



## **THE UGANDA GENERAL ELECTIONS**

### **Observation Report for 2016 General Elections “Pre and During Elections”**

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## **Executive Summary:**

Students for Global Democracy (SGD Uganda) is a student-led nonprofit and non-partisan organization founded in 2005 that inspires young people, principally students, to adopt and promote principles of leadership, good governance and sustainability with the goal of greater youth participation in democratic processes and sustainable development efforts in Uganda and the outside world. Given the needs of the Ugandan youth and student population in particular and a recent trend towards more active citizen engagement on governance issues in Uganda, SGD Uganda has set out to empower students and youth to participate effectively in the democratization process. SGD seeks to become a platform from which to help youth advocate and lobby for their needs and priorities, particularly sustainable development, accountable governance, conflict resolution/prevention, and social justice for all Ugandans.

In preparation for the 2015 general elections in Uganda, SGD Uganda engaged in voter education activities under the “Strengthening Youth Participation in the 2016 Elections and Beyond Project”. The project was intended to identify and address challenges that limit youth participation in the electoral process, and also through its voter education engagements like the Mock Election Simulations, Democracy walks and Why Vote Debates, it intended to mobilize an educated, informed and engaged citizenry at the 2015 polls. It was also aimed at motivating active citizen participation in the electoral process and to bring the issues and concerns of ordinary Ugandan citizens to the attention of political aspirants through the various platforms.

SGD Uganda has been studying recommendations submitted by its election observer team, which are herein form its basis for electoral reform agenda 2016-2021. It is against this background that SGD Uganda sent a 34 observer team, that

included 9 staff members, 2 teachers and 22 student leaders to observe the February 2016 polls in the selected parts that represented the four traditional regions of Uganda i.e. Eastern, Northern, Southern and Western in the districts of Jinja, Iganga, Fortportal, Mukono, Wakiso, Kampala, Masaka, Gulu and Soroti. The elections that were held on 18th February, 2016 were a milestone in the political history of Uganda, especially after a failed attempt for electoral reforms, pioneered by the civil society organizations and opposition political parties.

During the observer mission, the team interacted with different stakeholders in the electoral process from the Electoral Commission, Political parties, civil society organizations, the media and the general public. Emerging issues and views were picked on various components of the Ugandan electoral process; ranging from the failed electoral reforms, civic/voter education, election observation, ICT in elections, Media and Elections, among others.

SGD Uganda will engage with the different respective stakeholders; to share experiences and lessons learnt with a view of forging a winning formula to achieve credible and democratic elections in Uganda.

## **Electoral Background**

Uganda's last general election held on 18th February, 2016 was the fourth election held under a multi party dispensation.

The election attracted lots of attention primarily because it followed a failed coalition by some opposition political parties and an attempt spearheaded by the civil society organizations and opposition politicians to advocate for electoral reforms.

The election attention hyped, after on the 15<sup>th</sup> of June 2015, Amama Mbabazi, President Museveni's close bush war comrade and former prime minister declared his intentions to run against his boss for the National Resistance Movement's nomination for president at the party's convention on 4 October 2015. This declaration was followed by a response from President Museveni who dubbed it "bad conduct and premature". On 31 July, after much disagreement between top-ranking party officials and Mbabazi himself, the former Prime Minister declared he would stand as an independent candidate. His candidature was backed by The

Democratic Alliance (TDA), a loose convergence of minor political parties working to win the position of presidency, which later failed after disagreements on who should be the flag bearer of the coalition.

## **Final Results:**

President Museveni was declared the winner on 20 February 2016. Results from the electoral commission showed him with 60.8% of the vote against 35.4% for Besigye. He sworn in at a ceremony in Kampala on 12 May 2016.

Despite 2016 elections being widely seen as shambolic, a winner had to emerge and President Museveni it was. But the losing candidate, Dr Kizza Besigye, who described the election as the worst in Uganda's history, made bigger gains than Museveni.

According to the official declaration by the Electoral Commission based on results from 26,223 out of a total of 28,010 polling stations, Museveni garnered 5,617,503 votes (60.7%) and Besigye 3,270,290 (35.3%). Total votes cast were 9,701,738, which translate to 63.5% of registered voters.

