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# Uganda 2021 General Elections Information Leaflet

## ABOUT THIS INFORMATION LEAFLET

Uganda will go to the polls in 2021 for the country's fourth multiparty general elections under the 1995 constitution. PPI through this leaflet has profiled the basic facts and information that you need to know about the elections.

## ELECTORAL GEOGRAPHY

The total number of available elective positions for the 2020/21 elections are 1,539,946. These positions cover the Presidency, Parliamentary and Local Government Councils general elections as well as Special Interest Groups.

Electoral Units	Number	Seats/Elective positions
Number of Districts	135	a) 135 Women Representative to Parliament b) 135 District Local Council V Chairpersons
Number of Cities (including Kampala Capital City Authority)	11	c) 11 City (District) Women Members of Parliament d) 29 Directly elected Members of Parliament e) Lord Mayor (KCCA) f) 10 City Mayors g) 25 City Division Mayors
Number of Municipalities	56	h) 56 Directly elected Members of Parliament
Number of Regions	4	5 Members of Parliament for Youth 5 Members of Parliament for PWDs 5 Members of Parliament for Workers 5 Members of Parliament for the Elderly
Uganda Peoples Defense Forces Council	1	10 Members of Parliament for the UPDF
Number of Counties	312	353 Directly elected Members of Parliament
Total number of Members of Parliament to be elected	529	Direct and Special Interest Groups Seats, includes Women District Representatives
No. of Sub counties/Towns/Municipal Divisions	2,184	2,184 Chairperson of LC III
Number of Parishes in Uganda	10,595	Local Council II Chairpersons
Number of Villages in Uganda	70,626	Local Council I Chairpersons
Number of Polling Stations in Uganda	34,344	
Number of Registered Voters in Uganda	17,658,527	43.8 percent of Ugandans
Total population	40.3 Million	

Source: Electoral Commission & UBOS 2019 Statistical Abstract



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**Table 2: Disaggregation of Registered Voters by Age and Gender**

Category	Number	Percentage
Total Registered Voters	17,658,527	100
Female Registered Voters	9,218,963	52.21
Male Registered Voters	8,439,564	47.79
Youth (10 – 30 Years )	7,846,373	44.4
Elderly (60+ years)	1,701,518	9.6
PwDs	382,577	2.1

Source: Electoral Commission, 2019 ( Compiled in 2019, using the youth, elderly and PWD registers )

*The number of eligible voters has increased from 15.28 million in 2016 to 17.66 million in 2021, representing an increment of 2.38 million new voters.*

### 3. ELECTION FACTS AND INFORMATION

3.1 Laws and Provisions Under which the 2021 General Elections will be Conducted?

The 2021 general elections will be conducted under the following legal frameworks;

3.1.1. The Constitution of the Republic of Uganda The 1995 Constitution of the Republic of Uganda (as amended) provides for;

- a) The Establishment of the Electoral Commission (Article 60) and its mandate (Article 61) to organize, conduct and supervise regular, free, and fair elections and referenda;
- b) The electoral process and timelines within which to conduct the elections; and
- c) Redress procedures to aggrieved presidential candidates (Art.104) in the Supreme Court after the declaration of election results.





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### **3.1.2. The Electoral Commission Act, Cap 140 [ECA] (as amended).**

The Electoral Commission Act, Cap 140 provides the detailed provisions related to the functions of the Commission.

In 2020, the ECA was amended to provide for

- a) Use of technology in the management of elections (s. 12(1a);
- b) Electronic display system for the public at every tallying Centre (s. 12(1b)
- c) Regulations by way of statutory instrument to prescribe the manner of use of technology in the management of elections (s. 12(1c)- (1d).

### **3.1.3. The Presidential Elections Act, 2005 [PEA] (as amended)**

The Presidential Elections Act (2005) provides for the election of the president. In 2020, section 56 (2) of the Act was amended to provide for the electronic transmission of electoral results (the return form, tally sheets and declarations of results forms) by returning officers to the Commission. The electronic transmission requires copies to be availed to political parties and candidates, though it does not do away with delivery of hardcopies of the listed documents to the Commission.

