



Brief on Progress of the Exercise of Update of the National Voters' Register

A: Background

- The nationwide exercise for update of the National Voters' Register (NVR) commenced on Monday 3rd May 2010.
- The Commission's publicity and voter education campaign featured calls to all eligible voters to turn up at the designated update/registration centers within their respective parishes and register.
- The update exercise was to be conducted at update/registration centers within each parish throughout the country from 8:00am till 6:00pm, on each of the appointed dates, including weekends.
- This is not fresh registration of all voters in Uganda, but rather an exercise to enable Ugandan citizens of 18 years and above, who have not had their pictures and bio-data taken before by the Electoral Commission for purposes of registration for elections, to do so.
- This registration exercise includes capturing of the following data:
 - a. The photograph of the applicant;
 - b. The finger prints (for all available fingers);
 - c. The signature of applicant;
 - d. Bio-data of the applicant, namely, the names, parents' names, date of birth, sub county, parish and village of origin, as well as sub county, parish and village of residence; and,
 - e. The applicant's preferred polling station, which must be within the parish of origin or residence.

- Meanwhile all those persons who were registered and had their photographs taken, but (the photographs) do not appear on the National Voters' Register, have been able to do so during this exercise.
- At the same time, all registered voters who wished to transfer to new voting locations have also been enabled to do so during this exercise.
- The Electoral Commission availed the National Voters' Register for each voting location so that existing voters check and confirm their registration status.

B: Challenges to the Commission

a. Partial delivery of the registration kits

Only 2,000 out of the expected 4,000 registration kits had been delivered to the Commission at the commencement of the exercise on 3rd May 2010:-

- The delay in delivery of the entire 4,000 kits was a result of airport shut down in Europe due to visibility problems caused by effects of volcanic ash;
- In spite of this, the Commission commenced was scheduled to keep the public confidence since the Commission had previously changed dates to accommodate the implementation of this Biometric System;

- Practicably, this was also to keep in pace with the milestones as set out in the road map;
- Eventually, all the 4,000 kits were delivered (by 10th May)and have since been dispatched to the districts;
- This exercise commenced on 3rd May because the Commission is following a Roadmap for the 2011 General Elections, with tight Constitutional deadlines.

b. Black-out of computers

During the first week of the exercise, there was a common technical problem of black out of the computers (software was closing after a few registrations).

- This was caused by a software problem, which has since been sorted out by our technical team in all the districts.

c. Recharging of batteries

Since most parts of the country do not have power supply, the officials have had a challenge of charging the batteries, especially in cases where the batteries have lower power life than expected, hence requiring more charging trips.

- The Commission installed 1000 generators and provided fuel, at various sub county headquarters to enable the re-charging of the batteries.

d. Processing of funds

The Commission has been criticized by some sections of the public over the delay in processing of funds for our field officials.

- This delay is not deliberate; currently, the Commission has to prepare a pay-roll for an additional 16,000 personnel (8000 update officers, 7000 Parish Supervisors, 1270 Sub County Supervisors, and 91 District Information Technology Officers). The Commission is now processing all their bank details so that their monies are paid directly into the said accounts. However the process of submission of the details from the districts and processing them is quite slow. The Commission has made progress on about 60, although some have been partial submissions.
- Meanwhile, the Commission has already paid allowances (training allowances and transport, etc) to the officials to enable them execute various tasks under the programme.

e. Public Mistrust

There have been reservations and politicization of this exercise by some sections of the public concerning the purpose of this registration exercise.

- The Commission has continued to provide regular information to the public through the weekly press briefing held every Wednesday and through voter education campaigns in the media.
- The Commission has held sensitization meetings with various stakeholders in the electoral process at various regional centers to clear out these misunderstandings.

f. Natural hazards

Some other factors have affected the conduct of the exercise, for example, heavy rains in eastern, western, northern and

West Nile regions have disrupted various activities in those communities, including the ongoing update of the National Voters' Register.

- g. Some people are reluctant (especially in the rural areas) to come and register, and are content that they are already registered by their parties.

C. Cut-off of registration after 4th June 2010

- According to Article 59(2) of the Constitution of the Republic of Uganda, only persons who have attained the age of 18 years are allowed to register as voters.
- Section 19 (1) of the Electoral Commission Act, Cap 140, provides for registration of persons of 18 years and above in a parish or ward where the person resides and/or originates from.
- This registration forms part of the mandate of the Commission to compile, maintain and update on a continuing basis, a national voters register under Section 18 of the Electoral Commission Act, Cap 140.
- Persons who attain the age of 18 years after this date shall not be able to register as voters for purposes of the 2011 General Elections.
- The cut-off of registration is in compliance with Section 19 (7) and (8) (a) of the Electoral Commission Act, Cap 140.

- After this registration exercise, the Commission shall conduct a Display of the Voters' Register for public scrutiny and objections to inclusion/deletions shall be made. During this process, which will be conducted between July and August 2010, Ugandans shall have an opportunity to verify the contents of the Voters' Register.

D. Conclusion

Despite the above challenges, the process has steadily progressed. To date, the Commission has completed the installation of servers in all the districts of Uganda; the process of uploading data from the parishes is ongoing, and the Commission expects to receive the first round of returns this week-end (22nd-23rd May 2010). The Commission shall compile the statistics and update the country accordingly.

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