The invalid votes were 455,175, a figure more than the combined votes of Amama Mbabazi, Abed Bwanika, Venansius Baryamureeba, Benon Biraaro, Maureen Kyalya and Joseph Mabirizi (the six got a total of 358,765).

A comparative analysis of the 2011 and 2016 election results shows that Museveni's overall vote tally increased marginally from 5,428,369 in 2011 to 5,617,503, a gain of 189,134 votes. Within the same cycle, Besigye's votes increased by a margin of 1,205,327 votes – from 2,064,963 in 2011 votes to 3,270,290 in 2016.

Besigye, according to the results, was set to win in 14 out of 112 districts, which is a marked improvement from the four districts (Kampala, Soroti, Kaberamaido and Serere) he won in 2011.

The districts include: Soroti, Pader, Tororo, Mbale, Sironko, Lira, Gulu, Amuru, Ngora, Masaka, Kampala and Wakiso. Besigye was also in a comfortable lead in Kasese and Rukungiri where only three out of 276 polling stations had declared results by the time EC made the final declaration.

In Kampala, of the 1176 polling stations out of 1338 that had declared results Besigye garnered 300,751 while Museveni got 142,181 votes, a margin of 158,570 votes. Similarly in Wakiso, Besigye got 263,657 while Museveni scored 162,555, a difference of 101,102 votes.

According to the results, Museveni maintained his support in most areas that have traditionally voted for NRM like Ankole, Busoga, Tooro, Karamoja and Kigezi sub-regions. In districts like Amudat and Napak in Karamoja sub-region, Museveni garnered 97% and 93% of the vote respectively.

## **Youth Factor during the Campaigns:**

In the run up to the February 18<sup>th</sup> 2016 polls, youth constituted a big proportion of voters, campaigners, campaign agents and supporters with every political candidate seeking elective office, earmarking key messages targeting them.

The statistics revealed even more interesting figures, for example, the majority of the approximately 4 (four million) new voters on the roll were youth voters.

83% of Uganda's unemployed population is aged between 15 and 24 years. Youth unemployment poses a serious political, economic, and social challenge to the country and its leadership. As a result, youth unemployment was elevated by presidential candidates to one of the most pressing issues for young people in this election. This explains why many of the contestants acknowledged this challenge in their manifestos and generously detailed strategies on job creation if they were elected into office.

In relation too, numerous promises were made, including a pledge to enhance the capacity of the Youth Livelihood Fund and the creation of a diversified economy with more focus on industrialization than agriculture. Clearly, the objective here was to diagnose the causes of youth unemployment.

In order to follow-up on promises by politicians, and in their conscious efforts to be a part of the decision making processes, a number of young people made their way to the inner circle campaign teams of the contending politicians.

It is therefore no wonder that quite a good number of youth were endorsed and some nominated for national assembly positions. It should also be noted that the age bracket of the political aspirants may have shaped or influenced the voting pattern of the youth with many of them being possibly drawn to the more youthful candidates against the hope that they would appreciate and expeditiously deal with the issues that affect the young generation of the country.

Also, for the candidates looking at the figures, the issue of voter apathy was top on the agenda given that the voter turnout in the past three general elections was on a steady decline. In 2001, it was 70.3 per cent of the registered voters. It reduced to 68 per cent in 2006 and fell further to 59.2 per cent in 2011. Therefore, getting the youth to vote was critical to any leader looking at winning the elections.

## **Youth Engagement**

The status of youth participation in Uganda's political processes remains a major challenge. Around 6.4 million youth (18—30 years) constituted nearly half the number of registered voters in 2016 elections; and yet, they still failed to meaningfully and sustainably impact on politics and governance processes. Consequently, public policies and programmes are yet to effectively respond to the several challenges faced by young people such as, unemployment and underemployment, limited access to quality education and health services as well as inability to meet personal aspirations and goals.

The above phenomenon unfortunately persists, despite several institutional provisions for youth inclusion in governance and decision-making processes like, their representation in parliament, local councils, and political parties as well as a myriad of civic organizations representing youth interests.

Uganda held its general elections in February 2016, the fourth under a still nascent multiparty framework. In such a democratic context, how the different social groups defined and marketed their interests was crucial influence to the manifestos of political parties and subsequent policies pursued by the eventual government. This question is one of particular importance for Uganda's youth, who face several social, political, and economic challenges and whose interests still fail to effectively make it to the public policy platforms.