### **3.1.4. The Parliamentary Elections Act, 2005 (as amended)**

The Parliamentary Elections Act provides for the parliamentary elections in accordance with Article 76 of the 1995 Constitution. It stipulates the qualifications and disqualification for a parliamentary election, the nomination, campaigning, polling, counting of votes, tallying and declaration of election results and procedures for petitioning the election results. In addition, it provides for parliamentary constituencies and tenure of office of members of Parliament.

### **3.1.5. The Local Government Act, 1997 [LGA] (as amended)**

- a) Section 101 of the LGA mandates the EC to organize local council elections, providing the various positions, requirements to contest and procedures of conducting the elections.



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- b) The LGA mandates the EC to demarcate electoral areas in line with parameters stated in section 108 (1-4).
- c) The electoral positions provided for under the LGA are District Local and urban council Chairpersons, municipal mayors, and councillors.

### **3.1.6. The National Youth Council Act, 1993 (NYCA) (as amended)**

Section 15 of the NYCA provides for the National Youth Council Delegates Conference as the electoral College for the election of the 5 Youth members of Parliament.

### **3.1.7. The Political Parties and Organizations Act, 2005 (PPOA) (as amended)**

- a) The political Parties and Organisation's Act provides for the formation, registration of and membership to political parties;
- b) In addition, the PPOA provides for the regulation of the financing of political parties and organisations;
- c) In 2019, an amendment was done to prescribe a code of conduct for political parties and organisations including a prescription of how parties should conduct themselves ahead of and during general and residual elections;
- d) Ahead of the 2021 general elections, the Electoral Commission has provided guidelines to political parties, guiding that each candidate shall be personally identified by the symbol of his or her party on the ballot paper.

#### **Other legal frameworks include;**

- i) The National Women Councils Act, Cap 319 (as amended);
- j) The Persons with Disability Act, 2020;
- k) The National Council for Older Persons Act, 2013; and
- l) The Labour Unions Act, 2006.



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### **3.2. Political System for the 2021 General Elections**

- a) The 2021 presidential and parliamentary elections will be the fourth elections to be conducted under a multi-party-political dispensation since 2005 when the country returned to Multiparty Democracy. Since 2006, the country has successfully conducted regular elections following a 5-year cycle.
- b) A total of 26 political parties are registered and eligible to participate by sponsoring candidates across all elective positions.

#### **What will be there roles in the elections?**

##### **3.3.1. Uganda Communications Commission (UCC)**

The mandate of the Commission is to regulate the communication sector in Uganda. The Commission thus has regulatory oversight with respect to telecommunications, data communication, radio communications, postal communications, and broadcasting.

Following the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic and the measures established to combat its spread, the Electoral Commission, in its revised roadmap to the 2021 elections indicated that political campaigning by the different candidates will be done mainly through the media, especially radio stations, television stations and online platforms.

The Uganda Communications Commission has therefore developed guidelines that lay out the responsibilities of media houses, broadcasting radio stations, television stations, political parties, candidates, journalists and the Electoral Commission regarding the use of media for campaigns during the national Presidential and Parliamentary elections in Uganda.

UCC will therefore play a regulatory function to ensure that the media;

- a) Provides fair, accurate and comprehensive election related news and information to enable citizens to make informed political decisions;



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- b) Provides a balanced and adequate opportunity for citizens, candidates, and political parties to express divergent political views;
- c) Reports accurately about the voting process and the results; and
- d) Reports accurately and fairly the immediate aftermath of the elections.

### **3.3.2. Uganda Human Rights Commission (UHRC)**

- The role of the Uganda Human Rights Commission is to conduct and report on civic participation ahead of the general elections. In addition, UHRC is mandated to ensure that voter and registration campaigns play a vital role in ensuring that citizens effectively exercise their rights to vote and minimizing cases of voter apathy.
- In addition, UHRC is mandated to protect the rights of non-state actors duly accredited for civic education, from any undue harassment, interference, and interruption in the course of their civic education work.

