



**UGANDA  
ELECTORAL COMMISSION**

**POLLING OFFICERS'  
POCKET FACTS**

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# **POLLING OFFICERS' POCKET FACTS**

## **Foreword**

The Electoral Commission's Act, Section (34) (1) (a) mandates the Electoral Commission, through the Returning Officer, to appoint one Presiding Officer, Polling Assistants as needed and one Constable for each polling station.

As agents of the Electoral Commission (EC), you should know that the Commission is constitutionally mandated to "hold regular free and fair elections and referenda". Therefore, your role in assisting the EC fulfill its mission on polling day is of the utmost importance. That is why you are called upon to carry out your responsibilities with integrity, impartiality, transparency and fairness throughout the day. And, please do not forget to ensure the secrecy of the ballot!

As polling day Officers your responsibilities cover the entire spectrum of polling day activities, including:

- Logistics:** Transportation of polling kits to the polling station and back to the sub-county
- Operations:** Preparation of the polling station  
Polling process activities
- Administration:** Counting of ballots Filling of EC forms
- Public Relations:** With voters, candidates' agents and monitors/observers.

Generally speaking, and for the purpose of these elections, the **Presiding Officer** will be the leader of the team at the polling station. His role is to **supervise** the polling station throughout the day and all officers on active duty will perform under his direction and supervision

## **Purpose of Your Training**

- 1) To ensure that you know:
  - a. The polling process thoroughly
  - b. Your duties and responsibilities in the polling process
  - c. The rights and obligations of voters
  - d. The rights and obligations of candidates
  - e. The rights and obligations of monitors and observers
- 2) To enable you to perform professionally in full control of polling activities

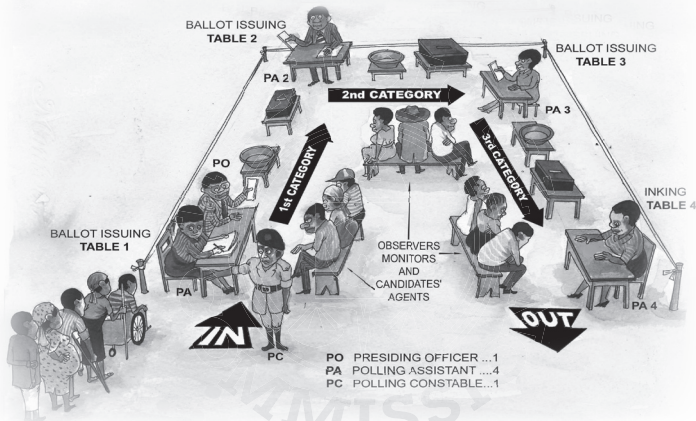
**In addition, the Commission would like to make the following personal recommendations to its Election Officers:**

- 1) Secure transportation to the polling station in due time
- 2) Sleep well the day before, polling day is a long day
- 3) Bring water and food
- 4) Dress presentably
- 5) Avoid contact with people who could put your impartiality into question

- 6) Beware to exercise impartiality at all times in your dealings with others: you mustn't be seen, or perceived, as taking sides

## Role of Polling Assistants (PAs)

### POLLING STATION LAYOUT FOR MULTIPLE VOTING PRESIDENTIAL, PARLIAMENTARY AND LOCAL COUNCIL ELECTIONS - 2006



As a rule, Polling Assistants assist Presiding Officers in the performance of their duties. Specifically:

- 1) Participate in the arrangement of the polling station
- 2) At **table 1, PA1 checks** voters' information (names, photographs, voter number, etc.) against the Register. Then, places a **tick** next to the name on the Register, and **issues** the first ballot paper ensuring, in addition, that the voter's fingers are **clear of ink**.

- 3) On **table 2 and 3, PA2 and PA3** respectively issue relevant ballot papers
- 4) On **table 4, PA4** ensures that voters who have finished voting have their thumb, or any other finger, marked with indelible ink
- 5) Be knowledgeable about the voting process and the duties of the Presiding Officer because, as need arises, Polling Assistants may be called upon to replace the Presiding Officer, or re-deployed to another polling station
- 6) In chain voting, Polling Assistants' assistance may be required in the counting of votes

### **Role of Polling Constables**

Usually standing by the entrance of the polling station, Polling Constables have the following responsibilities:

- 1) Keep law and order
- 2) Together with the Presiding Officer, ensure that voting occurs smoothly
- 3) Make sure that voters are forming and standing in **ONE line**, so as to vote in an orderly manner
- 4) Make sure to give priority to those people who are entitled to it: the aged, people with disability and expectant mothers
- 5) Keep crowds away from the polling station
- 6) After polling, ensure the safety and safe custody of polling materials