New groups of young people emerged ahead of the elections. These included, Solida, the Jobless Brotherhood, and the NRM Poor Youth. The rise of such "new" platforms raise questions as to whether Uganda's young generation has lost confidence in hitherto existing forums of representation and whether limited youth participation is a problem of ineffective organizations.

The matter should now be put to debate to explore why youth political participation remains ineffective despite existence of an apparently supportive institutional framework.

## **Special Interest Factor:**

Low inclusion of all citizens in public affairs has always been a significant governance challenge facing Uganda. The minority groups have always viewed the national resources as accessible to only those with either economic might or strong ethnic affiliations with holders of political power. Minorities and indigenous peoples in the country remain some of the groups that have suffered from exclusion. Even when their participation in the electoral process does not amount to inclusion, it was seen as a fundamental step towards having the voices of the minority, under privileged heard.

Better representation of the minority and marginalized persons was one of the 2016 General Election Agenda, especially spearheaded by Civil Society organizations like Foundation for Human Rights Initiative, Union of Disabled Persons –Uganda, Uganda Women Network, Forum for Women in Democracy (FOWODE). Under the women emancipation factor, new administrative positions created were aimed at enhanced representation of women, PWDs and other special interest groups.



## **Electoral Reforms**

The Inter- Party Coalition for Dialogue (IPOD) tabled before Parliament 43 Electoral and Constitutional Reform proposals, which sought to improve the conduct of the next general elections in 2016.

Members of the six-party coalition who met Right Hon. Rebecca Kadaga, Speaker of Parliament in her Chambers on Monday March 2nd, 2015, wanted amendments made to the Presidential and Parliamentary Elections laws, Local Government Act, Electoral Commission Act and the national constitution

IPOD Chairman Engineer Omar Kalinge Nyago said the selection and tenure of office of members of the Electoral Commission requires review by Parliament. IPOD proposed that the Commissioners should increase from seven to nine but their term of office should be restricted to seven non-renewable years in order to minimize the possibility of compromise in anticipation of re-appointment. The proposals tabled by IPOD included empowering the Constituency to serve as the basic electoral unit; requiring the Electoral Commission to formulate voter education programmes jointly with political parties; and waiving the requirement for civil servants to resign before being nominated. When the proposed reforms were handed to the Speaker of Parliament, Hon. Rebecca Alitwala Kadaga, she said, “I have seen several areas of convergence in the IPOD and National Forum proposals. We need to build consensus on all issues ahead of the 2016 elections. I reaffirm the readiness of Parliament to receive and consider the proposals,”

The civil society organizations also played an important role in pushing for electoral reforms prior to the 2016 elections. Together with the opposition political leaders, they launched a nationwide campaign to rally citizens to demand electoral reforms to guarantee free and fair elections come 2016. This campaign was intended to motivate people to push for the new electoral reforms and for the government to yield to their demands. The civil society was ready to table their proposals once parliament called for public hearing, however the delay to table the reforms was a warning sign that government's commitment was non-existent. On the other side, the opposition wanted the current Electoral Commission disbanded before the 2016 elections and a new body called the Independent Electoral Commission replace it.

The reforms were not passed prior to the 2016 general elections as anticipated by

the general public, and this is one of the reasons for the continued public outcry to contest the election results.

## **Generational Factor**

The 2016 General Election brought to light an emerging political class that comprises of a new generation of elite, learned and urban young citizens. These drew a clear distinction between themselves and the older generation of politicians. The election process revealed a complete turn over from conventional campaign tactics. In came, use of new media; social media and ICT applications such blogs, twitter, facebook though in many ways they were not an exclusive preserve of the younger citizens.

Internet usage in Uganda has grown at one of the fastest rates in Africa. According to the latest statistics provided by Uganda Computer Emergency Response Team (UgCERT) its noted there is a steady growth in the internet penetration with mobile being the preferred connection. The rate at which Ugandans are embracing internet use for different activities like keeping updated with social media updates and emails had to led to this mobile growth use.

The numbers say Uganda internet usage has increased by 1% from last year's 100,900 fixed Estimated Internet subscriptions and 14.2% from 3,625,559 Mobile Estimated Internet subscriptions. This scenario has helped open up the platform for discussion of pertinent political issues among the public especially the young generation. It was noted that some civil society organizations also made use the social media to open up informative discussion platforms on election violence and peace besides other electoral issues. As result, it was a more informed electorate that went out to the polls on 18<sup>th</sup> February 2016.

