



ELECTION CONFLICT SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS & HOTSPOT MAPPING IN UGANDA-2025

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Acronyms

ANC:	African National Congress
CSO:	Civil Society Organization
EC:	Electoral Commission
FGD:	Focus Group Discussion
FDC:	Forum for Democratic Change
FIRDI:	Foundation for International Research, Development, and Innovation
GWED-G:	Gulu Women's Economic Development and Globalization
HURIFO:	Human Rights and International Peace Initiative
IDP:	Internally Displaced Person
IPV:	Intimate Partner Violence
KII:	Key Informant Interview
NGO:	Non-Governmental Organization
NUP:	National Unity Platform
NRM:	National Resistance Movement
PFF:	People's Front for Transition
RDC:	Resident District Commissioner
SOP:	Standard Operating Procedure
UGX:	Ugandan Shilling
UN:	United Nations
UPC:	Uganda Peoples Congress
UPDF:	Uganda People's Defence Forces
VDC:	Village Development Committee

Executive Summary

Electoral violence has become a recurring challenge in Uganda, posing a significant threat to democracy, political stability, and human security. Recognizing the complex interplay of political, socio-economic, ethnic and historical factors influencing electoral conflicts, the Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy (NIMD) sought to analyze the potential impact of upcoming elections in 2025/26 on peace and stability in the hot spots.

This report provides a comprehensive analysis of the underlying drivers, key actors, and conflict dynamics that are expected to influence Uganda's general elections in 2026. Building on historical patterns, recent political developments and current socio-economic trends, the report identifies a combination of structural, political and institutional factors that pose significant risks to the peaceful conduct of the upcoming elections at national level and in the respective regions. The report further points out the would-be hotspots ahead of the 2026 general elections.

A central concern at the national level is the highly commercialized politics characterized by a high political and economic premium awarded to winning political power. As a result, electoral competition in Uganda has turned into a do-or-die affair as candidates explore all means at their disposal including unchecked campaign spending and violence borne out of the frustration of losing.

The political landscape is increasingly defined by polarization and growing culture of intolerance where political affiliation or association with opposing views is increasingly perceived as enmity. This deepening intolerance is likely to fuel hostility and increase the risk of election-related conflict.

Further, the perceived bias and lack of independence of key electoral institutions such as the Electoral Commission, Judiciary, and security forces have significantly eroded public trust. This distrust fuels frustration among political actors, some of whom resort to violence to express grievances or contest election outcomes.

The continued militarization of the electoral process, with security agencies, particularly, the military and specialized police units playing an outsized and often perceived partisan role was also highlighted. The lack of clear legal mandates, weak accountability mechanisms and the politicization of security institutions were seen to be a likely trigger for violence.

The growing use of digital technology and social media in Uganda has opened new spaces for civic engagement and political participation particularly among the youth. However, these platforms have also been exploited to spread misinformation, hate speech and propaganda, influenced by some political actors. This unchecked digital manipulation has heightened tensions and has potential to contribute to incitement of violence during election periods.

The declining funding and support to NGOs, independent media and other civic actors has significantly reduced their ability to provide civic education, election observation and peacebuilding ahead of the 2026 elections. This weakening oversight and early warning systems creates a vacuum that enables misinformation to thrive, deepens public distrust and enhances the risk of election-related violence.

High youth unemployment, poverty, and political exclusion have created a fertile ground for radicalization and manipulation of youth by political actors. Frustrated and disenfranchised, many young people are increasingly being mobilized for partisan violence, and youth involvement in electoral violence is likely to intensify.

At the regional level, in addition to the above issues that apply across all regions, election related violence is likely to be triggered by interplay of socio-political, economic, and cultural factors including: longstanding land and resource disputes, ethnic tensions, perceived political marginalization, youth unemployment, and mistrust in electoral processes.

The Rwenzori region, marked by recurring ethnic tensions, remains volatile, particularly around issues of local governance and identity.

In Acholi and Lango, the Balaalo's involvement in the region and the unresolved Apaa land conflict could be exploited by the political leaders to inflame ethnic tensions and resultant conflicts in the region.

In the Elgon Region, inter and intra political rivalry is likely to be a major trigger for violence as evidenced by the recently concluded NRM primaries. The greater Kampala, as the political and economic capital, is likely to witness intense contestation between opposition and ruling party supporters, driven by youth disenfranchisement and urban poverty. The youth gangs/ghetto youth from different political groups popularly known as "*Egaali*", misinformation, voter bribery and the role of the military are likely to be major factors.

Recommendations

To prevent election violence in Uganda, particularly in the identified hotspots, a coordinated multi-stakeholder strategy should be implemented, including the establishment of robust Early Warning and Response Mechanisms (EWRMs) and structured dialogues to provide space to deal with both long standing and emerging conflict drivers. This should be supported by intensified civic education campaigns on peaceful participation and constructive engagements with the security organs on clear code of conduct during elections. It is also important to establish conflict mitigation programs in the conflict hotspots and build capacity of key actors in offering mediation support during the electoral period.

Conclusion

Uganda's upcoming elections present significant challenges to stability rooted in deep-seated grievances, socio-economic disparities and political polarization. However, with coordinated efforts among government bodies, civil society, traditional institutions and development partners, elections can serve as a platform for social cohesion and democratic consolidation. Addressing emerging national issues proactively is critical to ensuring peaceful, credible and inclusive electoral processes that uphold Uganda's democratic aspirations.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Uganda's Electoral Conflict Landscape Ahead of 2025/26 Elections: Risks, Dynamics, and Mitigation Pathways

Elections are held in Uganda every after five years as a mechanism for democratic transfer of power. Yet, in its democratic trajectory, the country has witnessed a series of electoral violence. Election violence has been common through the election cycle including during delegates conferences, party primaries, general elections and by elections. Whilst such violence has not escalated into full conflicts in Uganda, it has led to loss of lives and properties while stalling the country's democratic progression. Owing to her involvement in different governance, peace building and conflict resolution interventions in Uganda, NIMD appreciates the need to proactively design evidence-based programs to curb the escalation of violence during elections.

As the country prepares for the 2025/2026 general elections, NIMD seeks to take stock of how elections are likely to affect the peace and conflict terrain and facilitate processes that ensure elections are a space for building consensus on critical social, economic and political issues.

This report assesses the landscape of potential electoral conflicts in selected sub regions of Uganda leading up to the 2025/26 general elections, with a view of enabling the development of targeted prevention and mitigation strategies. Specifically, the analysis sought to:

- i. Analyze the existing and emerging conflict patterns in the selected regions and their impact to the 2025/26 general elections
- ii. Identify and analyze key actors and their respective interests that could contribute to or mitigate electoral violence
- iii. Determine the primary conflict triggers and potential hotspots for electoral violence
- iv. Identify existing possible conflict mitigation and prevention mechanisms within the selected sub regions that can be replicated elsewhere in the country.

This report is organized into several key sections to facilitate a comprehensive understanding of the electoral conflict landscape in Uganda.

The introductory section provides an overview of the background and objectives. The subsequent section details the methodology utilised, including data collection and analysis techniques. The core of the report presents the national emerging issues, regional analyses and trends analysis of elections and socio-economic characteristics, highlighting specific conflict drivers, risk factors, and hotspot areas across Kampala, Acholi, Lango, Rwenzori, and Elgon regions. This is followed by a risk assessment section that maps potential flashpoints and early warning indicators. The final sections focus on strategic recommendations for peacebuilding and conflict prevention, emphasizing practical interventions for stakeholders.

The report deliberately showcases the traditional institution's role in elections and the Electoral Commission and concludes each section with calls to action for coordinated efforts to ensure peaceful elections.

1.2 Contextual Background

Globally, electoral conflicts are a pervasive threat to democratic stability and good governance. The consequences of these conflicts extend beyond the immediate physical harm inflicted on civilians. It poses a direct threat to citizens' ability to participate in elections freely and fairly, eroding trust in democratic institutions and can escalate into broader conflicts or political crises. While it manifests in different ways, weak institutions, lack of rule of law, ethnic divisions, and contested electoral processes often serve as triggers of election conflicts.

The prevalence of electoral conflicts and violence contravenes several global and regional instruments that codify the principles of democracy and human rights including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), 1948¹, International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), 1966², African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance (2007), among others.

1.2.1 The Electoral Commission and the legal framework for elections in Uganda

The current Electoral Commission of Uganda came into being in 1997 through an Act of Parliament (Electoral Commission's Act of 1997). Several instruments form the basis of the legal framework for elections in Uganda and they include:

- a. Constitution of the Republic of Uganda (1995); The Constitution provides that *"All power belongs to the people who shall exercise their sovereignty in accordance with this constitution."*¹ It further provides that, "the people shall express their will and consent on who shall govern them and how they should be governed, through regular, free and fair elections of their representatives or through referenda²." This means that Uganda is under legal obligation to ensure that regular elections are organised to enable people to vote and choose their leaders and representatives. Moreover, the Constitution provides for citizen's *"duty to register for electoral and other lawful purposes"* and for the right to vote.
- b. *Local Governments Act* which establishes local governments as well as elections for local governments.
- c. The *Electoral Commission Act* establishes the Electoral Commission, the body responsible for ensuring successful electoral processes in Uganda.
- d. The *Presidential Elections Act 18* governs the conduct of presidential elections and the
- e. *Parliamentary Elections Act 19* governs the conduct of Parliamentary elections.
- a. Similarly, *the Political Parties and Organisations Act* establishes political parties and organisations and enables citizens to form and join the same, whereas the National Women's Council Act 21 regulates the elections of national council and local council women's committees.

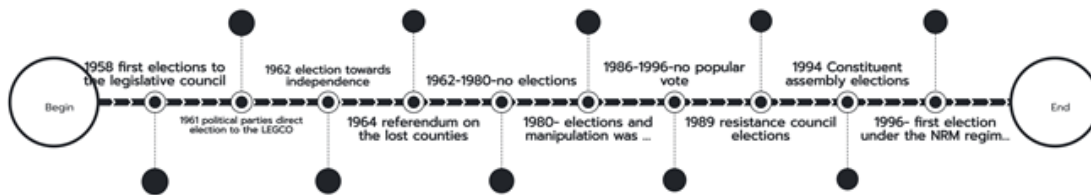
¹ The Constitution of Uganda (1995), Article 1(1)

² Ibid Article 1(4)

1.2.2 Violence and Elections in Uganda³.

Since its independence in 1962, Uganda has experienced violent political transitions⁴. At least seven of Uganda's eleven successive electoral cycles since independence (63.6%) have been marred by violence and political unrest. This is illustrated in the timeline in Figure 1 below and the subsequent narrative.

Figure 1: Timeline of election cycles in Uganda since independence



The colonial power which ruled the country for 68 years did little to nurture democratic governance. Only at the end of colonial rule were attempts made to introduce elections. This colonial administration introduced elections in 1958 but they were boycotted in Buganda, the country's power centre at the time. In the 1961 elections, Buganda showed its discomfort with the emerging political parties, resulting in violence in the central region.

The April 1962 elections were meant to install the first post-independence government and the Democratic Party (DP) won but did not assume power because its rival, the Uganda People's Congress (UPC), formed an alliance with Kabaka Yekka (KY) which nominated Members of Parliament through the Lukiiko (the legislative assembly of the Buganda Kingdom).

During the 1961 and 1962 elections, violence was rife, especially in Buganda. Elsewhere in the country, political sloganeering was intensely sectarian and derogatory, spreading hatred amongst rival political camps. In 1980, general elections were held and Milton Obote returned to power after winning the presidential election. However, the election was marred by conflict and allegations of fraud. Since 1996, Yoweri Museveni has been repeatedly elected as Uganda's president, beginning with his first victory under the new constitution in 1996, followed by re-elections in 2001, 2006 (after constitutional amendments removed term limits), 2011, 2016, and most recently in 2021, despite persistent concerns over electoral fairness and opposition challenges.

As early as 2001, a culture of violence was introduced into Uganda's politics and the electoral process. The violence escalated through the 2006 and 2011 elections reaching epic levels during the 2016 and 2021 elections. In the recent times, violence continues to resurface in the operations of the Uganda Peoples Defence Forces (UPDF). It has been on display during the Kayunga riots, the attack on the Rwenzururu palace in Kasese in 2016 and the Arua municipality

- 3 See <https://www.ec.or.ug/info/history-elctions-uganda>. <https://www.monitor.co.ug/uganda/special-reports/elections/the-turbulent-history-of-uganda-s-elections-5115112>. <https://wipc.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/Election-Related-Conflict-and-Violence-in-Uganda.pdf>
- 4 See Joseph Siegle and Candace Cook (2024) piece on Africa's 2024 Elections: Challenges and Opportunities to Regain Democratic Momentum. Ayamba (2024) Politics of Winner-Takes-All and Conflict in Africa: A Brief Reflection

parliamentary by-election in 2018 which acted as the dress rehearsal for the 2021 general election violence. These cases provide compelling evidence that violence has become one of the main weapons against organized political dissent to Mr. Museveni's four-decade reign. In effect, elections are conducted as a deadly contest between the NRM group and opposition political actors.⁵

The African Barometer reported that almost half of Ugandans fear intimidation and violence during elections.⁶ Further evidence shows that violence in elections in Uganda prevents marginalized sections of society such as women from exercising and realizing their political rights, both in public or private spaces. Violence against women in elections is driven by gender specific motivations and discrimination, especially as women challenge traditional roles and engage in politics⁷.

