



RECORDS MANAGEMENT IN THE ELECTORAL
COMMISSION

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Officials

Presented by

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1.0 Introduction

The Electoral Commission is established under Article 60(1) and mandated under Article 61 of the Constitution of the Republic of Uganda (1995) to organize, conduct and supervise regular, free and fair elections and referenda. The Electoral Commission Act 1997 (as amended) spells out the functions and powers of the Commission.

One of the critical variables for the success or failure of democracy and/or democratic transition of power is the administration of elections. In developing countries like Uganda, with low levels of literacy, administration of elections is not an easy task. This is often because in a developing democracy, technical problems become political ones, which then threaten credibility of the whole electoral process. This is often compounded by poor record keeping.

There is a misconception that the electoral process is actually polling day. The process actually starts with cut off date, through the display exercise, nomination of candidates, campaigns, polling day and finally post polling period. In any of these periods, multitudes of records are generated and credibility of the electoral process can be compromised if the records are not managed well.

2.0 The Electoral Process

Elections are conducted to obtain legitimate leaders through participation of all adults. This gives an elected leader a clear mandate which is interpreted as genuine democracy i.e in order to change leaders peacefully, elections must be held. For the elections to be acceptable, they must be and must **be seen** to be free and fair.

In order to achieve its objectives, the Commission is required to ensure successful conduct of the following:

- Planning
- Demarcation of Electoral Areas
- Compilation and maintenance of voters' registers
- Training Election Officials
- The Voter Education Campaign
- Nomination of Candidates and Campaigns

- Polling Day Activities
- Declaration and Gazetting of Results
- Evaluation

All these activities require and indeed generate documentation in form of records, reports forms, and electronic data. The management of this documentation is critical to the acceptability of electoral results. Guidelines govern these activities and reports are expected at their conclusion. Periods and timelines for critical activities must be gazetted.

2.1 Planning

This is the first activity that is required prior to commencing any project and conduct of elections is a project. Planning involves drawing up plans both strategic and activity plans. Budgets are drawn up and projections formulated. This activity is critical and if its output is not adhered to, it can lead to collapse of the whole project.

2.2 Demarcation of Electoral Areas

This is done according to the law right from village to district. It is the basis for representation at both local and parliamentary levels. The demarcation is required for establishment of polling stations that are the basic units of operation for the Commission. It generates maps and is spearheaded by the Cartographic Section of the Commission.

2.3 Compilation and Maintenance of Voters' Registers

This includes Registration of voters, General Update and Display of the Voters' Register (mandatory 21 days) and issuance of colored photograph bearing voter's cards. This process is documentation intensive. Activities includes initial registration that requires registration forms and diskettes for the digital image, through transfer of voting location that requires transfer forms to display of the voters register and issuance of voter's cards. Consequently apart from the photograph-bearing register, the following forms are required;

- CLN 2 for issuing Voter' s cards
- CLN 3 for mismatched images,
- CLN 4 for registered voters without voters' cards,
- CLN 6 for registered voters who are missing on the register,
- CLN 8 for accountability,
- CLN 9 for persons no longer eligible to vote from a certain parish, and
- CLN 10 to enable registered voters correct their particulars.

Besides this documentation, the process of maintaining the voters' register requires editing both manual and electronic as well as storage and archiving. The Commission therefore has a LAN and Storage Area Network (SAN) and maintains archives all departments.

2.4 Training of Election Officials

During the peak time, the Commission recruits personnel to undertake activities on its behalf. This is because the Commission cannot recruit permanent staff for all the 19,788 polling stations together with the respective supervisors from district to parish. Documentation here includes syllabus, guidelines and training manuals. After training, the officials are issued with appointment letters that have a tear off acceptance section. The later should be filed carefully for future reference.

2.5 The Voter Education Campaign

Documentation here includes promotion and publicity materials (IEC materials) like Hand books, posters, flyers, hand bills, billboards, skits etc. Logs for electronic media programmes are also kept. Apart from for accountability purposes, records should be kept for evaluation of the methods and coverage of the campaign.

The campaign is spear headed by the Voter Education & Training department and the PRO office.

2.6 Nomination of Candidates and Campaign Period

These are very important aspects of the electoral process. They are also the most visible aspects of the electoral process. Documentation includes qualifications (academic and legal), campaign schedules and contents. Records management at this level is critical to production of ballot papers. The volume of documentation generated, especially at lower level elections, is humongous.

2.7 Polling Day Activities

Documentation here starts the day before when polling materials are received and accountability is important to ascertain completeness of the polling kit. Checklists are ticked against and delivery notes signed. On polling day itself, the Presiding officer has an Official Report Book and various forms to fill including those of oaths and accountability of ballot papers (ABP). The most important form on polling day is the Declaration of Results (DR) form. Most of the forms on polling day must be filled in multiple numbers and elaborate procedures are in place to ensure integrity if the activities.

The various DR forms are then assembled and the results tallied. The documentation here includes Tally sheets/software, transmission of results (TR) form and the returning Officer' s report.

After the winner has been announced, any dispute is the business of Courts of Judicature. The courts may require affidavits from key players which affidavits may require supporting documentation from any of the earlier enumerated paperwork.

2.8 Evaluation

The electoral project started with planning, it must be concluded with evaluation of the plan. This enables the Commission to improve on the quality of elections with each completed one. You are advised to carefully study Evaluation Reports to familiarize yourselves with constraints and possible solutions.

3.0 Administrative Records Management

Apart from election related documentation, there is administrative documentation. This refers to accountability of funds, administrative instructions in form of appointment and posting letters and circulars. All correspondence going out of the Commission in this regard is signed by or for Secretary Electoral Commission. For this purpose, the Commission has a Security Registry that is the first point of call for all in coming and out going correspondence.

At the district level, the Returning Officer is responsible for correspondence to and fro the Commission. The District Registrar should maintain files relating to all activities of the district office including Cash Books and Cheque Registers. The district secretary is responsible for maintaining desk files and various office files. The Assistant District Registrar is the minute secretary for the district office and should write and maintain minutes of meetings at this level. The driver is responsible for maintaining the vehicle log book and service history.

4.0 Conclusion

The importance of records management cannot be over-emphasized. Records are important in the conduct of elections and indeed can be critical in the post election phase during conflict resolution. They are required during the planning phase, through the electoral process and for evaluation.

In conduct of elections, no mistakes are permissible. You had better have a proper record of everything when called upon to explain issues. The advantage is that with proper records management, you will not be bogged down with explanations but will be able to put your efforts in what really matters, the conduct of free and fair elections.

THANK YOU AND GOD BLESS YOU