### **3.3.3. The Police (Assisted by its Sister agencies)**

#### **a) Ensure Law and Order**

The obligation of the Police is to provide security to the Electoral Commission and ensure law and order ahead of and during the elections. This includes safety of voting operations and guarantees that all eligible voters can freely participate in voting and according to their own choices without fear of harm or intimidation.

#### **b) Secure Election Materials**

The police will have the role of ensuring security of election materials at voting and counting centres and during their transportation. Therefore, it is the duty of the police and not that of political players to ensure that electoral materials are not stolen, hijacked, destroyed, or fraudulently altered by any group or persons.





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**c) Mitigate Electoral Violence and Investigate Related Offences.**

The police is obliged to ensure equitable security during an electoral process and build citizens confidence and commitment to an electoral activities.

**d) Providing Security to Political Candidates.**

During the campaign period, the Commission in liaison with the Uganda Police, provides escort teams to Presidential candidates. The Police ensures adequate security at all the campaign venues countrywide.

No	Activity	Period
1.	Nomination of candidates for Local Government Councils	October 5, 2020
2.	Nomination of Candidates for Parliamentary Elections	October 15 -16, 2020
3.	Nomination of Candidates for Presidential Elections	2 <sup>nd</sup> - 3rd November, 2020
4.	Nomination of Municipality and City Division SIG Committees Candidates (Older persons, PWDs and Youth)	21 <sup>st</sup> -22 <sup>nd</sup> September, 2020
5.	Conduct of municipality and City Division SIG committees Candidates” campaign	23 <sup>rd</sup> -24 <sup>th</sup> September, 2020
6.	Polling for municipality and city Division OP committees	25 <sup>th</sup> September, 2020
7.	Polling for municipality and city Division PWD committees	28 <sup>th</sup> September, 2020
8.	Polling for municipality and city Division Youth committees	30 <sup>th</sup> September, 2020
9.	Polling period for 2021 General Elections	10 <sup>th</sup> January - 8 <sup>th</sup> February 2021

Source: Electoral Commission, 2019

**4.1. ELIGIBILITY TO VOTE**

All citizens of Uganda 18 years and above are eligible to register to vote. Every registered voter is enrolled on to the National Voters' Register.

For one to vote in the 2021 general elections, they must be on the Electoral Register and should be 18 years by the closure of the update exercise conducted by Electoral Commission.

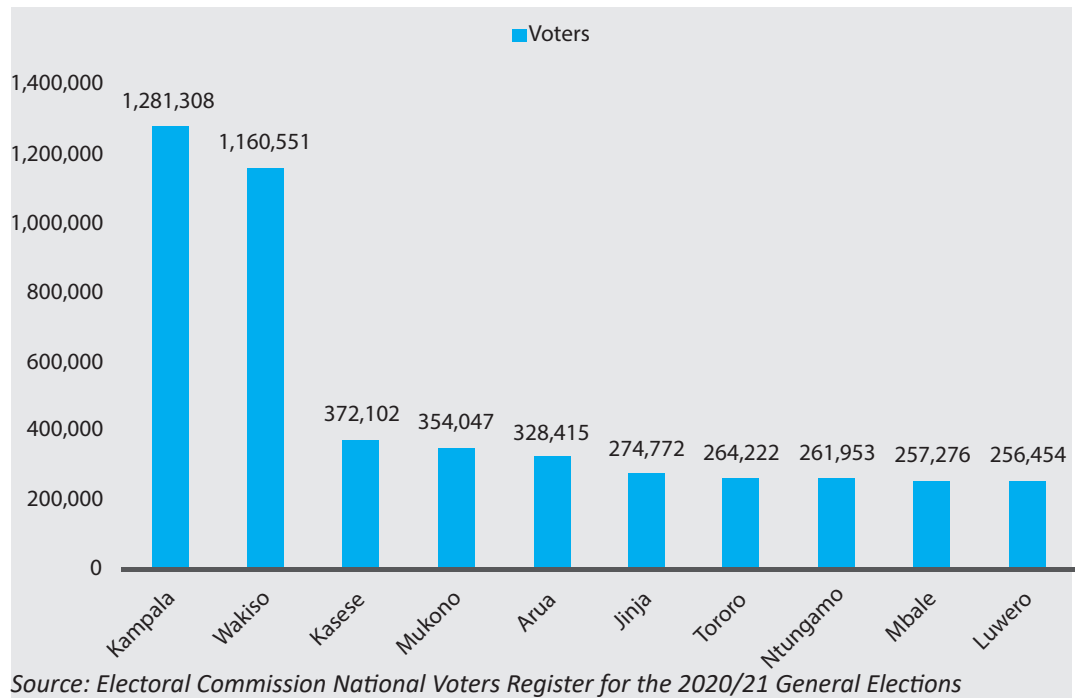
Hence, when a voters' roll for each polling station in a parish has been compiled, only persons whose names appear on the roll are entitled to vote. Voters' register was compiled by updating and displaying of the National Voters Register and Registers of Special interest groups.