Please note that your responsibilities begin **BEFORE Polling day** and include:

### **Role of the Presiding Officer**

Besides overall supervision, the Presiding Officer will be in charge of the following:

#### **At least 2 days before polling**

- 1) Visit your polling station and level the ground, clear out bushes if they're in the way. Choose a good spot, easily accessible. Identify the lay out of your polling station and think of an easy passage way for voters
- 2) Secure furniture you will need for polling
- 3) Meet with your team and become acquainted: your Assistants and the Constable and agree on polling day strategy
- 4) Visit the polling station as a team
- 5) Make sure to arrange for and bring lunch pack and water because you will not have time to look for sustenance on polling day
- 6) Refrain from drinking alcoholic beverages; they impair your ability to perform

#### **On Polling Day**

- 1) Wake up early
- 2) Collect polling materials including your polling kit from the Sub-county Officer. In special cases, follow the arrangements made by the Returning Officer
- 3) Be at your polling station **before 7:00 AM** and set up

our polling station as indicated in the law and guidelines

- 4) Confirm agreements made previously with your team mates about respective responsibilities
- 5) Remind the Constable to give priority to those people who are entitled to it: the aged, people with disability and expectant mothers

### **Opening the Polling Station**

- 1) At **7:00 AM sharp**, all must be **in place** for polling. The station has been properly demarcated; the sisal rope stretched to cordon off and clearly mark the polling station. The tables and chairs are in place in accordance with the law as indicated on the polling station set-up poster
- 2) All Polling Assistants are in place and ready to receive voters

### **Opening the Polling Kit**

**There must be at least 5 voters to witness the opening of the polling kit, then:**

**There will be 3 polling kits. So:**

- 1) Open the polling kits, one at a time, starting, in this case, with Women Parliamentarians, moving on the Member of Parliaments, and lastly to the Presidential elections polling kit. Please keep to that order.
- 2) Open all kits, one at a time, in full view of the voters



- present and empty their contents on their respective tables (this may be any time after 7:00 AM)
- 3) Turn the ballot boxes upside down to show that they are empty to all present, and secure them appropriately. Keep other seals for final sealing after the counting of votes
  - 4) Count and check the contents of each polling kit and fill the Report Book accordingly. If anything is missing, inform your supervisor, usually the Parish Chief
  - 5) Administer the oath to the polling constable and give out badges to all officers including yourself
  - 6) Receive candidates' agents' appointment letters: only 2 agents per candidate
  - 7) Place the basins in their right places keeping in mind the secrecy they are to provide to voters
  - 8) Place the ballot boxes on their respective tables
  - 9) Station the Polling Assistants (PAs) in their right places, following the EC set-up poster (Polling Assistants may rotate in the course of the day)
  - 10) Station candidates' agents in their rightful places

## **Opening of the Polls**

- 1) Make sure ballot papers are in order of their serial number, starting with the lowest
- 2) Note the time in the Official Report Book
- 3) Make sure your Constable ensures that voters form one single line and let voters into the station and start voting

- 4) Give **ONE** ballot paper per voter
- 5) Begin with the first five voters who witnessed the opening  
of the ballot box and mark their names with an asterisk next to it, in addition to the tick
- 6) To make final accounting of ballot papers easier, give ballots out in sequence, according to the serial numbers, starting with the lowest

## **Polling**

During polling, remember to continue giving some voter education messages on issues such as:

- \* The authorized mark of choice
- \* The right of voters to another ballot in case the one given is spoilt
- \* The rights of voters with disabilities: the blind or elderly may be helped to vote by a member of their family even if they are below 18 years of age. A voter of their own choice can also assist them
- \* Not to abuse the right of voters with disabilities: no one should pretend to be disabled! A person is allowed to help only one voter with a disability!
- \* Encourage voters, who may know how to vote, but appear shy to mark the ballot paper themselves
- \* Make sure that the entire polling station is within your view
- \* Monitor the activities taking place around you
- \* Do not allow agents to write voters' names or serial numbers

- \* In case an incident affects the polling process, note it in the Official Report Book including any action taken to rectify the situation
- \* Give observers and monitors who visit your station the necessary attention, but do not let anyone interfere with your work