In 2021, the campaigns were marred with intimidation of some of the presidential candidates and their supporters as well in violation of the section 21 of the Presidential Elections Act, 2005 as amended⁸. For example, Robert Kyagulanyi and Patrick Oboi Amuriat (presidential candidates) were incarcerated, causing them to miss campaigns for a few days.⁹ In addition, some of the supporters of these presidential candidates were sprayed with teargas several times, arrested and detained and some even died¹⁰. The Police and the Electoral Commission pointed out that these candidates were holding campaign rallies contrary to the COVID-19 Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) and guidelines contrary to the Public Health Control of COVID-19¹¹ which prohibited mass gatherings as an SOP against the spread of COVID-19 and Section 171 of the Penal Code Act¹² which prohibits the spread of harmful disease.

Whereas this might have been the case, it is important to note that the guidelines were selectively applied with some of the candidates, for example Yoweri Kaguta Tibuhaburwa Museveni (the then incumbent president), being allowed to traverse the nation and hold mass gatherings with his supporters.

On the 13th of January, 2021, the government of Uganda shut down the internet across the country¹³. This was preceded by the shutdown of social media. Uganda government's interference with internet connection as well as the disconnection of social media is a violation of Constitution of the Republic of Uganda which provides that 'power belongs to the people.'

By curtailing their use of social media, the citizens of Uganda were denied the power or liberty to receive any kind of information across any form of media and hence lost the opportunity to exercise their power to make informed decisions (whether influenced by social media content or not). This is related to a headline that was in the Daily Monitor Newspaper Ugandans under

- 5 G., Tumushabe and J., Kijja (2021) Uganda's Political Transition Scenarios to 2026 and Beyond The Crested Crane, the Storm in the Teacup or the Warrior Mad King? GLISS Policy Research Paper Series, No. 1, 2021
- 6 Dorah Babirye (2024) Political freedom at risk? Almost half of Ugandans fear intimidation and violence during elections, available at <https://www.afrobarometer.org/publication/ad866-political-freedom-at-risk-almost-half-of-ugandans-fear-intimidation-and-violence-during-elections/>
- 7 WIPC(2019) Election Related Conflict and Violence In Uganda
- 8 Electoral Commission, 'EC Suspends Campaign Meetings in Specified Districts' <https://www.ec.or.ug/news/ec-suspends-campaign-meetings-specified-districts> accessed on 19th January, 2021.
- 9 Ibid
- 10 Ibid
- 11 Public Health (Control of COVID-19) Regulations S.I.83 of 2020
- 12 Cap 120, Laws of Uganda 2000.
- 13 This was confirmed by President Yoweri Museveni's national address held on the 12th of January 2021 at 8pm and aired on NTV television (Uganda).

Surveillance ahead of 2026 elections prompted by a report from Unwanted Witness that points to undermining of democratic freedoms as a result of weak laws on privacy, national security and public safety¹⁴. The same report notes how government controls and tracks opposition figures, journalists and Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) with the help of foreign spyware companies.

Election violence in Uganda is systemic and deeply rooted in the country's political history, governance structure, and the behavior of state institutions. It is orchestrated by an interplay of several factors including:

- a. Political landscape:** A dominant party system with a strong incumbent, leading to heightened stakes in elections and increased tensions between competing political forces. The political space is restrictive, limiting avenues for peaceful dissent and increasing the risk of violence as a means of expressing grievances.
- b. Socio-economic factors:** High levels of poverty, youth unemployment, and inequality create a class society where individuals may be more susceptible to mobilization for violence, particularly when linked to perceptions of unfair resource distribution or lack of opportunities. The urban poor groups/ghetto, comprised mainly of youth are a common target for political actors seeking to mobilise for violence.
- c. Ethnic and regional divisions:** While Uganda is diverse, ethnic and regional identities tend to be mobilized in some sections during elections, exacerbating tensions and leading to violence along these fault lines.
- d. Historical grievances:** Past conflicts and unresolved grievances, including those related to land disputes or historical injustices, can be triggered or exacerbated during election periods.
- e. Security sector dynamics:** The role and conduct of security forces during elections tends to play a significant factor. Heavy-handed policing or perceived bias escalate tensions and trigger violence.
- f. Weak institutions:** While there are formal institutions, weaknesses in the rule of law, including inconsistent application of the law and perceptions of impunity, tend to undermine trust in the electoral process and increase the likelihood of violence.

In addition to the above, respondents pointed to longevity in power by the existing regime to be a factor for violence especially where there is strong opposition in areas like Kampala. They also reported that historical grievances like the conflict in Northern Uganda between the Lango and Acholi subregions; as well as the land issues in Kasese are the causes of conflict as will be seen in the findings sections.

1.2.3 Drivers and Predictors of Election Violence¹⁵:

Interviews with respondents revealed the following drivers and predictors of election violence:

- 1. Competition for power:** Highly competitive elections, particularly where the outcome is perceived to have significant consequences, increases the risk of violence as was noted in all the areas of study.

¹⁴ See <https://www.monitor.co.ug/uganda/special-reports/elections/ugandans-under-state-surveillance-ahead-of-2026-elections--5143732#story>

¹⁵ Violence refers to the use/expression of psychological or physical force to react to a disagreement. It is usually characterized by harm/injury/pain, damage/destruction, torture, deprivation among others.

2. **Incumbency advantage:** The advantages of strong and powerful incumbents including the President and lower positions with significant control over State resources and with close ties to the state institutions and programs like the security organs including RDCs and PDM are more likely to instigate election violence and can lead to perceptions of unfairness and increase the likelihood of violence by the opposition or their supporters.
3. **Mobilization:** The mobilization of support along ethnic, religious, or regional lines can create a volatile environment and increase the risk of violence as seen in the Lango and the Rwenzori sub regions.
4. **Hate speech and incitement:** The use of inflammatory language, hate speech and incitement to violence by political actors or in the media can and has already triggered violence as was observed in the NRM primaries in Gulu city and areas of Arua city.
5. **Disinformation and misinformation:** The spread of false or misleading information, particularly through social media, can escalate tensions and contribute to violence.
6. **Youth involvement:** The involvement of unemployed or underemployed, frustrated and marginalized youth in political activities can increase the risk of violence, as they are more susceptible to manipulation or recruitment into violence. The study encountered this in Lango, Acholi and Kampala subregions.
7. **Presence of security forces:** While security forces are meant to maintain order, their presence or impartial actions in favour of particular candidates often escalate tensions and lead to violence through impartial actions for the different candidates.
8. **Lack of trust in institutions:** Low levels of trust in electoral institutions, the judiciary and security forces undermine the legitimacy of the electoral process and increase the likelihood of violence.
9. **Commercialization of politics:** Politics seen as a lucrative and high paying job hence placing a premium of 'die or die' while participating.

In understanding the complex and interwoven conflict¹⁶ dynamics that shape Uganda's electoral landscape particularly in regions of Kampala, Elgon, Lango, Acholi and Rwenzori; these sub regions also mirror Uganda's broader political landscape, where party-based rivalries, ethno-political rivalry, regional inequalities often align with partisan divides, making elections a flashpoint for conflicts. This hinders meaningful participation especially for young men and women in politics.

¹⁶ Conflict is a state of disagreement, argument or misunderstanding between opposing groups or opposing ideas. It can be change for the better or for the worse depending on how it is perceived and responded to / handled.

2.0 SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

The study scope was determined by time and financial resources and it centered on Kampala, Wakiso, Mbale city, Arua city, Gulu city and Kasese. This followed a sub region outlook with the following districts: Kampala (Urban and Peri-Urban Areas), Kampala Capital City Authority (KCCA) and selected peri-urban districts such as Wakiso.


Acholi Sub-Region (Northern Uganda): Districts: Gulu, Kitgum, Pader, Agago, Amuru, Lamwo, Omoro, and Nwoya; **Elgon Sub-Region (Eastern Uganda):** Districts: Mbale, Budaka, Bududa, Bukwo, Manafwa, Sironko, Bulambuli, Kapchorwa and Bukedea.

Lango Sub-Region (Northern Uganda) Districts: Lira, Alebtong, Apac, Dokolo, Otuke, Oyam, Kole, and Amolatar. **Rwenzori Sub-Region (Western Uganda):** Districts: Kasese, Kabarole, Bundibugyo, Kamwenge, Kyenjojo, and Hoima.


In terms of stakeholders, the analysis planned to consider: Government and electoral bodies: Security Agencies (UPDF, Police); Civil Society and Non-Governmental Organizations: Election observer groups and individuals; Human rights and election programming organizations e.g FHRI; Interparty Women Platform, UWONET, FOWODE, WIPC, CEWIGO, CoAct 1325 and the Media Challenge Initiative.

The scope also included Community-based organizations working on elections, peacebuilding and conflict mitigation in the districts. It also included traditional and religious leaders; media and communication stakeholders: local and national media outlets, community radios and broadcasters. international partners and observers, youth organizations, women's groups, marginalized communities and minority groups.


The study was predominantly qualitative and involved determination of the sample size for the areas of study, including key informant interviews, focus group discussions, and desk reviews that were used to ensure a comprehensive and context- specific understanding of election conflict dynamics. The systematic analysis of conflict framework was utilised throughout the study. For the hotspot map, GIS coordinates were picked and with other factors as described in the section determined the plotting.



EIGHTEEN (18) FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS (FGDs)
 were conducted with purposively selected members in the areas of the study



THIRTY-TWO (32) KIIs
 and a validation of findings involving at least 25 participants mainly from political parties and the Women Situation Room were conducted with various purposively selected state and non-state respondents



THOSE PURPOSIVELY SELECTED TO CAPTURE ELABORATE VIEWS INCLUDED

Eighteen (18) Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) were conducted with purposively selected members in the areas of the study. Thirty-two (32) KIIs and a validation of findings involving at least 25 participants mainly from political parties and the Women Situation Room were conducted with various purposively selected state and non-state respondents. Those purposively selected to capture elaborate views included women and youth, government officials, religious leaders, women and men led organizations working on elections, rule of law and democracy.



35
CONSTITUENCIES
in the target regions



MAXIMUM OF 3
CONSTITUENCIES
for each of the 4
regions



16 PARISHES
randomly selected



4 VILLAGES
randomly selected

The study had a sample space of 35 constituencies in the target regions. Due to time and data collection constraints, this was narrowed to a maximum of 3 constituencies for each of the 4 regions-where Kampala and Wakiso were represented by 2 constituencies each, resulting in 16 constituencies. These were further divided into 16 parishes and four villages randomly selected per district. This process ensured at least 4 FDGs per selected district were conducted.

The justification for the above is inclusive of background in literature on election violence cycles, clashes over the ongoing electoral processes, reports and tracking information regarding those particular locations. This was corroborated with data from Electoral Commission ¹⁷.

Qualitative data was analysed in themes to show the results in the four thematic areas for each region, the trends and similarities and differences in the regions. The literature identifies the areas of past election violence and this is supplemented by the visual representations of election conflict hotspots. An interpretive approach to the analysis of the data, based on the application of critical multi-level analysis was used. This generated

Key findings and analysis of the drivers and patterns of election violence.

- Map of election violence hotspots.
- Recommendations for violence prevention and mitigation.
- Policy implications and actionable strategies for stakeholders.

Ethical Considerations:

The analysis adhered to the highest ethical standards that included:

- Obtaining informed consent from all research participants.
- Ensuring the confidentiality and anonymity of data.
- Avoiding any potential harm to participants or communities.
- Being sensitive to cultural and political contexts

Limitations and remedies:

The major limitation was political sensitivities and biases in respondent feedback given that the study was conducted during a heated political period as NRM conducted its party primaries. To ensure acquisition of reliable data, findings were triangulated and data collection was guided by ethical safeguards, local knowledge and context specific adaptations.

¹⁷ For instance: Early Warning Signs for Violence in Uganda's 2021 Elections and Structures and Strategies for Mitigation report available at <https://ideaug.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/WDN-U-IDEA-Final-report-Early-Warning-Signs-Mitigation-of-Election-Violence-1.pdf>, Women and elections in East Africa available at https://wipc.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/Womens-World-52_EN.pdf; Election Related Conflict And Violence In Uganda available at <https://wipc.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/Election-Related-Conflict-and-Violence-in-Uganda.pdf>.

Media reports for instance <https://www.ugandaradionetwork.net/story/security-agencies-map-out-39-election-hotspot-districts>

3.0 FINDINGS

The findings section shares the summary of key emerging trends, key drivers of election violence and conflict and their implications, trends analysis of elections and socio-economic characteristics and the region-specific findings.

3.1 Summary of emerging trends

There has been an increase in conflicts within parties, as evidenced by the most recently concluded NRM primaries of 2025. These intra-party disputes have sometimes escalated into violence, indicating that the political opposition is no longer the only source or target of conflict. Tensions are now also rooted within political organizations themselves. Such conflicts undermine party cohesion and contribute to a polarized political environment.¹⁸

Currently there are 27 registered political parties vying for the political space across the country. This shows fragmentation of the parties but worse still, confusion of the voters. These include: Forum For Democratic Change, Democratic Party, Uganda Peoples' Congress, Uganda Economic Party, People's Progressive Party, Conservative Party, Justice Forum (JEEMA), Democratic Front, Ecological Party of Uganda, Society For Peace Development, Revolutionary People's Party, Uganda Patriotic Development, National Convention for Democracy, National Resistance Movement, Republican Party, Activists Party and the National Unity Platform, among others.