## **Civil Society Organizations**

Civil Society organizations in Uganda played a critical role in all activities as part of the preparation for the elections as well as on the E - Day and after. Organizations like Citizens Coalition for Electoral Democracy in Uganda (CCEDU), Citizens Election Observers Network (CEON-U) and Youth Coalition for Electoral Democracy also actively participated in the push for electoral reforms ahead of the 2016 general elections. Their participation stretched from extensive research to inform the content of the electoral legislation; to advocacy and lobbying for the same.

They had consistent engagement with the Electoral Commission, Members of Parliament and other stakeholders to ensure a clean electoral process was conducted on a leveled political ground. Besides, their campaign to push for electoral reforms, there was also heavy involvement of CSOs in civic/voter education that was mainly aimed at helping the citizenry understand and appreciate the tenets of the upcoming elections, as well as enlighten the masses on the value of holding elections in a peaceful environment.

To facilitate CSO engagements, quite a number of CSOs received direct funding from various development partners. Other engagements were in election observation efforts with the Citizens Election Observers Network (CEON-U) registering the biggest election observer group accredited by the Electoral Commission accredited over 1200 short term observers across the country. There were long term observers like European Union Observer Mission, Citizens Election Observers Network (CEON-U), who had been deployed earlier to monitor the campaigns and threats to the whole electoral process.

With support from the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) and the Taiwan Foundation for Democracy (TFD), Students for Global Democracy Uganda (SGD Uganda) was the sole organization, which conducted voter education among the student community prior to the 2016 General Elections. Through its project “Strengthening Youth Participation in 2016 Election”, SGD Uganda engaged the students, especially the new voters on election related activities like Mock Election Simulations, Democracy Walks, Why Vote Debates, Democracy Caravan, Democracy Walls, Dissemination of Right to Vote Tool Kit. These initiatives were intended to mobilize an educated, informed and engage citizenry at the 2016 polls.

## **SGD Uganda Team interaction with the Community**

SGD Uganda through its “Strengthening Youth Participation in 2016 Elections Project” engagements with the community, especially during the Democracy Walk activity, where we directly interacted with the local people, so as to establish their opinions about the 2016 elections.

During this engagement in Kawempe Growers Market, Mr. Swaib Katerega, one of the market vendors, acknowledged and appreciated the importance of our civic engagement with the community on matters related to mobilizing them to participate in the 2016 elections, but his fear was about the unemployed youth who were being recruited as crime preventers to beef up security during the elections, he said *“these youth pose a security threat, since they are jobless, they might turn against the local people and start beating them up as a cover up to take advantage of their belongings”*. He went ahead and said that *“there is no political will by government to push for the electoral reforms, yet we do have confidence and even trust in this current electoral commission.”*

The local people also feared that the election might turn violent, since the young people were angry for change and were being recruited in violent gangs like Solida, Red Top. They also attributed the signals for violence to the NRM Party primaries that were marred by rigging, anxiety, and unrest in some communities across the country. Cases of some people who had not received their national identity cards were also reported. They said that failure to get their national identity cards was deliberate, since their community is an opposition strong hold, so as to lessen the number of voters who would go out to vote their candidates.

Some communities linked the technological failure of the biometric systems during the voter registration to an alleged ploy to deprive certain communities of their right to vote for their preferred candidates.

## **Security Deployment:**

Although the elections were fairly peaceful with no serious reported incidents of violence, there was relatively a heavy deployment of the security agencies, especially the army in all areas where SGD Uganda election observers were deployed. At various polling stations, mostly in the urban areas and opposition strongholds, SGD Uganda observer noted the presence of more than 5 (five) plain clothed security agents and the disputed crime preventers.

The government recruited hundreds of thousands of unemployed young men code named “ Crime Preventers” to beef up security during the elections. These were hired, ostensibly, to prevent crime; however, according to human rights activists they harassed opposition politicians and supporters.