**Above all, be impartial and treat all voters with respect**

### **Closure of Polls**

- 1) **Polls close at 5.00 PM sharp**
- 2) Allow all people still in line by 5.00 PM to vote, but do not let any new voter join in. So, at 5.00pm, make the Polling Constable stand behind the last voter in line
- 3) When the last voter has cast their vote, re- arrange your station to ensure transparency in the counting of votes
- 4) Then, The Presiding Officer opens the first ballot box, **in the same order they were opened** and places all papers on the plastic sheet provided. The box should be turned upside down to show to those present that it is empty

### **Counting Votes**

For the sake of transparency, voters have a right to attend and witness the process of counting of votes. Aided by his Assistants, the Presiding Officer will:

- 1) Arrange the votes in full view of those present
- 2) Sort and pile up votes by candidates
- 3) Start counting for the candidate with the smallest pile and move on to the next
- 4) Take note that the authorized mark of choice is either the tick or the thumb- print
- 5) The invalid/rejected votes are those which:
  - a. Do not have the authorized mark of choice,
  - b. Do not have any mark on them,
  - c. Have something in addition to the mark of choice
  - d. Are marked in such a way that it cannot be determined for whom the vote was cast
- 6) Tie the counted ballots for each candidate in bundles of fifty (50) and label them accordingly. Form as many bundles of 50 as necessary, tie them all up and indicate the total number of votes for that candidate. Repeat the operation for each candidate.
- 7) Count the number of invalid votes and label them accordingly
- 8) Count the number of spoiled ballots and label them accordingly
- 9) Ensure that no votes remain unaccounted for or uncounted
- 10) Announce the results of the voting at the polling station

## **Filling Forms**

- 1) Complete copies of the relevant forms:
  - a. Declaration of Results (DR),

- b. Accountability of Ballot Papers (ABP)
  - c. Last part of the Official Report Book, and
  - d. Any other forms that may have been filled in the course of polling
- 2) Ensure that Declaration of Results forms are thoroughly filled including candidates' votes both in number and words. Take note of the number of forms to be filled
  - 3) Enter the correct time at opening and closing of the polls
  - 4) Agents who wish to sign the forms may do so, after the results have been properly entered

### **Distribution of Results**

DR-forms come in multiple carbon-copies. So **press hard** when filling it out and ensure that entered information comes through on all sheets. Copies are distributed as follows:

- 1) One copy of the DR-form is forwarded to the Returning Officer in the envelope provided to be sealed and countersigned by the Presiding Officer before leaving the polling station
- 2) Each candidate receives one copy of the DR-form through their agents
- 3) One copy of the DR-form is placed in the ballot box
- 4) One copy of the DR-form is posted at the polling station

## **The Envelope**

Please do NOT seal the envelope until it contains the following **3 items**:

- 1) Declaration of Results Form (DR-form)
- 2) Accountability of Ballot Paper-Form (ABP-form)
- 3) Official Report Book

## **The Ballot Box**

After closing of the polls, the following items should be sealed into the ballot box:

- 1) One copy of the Declaration of Results form (DR-form)
- 2) Counter-foils of used ballot papers
- 3) All cast votes
- 4) Invalid and spoilt ballot papers
- 5) Unused ballot papers
- 6) Voters' Register
- 7) One copy of the Accountability of Ballot Papers-Form (ABP-form)
- 8) Agents' appointment letters

Please ensure that the ballot box is transferred to safe custody once counting operations have ended

**Through official channels, deliver the envelope containing the results of the voting at your polling station to Returning Officer**

In a multiple election such as this one, repeat counting of votes, filling of forms, distribution of results, envelope and ballot box operations as many times as they are ballot boxes

## Offences and Penalties

For **all** Elections **Officers**, it is an offence to:

- 1) Make an **entry** on any official EC document one has reasonable doubt to believe is **false**
- 2) Allow a person to vote with the privileges attached to disability when there is reason to believe that that person is **pretending disability**
- 3) Prevent a person **with disability** to vote in accordance with the privileges of their legal rights
- 4) **Prevent** any one reasonably believed to be entitled to vote from voting
- 5) Refuse to count a **valid** ballot for any candidate
- 6) Count an **invalid** ballot paper in favor of a particular candidate
- 7) To act or fail to act in accordance with their official duty

### For Presiding Officers:

Failure by the Presiding Officer to submit returns in due time without a lawful reason is an offence. If convicted, the Presiding Officer is liable to a fine not exceeding 24 currency points (480,000/=) or imprisonment, or both

## Commonly Asked Questions

**Q.1: Let's say I have a problem to collect my polling kit!**

- A.1:
- 1) Your allowance includes some money for transport to collect and deliver the polling kit
  - 2) Problems of geography, such as lakes, mountains, and other environmental constraints such as wild animals and security risks are known to your local supervisors. Remind them of these facts well in advance and special arrangements will be made