Excessive monetization of politics has become a prevalent issue, leading candidates to adopt a do-or-die attitude towards elections. Many candidates stake personal property such as land, homes, or other assets by borrowing large sums of money, often secured through loans, to fund their campaigns. Because of these high personal stakes, candidates find it difficult to accept defeat, as losing could mean financial ruin or loss of social standing. This culture of monetary influence encourages vote-buying and corrupt practices, further compromising the integrity of elections. This was emphasized by a respondent below.

"The high monetization of politics further deepens exclusivity. Contesting for leadership increasingly requires vast financial resources, which many Ugandans simply do not have. As a result, we often elect individuals not based on their competence or vision for the country, but on the size of their wallets. This dynamic undermines merit-based leadership and risks sidelining capable voices that could contribute to national development." Participant at the Political Parties' Secretary-Generals Retreat, August 2025.

The emergence of new political parties has significantly raised the stakes in the political landscape. This is because former party-mates, who previously aligned themselves within the same political organization, are now competing against each other in elections. For example, parties like

¹⁸ See Violence in NRM primaries signals crisis for 2026 elections – Democratic Front available at <https://www.monitor.co.ug/uganda/news/national/violence-in-nrm-primaries-signals-crisis-for-2026-elections-democratic-front--5126714>

Parliament orders probe into deadly NRM primary clashes available at <https://parliamentwatch.ug/news-amp-updates/parliament-orders-probe-into-deadly-nrm-primary-clashes/>

Why ghosts' of 2021 election violence loom over country, available at <https://www.monitor.co.ug/uganda/news/national/why-ghosts-of-2021-election-violence-loom-over-country>.

FDC and PFF, or NUP and Democratic Front now find themselves in direct competition, which intensifies political rivalry and changes traditional loyalties.

The role of RDCs, supported by security forces, in influencing candidate support has expanded beyond their official duties. They are increasingly involved in undocumented and illegal ways in determining which candidates are favored or supported to win elections. This manipulation creates a perception among the population that certain candidates are preferred by the State or the ruling party (NRM), leading to mistrust in the fairness of electoral processes.

The withdrawal of donor funds, such as those from the Democratic Governance Facility (DGF) that was suspended by the Uganda Government in 2021 and, more recently USAID, has crippled the capacity of NGOs to conduct civic education nationwide. As a result, there is little evidence of voter education programs in all the research districts and the country at large. This gap leaves voters uninformed about their rights and the electoral process, increasing susceptibility to misinformation and apathy.

Voter turnout has generally been low, reflecting a growing public mistrust in the legitimacy of elections. Many citizens feel that their votes do not genuinely influence outcomes or that the electoral process is compromised by manipulation or unfair practices, which discourages active participation.

A new trend involves the formation of factions that pit older politicians and parties against newer or younger parties. For instance, the longstanding rivalry between Museveni and Besigye (NRM vs. PFF) continues to define the political landscape, while emerging figures like Muhoozi and Kyagulanyi (PLU/NUP) are challenging traditional dominance. These factional divides deepen polarization and hinder collaboration among political actors.

The quality of journalism and incident analysis has also been affected by underpaid journalists and political analysts who are susceptible to influence by those willing to pay the highest bribe. This influence leads to the spinning of particular political narratives, which can distort public perceptions and undermine informed decision-making.

Uncertainty and fragmentation have emerged with a lack of unity. This was evident in the recent NRM primaries, which were deeply embarrassing due to internal divisions. Political parties are responding to fragmentation and voter apathy by simply creating more parties. As Uganda's population grows, the proportion of eligible voters increases, yet voter turnout continues to decline with each election cycle. This trend may worsen, especially following the discouraging events within NRM, the largest party.

Intolerance and threats are rising, and some of the rhetoric from some quarters is deeply alarming, with statements like "We shall kill you" or "We shall butcher you". These threats extend beyond political competition and affect institutions meant to safeguard Uganda's multi-party democracy.

Social media and technology have become powerful tools for mobilizing and organizing the youth, but they also facilitate violence and misinformation. Misinformation spreads rapidly on platforms like WhatsApp, Facebook, Tik-Tok and Twitter, fuelling tensions and inciting violence during campaigns and elections.

There is a noticeable hardening of attitudes among the population, with people demonstrating less fear of security organs. Citizens are increasingly willing to confront police and military personnel directly, sometimes engaging in violent or confrontational behaviour, which further escalates tensions.

Meanwhile, religious leaders are increasingly taking sides in electoral contests, often endorsing candidates aligned with their faith. This politicization of religious authority influences community loyalties and can either promote peace or incite conflict, depending on the stance taken.

The radicalization of party supporters and supporters' aggressive attitudes have diminished opportunities for dialogue and inter-party cooperation. Many parties and their supporters now view their opponents as enemies, which hampers efforts toward consensus-building and peaceful political engagement.

Across these regions, the overarching pattern indicates that electoral violence is fuelled by socio-economic vulnerabilities, land disputes, ethnic identities and political manipulation. Misinformation and social media are emerging as new triggers, while traditional institutions remain vital peace agents. To ensure peaceful credible elections, this study's recommendations emphasize civic education, community engagement, impartial security, responsible media and inclusive political processes.

3.2 Hot spot mapping

The hotspot mapping shown in Figure 2 was arrived at through GIS mapping and visualises potential flashpoints based on history, political contestation, strength of holding up those areas by particular political parties, areas of contestation between political parties, areas of violence as a result of historical grievances, areas where primaries were annulled or even suspended and intra-party incidents and other relevant data to identify patterns and areas of concern.

The map is not cast in stone nor are the hotspots because they can change over time but it's an illustration that enables stakeholders to plan for mitigation. It is presented with the following colour codes and a narrative of the specific area and incident.

Orange: High potential of election violence, injuries to persons and destruction of property

Red: Very high potential for election violence, injuries or death of persons and destruction of property.

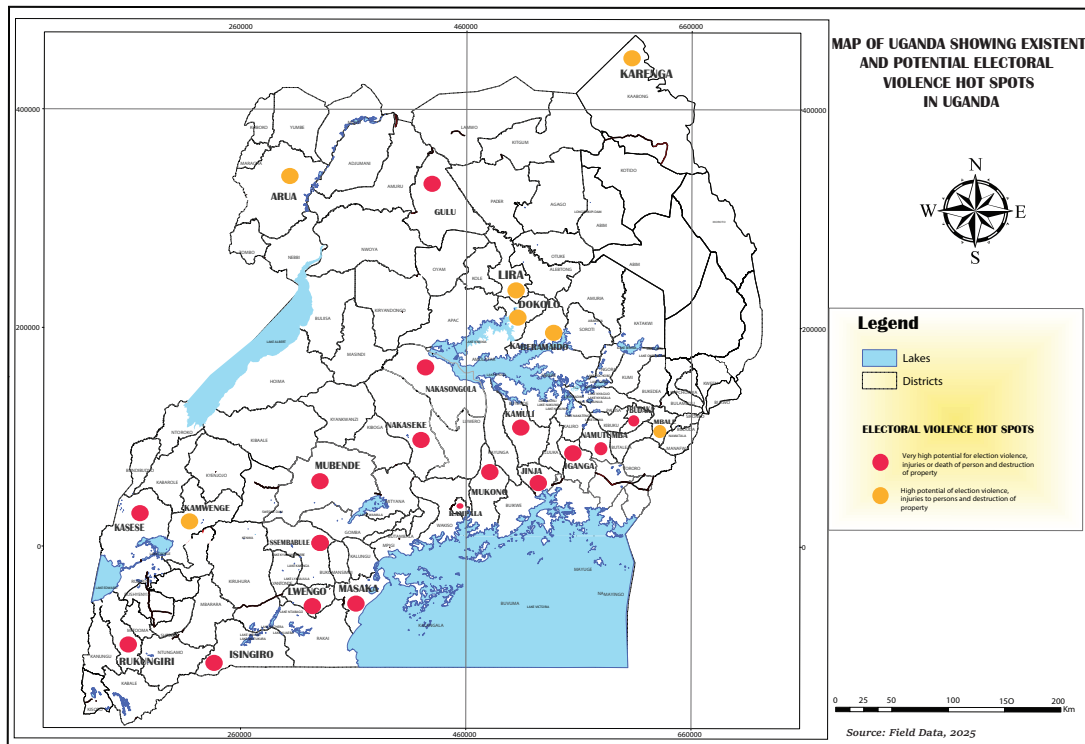
Table 1: Election hotspots in Uganda

District	Constituency	Incident	Colour Code
Sembabule District	Lwemiyaga County	Incumbent Ssekikubo's supporters have been engaged in clashes with new-comer and State-backed Gen. Rwashande. One person killed during primaries.	Red
Lwengo District	Bukoto West	12 people arrested after supporters of incumbent Muyanja Sentayi clashed with those of rival Ibrahim Kittata.	Orange
Budaka District	Iki-Iki County	One person killed in political violence in run up to NRM primaries	Red

District	Constituency	Incident	Colour Code
Mubende	Kasambya County	Incumbent and PLU-backed Kabanda showing impunity and State might in campaigns. One person shot and injured. Two cars burnt at Nabigala Sub-County Head quarters	Red
Mbale	Northern City Division	Fraud and irregularities in past NRM primary have led Hudu Hussein to reject the election results.	Orange
Isingiro	Isingiro South	Arrests were made during NRM primaries, a man found with a hand grenade, two candidates' cars burnt.	Red
Arua	Ayivu West	Attacks on supporters of different political camps	Orange
Jinja	Busiki	Violent clashes between incumbent and rival candidates	Orange
Mukono	Mukono Municipality, Mukono North	Clashes between NUP and NRM	Red
Masaka	Municipality	Clashes between DF, NUP	Red
Iganga	Municipality	68 LDC students ferried from Kampala arrested. Assistant RDC arrested. Strong NUP area	Red
Karenga		Woman MP race where incumbent and Minister rigged primaries	Orange
Dokolo	Dokolo South	Taxi intercepted carrying 14 bouncers hired to disrupt voting	Orange
Kamuli	Buzaaya County	Gang member was shot down – also Husband to leading Woman MP candidate	Orange

District	Constituency	Incident	Colour Code
Lira	Erute South, Lira city	Disagreements between NRM leaders caused suspension of election in recently concluded primaries. The competition between UPC and NRM flag bearers for the City Woman MP has led to skirmishes among the voters.	Orange
Kamwenge		90 goons stopped at checkpoints	Orange
Nakaseke	Nakaseke North	Tumukunde son contesting. His supporter was shot.	Red
Rubanda		Supporters of incumbent Musasizi attacked, Ministers convoy stones	Red
Rukungiri	Rujumbura County	Security Minister Jim Muhwezi reportedly using his position to intimidate rivals' supporters. Several people were injured and bullets fired.	Red
Namutumba	Bukono	Namuganza Feud with Seaker Among, Namuganza plans to run as independent	Red
Lwengo (Bukoto West)	Lwengo (Bukoto West)	Arrests and confrontations between rival supporters	Red
Nakasongola District	Kakooge, Katuugo, and Migyeera	District security structures report high potential for violence in the mentioned hotspots partly due to the presence of youth gangs.	Red
Kaberamaido	Kalaki County	Campaigns suspended due to escalating violence	Orange
Kasese	Hima, Municipality	Historical grievances, excessive deployment of UPDF and RDCs	Red

Figure 2: Uganda's electoral violence hotspots



3.3 Key drivers of election violence and conflict and their implications

The study identified the following key drivers of election violence as shown in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Key drivers of election violence

Key Driver	Description	Impact/Implication
Political dominance and incumbency advantage	Concentration of power in the ruling party (NRM), control over resources, limited political space for opposition.	Heightened tensions because of misallocation of government resources that increases likelihood of violence due to perceived unfairness.
Weak and biased electoral Institutions	Lack of transparency, limited capacity, perceived bias in electoral processes, poor early warning systems.	Undermines electoral credibility, increases disputes, and opportunities for manipulation.
Vote-buying	Use of material incentives, cash, gifts, or services to sway voters.	Erodes electoral integrity, fosters resentment, and leads to post-election conflicts.

Key Driver	Description	Impact/Implication
Ethnic, regional and identity politics	Mobilization along ethnic, regional, and religious lines; exploitation of identity-based loyalties.	Triggers tribal conflicts, regional rivalries, and violence during elections.
Misinformation and hate speech via social media	Spread of fake news, inflammatory language, propaganda through social media and local radios.	Incites violence, spreads distrust and escalates tensions among supporters.
Youth mobilization and vulnerability	High unemployment, social pressures, manipulation of youth as supporters or foot soldiers.	Increased risk of youth-led violence, protests, and disruption.
Bias and heavy-handed security forces	Security agencies' conduct, perceived bias, or excessive force.	Escalates tensions, triggers clashes, and undermines trust in law enforcement.
Historical land and resource disputes	Long-standing conflicts over land rights, evictions, resource control.	Fuels violence, mobilizes support around land issues, and exacerbates tensions.

