



UGANDA

Capital
(and largest city) Kampala, 0°19'N 32°35'E

Official languages English, Swahili

Government **Democratic Republic**
– President Yoweri Museveni
– Vice President Gilbert Bukenya Balibaseka
– Prime Minister Apolo Nsibambi

Independence from the United Kingdom
– Republic 9 October, 1962
– Current constitution 1995

Political Parties (election results 2006)

Governing Party
National Resistance Movement (NRM) 212 seats
Opposition Parties
Forum for Democratic Change (FDC) 37
Uganda People's Congress (UPC) 9
Democratic Party (DP) 8
Conservative Party (CP) 1
Justice Forum (JEEMA) 1
Independents 40
Vacant 1

Total: 332*
Total votes (2006): 7,230,456
Registered voters (2006): 10,450,788

*When fully constituted the Parliament of Uganda consists of 332 members, 215 of whom are directly elected. The remainder represent special interest groups including the army (10 seats), women (79 seats), youth (5 seats), workers (5 seats) and the disabled (5 seats) and are elected by Electoral Colleges. There are also 13 ex-officio members.

State of Democracy Uganda

Uganda has gone through severe political turmoil: since Independence, it has witnessed five military coups. The July 2005 Referendum and the first multi-party elections in twenty years held in February 2006 clearly marked the opening up of the political space for competitive party politics in Uganda. Although new actors have been brought into the political arena with the introduction of multiparty politics, the playing field remains uneven.

Constitutional/Electoral Situation

Uganda has a presidential system with a 'first past the post' electoral system for parliamentary elections. The ruling National Resistance Movement (NRM) dominates parliament with 212 out of the 332 seats. For presidential elections, a majority system exists in which the winner must receive 50% plus one of valid votes cast. The two-term presidential limit was lifted in 2005, to allow a President to stand any number of times.

Overview of political parties

Six of Uganda's thirty six registered political parties are represented in Parliament. The ruling National Resistance Movement (NRM) has been in power for some 24 years now. The main opposition party, the Forum for Democratic Change (FDC), is an alliance of parties that have broken off from the NRM and is a new entrant in Ugandan politics. Older parties, including the Uganda People's Congress (UPC), the Conservative Party (CP) and the Democratic Party (DP), have fewer seats in parliament but remain important players in Ugandan politics.

2011 elections

With all political parties jostling for a position of advantage under the new political dispensation amid fears of a repeat of the September 2009 riots, the stakes for the next Presidential and Parliamentary elections in Uganda are high. It remains to be seen whether the political parties can put behind them Uganda's (and the region's) history of ethnically-fuelled violence. Significant obstacles to peaceful elections include the question of the composition of the country's Electoral Commission. It will be important to make meaningful political and electoral reforms in order to create a more level playing field.

Interparty Cooperation (IPC)

An important development has been the formation of the Inter Party Cooperation (IPC) an opposition alliance consisting of CP, FDC, Justice Forum (JEEMA), and UPC. The IPC intends to field joint candidates in the 2011 election, including a joint presidential candidate. Each member party will elect its own candidate and these candidates will then vie for the IPC nomination for the joint presidential candidate.

Interparty Organisation for Dialogue

The NIMD-facilitated Interparty Organisation for Dialogue (IPOD) provides a neutral platform through which Uganda's parliamentary parties can gain a better understanding of each other's positions. Under the guidance of IPOD, amendments to the government's 2011 electoral legislation have been presented to the Parliamentary Commission of Legal and Constitutional Affairs.

NIMD Programme Summary

Against the background of a volatile political environment and acknowledging the short timeframe left for realising meaningful action before the next elections, in 2009 NIMD decided to respond positively to requests from both the ruling and opposition parties in Uganda to facilitate an inter-party dialogue process. Since September 2009, NIMD has succeeded in bringing the key political players around the table and helped broker an agreement amongst the parliamentary political parties to formally commit themselves to a structured and continuous dialogue process. This critical first step has laid an important basis for future cooperation around a consensus agenda for (electoral) reforms.

Ghana-Uganda exchange

The Ghana-Uganda exchange, a new initiative, is a true 'south-to-south' peer exchange of politicians between the two countries. Part of the rationale behind the initiative is Ghana's deepening of its democracy through dialogue, and the potential benefits that could accrue to Uganda by learning from this experience. In December 2009 NIMD facilitated a visit by Ghanaian politicians to Uganda. This visit was a follow-up to the exchange visit by a delegation of Ugandan political parties to Ghana in October 2009.

MoU signing

On 5 February 2010, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on interparty dialogue was signed by the Secretaries General of the six Ugandan parliamentary political parties at a public ceremony attended by high level representatives of political parties and witnessed by members of the international diplomatic community, the media, religious leaders, and representatives of civil society. This signing brought into existence the Inter-Party Organisation for Dialogue (IPOD), the organisation that will provide the secretariat for the dialogue: it is the equivalent to the interparty dialogue platforms in some of the other countries in which NIMD has a presence.

Inter-party dialogue

Consequent to the signing of the MoU, a dialogue around the issues identified by the parties kicked off. Since Uganda holds a general election in March 2011, the parties jointly decided to prioritise election-related issues. In particular, the dialogue focused on the five electoral amendment Bills before Parliament: the Parliamentary Elections (Amendment) Bill, 2009; the Presidential Elections (Amendment) Bill, 2009; the Electoral Commission (Amendment) Bill, 2009; and the Political Parties and Organizations (Amendment) Bill, 2009 and the Local Governments (Amendment) Bill 2009. Weeks of deliberations on issues that were often highly contested finally resulted in a joint IPOD position on these Bills that was supported by all six parties that are members of IPOD. On Tuesday 9 March 2010, the IPOD amendment Bills were presented to the Parliamentary Committee on Legal and Parliamentary Affairs.



With the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding on 5 February 2010, political parties in Uganda agreed to a dialogue with a view to contributing to free and fair elections in 2011, as well as long-term democratic reforms. The agreement, which was facilitated by NIMD, is considered a breakthrough in Uganda, which for years has been plagued by political conflict. The signing of the MoU set in motion a dialogue around the electoral Bills which culminated in the production of a set of IPOD amendment Bills to the legislation, which was supported by all its political parties.

Stakeholders

1. Country Partner

The NIMD office in Kampala became operational in December 2009. It acts as the temporary secretariat for the Inter-Party Organisation for Dialogue (IPOD) and is currently staffed by NIMD's country representative in Uganda and a finance and administration officer. In the few months since it has opened the office has hosted more than a dozen IPOD meetings.

2. Key national partners

Six parliamentary parties: CP, DP, FDC, JEEMA, NRM and UPC.
Electoral Commission of Uganda (ECU)

3. Key international partners

Royal Netherlands Embassy (RNE)
Deepening Democracy Programme (DDP) and its contributing partners (UK, Denmark, Norway, Ireland, Sweden, Netherlands)

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