



HIGH SCHOOL MOCK ELECTION PROGRAM PROGRESSIVE

REPORT

Introduction and Background

This program organized by SGD-Uganda in high schools is intended to promote meaningful youth participation in electoral process by giving young people, principally new voters' practical skills during elections.

The program is intended to continue promoting students' engagement in politics through addressing the gaps identified in the previous project by creating sustainable school-based civic education programmes ahead of the upcoming elections. Through civic education, the program hopes to inculcate a culture of responsible citizenship and civic duty among the young people, principally students to enhance the realization of accountable democratic rule and governance in Uganda. The program does this by engaging the students in activities that are geared towards enhancing their individual love and respect for democratic participation and culture in their daily lives; their individual love and respect for democratic good practices and accountable democratic service in the political life of their communities; their individual understanding of the dangers associated with resorting to undemocratic means of management of society and their individual capacities in applying democratic means self-development in community leadership. Because Civic and Voter Education are fundamental process that give the citizenry power and hope through knowing the process and information for them to participate, this intends to sustain civic engagement and participation beyond the previous 2016 elections.

Why Targeted the Student Community?

The Students community in Uganda represents a significant cohort of the total population that should be at the centre of national development and a new generation of active participants in the electoral process. Their immense numbers, energy, potential, dynamism and technical know-how make them a reliable voter constituency. However, the student community is not well informed on the electoral process. The existing voter education initiatives and knowledge are not accessible and student-friendly.

There are little accessible literature, promotional materials like banners, leaflets, manuals and all the related IEC materials on voter education. Further, there has never been a structural entry point to institutions of higher learning for such campaigns. Also, there lacks a coordinated approach or strategy of electoral process activities amongst stakeholders, mainly between the students on one hand and the other public, private and CSO players on the other hand to address the phenomenon.

In the previous elections, the **Citizen's Coalition for Electoral Democracy in Uganda (CCEDU)** played an important role in helping more young people and students participate and understand the meaning of elections through the *"Honor your Vote Campaign"*, however despite this engagement, access of information and participation was limited through to this category of young people. In the year 2016, there existed barriers to participation, such as not knowing registration rules and deadlines, lacking acceptable voting identification cards, lack of knowledge of actual demarcated polling stations and movable polling station for student's communities in cases of mobility and youth knowledge of voting procedure, commercialization of political spaces, the young people lacking information about political candidates as this incapacitates their fair participation in the electoral process.

Why the Mock Election Program?

Voting is very important to the future generation and this necessitates all eligible citizens, especially the new voters we are currently targeting in the high schools to know how to get involved, share with other voters why it is important. The most important issue is how to use our civic "voice" when it comes to making decisions, because if we don't, we will never make our voice heard.

Election Day is one of the most exciting days where citizens come together to elect leaders who best represent them. It is during that time that we elect leaders that will stand for our rights as citizens, hopefully keep their promises. Voting is our right as citizens, as well as an opportunity to contribute to the political process, therefore using our right to vote should not be about voter turnout statistics, but rather participate in making our choice and opinion matter.

Overall objective

To enhance student participation in electoral process

Mock Election Key Objectives:

- Carryout mass voter education and registration in student communities. Under take voter education and registration programs targeting schools, universities and communities.
- Advocating for electoral reforms. Mobilize and coordinate a strong organized student community possessing capacity to advocate and lobby for suitable electoral reforms.
- Promoting effective student participation in electoral processes. Design and coordinate constructive platforms that will provide a forum through which the students will be able to engage in the electoral process.
- Promote non-violence and peaceful elections. Sensitization and mass awareness among student communities on the dangers of election violence and dividends of peaceful elections.

Ongoing Election Related activities

- Mock Election Programs in High Schools
- Popularizing Electoral Reforms among the Student Community.
- Democracy Walks in the communities
- Social Media Campaign
- Monitoring and observing Secondary School student leaders' Elections and University Guild Elections as mock exercises.