3.4 Trends analysis of elections and socio-economic characteristics

3.4.1 The question of youth unemployment and violence in elections

The trend of youth unemployment and increasing violence in elections across Uganda's key regions, especially Kampala/Wakiso, Acholi, Lango, Rwenzori and Elgon Regions, reveals a strong correlation supported by multiple sources and regional reports. Across Uganda, there is high youth unemployment, exceeding 70%. Such economic vulnerabilities foster frustration, disenfranchisement, and susceptibility to manipulation by political actors. This was noted below by respondents.

"Youth mobilization and violence through youth gangs (e.g., Foot Soldiers in Kampala, Kony Youth in Acholi, and Youth Militia in Lango) are often recruited or mobilized during electoral periods, driven by promises of material gains or as a response to economic despair. This mobilization escalates into violent clashes, especially in hotspots like Kampala's Kawempe Division, Gulu City, Lira city and Kasese." **FGD's perspective**

"The trend since 2009 shows the increase in youth unemployment has also increased with a rise in electoral violence, with recent elections (2016, 2021, and upcoming 2026) marked by heightened youth involvement, including organized violence, protests, and intimidation." **FGD Kasese.**

Below is a summary table to show the relationship between youth unemployment, violence trends and key drivers

Table 3: Youth unemployment and electoral violence in Uganda

Region	Youth Unemployment Trend	Violence Trend	Key Drivers
Kampala/Wakiso	Rising youth unemployment, especially in urban slums	Surge in open youth gang violence, protests, social media incitement	Political rivalry, social media misinformation, youth grievances
Acholi	High youth unemployment linked to post-conflict trauma and land disputes	Increased electoral clashes, land conflicts, youth mobilization	Land grievances, ethnic tensions, youth manipulation
Lango	Over 70% youth unemployment, clan-based support systems exploited	Clashes during campaigns, vote-buying, family disputes	Patronage politics, land issues, youth mobilization
Rwenzori	Land conflicts and youth unemployment leads to volatile hotspots	Violent land disputes, ethnic tensions, protests	Land resource conflicts, marginalization, youth involvement
Elgon	Socio-economic underdevelopment, urbanisation fuels tensions	Electoral violence linked to land disputes and youth mobilization	Land disputes, political manipulation, youth disillusionment

3.4.2 The manifestation of gender dynamics in electoral violence

Most respondents confirmed that electoral violence affects women differently, during and even after the elections. In the recently concluded NRM primaries, some respondents gave personal experience of women who faced violence by virtue of lining up behind candidates of their choice rather than their spouse's preferred candidates. Below are some comments from respondents regarding violence against women during elections.

"Women are especially affected during campaigns, with incidents including verbal abuse, threats, and physical violence. Women challenging traditional roles or engaging actively in politics are disproportionately targeted for gendered violence and discrimination." FGD Kawempe

Another FGD participant in Lira commented as follows regarding gendered campaign violence:

"Women supporting opposition candidates or advocating for gender equality are more vulnerable to intimidation and violence. This manifests in the form of harassment, smear campaigns, or physical attacks aimed at discouraging their political engagement." FGD Lira district.

The table below describes different levels of manifestation of violence against women during the electoral processes.

Table 4: Manifestations and implications of violence against women in elections

Manifestation	Description	Implication
Violence against women candidates/supporters	Physical attacks, harassment, threats	Discourages women from participating, reduces gender equality in politics
Gender-based harassment and intimidation	Sexist insults, threats of sexual violence	Silences women supporters, reinforces gender stereotypes
Domestic and family violence	Family splits, domestic abuse linked to political loyalties	Disrupts social stability, perpetuates gender inequalities
Discrimination and underrepresentation	Limited access to resources, unequal campaign opportunities	Maintains gender disparities in political leadership
Sexual violence and exploitation	SGBV linked to election tensions, especially targeting women	Deters women from political engagement, undermines democratic participation

3.4.3 The relationship between commercialized politics and triggers of violence in hotspots

The analysis notes that commercialized politics has significantly contributed to triggering electoral violence in hotspot areas through several interconnected mechanisms as described below.

In a highly commercialized political environment, candidates and political parties often rely on monetary or material incentives to secure votes. This practice, known as vote-buying, fosters corruption and undermines genuine democratic engagement. In other hotspot areas, where economic disparities are pronounced like Mbale in the Elgon Region, voters were susceptible to such incentives, leading to intense competition among candidates. It was also noted that this competition often results in disputes, intimidation and violence as candidates and their supporters vie for control over electoral outcomes.

Commercialized politics tends to strengthen patronage networks and factional alliances, which can escalate tensions. Politicians mobilize supporters based on loyalty to patronage figures rather than ideological differences, causing localized conflicts. In hotspot regions, these networks often translate into groups that mobilize support through violence as was the case in mention for boda-boda riders in Lira city, especially when electoral results threaten their influence or access to resources.

The focus on material gain shifts priorities from democratic principles to personal or group enrichment. This shift was noted to weaken institutions responsible for maintaining order during elections, such as electoral commissions and security agencies. As a result, electoral disputes are more likely to turn violent when legal mechanisms are perceived as ineffective or biased, especially in areas with a history of conflict.

In many hotspot areas, land and resource control are central to local power dynamics. Commercialized politics exacerbated these disputes, as politicians seek to control or influence resource-rich regions for personal or political gain. The struggle over resources becomes intertwined with electoral competition, leading to violence when different factions attempt to assert dominance as was reported in areas of the Acholi and Rwenzori sub-regions.

Commercial interests can lead to the formation and mobilization of violent groups aligned with particular political actors. These groups may use violence to intimidate opponents, manipulate electoral processes, or settle disputes over political or economic control, especially in regions where state authority is weak or contested.

3.4.4 The relationship between civic education and electoral violence

Civic education and electoral violence are closely interconnected. Effective civic education promotes understanding of democratic processes, encourages respect for electoral outcomes, and fosters a culture of tolerance and peaceful resolution of conflicts. This was emphasised by a respondent in Lira district who noted that ... *“when citizens are well-informed about their rights and responsibilities, they are less likely to resort to voter sell outs, violence out of frustration, misinformation, or misunderstanding.”*

Additionally, civic education was noted to counteract divisive narratives, promote national unity among diverse groups, and equip voters and political actors with skills for negotiation and conflict resolution. This reduces the likelihood of electoral disputes escalating into violence.

However, inadequate civic education has an opposite effect, failing to address underlying tensions or, worse, reinforcing divisions, which can increase the risk of electoral violence. Ultimately, robust civic education acts as a preventive tool, helping to build a culture of peaceful participation and democratic legitimacy, thereby reducing the incidence and severity of electoral violence.

3.5 Region specific findings

3.5.1 Rwenzori region: Kasese District

Kasese District has a long history of complex conflict dynamics rooted in land disputes, ethnic identities, political marginalization, and historical grievances. The issues in Kasese have a huge spiral effect to other Districts in the regions since the Bakonzo community spreads to Districts of Bunyangabu, Kabarole, Ntoroko and Bundibugyo. The upcoming 2025/26 elections are poised to be influenced by these entrenched issues, with recent developments indicating escalating tensions¹⁹. This report provides an in-depth analysis of the conflict patterns, key actors, triggers, hotspots, existing mitigation mechanisms, and strategic recommendations to foster peaceful elections.

Kasese's conflicts are deeply embedded in its history, with significant episodes dating back to colonial and post-independence eras²⁰. Key historical factors include:

Colonial land allocations and post-colonial marginalization: Land disputes have persisted since independence, especially involving the Basongora minority, Banyabindi and Bakonzo majority communities. Land was allocated unevenly, leading to grievances over land rights, access, and control. A respondent explained this as follows:

19 <https://messiahradio.co.uk/kasese-residents-urged-to-remain-peaceful-during-the-election-period/>

20 <https://www.monitor.co.uk/uganda/lifestyle/reviews-profiles/what-breeds-conflicts-in-rwenzori-region--1643686>

Over these years of open or silent conflict, the consequences have been grave for the various groups attempting to co-exist in the Rwenzori region. Foremost have been the loss of lives and property in the course of the various episodes of violence. The 1998 Kichambwa massacre, when more than 80 young people lost their lives at the Technical Institute, is still present in our collective memory. More recently, people have also lost their lives and property in many parts of the region due to local fights over access to land, including violent episodes between pastoralists (Basongora and and agriculturalists (Bakozzo and others). Over the years, several communities have also been displaced, deprived of services – including education - and want to return to what they consider their ancestral land.²¹

- **Kingdom and ethnic identity movements:** The official recognition of the Rwenzururu Kingdom, led by the Omusinga, has come with mistrust over security concerns from the central government authority. On the contrary there is denied recognition of the Busongora, Banyabindi Bagabo, Bakingwe, Bavanoma and Batwa,
- **Rebellion and violence:** Notable violent episodes include the 2016 Kasese clashes, where security forces clashed with royal guards, resulting in fatalities and deepened mistrust.

a) Recurring Conflict Patterns

- **Land disputes:** Land grabbing, evictions, boundary conflicts, and illegal settlements frequently trigger violence. These disputes often involve government agencies, private individuals and community groups.
- **Ethnic and territorial tensions:** The Bakozzo, Basongora, and other tribes have competing claims over land and political dominance, fuelling tribal sentiments and regionalism.
- **Political marginalization and repression:** Perceptions of unfair political representation, manipulation, and repression have led to protests, rebellions, and electoral violence.
- **Historical grievances and reconciliation gaps:** The absence of sustained reconciliation or trauma healing programs perpetuates mistrust and resentment.

b) Impact of past elections

Past electoral cycles, notably 2012 and 2016, have experienced violence linked to contested land rights, political dominance²², and ethnic tensions, with incidents such as the attack on the royal guards and retaliatory violence. These episodes have entrenched division and mistrust, influencing current conflict dynamics.

c) Key actors and their Interests

- **Political leaders:** Incumbents (NRM) and opposition parties (FDC, NUP, PFF) vie for control, often exploiting land and identity issues.
- **Traditional and cultural leaders:** The Omusinga and local Chiefs wield influence over their communities, with their support being critical in electoral mobilization.
- **Security agencies:** UPDF, Police, RDCs, and local security personnel are tasked with maintaining order but are often perceived as biased or heavy-handed.

21 https://crossculturalfoundation.or.ug/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Managing_Inter-cultural-conflict-in-the-Rwenzori-region-@CCFU2014.pdf

22 Khisa, M., & Rwengabo, S. (2022). The Deepening Politics of Fragmentation in Uganda: Understanding Violence in the Rwenzori Region. *African Studies Review* 65(4), 939-964. <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/886307>.

- **Communities and land victims:** Landless families, evictees, and minorities like Basongora and the dominant tribes like the Bakonzo are both directly affected.
- **Civil society and NGOs:** Some have been active in peacebuilding. However, many NGOs have been curtailed post-USAID funding, limiting their influence.
- **Religious leaders and institutions:** Churches and faith-based organizations serve as mediators but are sometimes accused of taking sides.
- **External actors:** Donors and international NGOs formerly played roles in peacebuilding; their current influence is limited.

d) Core Interests

- **Land control and reparation:** Communities seek land restitution, security of land rights, and fair resettlement.
- **Political power:** Parties aim for electoral victory, often using land and ethnicity as mobilization tools.
- **Cultural autonomy:** The Omusinga and local cultural leaders seek recognition and influence over land and identity issues.
- **Security and stability:** Security agencies aim to maintain order but are sometimes perceived as instruments of repression.
- **Historical and cultural preservation:** Traditional institutions seek to uphold their authority and cultural identity.

e) Conflict Triggers and Hotspots

Historical Triggers

- Land evictions, boundary disputes, and illegal land grabbing.
- Repression of ethnic groups or traditional institutions, exemplified by the 2016 Kasese clashes.
- Electoral disputes, vote rigging, and manipulation.
- Land resettlement policies, notably those involving the Basongora and Bakonzo communities.