**Q.2: What if a change in weather disrupts the polling process?**

- A.2:
- 1) As the person in-charge of the polling station, you should look into **alternative voting venues** before polling day. In case of rain, shift the exercise indoors where voters can still move freely and where the secrecy of the ballot is not compromised. A classroom or a hall may come in handy
  - 2) Where there are no buildings, you may suspend polling until the weather cooperates, but ensure that polling materials are well protected at all times.
  - 3) In any event, please remember to **record** the event in the Official Report Book



**Q.3: What do I do if I do not have five voters present in line to witness the opening and securing of the empty ballot box 7:00 at AM?**

A.3: As long as you are at the station by 7.00 AM and all arrangements are in place, you cannot be blamed if polling does not start at exactly 7.00 AM.

So, wait for the witnesses to arrive first. You are protected by the law. You **MUST NOT** open **until** you have **five witnesses**

**Q.4: Do I have to wait for the arrival of candidates' agents?**

A.4: No. Their presence is desirable for the transparency of the exercise, but the onus is on them to keep time!

**Q.5: What do I do if items are missing from the polling kit?**

- A.5:
- 1) Inform your supervisor immediately.
  - 2) Borrow the missing items from the neighbouring polling station if possible and, if crucial to the voting process, such as ballot papers, do not forget to note the serial numbers of borrowed ballots for accountability

**Q.6: What if voters do not know what to do?**

- A.6:
- 1) As part of your responsibilities, you are expected to provide voter education messages from time to time

- 2) As a rule, the EC distributes posters and brochures with voter information, use them to help out uninformed voters
- 3) Please note that neither Polling Officers, nor candidates' agents, nor monitors/observers are allowed to help voters mark their ballot papers
- 4) Anyone can only help **ONE** voter

**Q.7: What do I do if a voter with disability has come without help?**

- A.7:
- 1) First, make sure that they are not faking disability. It is an offence for a voter to pretend to be disabled
  - 2) Any person with disability is free to ask anyone present for assistance, including an under-aged
  - 3) No one can volunteer to help if not expressly requested to do so

**Q.8: Can a voter whose photograph is not on the Register be allowed to vote?**

- A.8:
- 1) Yes. If their particulars appear on the Register and, they can be identified by those present, then they can vote
  - 2) It is at your discretion to make further verification of the person's identity especially if you're suspicious

**Q.9: What do I do if a voter finds their name has already been ticked?**

- A.9:
- 1) The voter must fill out the Oath of Identity-form, and then be allowed to vote
  - 2) Take great care and do not issue ballot papers to voters whose identity is not clear to you

**Q.10: What do I do if somebody comes to the polling station armed?**

- A.10:
- 1) You should inform them of the law that prohibits anybody to be armed within 300 meters of the polling station
  - 2) Inform your supervisor
  - 3) If they refuse to leave, as the Presiding Officer in charge of the peace at the polling station, you can write an order for arrest
  - 4) With the help of the Polling Constable, if practical, this person can be put into custody until one hour after the end of polling

**Q.11: What do I do if rioting breaks out?**

- A.11:
- 1) Stop the polling
  - 2) Ensure the safety of the ballot box
  - 3) With the help of the Polling Constable, try to bring about order
  - 4) Inform your supervisor
  - 5) With your supervisor you will use discretion and decide whether polling can resume after rioting has subsided, or be postponed to the following day. In case of postponement, the Returning Officer will have to be informed

6) Note the incident in the Report Book

**Q.12: Are candidates allowed into the polling station?**

- A.12:
- 1) If a candidate is registered at your polling station, they have a right to come in and vote
  - 2) Otherwise, they have no business being at the polling station. Their agents are there to take care of their interests

**Q.13: What do I do with hangers-on?**

- A.13:
- 1) Voters have a right to keep around and witness the counting of ballot papers
  - 2) However, those waiting for the count should be seated at least 100 meters from the polling station and, remain calm and orderly
  - 3) Direct the Polling Constable to ensure that they do not disrupt the peace at the station!

**Q.14: What do I put into the envelope for the Returning Officer?**

- A.14:
- 1) This envelope should contain **3 items**, namely
    - 1) One Declaration of Results-form (DR-form)
    - 2) The Official Report Book (ORB)
    - 3) The Accountability of Ballot Papers-Form (APB-form)
  - 2) Remember, there will be **3 envelopes** to forward: one for each election!