## **Social Media Blackout**

On the 18<sup>th</sup> February 2016, polling day, the government ordered the mobile service providers MTN and Airtel to block social media platforms. According to the Executive Director of the Uganda Communications Commission, Mr. Mutabaza, the government claimed that platforms such as Twitter, Facebook and WhatsApp would spread rumors and create unnecessary chaos. The opposition argued that the directive was put in place to prevent the public from reporting irregularities in the election process. The social media platforms were restored after continuous condemnations from the human rights activist and foreign missions like the US Embassy in Kampala.

The social media blackout denied citizens of their right of expression, especially that of sharing their views on how the elections were conducted.

## **Overall Assessment and General Conclusion**

Uganda's general elections held in February, 2016 put to test Uganda's commitment to democratic electoral processes, especially the disputed elections conducted without the desired electoral reforms.

Apart from high reports of vote rigging and staffing and moreso, late delivery of election materials, mostly in areas considered opposition strongholds in some parts of country; and logistical challenges to the Electoral Commission, the electoral process generally came off violent free.

The overall atmosphere, days before and during the election was calm and punctuated by evident zeal among the populace, especially the youth to exercise their democratic right to vote and rewrite the election history of their country for change.

The high record voter turn up on polling day as compared to the recent elections emphasized the commitment of Ugandans to make their voice heard. This was also a score to the efforts put into civic/voter education by the civil society organizations and other stakeholders in the electoral process.

There was a widespread advocacy for peace before, during and after the election. Besides the messages from the civil society organizations and the Electoral Commission, political candidates were also seen and heard to engage in the peace campaign during their rallies. This could be one of the reasons for the remarkable calmness and patience exhibited, especially among the discontented populace through the process.

The Electoral Commission did not enjoy high confidence and earn the trust among stakeholders from across the board; political parties, civil society organizations and the general public. One of the reasons to explain this could be who the appointing authority of the Electoral Commission Commissioners, who was also the incumbent, establishment of the Electoral Commission; composition, and recruitment of officers to the electoral body. This process has a negative impact on its independence and positioning in the political and electoral environment.

On a positive side, the election was not hinged on the ethnic affiliations of the electorate, there was clear sign of representation of the different interests in the bid for the presidency. There was evident representation of; minority and under privileged groups, and religious interests.

Also it should also be noted that throughout the campaign and election period, focus was on both internal and regional politics.

Following the conclusion of the election exercise, what is left to be seen is the future of Uganda's elections, which is a matter of debate to question the credibility of the electoral process and the manner in which election disputes will be resolved.

### **Observations:**

Some Presidential candidates had no agents to represent them at polling stations during the voting time in various parts of the country as this was witnessed at Library Grounds polling stations (No.3802 A-L, KI), Kawempe C/U primary school (No. 3803 L-M), Binyonyi A-1 in Masaka Nyendo.

Voting that was supposed to start at 7:00am in the morning, rather started late at 1:45pm. This affected the closure time of voting instead of 4:00pm, voting ended at 7:00pm. This was observed at St. Mark Primary School Nakawadde polling station, Busiro East, Wakiso District as reported by an SGD Uganda observer, Mr. Karungi Stephen.

The alteration of the official voting time in various areas caused growth of impatience especially among the elderly and the disabled, because they could not withstand the condition and never returned for voting. Thus, next time this needs to be addressed by probably keeping the voting materials at a police station a day before such that they can be ferried from nearby police station in order to enable the voting to start in time.

Loss of trust by the citizens from the Electoral Commission during the electoral process, this was due to the distribution of electoral materials to different polling stations like ballot boxes, condoning tape, and basins were distributed first by Police in Kawempe North and later at 11:00am ballot papers and other materials

were brought last and this raised a strong question from the voters as to why the materials for the first time were being brought in 2 shifts without explanation.

The role of the army to help police maintain peace during elections also intimidated voters, because there was heavy deployment and this created fear amongst some voters signaling that there was going to be violence. *Ntale Abdu, SGD-Uganda* observer based in Kampala district saw the army surrounding Kawempe Mbogo Muslim Secondary School Polling Station No.3805 and 3822 since voting from NAL-NAM and M-NAM started at 4:00pm. Mr. Green from Electoral Commission in charge of Kawempe North communicated that they have adjusted time for voting to all stations in Kawempe North and voting was extended to 7:00pm from 4:00pm. At the above mentioned polling stations, voting closed at 02:00am and some candidates agents had gone away, because they wouldn't manage the weather condition at night.