Emerging Triggers

- Unresolved land claims: Affected persons camping at RDC offices, unresolved land disputes, and delays in land adjudication.
- Politicization of traditional authority: Support or opposition to the Omusinga influences voter mobilization.
- Misinformation and hate speech: Spread via social media, WhatsApp groups, and local radios, inciting tribal and political tensions.
- Youth unemployment and drug abuse: Idle youth are susceptible to recruitment into violence or protests.
- Security incidents: Attacks involving cattle keepers, security forces, or political supporters.

f) Hotspots

- Hima- known for cattle-related tensions, ethnic rivalries, and past violence.
- Nkoko is also the location of a land dispute between pastoralists and crop farmers, which has led to tensions and calls for boundary demarcation
- Kasese municipality and surrounding areas known for ethnic, land, and political rivalries.
- Border areas and regions with land resettlements: Nkoko, Kabukero, Bigando, Rwehingo, Rwamusakara.

g) Early Warning Signs

- Low voter turnout or high abstention.
- Political character assassination and defacement of posters.
- Increased tribal or ethnic rhetoric.
- Movement of armed groups or mobilization of youth militia.
- Incidents of violence, arson, or threats in hotspots.

h) Existing mitigation and prevention mechanisms

- Religious mediation: Inter-religious councils and church leaders mediate conflicts at community levels.
- Community dialogues: Forums like Kasese District Elders Forum and Busongora Development Forum facilitate stakeholder engagement. NGOs like RFPJ, CAF, KRC, NAYODE, FOWID-R and others have facilitated peace forums and dialogues.
- Peace messaging: Radio campaigns promoting peace, although limited in scope and reach.
- Judicial interventions: Court rulings on land disputes and some legal resolutions.
- Party-level conflict resolution: Internal dispute resolutions and candidate negotiations.
- Security presence: Police and military deployment to prevent escalation, often reactive rather than proactive.

i) Gaps and Challenges

- Limited institutional capacity: lack of operationalized conflict prevention policies, such as the 2016 transition policy.
- Weak early warning systems: absence of community-based mechanisms to detect tensions early.
- Muzzling civil society and media: restrictions on civil society activities and media reporting reduce civil society's role.
- Delayed or ineffective response: security agencies often respond reactively, with limited emphasis on preventive diplomacy.
- Land dispute resolution gaps: land conflicts remain unresolved due to legal and administrative bottlenecks.
- Lack of civic education: Insufficient voter and civic education fosters misinformation and mistrust.

j) Recommendations for peaceful elections

- i. Institutional and policy reforms through strengthened electoral independence to enhance the independence and transparency of the Electoral Commission (EC).
- ii. Community and civil society engagement through enhanced civic and voter education by widespread civic education campaigns utilizing local radio, community leaders, and CSOs.
- iii. Community-based early warning systems through community peace committees trained to detect and de-escalate tensions early.
- iv. Reconciliation and trauma healing to be implemented by the various stakeholders that implement community reconciliation programs, especially in areas with past violence.
- v. Security and rule of law that ensures security agencies operate without bias and focus on preventive measures; protection for vulnerable groups like women, youth, and land victims.

- vi. Media and misinformation can be addressed through support for trainings on responsible reporting for elections for instance in conflict-sensitive journalism among media outlets; government to monitor and regulate social media and WhatsApp groups to curb incitement and utilize trusted local radio stations for peace messaging and civic education.
- vii. Political and traditional leadership can be engaged by various stakeholders through dialogue among political parties, traditional institutions, and communities with traditional leaders to promote peace and social cohesion and encourage parties to conduct transparent nomination processes.

General trend analysis for Kasese

- Land and land-related conflicts are central; Land disputes, evictions, resettlements, and historical grievances are recurring and deeply rooted issues in Kasese. Political actors are exploiting land issues to mobilize support or create conflict, especially around areas like , Nkoko, Mobuku, and others. Land conflicts are intertwined with ethnic identities, historical grievances, and resource control, heightening tensions.
- Political instability and electoral violence where elections are characterized by violence, voter intimidation, vote-rigging, and political manipulation. Related to this are incidents of violence linked to intra-party conflicts, rivalries, and manipulation of electoral processes are common and the involvement of armed groups like the Royal Guards, Royal Guards' attacks, and government responses indicate a volatile political environment.
- Ethnic identities such as Bakonzo and Basongora influence voting patterns and conflict dynamics, while historical and ongoing disputes over land, political representation, and cultural recognition fuel mistrust, with the influence of the Kingdom and cultural leaders remaining significant in either escalating or mitigating conflict.
- Security and law enforcement challenges, including perceptions of bias among security forces, the presence of armed cattle keepers, reports of mistreatment, fragile security arrangements evidenced by cattle movement and restricted access for surveyors, and prevalent buying of votes, collectively undermine trust, community security, and electoral integrity.
- Voter fatigue, driven by limited civic education, misinformation, and disillusionment with electoral outcomes, is compounded by the exit of NGOs like USAID-funded peace organizations, thereby reducing peace-building efforts and increasing mistrust and apathy.
- Challenges in peace and conflict prevention include a lack of effective peace institutions, with some peace actors arrested or disillusioned, existing mechanisms such as CSOs, religious leaders, and community elders being ineffective or limited in scope, and a community expressed need for transitional justice, reconciliation, and improved civic education.
- External factors influencing peace and conflict include the diminished role of NGOs, donors, and foreign governments in peace-building efforts; political influence and internal conflicts among national parties like NRM, FDC, NUP, and PFF shaping local dynamics; and the significant impact of media, with biased or compromised outlets and social media channels spreading misinformation.
- Increasing politicization of land and ethnic issues, the use of youth and marginalized groups for mobilization or violence, rising political polarization leading to feelings of exclusion, the prevalence of monetization and vote-buying undermining electoral integrity, and the expanding role of digital tools and social media, which offer opportunities for youth participation but also pose risks of misinformation.

- The long-term outlook indicates that deep-rooted grievances related to land, ethnicity, and political marginalization are unlikely to be fully resolved before the elections, and if these issues are not addressed through inclusive dialogue, land reforms, and justice processes, tensions in hotspots like Hima, Nyakatonzi, Katunguru, and Kasese Municipality may escalate, increasing the risk of post-election conflicts.

3.5.2 Lango Subregion

a) Historical context and community experiences

Historical roots of conflict

Lango subregion has a long history of political rivalry, cultural disputes, and socio-economic challenges that have shaped its current conflict dynamics. Historically, the region experienced marginalization, especially during colonial rule, which sowed seeds of mistrust towards central government institutions. Post-independence, political competition intensified, with local communities often feeling excluded from resource allocation and political decision-making.

Elections have been a flashpoint for violence, primarily due to the monetization of politics—where candidates buy votes with cash, alcohol, or material gifts—undermining the legitimacy of electoral processes. For example, during previous campaigns, reports indicated that candidates would distribute large sums of money or alcohol at rallies to sway voters, creating a transactional political culture. KII

Cultural and social dimensions

Lango's social fabric is intertwined with strong clan and cultural institutions. These institutions historically served as conflict mediators but have increasingly been politicized. Clan loyalties influence voting patterns, with some clans supporting particular candidates or parties, often leading to intra- and inter-clan rivalries during elections.

Its only in Lango where voters will ask; which clan do you belong to? Who is your clan leader? Who are you married to? Which clan are you married into and what is the position of your spouse in the clan? How are you going to represent the clan?

In interviews with community respondents, they gave the following descriptions of their perception about election-related violence.

- Vote-buying and money politics during elections is a common vice as community members often report that candidates distribute money, alcohol, and food to supporters. Such practices create divisions, as supporters feel obligated to vote for the benefactor, regardless of their preferences or the candidate's capacity to deliver development. KII Lira city
- Violence and intimidation in the past elections have seen supporters clash over results, with incidents of physical violence, destruction of property, and in some cases, deaths. For instance, in the 2016 elections in Oyam district, supporters of rival candidates clashed, leading to injuries and displacement. KII Lira city
- Militarization and security measures are often applied heavily during elections, sometimes exacerbating tensions. In 2018, reports indicated that security personnel used excessive force to disperse protesting supporters, leading to increased hostility.

- Lack of accountability towards community members frequently complain about the failure of elected leaders to deliver promised development projects, which breeds disillusionment and reduces trust in the electoral process. KII Lira city
- Youth disillusionment in form of unemployment rates among youth—estimated at over 70% in some districts—fuel frustration. Youth often see politics as a means of economic gain rather than service, leading to their engagement in violence or electoral malpractices. KII Lira district

b) Key actors and interests

- Political candidates and parties: candidates from NRM, UPC, FDC, and other parties seek electoral victory. Their interests include gaining political power, economic benefits, and regional dominance.
- Community and clan Leaders are traditional authorities that influence local support, often mobilizing their clans or groups during elections. Their interests include maintaining influence, cultural integrity, and social cohesion.
- Youth and supporters are vulnerable to political manipulation, youth are often recruited as foot soldiers or mobilizers. Their interests are influenced by unemployment, lack of socio-economic opportunities, and the desire for recognition.
- Security agencies like the police and military are responsible for maintaining order but are sometimes accused of bias, excessive force, or collusion with certain political actors.
- Business community of local traders and entrepreneurs invest in political campaigns, expecting contracts, protection, or favours in return. Reports of boda boda saccos funded by political candidates were prevalent in the city and how the saccos were changing loyalty due to better financial support from particular aspirants.
- Civil society and NGOs work to promote peaceful elections, civic awareness, and transparency. Their interests are in ensuring credible, transparent electoral processes. These include FAPAD, GLOFORD -Uganda, WOPI, FIRD-Uganda.
- Religious and cultural leaders influence community attitudes and can either promote peace or incite tensions depending on their allegiances.
- Media outlets like the radio stations and social media platforms are powerful influencers, capable of shaping opinions either positively or negatively.

c) Conflict triggers and hotspots

- Vote-buying and material incentives where candidates distribute money, alcohol, or other gifts, creating dependency and resentment among supporters.
- Violent disputes over election results as results are perceived as manipulated or unfair, supporters often resort to violence, destruction, or protests.
- Use of alcohol and drugs among supporters during rallies or voting days often leads to unruly behavior, fights, and property destruction.
- Clan and ethnic rivalries are deep-rooted loyalties can lead to clashes, especially if a community perceives marginalization or exclusion.
- Hate speech and provocative language by candidates and supporters through use inflammatory language, insults, or threats can escalate tensions.
- Perceived marginalization of communities feeling neglected or discriminated against tend to protest or resist electoral processes and their outcomes.

d) Hotspot Areas

- **Oyam District and Lira City:** These are high-stakes electoral zones with a history of violence, especially around trading centres and key polling stations.
- **Trading Centres (e.g. Kakoge, Bunga, Orem):** Places where supporters gather in large numbers, making them prone to clashes.
- **Rural Villages (e.g. Atira in Onywako Parish, Bong Cayo):** Supporters often gather in communal spaces, where alcohol consumption and gang activities are common.
- **Clan and cultural institution areas:** Zones where traditional authority conflicts or rival clan loyalties manifest into disputes.

Mitigation and Prevention Mechanisms

- **Civic education campaigns:** Government and civil society organizations conduct voter awareness programs emphasizing peaceful participation, the importance of democracy, and the dangers of violence.
- **Community dialogue and mediation:** Elders, religious leaders, and cultural institutions often facilitate peace meetings to reconcile supporters and diffuse tensions.
- **Security deployment:** Police and military personnel are stationed in hotspots during elections to deter violence, disperse unruly groups, and enforce law and order.
- **Media campaigns:** Radio programs and social media are used to promote messages of peace, unity, and civic responsibility.
- **Conflict Resolution by Traditional and religious:** Clan elders, religious and cultural leaders use customary dispute resolution mechanisms to settle electoral disputes peacefully. The religious leaders and cultural leaders were noted compromised

“...for the case of Lira; it is disastrous even where we believe in our elders from Boroboro and the Catholic church ...they are taking sides and providing a fighting ground for the tight contestants in the city through invitations for fundraisings where the candidates have to show their financial power... we hope for dialogue through another neutral party. The cultural institution is divided into the foundation and institutions-another crevasse in our society- thus little trust and each side pays allegiance to a particular party.” KII Lira city

e) Challenges and Gaps

- Limited reach of civic education as campaigns often occur close to elections, leaving little time for community sensitization and attitude change.
- Bias and mistrust in security because some community members perceive security forces as partisan or abusive, reducing cooperation.
- Inadequate early warning systems and lack of community-based mechanisms to detect brewing tensions early.
- Inconsistent engagement of traditional and religious leaders who are publicly taking sides in their involvement in politicization, undermining peace efforts.
- Misinformation and hate speech through social media platforms are often used to spread false information, incite violence, or defame opponents.
- Radio stations like Voice of Lango and Unoty have been used to promote peace messages, but hate speech and misinformation still circulate widely.

(f) Recommendations

Policy and legal reforms should focus on strengthening laws against electoral violence by enforcing strict penalties for vote-buying, intimidation, and hate speech; developing and implementing early warning systems through training community volunteers, local leaders, and security personnel to identify and respond to early signs of conflict; ensuring impartial security deployment with adequate training on human rights and non-partisan law enforcement; and promoting transparent electoral processes through independent monitoring, credible vote counting, and transparent result announcement procedures.

Community and civil society initiatives should focus on expanding civic education through ongoing, targeted campaigns on peaceful elections and civic rights, strengthening community dialogues involving elders, religious leaders, youth, and women to foster social cohesion and address grievances early, utilizing local influencers such as traditional, cultural, and religious leaders as peace ambassadors to shape positive community attitudes, and addressing socio-economic factors by implementing youth employment programs, vocational training, and poverty alleviation initiatives to reduce susceptibility to manipulation and violence.

Media and information management should involve regulating social media by enforcing policies to curb misinformation, hate speech, and incitement online through collaboration with platforms, while promoting responsible journalism by encouraging media outlets to adhere to ethical standards, especially during electoral periods.

g) Other Strategic Measures

Inclusive political engagement should involve actively fostering dialogue among political parties to promote consensus-building, enhance transparency in the electoral process, and ensure mutual respect for electoral rules and democratic principles.

Strengthen Local Peace Committees by equipping grassroots peace committees with resources, training, and authority to manage conflicts at local levels.

h) Trends Analysis of the Lango Subregion

The Lango subregion has experienced dynamic political, social, economic, and security shifts over recent years. Understanding these trends is vital for designing effective peacebuilding, development, and governance strategies. This report provides a comprehensive overview of the key patterns shaping Lango's trajectory and implications for the future.