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## 4.2. The Districts with the Highest Number of Voters in Uganda?

Figure 1: The Top Ten Districts in Terms of Registered Voters



Source: Electoral Commission National Voters Register for the 2020/21 General Elections

Kampala and Wakiso districts have the highest number of registered voters totaling 2.4 million. The top ten districts in terms of voting numbers constitute a total of 4.8 million representing 27 percent of the overall voters.







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### 4.3. Elective Positions

*Table 4: Category of Elections with Elective Positions for 2021 Elections*

Category	Number of electives Positions for 2021
Presidential	1
Parliamentary	529
District	4,273
Municipality/City Division	1,424
Sub-county/Town/Municipal Division	30,679
Youth, PWDs and Older Persons Committees Village to National Level	1,503,040
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,539,946</b>

Source: Electoral Commission Revised Roadmap to the 2020/2021 General Elections

### 4.4. How are Special Interest Elections Conducted and Who is Eligible?

Special interest groups will be conducted taking into consideration the Standard Operating Procedures put in place to control the spread of COVID -19 by the Ministry of Health.

*Table 5: The Category, Level and Mode of Elections for Special Interest Groups*

Category	Level	Mode of Election
Youth	Village/Cell, Parish/ Ward, Sub-county/ Town/Municipal Division and Municipality/City Division	Electoral college and lining up
	District and National level	Electoral college and Secret ballot
PWDs	Village/Cell, Parish/ Ward, Sub-county/ Town/Municipal Division and Municipality/City Division	Electoral college and lining up
	District Level	Electoral college and Secret ballot
Older Persons	Village/Cell, Parish/ Ward, Sub-county/ Town/Municipal Division and Municipality/City Division	Electoral college and lining up
	District and Regional level	Electoral college and Secret ballot
PW Ds	Village/Cell, Parish/ Ward, Sub-county/ Town/Municipal Division and Municipality/City Division	Electoral college and lining up
	District Level	Electoral college and Secret ballot
Older Persons	Village/Cell, Parish/ Ward, Sub-county/ Town/Municipal Division and Municipality/City Division	Electoral college and lining up
	District and Regional level	Electoral college and Secret ballot

Source; Uganda Electoral Commission Revised Roadmap to the 2021 General Elections



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**Youth.** Eligible youth should be a Citizen of Uganda with 18 years of age but below 30 years, residing in the village/cell and a registered voter in the Youth Council Register.

**Persons with Disabilities.** Eligible Persons with Disability should be a Citizen of Uganda with 18 years of age and above, residing in the village/cell and a registered voter in the PWD Council Register.

**Older persons.** Eligible Older persons should be a Citizen of Uganda with 60 years of age and above, residing in the village/cell and a registered voter in the Older Persons Council Register

#### **4.5. Will Technology Be Used in the 2021 General Elections?**

The Electoral Commission (Amendment) Bill, 2019 that was passed by Parliament in March 2020 amended the Electoral Commission Act, Cap.140 to provide for the use of technology in the management of elections.