Some polling stations did not receive enough materials to start the voting in time, and this delayed the entire process, the police distributed few materials to some polling stations, for instance Kawempe Mbogo Secondary School Polling centers NAL-NAM and M-NAM, which had 4 polling stations received materials for only 2 polling stations and the other materials were brought in at 3; 00pm, this caused anger among the voters and eventually violence erupted.

*Mr. Simon the political Assistant of Hon Latif Ssebagala contesting for MP Kawempe North said that, since Morning Sebamba's compound polling station (No.3838-N-NAL) and Sebamba's compound polling station (No.3840-O-Z) have been voting with all the materials and one station (No.3841-NAM-NZ) was stopped because it was missing a register.*

Some citizens never had time to internalize the candidates' manifestos, since some of the manifestos were launched amidst campaigns, so at large, some citizens voted not basing on issue-based participation.

The multiparty system also affected citizens' meaningful participation; this was justified during the FDC rally when their Aspiring Presidential candidate supported independent candidates named Hon. Latif Ssebagala (Kawempe North MP) and Hon Shifrah



Lukwago (woman MP Kampala) who were independents, yet they had the party flag bearers.

Some polling stations had no voters' registers, for example at Sebamba's compound polling station (No.3841-NAM-NZ), however the voting materials were available, however after a query by the voters to questioning the absence of the voters' register, within 4 hours time the register was brought by the electoral commission and voting started at 2:00pm.

Most polling officials were not familiar with their duties at the polling station. Some did not know how to setup the polling stations, instead the observers from SGD-Uganda were requested to direct them on how to step up polling stations and this happened at Toro Sports Club Polling station in Fort Portal Municipality, Kabarole district, as reported by our Shamim Nassuna and Habiba Nakanwagi, SGD Uganda Observers.

*A youth called Golomba (bodaboda man) who is a voter at kawempe Mbogo primary sch Polling station said that, "I voted two women members of parliament because I liked both of them." (Hon Nabira Nagayi and Hon Shifrah Lukwago)*

Low turn up of voters was highly witnessed at Toro Sports Club, however they had been deployed to different locations for official duties hence indirectly denying them their civic right to vote.

Some polling officials did not know how a valid and invalid vote is, when it came to the counting of votes, because they were not knowledgeable about what makes an invalid and valid vote. This was still at Public Library polling station in Fort Portal, Kabarole district.

Some of the officials were not equipped with uniforms to be easily identified by voters, and this caused chaos when some opposition supporters realized that someone acting as a police constable was not in his uniform, and immediately elections were stopped there and then, not until they took him away and was replaced by an officer. This too happened at Public Library polling station in Fort Portal Municipality, Kabarole district.

Low staffing was witnessed at some polling stations, where the polling officials were not enough to carry out the process efficiently. This was observed at Binyonyi A-1 polling station in Nyendo Masaka district, where one Polling Assistant was issuing out ballot papers to the voters on all the three desks and this slowed the process to some extent.

Some polling officials were not well facilitated by the Electoral Commission during the polling day and this delayed the voting process because officials did not turn out in Mukono district.

Low turn up of citizen on the polling day in Kigandani H-Z polling station in Soroti district was witnessed according *Mr. Ssali Umaru an observer from SGD-Uganda during his interactions with the voters , they told him that “we don’t see meaning in the electoral process since after registration they have not conducted any civic education program on voting and the social media platforms are not easily accessible i.e. radio, TV and newspapers”*.

The Presiding Officers were not receptive, because they could not give clear guidelines on how one should cast his or her vote and this affected the new voters. The polling officers at Kigandani H-Z were not well inducted during the training of presiding officers, since the training was carried also for one day which was not sufficient for them to analyze the information about the electoral process.

In Entebbe, Wakiso District at Abayita Ababiri Maize Mill Polling Station 02, our observer said that, some agents did not complete the voting process at the polling station due to time delays that were caused by the Electoral Commission to deliver the materials and led to extension of the voting time till night i.e. counting started at 08:30 pm and ended at 11 pm.

According to Rashid Nsubuga, our observer deployed at Nansana West II-B Polling Station in Wakiso District, said that, some polling officials were not well trained to efficiently conduct elections, since they were ever asking him for guidance, especially when it came to setting up the polling station.