Secondary Schools reached out so far:

- Emma High School
- Kinawa High School
- Wakiso Muslim High School
- London College Nansana
- Gulu Central High School
- Equator High School, Masaka
- Gayaza High School
- Mbale Comprehensive High School
- Kinaawa High School Kawempe

- Hiliton High Hchool mukono
- City View High School
- Mbogo High school
- Wakiso Muslim S.S.S
- Caltec Academy
- Hana International School

Secondary Schools Outreach Strategies:

These mock election exercises are strategically conducted during the high school student leaders' elections as mock platforms to inculcate a democratic culture to the students, especially the new voters to be able to understand the meaning of elections and enhance their constructive engagement about electoral democracy.

During mock election engagements in high schools, we popularize the electoral reforms among student community, in order for them to understand them and add their trumpet to the existing voices of the other civil society like the Citizens' Coalition for Electoral Democracy in Uganda (CCEDU) players, who are championing the demand for suitable electoral reforms on behalf of the citizenry.

Achievements/Opportunities for Engagement.

- Over 1000 students, 20 secondary schools and 5 universities have been reached out and registered so far as members to the coalition.
- The universities and schools have highly embraced the coalition and its activities, that it is an eye opener and engaging.
- CCEDU has been able to provide us with some IEC materials.
- More, specifically the students have embraced the need for electoral reforms and they are ready to push for their realization, if effectively engaged.
- There is a strong and genuine enthusiasm for the students to participate in the 2016 elections, as this has been witnessed in their schools' prefectorial elections.
- There is a high need for Voter IEC materials among the student community.
- Created Non partisan Vote Coalition in schools to sustain the coalition activities
- There is relatively high knowledge of basic political facts among student community.
- Existing Universities 'Guild Elections and Secondary Schools Prefectorial Elections platforms act as mock election exercises to the 2016 elections.

Findings during SCOPE Universities and Schools Outreach Programme:

- Students have limited platforms/opportunities to participate in politics

- Students, especially in secondary schools are ignorant and lack knowledge about how to participate in electoral process
- Students feel that they have better things to do than participating in the electoral process
- Perceive that there is lack of interest in their views; and
- Believe that there is no point in voting, because it is unlikely to bring about change
- The biggest barrier among the young people is a negative view of politicians, with many feeling that politicians do not address issues that matter to them.
- There is lack of political education in many secondary schools
- Young people's attitude towards politicians appear to hinder their engagement in the electoral process, with many viewing them as remote, untrustworthy, self-interested and unrepresentative of young people
- Students, especially in secondary schools have little knowledge on the various types of elections that take place
- Their families and peers have a strong influence on who they vote for; they are unlikely to vote for a party that the family and their peers would not approve of.
- Students have a genuine enthusiasm for participating in elections, as this is witnessed in their prefectorial elections, but they lack the basic information about the entire electoral process e.g. most of them do not know the voting process, E.C Road Map for 2016 Elections.
- Students think that the voting age should be lowered to 16 years.
- Students especially those in secondary schools feel that they are excluded from the political process; they are often treated as immature and childish and their views ignored.

Recommendations to encourage Students to become more engaged in Electoral Process

- There is more need for more education and information on voting process. They don't have access to literature on political parties and candidates' profiles.
- Electoral Commission should visit schools and explain the process of registration and voting, including counting of votes.
- Students feel that schools should provide them with sessions to engage with politicians. These sessions would give students an opportunity to ask politicians a variety of questions and also to get to know them better.
- Students also suggested that information on voting should be placed in establishments that young people would frequent such as clubs, pubs, universities and schools, and it was emphasized that this information should be designed and presented in a manner that is more appealing to the youth.
- There is a strong need to educate young people that " politics is in everyone's life and affects everyone"

Challenges

- Some universities and schools are not accessible for engagement, as they perceive our programmes as being political.
- Lack of enough resources to engage more universities and schools, especially those ones up country.
- Lack of enough and youth friendly Voter Education IEC materials
- There are no sessions/platforms in most secondary schools where students can engage with politicians.
- Negative perception of politicians among the student community.