The Commission shall deploy the use of technology as follows;

- **Registration of voters;** the national nominal roll shall be generated from the National Information data base that is compiled by the National Information and Registration Authority.
- **Display of the register;** the nominal roll shall be displayed electronically accessible via computer through the Electoral Commission website.
- **Identification of voters on polling day;** the Electoral Commission shall use the Biometric Voter System to identify voters during polling.
- **Transmission and Tally of Elections:** on polling day, results from the polling station and sub county tally center shall be electronically transferred using the Electronic Results Transfer and Dissemination System (ERTDS).
- **Sensitization, Communication, and Voter Education;** the Electoral Commission shall conduct voter education using media including social media. In addition, voters are able to access their voter details electronically by sending an SMS/ or via the EC website.



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#### **4.6. How Do Political Parties Internally Choose their Candidates for the General Elections?**

All political parties are required to choose their candidates for general elections as well as party structures in adherence to Article 71 (c-d) of the 1995 Uganda Constitution. In adherence to this provision, political parties have used electoral colleges and primary elections (using adult suffrage) to choose their candidates for the various positions. However, due to COVID-19 and the measures established to combat its spread, Parliament in July 2020 approved new guidelines for the conduct of political party primaries and election of its leaders.

- a) Regulation 5 of the guidelines empowers political parties to include virtual meetings, phased elections, and resolutions by circulation as an alternative to conventional fun-filled primaries.
- b) Regulation 5(3) empowers parties to override their Constitutions and opt for a method that is in sync with the Covid19 health guidelines in selecting party officials and candidates.
- c) Except the topmost organs of political parties, the other party structures can now have their tenure extended pursuant to Regulation 5(4).

#### **4.7. How will Election Disputes be Handled?**

Several legal instruments such as the 1995 Constitution of Uganda, the Presidential Elections Act of 2005, the Electoral Commission Act of 1997, and the Parliamentary Elections Act of 2005, provide avenues through which election disputes should be handled.

- a) For example, Article 61(f) of the constitution empowers the Electoral Commission (EC) to hear and determine election complaints arising before and during elections.



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b) The Electoral Commission Act further gives the commission the authority to examine any election-related complaints, decide on a course and take necessary action to correct an irregularity once confirmed.

c) In the event that a complainant does not agree with the EC's decision, they can appeal to the High Court in the form of a petition, supported by affidavits of evidence specifying the declaration that the High Court is being requested to make.

#### **4.8. How will the 2021 general elections be different from the previous elections (are there any new reforms to election delivery and management?)**

##### **a) Use of technology in elections in the 2020/2021 General Elections**

As highlighted above, there are new legal provisions mandating the Electoral Commission to use technology in the 2020/2021 general elections. The EC will deploy technology as follows;

- Display of the register; the nominal roll shall be displayed electronically accessible via computer through the Electoral Commission website.
- Identification of voters on polling day; the Electoral Commission shall use the Biometric Voter System to identify voters during polling.
- Transmission and Tally of Elections: on polling day, results from the polling station and sub county tally center shall be electronically transferred using the Electronic Results Transfer and Dissemination System (ERTDS).
- Sensitization, Communication, and Voter Education; the Electoral Commission shall conduct voter education using media including social media. In addition, voters are able to access their voter details electronically by sending an SMS/ or via the EC website.

##### **b) Equal Access to State-owned Media by Presidential Candidates.**

The Presidential Elections (Amendment) Act 2020 recasts and expands the provisions of section 24(1) of the Presidential Elections Act No 16/2005 on equal access to State owned media.



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- Defines state owned media as “media houses in which the controlling interest is held by the state;
- Places the obligation on to the Electoral Commission to ensure equal treatment of all presidential candidates on state owned media;
- Mandates state owned media to notify all presidential candidates of available times, broadcasts schedules and costs;
- Creates sanctions for contravention in terms of fines to the state owned media houses and fines and/or imprisonment for persons in charge of state owned media houses

**c) Campaign Rallies in Presidential Elections to be Conducted Between 7am – 6pm**

The Presidential Elections (Amendment) Act 2020 amends the provisions of section 21 of the Presidential Elections Act No 16/2005 by stipulating time for holding of campaigns in presidential elections, as between 7 a.m. and 6 p.m. (s. 21(1a)). As a result, it prescribes sanctions for contravention in terms of fine not exceeding UGX: 960,000 and/or imprisonment for not more than 2 years (s. 21(1b)).