## **Lessons.**

During our interaction with voters after voting, some voters because they wanted change but not focusing on the manifestos of any candidate.

There is a greater need for voter sensitization in any other forth-coming elections. This outcry is based on the number of many invalid ballot papers recorded due to lack of enough voter education.

Some voters did not understand the voting process, because they never received any voter education training to help them get familiar with the process, for example at Binyonyi Polling Station in Masaka District, where voters did not know that they should cast their votes from the basins and could just skip them.

Most of the voter education posters with messages on electoral process that were used by the electoral commission could only favor the literates, since they were not translated in the local languages.

Some voters failed to vote, because of the intimidation due to the heavy deployment of the army, this created fear amongst the voters thinking that there would be violence, so some scared away from voting.

Many people voted for candidates not basing on manifestos or policy positions, but only for change and other factors. This greatly affected many aspiring candidates, especially those on the ruling side and mostly in opposition stronghold; people were just voting for any opposition candidates, mostly those attached to the Forum for Democratic Change (FDC). This was highly witnessed in the urban areas.

## **Achievements:**

Very many youth participated in the 18<sup>th</sup> Feb 2016 General Elections as compared to the previous elections, and this is to some extent attributed to some of the several election related engagements conducted with the youth during the pre-election period like Mock Elections, Why Vote Debates, Democracy Walks among others. These pre- election activities conducted by SGD-Uganda were intended to mobilize youth as educated, informed and engaged citizens at the 2015 polls.

30 young people from SGD-Uganda who effectively participated in mock election activities of SGD-Uganda were given an opportunity by the electoral commission to work as polling officials

Young people effectively participated in large numbers on the polling day. This is also attributed to our engagements with them on election related activities conducted by SGD Uganda like the Mock election Simulations, Why Vote Debates, Democracy Walks, Non-Violence Peace Dialogues and the Youth Parliaments on the National Youth Manifesto

School administrations mobilized their students to effectively participate in the electoral process to exercise their civic right of voting i.e. during these engagements with Mbogo High School, Kinaawa High School, Midland High School they provided 20 student leaders to be trained as polling officials. This is a sign of promoted school-based civic education platforms

A team of 34 young from SGD-Uganda were able to observe and monitor the electoral process for 2016 in the 4 regions within the districts of Jinja, Iganga, Wakiso, Kampala , Soroti, Fortportal and Gulu District

## Challenges:

The Electoral Commission had few materials at various polling stations on the polling day and this limited citizens participation for instance at Kawempe Mbogo SSS (NAL-NAM and M-NAM) polling station. Three ballot boxes were missing.

During the elections, it is the presiding officers' responsibility to provide information to the election observers, especially before and after the voting process. In some areas, presiding officers could fail to avail election related information to the observers, which restricted and made their work very difficult and hence being not transparent to the public, this was observed by *Nakazibwe Martha, our observer based in Kawempe Division, Kampala District.*

Some polling officials did not turn up on the polling day and this was attributed to the low payments by the electoral commission. This greatly affected polling station of Kawempe Mbogo SSS (NAL-NAM and M-NAM), in Kawempe Division, Kampala District.

Also at Binyonyi A-1 in Nyendo Polling station in Masaka District, there were recorded instances of missing polling officials.

*Kazibwe Proscovia who was a student at Makerere University and a member of SGD-Uganda was just called on 17<sup>th</sup> Feb 2016 to work as polling Assistant at UCTU polling station in kawempe and yet she had not been trained. She said that," if it was not for the mock election activities conducted by SGD-Uganda, she would have missed the*

*In 2014, SGD-Uganda carried out a survey on youth participation in the electoral process. In Kawempe Division it was discovered that voting is done basing on Islam. We conducted dialogues on youth participation not in line with issues of religion with the chairman of Imams Kawempe Division Sheikh Kasawuli Saaid. So Muslims were encouraged to vote candidates basing on manifestos not religion during the 2016 Elections, Muslims managed to vote Mr. Emmanuel Sserunjoji as the Mayor of Kawempe Division (Non Muslim) and in Kawempe South where the Christians are the majority voted Hon Munyagwa Mubarak as their MP (Muslim).*

All these illegalities like missing ballot boxes, registers, time delay and polling officials not turning up among others have resulted into many petitions from the defeated candidates.