Political Trends

- Increasing electoral contestation over the past decade, has intensified. Multiple candidates, including independents and party-affiliated, vie for leadership positions, leading to heightened rivalry.
- Monetization and clientelism in form of Vote-buying, material incentives, and entertainment during campaigns have become commonplace, undermining democratic integrity and fostering patronage networks.
- Traditional clan loyalties significantly influence political alignments as the electorates ask who are you married to? Which clan do you belong? Who has ever had the political cake in the clan? Which religious leader does the clan subscribe to? All this often resulting in intra-community rivalries and polarization.

- Security deployment and political violence: Heavy security presence during elections sometimes exacerbates tensions, with reports of bias and excessive force.

“The region is generally and has been for UPC despite all the odds and some young people have believed that Akena will be in state house. In his constituency he is liked naturally and gets sympathy votes all the time because of legacy. Lira city is a hotspot because all the political chicken in Lango boil from here- Oyam exports to Lira while its dominated by people who feel they have been left out but also agree to disagree; Apach- also feel they have been neglected and every body needs to be a UPC instead of NRM. In Amolatar- the fishing issues are key as many say the NRM came to kill our children thus FDC always gets that seat.” Kii Lira city

Social Trends

- Youth demographic and vulnerability where a large proportion of the population comprises youth (15–35 years), many of whom face high unemployment and limited access to education. This makes them susceptible to manipulation and involvement in violence.
- Cultural and clan dynamics remain central, influencing social cohesion and conflict resolution. However, politicization sometimes undermines traditional authority.
- Changing social norms with urbanization and exposure to social media have fostered shifting attitudes, with increased materialism and individualism.

Economic Trends

- Agrarian dominance as most livelihoods are dependent on subsistence farming of millet, cassava, and beans. Diversification remains limited thus leading to vulnerabilities, poverty and compromises during the election period.
- Poverty and Unemployment where about 50–70% of the population live below the poverty line, with youth unemployment rates exceeding 70%. This fuels frustrations and social unrest.
- Land and resource conflicts especially between pastoralists and farmers, are common and often escalate into violence

Conflict and security trends

- Electoral violence clashes over election results, vote-buying, and political rivalry have become more frequent, often leading to injuries, displacement, and property damage.
- Militarization and Policing by security forces deployed heavily during elections, sometimes perceived as partisan, fueling grievances.
- Localized land and resource disputes driven by population pressure and economic interests, often result in violence, especially in rural hotspots.

Communication and media trends

- Rise and popularity of social media platforms like WhatsApp and Facebook that have become influential in shaping political discourse but also spreading misinformation and hate speech.
- Radio as primary medium remains vital for community information and peace messaging, but some outlets are accused of spreading inflammatory content.
- Misinformation and fake news poses significant risks to social harmony and electoral integrity.

Table 5: Key shifts and their impacts

Trend	Past	Recent Developments	Implications
Electoral Violence	Occasional local clashes	Increased frequency and severity	Threats to democratic processes and social stability
Youth Engagement	Limited political participation	Active involvement, sometimes violent	Need for youth empowerment and civic education
Traditional and religious Authority	Central role in conflict resolution	Politicization of religious and cultural institutions	Potential for both peacebuilding and conflict escalation
Economic Vulnerability	Subsistence farming	Rising land/resource conflicts	Underpins many disputes and grievances
Media Landscape	Radio dominance	Social media proliferation	Risks of misinformation; opportunities for peace messaging

3.5.3. Acholi Sub-Region

a) Historical context and community experiences

The Acholi subregion's electoral history is deeply rooted in a legacy of conflict, land disputes, and socio-political marginalization. The region experienced decades of insurgency, notably the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) conflict, which disrupted social and political stability. Post-conflict, elections have often been a flashpoint for violence, fuelled by perceptions of injustice and land disputes.

"For example, during the 2011 general elections, violence erupted in Gulu, Kitgum, and Pader districts over allegations of rigging and voter suppression. Supporters of opposition parties, especially FDC, accused the ruling NRM of manipulating results, leading to protests, riots, and destruction of property." FGD Gulu city.

Some historical grievances include:

- The Acholi have historically experienced land grabbing, especially during the implementation of government projects like the Aswa Ranch, which involved relocating pastoralists and farmers, leading to land conflicts.
- Post-conflict disarmament programs and demobilization left communities suspicious of government motives, with many feeling their land or resources were unfairly taken or controlled.
- Beyond the direct violence, Acholi communities have historically felt marginalized and neglected by the central government.

We perceive ourselves as being deprived of adequate development, infrastructure, health, and educational services, which fuels a sense of social and political exclusion. Justice and accountability for the atrocities committed during the conflict are still unresolved for many, leading to feelings of injustice and a demand for truth-telling and reparations. KII Gulu.

- Cultural recognition is also a significant concern; the Acholi community seeks acknowledgment of their cultural identity, language, and history, which they feel has been overlooked or undervalued.
- Economically, the region continues to face high levels of poverty, unemployment, and underdevelopment, which aggravate feelings of neglect and marginalization.
- Psychologically, generations of Acholi have grown up carrying trauma from violence, loss, and abduction, affecting social cohesion and mental health in the region.

Collectively, these grievances reflect a history of suffering- we are children born during war, marginalization, and ongoing struggles for justice, development, and recognition continue to shape the social and political landscape of our subregion today. KII Gulu.

b) Community experiences during elections

Voter indifference and commercialization as many community members view elections as opportunities for immediate material gain rather than democratic participation.

Family conflicts often mirror electoral tensions. In communities like Laroo and Layibi in Gulu, families split along political lines, with some supporting opposition candidates and others supporting the ruling party, leading to domestic violence or family breakups.

Media's role through radio stations like Radio Rupiny and Radio Pacis are influential but often unprofessional. Rumours spread via WhatsApp groups, alleging voter rigging or threatening violence, leading to protests at polling stations and community clashes.

Land and resource conflicts like the ongoing Balaalo grazing disputes, where herders from outside the region graze cattle on community land, have become election issues. Politicians exploit these disputes to mobilize support or incite violence.

c) Community narratives and perceptions

Community members perceive elections as opportunities for personal or regional advantage, not as democratic processes. According to some respondents, this is fuelled by lack of civic education as many residents do not understand the roles of elected leaders, mistrust from past experiences of rigging and land disputes that foster suspicion and anxiety about the future.

“ In Gulu, a significant portion of the population believes that election results are often predetermined by party elites or security agencies, leading to apathy and low voter turnout.” KII Gulu.

d) Key actors and interests

- Political parties and candidates from the main parties: NRM, FDC, NUP, and emerging independents...the 2021 Gulu city mayoral race saw intense competition between NRM and opposition candidates supporters clashed over alleged vote-rigging, with accusations flying that the police favoured NRM. The interests of the above include political dominance and control of land and resources; economic gains through patronage networks.
- Traditional, cultural, and religious leaders are supposed to play the role of mediators, influencers, and custodians of customs but quite often influence community loyalties during elections by endorsing specific candidates, which can sway entire communities.

- Youth and supporter groups are highly vulnerable due to high unemployment, minimal civic awareness, and susceptibility to manipulation. For example the rise of youth gangs in Gulu, such as the “*Kony youth*,” have been used as political muscle. Their interests include economic rewards, respect, and regional influence and supporting candidates promising land or economic benefits.
- Electoral and security institutions have to spread credibility but including the police and military deployed in hotspots are usually accused of bias.
- Civil society and media roles include civic education, election observation, peace advocacy.
- External actors like international donors, NGOs, regional bodies like the African Union could be part of election observation missions but their influence on domestic politics remains limited as some times that are suspected to covertly to support certain political interests, exacerbating tensions.

e) Conflict triggers and hotspots

- Vote-buying and material incentives in form of alcohol, or material gifts before voting determine the decision of the voter. For example, during the 2016 primaries, supporters in Gulu received small amounts of money and alcohol, leading to disputes when promises were unmet. KII Gulu city
- Election rigging and manipulation allegations include voter register tampering, ballot stuffing, and early declaration of winners. The 2016 case of voter register manipulation in Pabbo triggered protests and violence.
- Land disputes especially over gazetted land and grazing rights, are exploited during elections. The Balaalo herders’ issue remains a flashpoint in Acholi.
- Media and social media misinformation in form of fake news, fake results, and inflammatory language spread rapidly on WhatsApp and Facebook, inciting violence.
- Party and candidate rivalries such as NRM factions vying for control, lead to physical clashes, especially when internal primaries are contentious.
- Youth mobilization where unemployed youth are manipulated or coerced into violence, often motivated by promises of land or money.

f) Hotspot Areas

- Gulu city: particularly Laroo Pece, Layibi, Kaunda grounds—areas with high political activity and history of violence.
- Rural land disputes: Pabbo and Amuru districts are hotspots due to ongoing land conflicts.
- Peri-urban markets: places like Pece and Layibi markets are crowded and prone to disputes over support and resource control.
- Traditional chiefdoms: disputes over succession or land authority exacerbate tensions.

g) Warning signs of violence

- Provocative language on radio, social media, or in community meetings.
- Gathering of youth gangs or mobs at odd hours.
- Heavy security deployment without clear communication.
- Rumours of ballot rigging or vote suppression.
- Property destruction, including burning campaign posters or attacking supporters.

h) Mitigation and Prevention Mechanisms

- Religious and cultural leaders' peace messages from ARPI and local elders had held peace sermons during campaigns, encouraging calm. for example, before the recently held NRM primaries they held radio talk shows and congregational prayers calling on the candidates and the ir supporters to be calm.
- Civil society monitoring from NGOs like HURIFO and GWED-G that monitor electoral activities, report irregularities, and promote civic education.
- Community peace committees of village elders and youth leaders mediate disputes before they escalate. in Acholi, the Kero Kwaro institution is expected to serve as a unifying traditional authority, but internal divisions weaken its effectiveness.
- Media campaigns in form of peace messaging via local radio stations, although often marred by bias or sensationalism.
- Security deployment of police and military at hotspots to deter violence; however, perceptions of bias undermine their legitimacy.

i) Recommendations for peaceful elections in the Acholi subregion

- Strengthening legal and institutional frameworks through improving electoral transparency by ensuring timely and transparent demarcation of polling stations, with public consultations
- Digitalizing voter registration to prevent manipulation
- Conduct public verification exercises in all sub-counties before elections
- Enhance electoral monitoring with deployment of trained independent observers and community monitors, especially in remote or gazetted areas.
- Community and civic engagement by all stakeholders through sustained civic education for example by using local radio, community theater, and schools to educate voters on their rights, the roles of elected leaders, and the importance of peaceful participation
- Engage religious leaders to preach peace and tolerance regularly, not just during election periods.
- Stakeholders should address the land and resource disputes through implementing transparent land registration and dispute resolution mechanisms.
- Stakeholders including government should promote responsible journalism by establishing media monitoring teams to flag misinformation and hate speech if they are not present and if present the responsible centres should collaborate with social media platforms to remove inflammatory content.
- There is need to use media for peace messages that broadcast stories of peaceful elections, success stories, and community peace initiatives.
- Foster stakeholder collaboration and policy reforms through regular coordination meetings among electoral bodies, security agencies, civil society, traditional leaders, and development partners. This could take the form of sensitising women and marginalized groups' participation in electoral processes.
- Address political party dynamics to foster internal democracy to prevent intra-party violence. This should replicate the electoral commission guidelines and it could ensure fair candidate selection processes that can reduce incidences of violence and conflict.

j) Trends Analysis of the Acholi Subregion

- The Acholi subregion is experiencing a complex interplay of traditional, political and socio-economic dynamics that influence electoral processes, social stability and development. This analysis synthesizes community experiences, triggers, hotspots, actors and mitigation strategies to identify prevailing patterns, emerging threats, and opportunities for peacebuilding and governance.
- Political trends
- Election Perception and Engagement: Elections are increasingly perceived as opportunities for material gain rather than genuine democratic contests; voters treat campaigns as “money-moment” rather than issues-based.
- “Community members often see elections as a “business” or “investment,” with political participation driven by monetary incentives, leading to voter apathy and disinterest in policy issues. There is widespread ignorance about the functions of elected leaders and the electoral process, fuelling misunderstandings and conflict triggers.” FGD Youth.
- Campaign conduct and campaign dynamics: The campaign language is derogative, provocative, and often insults opponents, escalating tensions; campaigns are characterized by personal attacks, inflammatory language, and the use of derogatory words, which increase suspicion and hatred.
- “Nomination processes are flawed—e.g., lining up instead of ballot voting—leading to suspicion and distrust. Candidates often engage in last-minute campaigns, with limited transparency, and some are poor or lack capacity but still run.” KII Gulu city
- Party and candidate dynamics: There is dominance of the NRM with internal factionalism, including conflicts between old and new members, especially with the ‘Muhoozi Project’ and party primaries. This is shown by widespread defections from opposition to ruling parties, turning politics into a “business investment” rather than service.
- Limited opposition presence: political contestations are issue-based rather than party-based, with many local leaders operating personal agendas. KII Gulu.

k) External influence and state support

This was shown with clear favouritism by state actors for particular candidates, e.g. in Gulu City West Division, affecting electoral fairness. External actors, including donors and civil society, influence the process but face resource and capacity constraints. This deepens the politicization, commercialization and internal party conflicts to undermine electoral integrity, deepen divisions, and create fertile ground for violence.