This provision may however not apply due to guidelines issues by the EC stipulating that political campaigns shall on be done through media and not political gatherings. This is intended to adhere to the guidelines issues by the Ministry of Health to combat the spread of Covid-19.

**d) Elections of Members of Parliament to be Conducted only during the General Elections**

The Parliamentary Elections (Amendment) Act 2020 amends the provisions of section 8(5) of the Parliamentary Elections Act No 17/2005 by requiring the filling of elective positions of Members of Parliament in respect of newly created districts or constituencies to be deferred until the next general parliamentary elections. The amendment means that the Electoral Commission only holds elections for the representatives of new districts or constituencies at the next general election, rather than schedule



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elections during the midst of an election cycle whenever a new district or constituency is created.

**e) Polling and Polling Procedures**

The Parliamentary Elections (Amendment) Act 2020 and the Presidential Elections (Amendment) Act 2020 amended sections 30(8) and 31(8) of the 2005 Acts respectively, in requiring that the opening of polling procedure be carried out in the full view of at least ten voters who are registered to vote at the polling station rather than, as it was previously required in the full view of only 5 voters present.

**f) Public Officers Banned from Political Campaigns**

The Parliamentary Elections (Amendment) Act 2020 and the Presidential Elections (Amendment) Act 2020 introduce new sections 83A and 79A of the 2005 Acts respectively, in banning the involvement of public officers in campaigns making it an offence that is punishable by a fine and/or imprisonment.

**4.9. How will Political Campaigns be Conducted ahead of the Elections?**

Following the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic and the measures established to combat its spread, the Electoral Commission, in its revised roadmap to the 2021 elections indicated that political campaigning by the different candidates will be done mainly through the media, especially radio stations, television stations and online platforms.

**4.10. How will media be used as a platform for political campaigns?**

The Media is required to;

- a) Provide fair, accurate and comprehensive election related news and information to enable citizens to make informed political decisions;
- b) Provide a balanced and adequate opportunity for citizens, candidates, and political parties to express divergent political views;
- c) Reports accurately about the voting process and the results; and
- d) Reports accurately and fairly the immediate aftermath of the elections.

The Electoral Commission issued the following guidelines in respect to the use of media for political campaigns;





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- All candidates/political parties shall conduct their media engagements in accordance with the programs submitted to the respective returning offices and harmonised by the respective media houses.
- The Commission shall, through the Uganda Communications Commission require all media houses (privately owned) to make public their rate cards, availability of time, the broadcast schedule and cost of presenting their programs and allocate time to candidates.
- Candidates and their agents are encouraged to use other non-contact means of communication, that is, broadcasting, publishing, cell and web-based platforms, to interact with the electorate during the campaigns.
- During the campaigns, candidates may use the Community Based Public Address Systems (Kizindaalo) and a program for usage should be communicated by the candidates /agents to the respective returning officer.
- The Electoral Commission shall ensure that all presidential candidates are given 'equal treatment on state-owned media to present their programs to the people in accordance with section 24 (1) of the Presidential Elections Act
- A State-owned media shall, within 14 (fourteen) days after nomination day, notify in writing, all presidential candidates of the availability of time, the broadcasting schedule and cost of presenting their programs and shall allocate time to the candidates in accordance with section 24 (1a) of the Presidential Elections Act.

4.1.1 How will political candidates finance their campaigns and what are the rules on campaign financing?

Political parties represented in Parliament receive annual funding to the tune of UGX 10 billion (USD 2.7m). This funding is administered by the EC and apportioned based on proportional representation.

During the general elections, the EC is required under the Presidential Elections Act (2005) to provide presidential candidates Security by way of personnel and lead vehicle throughout the campaign period.




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### Rules of Campaign Financing

- The Political Parties and Organisations Act (2005) restricts contributions from foreign sources to UGX: 400m (USD 100,108), but provides no restrictions on funding from Ugandan citizens, NGOs, businesses, and other private entities;
- Under the Political Parties and Organizations Act (2005), political parties are required to keep records of donations, contributions, and property;
- Funding by foreign and terrorist organizations is clearly forbidden; however, there is no legislation in Uganda to control the private funding of parties.



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