The role of religion in politics also affected participation of citizens i.e. Muslims at Kawempe Mbogo used propaganda against non-Muslim candidates not basing on manifestos but religion. Muslims highly preached against voting non-Muslims and this greatly affected the likes Democratic Party Candidate Hon. Nakiyingi Florence because of being a Christian.

## **Recommendations:**

There is still need for a continuous and massive voter education to the electorates. Voter education should be a continuous process, not an event during elections and there is also need to develop friendly Voter IEC Materials.

There is need train profession security officials with skills of detecting crime and handling trouble causers during elections, without mishandling them to propel to violence.

The Electoral Commission is urged to have a thorough pilot test of the biometric system if it is to be used in any other forth-coming elections in order to gauge its suitability as this was observed as a challenge at Alidina Village A-M Polling Station in Jinja District, where the machine jammed from time to time hence causing delays in the process. *This as witnessed by Mike Munabi, President of Students for Global Democracy Uganda, who was also observer based in Jinja.*

Contesting and Political Parties should endeavor to always deploy their agents at all polling stations around the country. In doing this, perhaps might reduce cases of some candidates saying the polls were rigged because they did not have agents to protect their votes and also witness vote counting in various areas across the whole country.

## **Adoption of the Biometric Registration and Voting System**

Use of this system would greatly minimize the possibility of election fraud, ensure high level security that enables for data protection, and facilitate quick enrollment. Biometric Voter Registration, Identification and Voting would also enhance the credibility of the electoral process. It is however important that the functionality of the systems be double checked before use and the officers to use them should be well trained before they are entrusted with the use of the systems.

## **Parallel Vote Tallying**

PVT is a vital exercise that ensures checks and balances on the preliminary and final election results released by the electoral body. However, there is need for civil society organizations or any other entity that would like to conduct PVT to work together with the electoral body so as to have agreeable terms on which to work. There should also be several back up plans to the service network; to mitigate eventualities of network compromise.

On the other hand, with the e – electoral process and the shortcomings of the same, the practical relevance Parallel Vote Tallying (PVT) and other initiatives which analyze outcomes rather than processes should be subjected to keen review with the intention of broadening their efficacy thresholds and suitability for e-observation.

## **Voting in Enclosed Areas – Indoor**

As much as voting in open fields may dispel possibilities of ballot stuffing and other election irregularities, voting indoors – where possible may guarantee secrecy of the ballot and also help to guard against possible natural, unforeseen calamities like change in weather that could disrupt the voting exercise. Also, in case of any unrest around the polling station, there would be considerable security of the election material.

## **Use of Polling Booths**

The use of polling booths provides space for secrecy of the ballot. Also the use of several polling booths at a particular polling station allows for several individuals voting at the same time hence reducing the time of the process.



## **Avoid Army involvement in Polls.**

The army should be completely kept out of the polls. The absence of heavy deployment of the army during polls guarantees an intimidation free environment that allows for free and fair voting.

## **Harmonization of the Civic/Voter Education Messages**

The Electoral Commission and civil society organizations should work together and harmonize the message(s) that they would like to take out to the populace in preparation for the elections. This allows for a strong message that is easily digested by the voters.

## **Electronic Transmission of Election Results**

The use of online or telephonic transmission of election results minimizes the risks of compromise of results and speeds up the process of tallying and relay of results at the national tally Centre. Adoption of this system should however be tagged with credible and reliable back up plans to alleviate technological breakdowns.

## **Fast Track the Electoral Reforms**

A deliberate move should be seen to be taken, especially by the Government as well as other stakeholders in this direction to fast track the electoral reforms. This as seen from the Kenyan experience is the Centre of the peaceful electoral process and also generates the basis for the voter and civic education that is a requirement for the populace before elections. This also gives credence to the process when there are no parties that feel aggrieved and therefore apportioning blame or unfair play in the electoral process.

## **Consultative and Regular Dialogue Engagements**

Following yet the various elections we have had in Uganda with various experiences and opportunities for that matter, it is imperative that Uganda conducts regular dialogue engagements. This would help to agree on the best practices where all interested parties would participate and give our elections the respect they deserve. In these engagements, borrowing a leaf from the other places like Kenya and Ghana would be of great importance but also sharing with them on their experiences particularly on the lessons they learnt in their own processes.