Social and community trends are shown with voter attitudes and behaviour where respondents note:

- *Elections are seen as opportunities for immediate material benefits—cash, food, or favours—leading to “buying” of votes.*
- *Ignorance about leaders’ roles and responsibilities, coupled with limited civic education, results in votes based on personal gains rather than policy or competence.*
- *Family-level conflicts often arise, especially when supporters of different candidates clash, intensifying social tensions.*

- *Women candidates get to join the rat race of elections with or no agenda directed towards the cause of women for instance by the time of the study no single woman candidate had expressed the challenges faced in accessing the GROW -the economic empowerment program funds.*

Youth and gender dynamics were realised with especially unemployed youth who are highly mobilized, often used as instruments of violence or disruption, e.g., by giving alcohol or money. Their involvement is fuelled by social media influences, social pressures, and the desire for recognition. Women were also reported to be underrepresented in decision-making and often do not speak on issues such as affirmative action or injustices faced in the region and their areas of anticipated jurisdiction.

Traditional and cultural institutions in form of chiefs, elders, and cultural leaders remain influential but are divided; internal conflicts have weakened the traditional authority. The Kero Kwaro institution is split, and community trust in traditional leadership is waning due to internal contradictions and inability to unify the community on key issues including the elections.

Land and resource conflicts have intertwined with the current election cycle. They manifest the long time grievances in the region as it was reported below:

“Land disputes, Balaalo invasions, and land grabbing are triggers for violence; while the people campaigning are mostly quiet about the same- locals are loosing land and their crps being destroyed across the region...land is viewed as the primary resource and economic asset. Issues like the Aswa Ranch and government land acquisitions exacerbate tensions, especially when land rights are manipulated against the locall Acholi or ignored.”

Economic trends have manifested in livelihoods and increased levels of poverty in the region generally. The economy remains predominantly agrarian, with high levels of poverty, unemployment, and economic shocks driven by land disputes, land grabbing, and high taxation. The “Balaalo” issue (herders grazing livestock) is not only environmental but also economic, leading to conflicts over grazing rights and crop destruction that will spill over into the election cycle.

Economic exploitation and commercialization of politics was key in causng violent elections that are heavily monetized as candidates and supporters spend large sums, reinforcing clientelism. Economic vulnerabilities—poverty, land disputes, and resource exploitation—fuel grievances and undermine social peace.

Electoral violence and hotspots were observed during the primary elections and campaigns, characterised by violence—property destruction, physical clashes, intimidation, and in some cases, use of tear gas and excessive force by security agencies. Hotspots include urban centers (Gulu City, Kasubi, Pece), marketplaces, and areas with high candidate activity. Family and community-level conflicts are common, often triggered by election disputes grounded in unresolved conflicts.

Triggers of violence included misinformation, fake news, and propaganda—especially on social media—are emerging as new triggers, vote bribery, voter intimidation, and manipulation of voter registers are persistent issues; deployment of security forces, if perceived as partisan or excessive, escalate tensions, the “Balaalo” issue and land conflicts are longstanding triggers.

Actors and interest were found to include politicians, unemployed youth, security personnel, traditional leaders, and external influences (donors, civil society, media) can either escalate or mitigate violence; Youth, especially unemployed or marginalised, are easily mobilized for violence or disruption; social media influencers and rumor spreaders have become new catalysts for conflict escalation.

Media and communication trends considered include the radio and social media where radio remains the primary medium for political messaging, peace advocacy, and civic education but is often biased, unprofessional, or provocative, social media platforms (whatsapp, facebook, tiktok) are influential in shaping public opinion and politics but also spread fake news, hate speech, and propaganda. The spread of false or manipulated content exacerbates tensions, especially among youth.

Misinformation about candidates' integrity, election results, or land issues influences voter behavior and perceptions as it was witnessed in the most recent NRM primaries- youth ran jubilating in victory at 2.00 pm before the end of the primaries only to be disappointed in the evening about the results which led to violence in the market area of the city. KII Gulu city

Institutional and actor trends reveal that electoral and security institutions monitor processes for the major elections but faces resource and capacity constraints, especially at grassroots levels; security agencies often act with bias or excessive force, escalating tensions, while traditional institutions like the Kero Kwaro, Chiefs, and elders are weak or divided, limiting their peacebuilding influence.

Religious and civil society like the Acholi Leaders Peace Initiative , The Inter-Religious Council of Uganda, the religious leaders, HURIFO, GWED-G and other organisations play an important role in peace messaging but face limitations and civic education and election monitoring but face resource gaps and politicization.

I) Emerging Issues and trends

- Social media has become a potent tool for campaign messaging, rumor spread, and mobilization—both peaceful and violent.
- Young people are becoming more active but are also vulnerable to manipulation, violence, and radicalization.
- Youth-led political parties and social movements are emerging, signaling a shift in political participation.
- Chiefs and elders are divided or weak, losing influence over social cohesion and conflict resolution.
- Land remains a core conflict driver, with issues like Balaalo grazing rights, land grabbing, and government land acquisition dominating disputes.
- Trust in electoral fairness is eroding due to perceived favouritism, manipulation, and lack of transparency.

Table 6: Emerging trends in Northern Uganda and implications on elections

Trend	Previous Status	Recent Developments	Implications
Electoral Perception and Engagement	Elections viewed as civic duty; voters motivated by issues	Elections seen as monetary “business”, voters treat campaigns as “money moments”	Deepened voter apathy; reduced focus on leadership quality; increased manipulation and clientelism
Campaign Conduct	Campaigns characterized by issue-based debates	Personal insults, derogative language, last-minute campaigns, and unprofessional media	Increased hostility, suspicion, and risk of violence; erosion of social cohesion
Party and candidate dynamics	Clear opposition presence; traditional party loyalty	Dominance of NRM with internal factionalism; defections from opposition; issue-based contests	Weak opposition, internal conflicts, and personal agendas fuelling instability
External and State Support	Limited favouritism; some level of neutrality	Clear favouritism by state actors; political manipulation; influence of external donors	Electoral unfairness, mistrust, and heightened tensions
Social attitudes and behaviour	Limited materialism; traditional social norms	Vote buying, material incentives, youth mobilization, family conflicts	Social divisions, family disputes, and increased conflict potential
Youth and gender	Limited youth involvement; women underrepresented	Youth mobilized for violence; social media influence; women less active politically	Rising youth violence risk; gender inequality persists in political participation
Traditional and Cultural Institutions	Chiefs and elders influential but unified	Divided institutions; weak traditional authority; internal conflicts	Reduced capacity for peacebuilding and conflict resolution
Land and resource conflicts	Land disputes and resource conflicts existed	Land grabbing, Balaalo grazing conflicts, government land acquisitions	Land-based conflicts intensify, threatening social stability
Conflict and Security	Electoral violence sporadic; property disputes	Increased violence during campaigns; hotspots in urban centers & villages; use of social media for incitement	Elevated insecurity, social tension, and risk of violence escalation
Media and Communication	Radio as primary medium; some bias	Media biased or unprofessional; social media spreads fake news and hate speech	Misinformation fuelling violence, distrust in electoral process

Trend	Previous Status	Recent Developments	Implications
Institutional capacity	Electoral bodies limited capacity; weak traditional structures	Resource constraints; biased security deployment; divided traditional authorities	Challenges in electoral transparency and peace enforcement
Emerging trends	Traditional structures weakening; youth activism growing	Social media influence; youth-led political movements; persistent land disputes	New conflict triggers; opportunities for youth engagement or radicalization

3.5.4 Mbale city-Elgon area

Mbale city, situated within the Elgon subregion, faces complex electoral challenges driven by socio-economic, cultural, and political factors. Like any other city its believed the Elgon area politics is determined by the original Mbale district. Traditional institutions like the Umkuka play a pivotal role in peacebuilding, while the Electoral Commission (EC) is central to ensuring credible elections. This analysis highlights key conflict drivers, actors, hotspots, and mitigation strategies to inform peace and electoral integrity efforts.

a) Context and dynamics

Political Landscape in form of monetization of politics through vote-buying and material incentives. Electoral malpractices, including rigging and ballot manipulation. Support for opposition parties, notably FDC, is strong in urban centres. Youth and marginalized groups are vulnerable to manipulation and violence.

Socioeconomic factors like Poverty, illiteracy, and unemployment exacerbate electoral tensions. Youth participation is high but often manipulated via bribery and alcohol. Land disputes and resource conflicts frequently escalate during elections.

Cultural Influences: the Umkuka and other traditional leaders uphold social cohesion stretching across the region into Kenya. Traditional justice systems support dispute resolution but face challenges from modern political conflicts.

b) Key actors and interests

Actor	Interests	Role	Impact on Conflict
Electoral Commission (EC)	Conducting transparent, credible elections	Law enforcement, voter education, election oversight	Can reduce conflict if impartial and well-resourced; risk if perceived biased
Umkuka and Cultural Leaders	Peace, social stability	Peace messaging, dispute mediation	Promote social cohesion and conflict resolution
Political Parties and Candidates	Power, influence, material gains	Campaigning, mobilization	Potential to escalate violence through malpractices; also promote peace
Security Agencies	Law and order	Security deployment, law enforcement	Effective deployment reduces violence; partisan bias worsens tensions

Actor	Interests	Role	Impact on Conflict
Civil Society and CSOs	Democratic peace	Civic education, election monitoring	Mitigate conflict, promote transparency
Community and Traditional Leaders	Social stability	Peacebuilding, dispute resolution	Key peace actors; influence community behavior

c) Conflict drivers, triggers, and hotspots

Aspect	Details	Implications and Recommendations
Main Drivers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vote-buying and monetization, Electoral malpractices Land and resource disputes, illiteracy, Identity politics (tribalism, religion) Poverty and illiteracy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deepen mistrust, violence Undermine electoral legitimacy
Emerging Triggers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disinformation and hate speech via social media Identity-based conflicts, Family disputes, Drunkenness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incite violence, polarization
Hotspots	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mbale City (urban centers, markets) Bufumbo, Namanyonyi, Mission Cell 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High population density, unemployment, alcohol abuse
Signs of Tensions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early alcohol use, Unauthorized gatherings Campaign disputes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential violence outbreaks

d) Mitigation strategies

Strategy	Description	Expected Impact
Enhanced Civic and Electoral Education	Local language campaigns, early voter engagement	Increased awareness, reduced malpractice
Engagement of Traditional and Cultural Leaders	Mobilize Umkuka, elders, religious leaders	Promote social cohesion, dispute resolution
Strengthening Electoral Institutions	Impartial, well-resourced, transparent	Increased public confidence, credible process
Proactive Security Deployment	Non-partisan, community-sensitive	Reduce violence, build trust
Land and Resource Dispute Resolution	Legal reforms, traditional arbitration	Less conflict over land and resources
Counter Disinformation	Media literacy, regulation of social media	Reduce hate speech, misinformation-driven violence
Community Early Warning and Dialogue	Hotspot monitoring, peace forums	Timely response, conflict de-escalation

Case Study:

The Role of the Umkuka and Bamasaba Institutions in Electoral Dispute Resolution and Peacebuilding

In the Bamasaba community, traditional institutions like the Umkuka hold significant authority and influence, serving as custodians of culture, peace, and social cohesion. Their role becomes particularly vital during electoral periods, where tensions, disputes, and violence can threaten community stability. Recognizing their capacity and reach, these institutions have been trained in alternative justice systems and can contribute meaningfully to dispute resolution, voter education, and peacebuilding before, during, and after elections.

The Umkuka and Its Institutional Framework

- **Structure:** The Umkuka operates with a cabinet comprising ministers, student representatives, and a public relations (PR) unit.
- **Reach:** The institution mobilizes across community levels—from clan chairmen to village clans—and has a network spanning schools, universities, and local communities.
- **Capabilities:** The Umkuka runs radio programs advocating against violence and election monetization, writes and publishes electoral information, and conducts voter education at primary and secondary school levels.

Role of the Umkuka in electoral dispute resolution and peacebuilding.

Alternative justice systems due to the training with other traditional institutions in alternative justice mechanisms, which can be leveraged during and after elections. Its systems can facilitate conflict resolution at community levels, mediating disputes over voting rights, candidate disputes, or post-election conflicts, thereby reducing violence and fostering reconciliation.

Voter education and awareness through through radio programs, school visits, and community meetings, the Umkuka could educate citizens on electoral processes, their roles, and the dangers of violence and monetization. The institution has broader reach up to the grassroots level that ensures widespread dissemination of credible information, especially in rural and hard-to-reach areas.

Advocacy and peace messaging through media engagement campaigns via radio and online publishing²³ to promote peaceful elections, emphasizing the importance of non-violence, integrity, and community cohesion. This can take the form of cultural messaging using cultural norms and traditional authority, that reinforce peaceful conduct and social harmony during election seasons.

The Umkuka collaborates with government agencies and civil society organizations in programs aimed at keeping children in school, which indirectly contributes to reducing electoral violence linked to youth unemployment and idleness. The Umkuka can serve as a community-based early warning system for tensions, facilitating timely interventions.

