix I</b>									
<b>Dist. Code</b>	<b>District</b>	<b>Voting Pop. As Projected by Census</b>	<b>Registered Voters by 2001</b>	<b>Referendum General Update Returns</b>	<b>Referendum - Display Register</b>	<b>Referendum - Polling Register</b>	<b>Presidential - General Update Returns</b>	<b>Presidential - Display Register</b>	<b>% Registered Population</b>
01	Apac	318,388	209,858	9,461	219,319	205,845	38,223	244,068	76.66
02	Arua	345,880	222,947	34,809	257,756	248,855	37,137	285,992	82.69
03	Bundibugyo	99,912	62,085	8,519	70,604	68,034	22,853	90,887	90.97
04	Bushenyi	349,239	259,170	24,135	283,305	269,247	43,804	313,051	89.64
05	Gulu	234,133	171,802	9,809	181,611	178,674	40,231	218,905	93.50
06	Hoima	167,648	90,102	14,588	104,690	103,293	32,231	135,524	80.84
07	Iganga	313,082	248,361	6,251	254,612	250,457	39,954	290,411	92.76
08	Jinja	189,883	130,266	15,234	145,500	138,415	27,176	165,591	87.21
09	Kabale	224,445	181,729	7,214	188,943	185,541	31,107	216,648	96.53
10	Kabarole	173,787	111,516	16,323	127,839	121,213	34,603	155,816	89.66
11	Kalangala	23,895	15,358	2,515	17,873	16,935	7,510	24,445	102.30
12	Kampala	712,222	504,203	46,007	550,210	539,245	234,329	773,574	108.61
13	Kamuli	243,874	217,387	7,861	225,248	223,481	- 12,387	211,094	86.56
14	Kapchorwa	66,426	72,988	4,374	77,362	74,846	- 12,100	62,746	94.46
15	Kasese	243,364	173,890	8,918	182,808	178,856	35,117	213,973	87.92
16	Kibaale	184,328	141,582	19,983	161,565	157,088	28,832	185,920	100.86
17	Kiboga	108,238	85,857	10,881	96,738	92,199	25,798	117,997	109.02
18	Kisoro	101,385	85,216	3,672	88,888	87,346	13,646	100,992	99.61
19	Kitgum	139,741	87,392	16,112	103,504	98,395	18,317	116,712	83.52
20	Kotido	99,994	77,827	9,867	87,694	83,553	- 26,141	57,412	57.42
21	Kumi	184,182	125,293	5,463	130,756	124,578	36,585	161,163	87.50
22	Lira	297,628	241,989	8,215	250,204	240,764	9,268	250,032	84.01
23	Luweero	153,749	156,976	20,743	177,719	174,331	- 24,718	149,613	97.31
24	Masaka	359,343	256,607	22,588	279,195	265,064	57,537	322,601	89.78
25	Masindi	222,549	141,729	10,324	152,053	145,808	53,616	199,424	89.61
26	Mbale	165,873	274,370	20,386	294,756	284,596	- 120,630	163,966	98.85
27	Mbarara	186,132	400,155	49,177	449,332	428,131	- 249,746	178,385	95.84
28	Moroto	101,180	50,315	6,198	56,513	53,550	11,154	64,704	63.95
29	Moyo	95,617	33,141	3,770	36,911	35,612	7,218	42,830	44.79
30	Mpigi	181,443	138,162	11,506	149,668	141,156	29,633	170,789	94.13
31	Mubende	196,287	236,401	27,018	263,419	251,826	- 51,993	199,833	101.81
32	Mukono	381,998	259,772	22,885	282,657	271,207	78,762	349,969	91.62
33	Nebbi	208,322	146,785	6,587	153,372	147,824	30,524	178,348	85.61
34	Ntungamo	185,220	152,968	13,728	166,696	158,412	30,353	188,765	101.91
35	Pallisa	229,290	185,454	12,085	197,539	188,158	40,341	228,499	99.66

<b>36</b>	Rakai	<b>223,234</b>	158,305	13,136	171,441	167,630	42,446	210,076	<b>94.11</b>