23 Cultural Institutions Pledge Support for Electoral Commission's Voter Education Ahead of 2026 Elections <https://phoenix-browser.com/BtxwyS11Mmx>

3.5.5 Kampala and Wakiso

a) Context and dynamics

Kampala

Elections in Kampala, particularly in divisions like Kawempe, are usually characterized by high levels of violence, insecurity, and human rights violations. Conflicts often escalate around delays in ballot box delivery, with election-related violence triggered by group clashes, police retaliation, and provocative behaviours from supporters. The community reports frequent use of tear gas, arbitrary detention, and physical assaults, including killings, with women, children, and vulnerable groups especially affected. More of community concerns is shared below:

The community also faces issues of internet shutdowns and power outages, which hinder effective communication and exacerbate frustrations. Violence is often fueled by political rivalry, with youth gangs and newly established groups like Foot Soldiers for NUP and Gheto Structures for NRM, known for violence and theft during elections, adding to the volatile environment. Political tensions are further worsened by misinformation spread via social media and propaganda, while the presence of heavy security deployment sometimes provokes more violence.

Wakiso

In Wakiso, conflicts during elections are driven by delays in ballot delivery, misuse of voting procedures, and confrontations among party supporters. Communities experience violence stemming from disputes over registration, ballot box misplacement, and voting procedures that are not well understood by polling staff. The community highlights issues such as vulgar language, destruction of posters, and intimidation, which lead to hostility at polling stations.

The community reports increased tension caused by accusations of rigging, vote-buying, and manipulation of results. Violence is often triggered by perceived unfairness, with supporters of different parties, especially NRM and NUP, engaging in confrontations. The use of social media during voting, heavy police deployment, and provocative actions by supporters are warning signs of potential violence.

“Due to the gross violations of rights, most women have given up their rights to vote. In fact they have also discouraged their children from taking part in elections to avoid getting into trouble with the law and exposure to unnecessary risks like imprisonment. Women and the elderly fear the beatings and are not comfortable with the vulgar, abusive and demeaning language used at the polling station. Women with chronic diseases like pressure diabetes etc fear to be exposed to such unsafe spaces that could end their lives thus have foregone the voting process. It affects the turnout of voters given the fear involved.” FGD Wakiso

b) Triggers and hotspots

Kampala

Key triggers were found to include the presence of rival youth gangs, new groups like Foot Soldiers (NUP) and Ghetto Structures (NRM), and the escalation of group rivalry. Incidents such as stone-throwing, police firing tear gas, and disputes over voting procedures could spark

violence. Hotspots identified include Kawempe Mbogo Zone, Kazo Angolla, Kikaya, Makerere III, and areas with repeated violence like Kazo Central.

Potential flashpoints are areas with high deployment of security forces, areas with unresolved political tensions, and locations where supporters gather and confront each other. Warning signs include increased verbal confrontations, heavy police deployment, and mobilization of violent groups.

Wakiso

Hotspots tend to be market centres such as Kazo Angolla, Kinyata Market, Corner Zone, and Lugoba Zone, which are known for recurrent violence. Triggers include the presence of armed police, provocative slogans, and the use of social media to spread misinformation. Early warning signs include escalated disputes, heavy security deployment, threats from supporters, and conflicts among supporters in markets or polling stations.

c) Institutions and actors

Kampala

Political influence is largely driven by the NRM and NUP, with aspiring politicians and party supporters actively mobilizing voters. External actors, such as government ministers, have been reported to escalate violence by supporting certain candidates and mobilizing supporters. Police and security forces are key actors, with their conduct either reducing or escalating violence depending on their professionalism and neutrality.

Wakiso

Parties like NRM, NUP, and PFF influence politics, with leaders like Hon. Ibrahim Ssemuju and party supporters wielding influence over their supporters. External actors, such as government ministers, have played roles in escalating violence through their support for particular candidates, as seen in recent elections. The police and security agencies are pivotal in maintaining order, but their deployment often contributes to tension, especially when perceived as partisan.

d) Mitigation and solutions

Kampala

Existing prevention measures include following party regulations and community sensitization efforts. However, these are largely ineffective due to poor implementation and lack of community buy-in. Recommendations include reintroducing civic education, involving interfaith and community leaders in peace advocacy, use of platforms that are appealing to the youth like music and social media and emphasizing accountability among security agencies.

Additional suggestions include the introduction of digital or online voting to reduce physical confrontations, better training for presiding officers, and continuous community sensitization. Engaging women and youth as peace ambassadors through training and mentorship is also vital.

Wakiso

Current mitigation methods involve youth leaders and community engagements, which have shown some effectiveness. To improve, the community recommends better sensitization, inclusion of persons with disabilities in voting processes, and transparency in electoral procedures. There's also a call for reducing police deployment, training presiding officers thoroughly, and updating voter registers timely.

Community members emphasize the importance of social media regulation, installation of security cameras, and ensuring impartiality of electoral officials to build trust and reduce violence.

e) Trend analysis for Wakiso and Kampala

Section	Common Patterns Across Communities	Differences/Highlights
Community Experiences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> High violence, insecurity, and human rights violations during elections. Disruption of daily life, economic hardships, and property theft. Voter intimidation, delays, and logistical issues. Women, children, and vulnerable groups heavily affected. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kampala reports organized youth gangs and social media incitements. Wakiso emphasizes delays, polling station changes, and poster destruction. Specific triggers vary: organized groups in Kampala; logistical/logistical delays in Wakiso.
Triggers and Hotspots	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Violence triggered by political rivalry, heavy deployment, propaganda, delays, and rigging perceptions. Hotspots include Kawempe, Kazo Angolla, markets, and specific neighbourhoods. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kampala: Recurrent organized violence, social media provocation. Wakiso: Event-driven conflicts linked to logistical delays, poster destruction, and local disputes.
Institutions and Actors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Influence of political parties (NRM, NUP), candidates, community leaders. Security forces (police/military) both maintain order and sometimes escalate violence. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kampala: External actors like ministers influencing violence. Wakiso: Emphasis on local leaders, less external influence.
Mitigation and Solutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existing methods: party regulations, community engagement, youth leaders. Effectiveness generally limited; need for civic education, neutral oversight, technology use. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kampala: Calls for accountability, reduced deployment, tech solutions. Wakiso: Emphasizes inclusive voting, training, voter sensitization, and neutral presiding officers.
Community Needs and Recommendations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduced security deployment, better logistics, civic education, community involvement. Adoption of technology like cameras, online voting. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kampala: Focus on accountability and transparency. Wakiso: Focus on inclusivity, accessibility, and neutral officials

f) Policy recommendations

Strengthen civic and electoral education through implementation of nationwide civic education campaigns focusing on electoral procedures, the road map, rights, and responsibilities, voter conduct, ballot paper ticking/ validity especially targeting youth and first-time voters. This should also leverage community leaders, religious institutions, and local NGOs to promote understanding and peaceful conduct during elections.

Build and strengthen community-led peace committees comprising community elders, youth leaders, women, and religious leaders and these groups should be trained in conflict resolution, early warning detection, and de-escalation of conflict and violence techniques.

Improve security sector conduct through imposing strict protocols on police and security deployment—prioritize professionalism, neutrality, and non-partisanship; regular training for security personnel on human rights and crowd control and establish accountability mechanisms for misconduct, with anonymous reporting channels.

Enhance transparency and accountability through installation of surveillance cameras at sensitive hotspots and polling stations to deter violence and facilitate post-election investigations, ensuring impartiality of electoral officials by random selection from diverse political backgrounds and foster transparent reporting of election-related incidents, with independent oversight by media and other stakeholders in the election process.

Leverage technology with introduction of digital voter education, electronic voting to reduce logistical delays, vote manipulation, and physical confrontations; real-time incident reporting apps for voters and observers to alert authorities immediately.

Promote inclusive participation by creating special provisions for persons with disabilities, the elderly, and marginalized groups to participate fully and safely. This can be done with more tailored training and mentorship for women and youth candidates to promote gender-balanced and youth-inclusive leadership.

Foster meaningful inter-party dialogue through established platforms for political parties and supporters to dialogue, share concerns, and develop joint strategies for peaceful elections. While the youth parliament was appreciated, its still lacks seriousness in terms of the follow up actions.

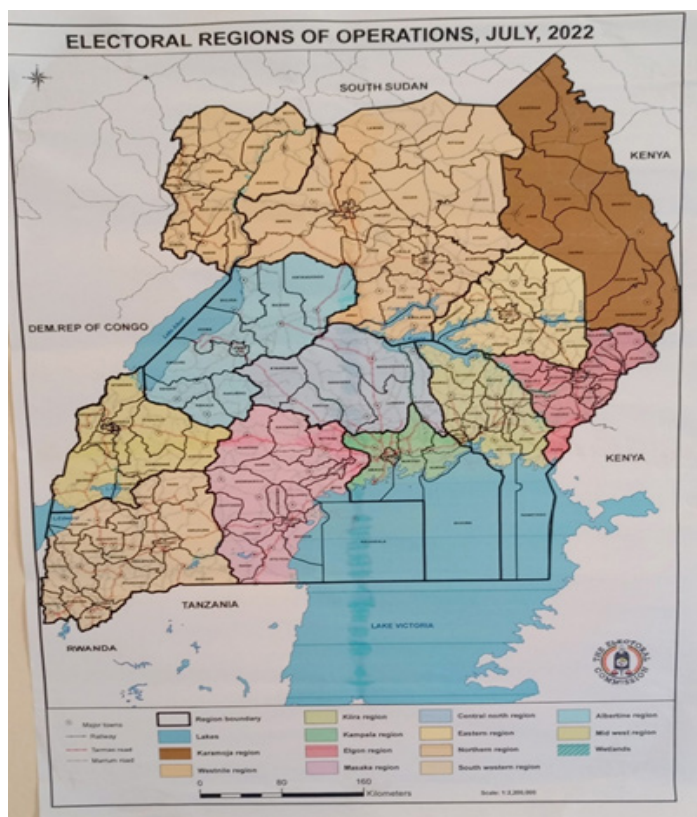
The Electoral Commission should change and have the presidential election last after the others. Given the trauma and human rights abuses people go through during the process of voting the president. The day of election of the president is usually declared a public holiday while the rest are normal working days. So, people usually voters start weighing their chances. *“First reaction is why go vote a counsellor and yet I have no food to eat, let me go make my money instead is usually the response.*

4.0 THE ROLE AND CHALLENGES OF THE ELECTORAL COMMISSION IN UGANDA'S ELECTORAL PROCESS

The Electoral Commission (EC) of Uganda is tasked with organizing, conducting, and supervising elections across the country. With diverse electoral regions including Mbale, Karamoja, Lamwo, Lira, Eastern Uganda, Mbarara, and Kira, the EC faces unique logistical, operational, and communication challenges. Despite notable improvements—such as individual liability for faults, better relations with the public, and the provision of a comprehensive compendium of electoral laws—the EC continues to refine its strategies to ensure free, fair, and credible elections.

a) Electoral regions and structural context

The map below shows the divisions in terms of districts which define the clustering of election districts. Note is made that the regions are wide in terms of reach and pose a challenge and more so an opportunity for the commission during the election roadmap. The cycle of elections was noted to be 3 years and all aspects of the cycle feed into each other for results.



b) Operational challenges and recommendations

Voter education and community engagement

- Current Situation: Much of the voter education relies on written materials in English, which is not accessible to many local communities considering the 52 spoken languages in the country.

- Recommendation: Re-engage foot soldiers—trained electoral officials and community mobilizers—to conduct grassroots voter education. This should be structured across the 52 main languages spoken in Uganda to improve understanding and participation. This is because local language communication fosters trust and clear understanding of electoral processes, especially in rural and marginalized areas.

Triggers along logistics and equipment management

- Example: In Lamwo an area with 17 sub counties, the commission released 10 machines for updating voter registers, but only 7 worked. To make matters worse the officers were stationed at the subcounty levels.
- Challenge: Equipment failures, inadequate maintenance, and security of supplies such as solar panels used for powering voting machines.
- Recommendation: Ensure that all supplies, especially critical equipment, are secured and tested before deployment. Establish routine maintenance and backup systems to minimize disruptions.

Accessibility and convenience at polling stations

- Issue: The voting process is time-consuming; voters often leave polling stations and do not return, risking low turnout and increased tensions.
- Solution: Optimize polling station layouts, increase staffing, and streamline procedures to reduce waiting times. Consider mobile or decentralized polling stations in hard-to-reach areas.

Inclusive for disabled voters

Current Practice: Inadequacies of none neutral parties at polling stations involved in ensuring accessibility for voters with disabilities.

Recommendation: Incorporate neutral observers or specialized personnel at polling stations to assist disabled voters, ensuring their rights are protected and their votes are confidential.

Adoption of electronic voting

- Benchmark: Countries like Kenya that have adopted voting using colour codes to increase efficiency and reduce malpractices.
- Recommendation: Pilot electronic voting systems in selected regions to assess feasibility, security, and voter confidence before nationwide rollout.
- Benefit: Electronic voting can accommodate larger voter populations, diaspora improve accuracy, and reduce counting errors.

Strengthen civic education focusing on ballot utilization.

- The current situation: There are frequently many more invalid votes compared to candidates votes. Some times brought about by the illiteracy levels and little or no interest in voting.
- Recommendation: Focus the civic education with more reach at the grassroots to prioritise the ballot validity requirements- this could decrease the violence and conflicts that result from announcing of result.

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