<b>37</b>	Rukungiri	<b>132,088</b>	101,569	5,033	106,602	101,685	22,361	124,046	<b>93.91</b>
<b>38</b>	Soroti	<b>175,528</b>	92,549	13,094	105,643	101,804	49,523	151,327	<b>86.21</b>
<b>39</b>	Tororo	<b>181,856</b>	202,250	14,888	217,138	205,064	- <b>38,242</b>	166,822	<b>91.73</b>
<b>40</b>	Adjumani	<b>98,576</b>	35,949	2,312	38,261	38,256	11,986	50,242	<b>50.97</b>
<b>41</b>	Bugiri	<b>187,479</b>	149,396	12,032	161,428	151,182	29,719	180,901	<b>96.49</b>
<b>42</b>	Busia	<b>106,366</b>	92,965	8,796	101,761	96,660	16,428	113,088	<b>106.32</b>
<b>43</b>	Katakwi	<b>58,449</b>	80,151	10,089	90,240	87,293	- <b>41,014</b>	46,279	<b>79.18</b>
<b>44</b>	Nakasongola	<b>58,729</b>	39,810	6,621	46,431	44,804	12,581	57,385	<b>97.71</b>
<b>45</b>	Ssembabule	<b>84,849</b>	65,637	6,728	72,365	69,198	16,920	86,118	<b>101.50</b>
<b>46</b>	Kamwenge	<b>125,802</b>	103,794	8,052	111,846	108,366	23,345	131,711	<b>104.70</b>
<b>47</b>	Kayunga	<b>131,303</b>	105,907	6,119	112,026	107,251	21,697	128,948	<b>98.21</b>
<b>48</b>	Kyenjojo	<b>174,015</b>	116,657	16,220	132,877	128,131	25,452	153,583	<b>88.26</b>
<b>49</b>	Mayuge	<b>142,182</b>	109,390	6,224	115,614	109,727	20,333	130,060	<b>91.47</b>
<b>50</b>	Pader	<b>159,017</b>	91,763	11,960	103,723	101,341	22,548	123,889	<b>77.91</b>
<b>51</b>	Sironko	<b>131,849</b>	115,889	6,993	122,882	119,578	20,328	139,906	<b>106.11</b>
<b>52</b>	Wakiso	<b>475,659</b>	303,015	31,624	334,639	323,051	140,316	463,367	<b>97.42</b>
<b>53</b>	Yumbe	<b>116,616</b>	54,453	5,850	60,303	58,914	18,139	77,053	<b>66.07</b>
<b>54</b>	Kaberamaido	<b>60,717</b>	40,918	6,543	47,461	46,024	15,007	61,031	<b>100.52</b>
<b>55</b>	Kanungu	<b>98,664</b>	78,109	8,254	86,363	83,556	13,648	97,204	<b>98.52</b>
<b>56</b>	Nakapiripirit	<b>75,277</b>	37,537	6,078	43,615	42,174	4,622	46,796	<b>62.17</b>
<b>57</b>	Amolatar	<b>39,723</b>				-	33,397	33,397	<b>84.07</b>
<b>58</b>	Amuria	<b>83,704</b>				-	66,588	66,588	<b>79.55</b>
<b>59</b>	Bukwo	<b>22,788</b>				-	24,254	24,254	<b>106.43</b>
<b>60</b>	Butaleja	<b>68,048</b>				-	70,704	70,704	<b>103.90</b>
<b>61</b>	Ibanda	<b>96,733</b>				-	89,825	89,825	<b>92.86</b>
<b>62</b>	Isingiro	<b>152,747</b>				-	145,278	145,278	<b>95.11</b>
<b>63</b>	Kaabong	<b>185,348</b>				-	42,416	42,416	<b>22.88</b>
<b>64</b>	Kaliro	<b>65,275</b>				-	60,220	60,220	<b>92.26</b>
<b>65</b>	Kiruhura	<b>107,072</b>				-	106,090	106,090	<b>99.08</b>
<b>66</b>	Koboko	<b>48,847</b>				-	49,644	49,644	<b>101.63</b>
<b>67</b>	Manafa	<b>183,254</b>				-	164,703	164,703	<b>89.88</b>
<b>68</b>	Mityana	<b>125,955</b>				-	116,811	116,811	<b>92.74</b>
<b>69</b>	Nakaseke	<b>62,852</b>				-	63,961	63,961	<b>101.76</b>
	<b>Total</b>	<b>11,729,278</b>	<b>8,125,666</b>	<b>723,852</b>	<b>8,849,518</b>	<b>8,524,224</b>	<b>2,080,178</b>	<b>10,604,402</b>	<b>90.41</b>