

Inter-Religious Council of Uganda
Religions for Peace



CIVIC EDUCATION AND VOTER MOBILIZATION HANDBOOK
FOR
RELIGIOUS LEADERS



**SHARED RESPONSIBILITY FOR PEACEFUL, TRANSPARENT, FREE AND FAIR
GENERAL ELECTIONS**

CIVIC EDUCATION AND VOTER MOBILIZATION HANDBOOK FOR RELIGIOUS
LEADERS



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Abridged Version

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CHAPTER ONE

VALUES ON WHICH UGANDA SHOULD BE GOVERNED

Introduction

Values are important and lasting beliefs or ideals shared by the members of a group, culture, or organization about what is good or bad and desirable or undesirable. Values have a major influence on a person's behavior and attitude and serve as broad guidelines in all situations.

Religious leaders observe that the absence of national values in Uganda has undermined the spirit of nation-building and has compromised the ethos of the management of public affairs in the country. These sentiments were expressed in an Envisioning Project report (2012) of the Inter-Religious Council of Uganda (IRCU). In 2012, the IRCU carried out nationwide consultations to assess the religious leaders' contributions to nation-building in the last 50 years of Uganda's independence. The study analyzed the achievements and challenges, and the role religion would play in addressing issues related to nation-building, namely: peace, social justice, reconciliation, national unity, and stability.

Religious leaders agreed that the country has to rely on the moral and ethical standards set out in the national Constitution and Holy Books (Bible and Quran). They asserted that these values, if adhered to, will reduce the challenges the country is facing and has encountered in the past 50 years.

Love for the country is a key value that should be promoted among Ugandans. When one loves one's country, patriotism comes naturally, and laws and regulations are practiced. In this scenario, resources are used wisely and citizens are able to live in unity while promoting the unique aspects of their cultures and diversities.

The value of sharing is considered important for it reduces greed and theft of public resources. There is a need to share the resources of the country more equitably for the benefit of all citizens.

Adherence to teachings of honesty and speaking out against illegal practices from an informed perspective will improve management of public resources and improve service delivery.

Fairness, equality, and equity in appointments to public offices will ensure that persons hold offices on merit and perform according to the expectations of their employers and the citizens of Uganda.

Upholding the principles of good governance, including respect for human rights and freedoms, transparency and accountability in the use of public funds, and respect for the rule of law, will steer the country in the right direction.

Unity among Ugandans and respect for diversity will be crucial in promoting the aspirations of the citizens. That will mean addressing some of the issues that have caused disunity, including unfairness in the distribution of national resources and nepotism.

Respect among various organs of government and between other institutions and the Government in their functions will enhance their roles and strengthen their performance. Moreover, at the individual level, respect is equally important to promote interpersonal relations.

Gender equality and sensitivity will determine the contribution of both men and women in national development. In this regard, efforts are needed to ensure that opportunities to access education, employment, and equal pay for similar work play key roles in promoting the rights of women and men and their participation in the development process.

Promotion of peaceful co-existence among Ugandans will also be a key value in steering Uganda in a direction of stability at all levels, leaving more time to concentrate on development.

Non-discrimination as enshrined in the Constitution is also a key value as Uganda seeks to improve its governance. This will entail treating one another with respect, looking at one another as Ugandans first, and seeking to promote the common good for all citizens.

*The Uganda
we Want*

As these values are promoted, the fear of God and upholding moral principles will be central in order to steer Uganda in the right direction in the next 50 years.

The use of dialogue to prevent and resolve conflicts and promote reconciliation in the private and public spheres will enable citizens and leaders to concentrate on nation-building rather than wasting resources on conflict resolution through bloody and destructive wars.

CHAPTER TWO

DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF RELIGIOUS LEADERS IN THE ELECTORAL PROCESS

Introduction

The electoral process belongs to the people of Uganda. The purpose of elections is to enable the people to express their wish and power to govern themselves and live in peace and freedom as provided for under Article 1 of the Constitution: *“All power belongs to the people who shall exercise their sovereignty in accordance with the Constitution.”*

Religious leaders should, therefore, play an active role in ensuring that elections are conducted in a peaceful, free, and fair environment and that the outcomes reflect the wishes of the people. In addition, it is their duty to see to it that the people who stand in elections present manifestos that truly reflect the needs and aspirations of the people whose votes they seek. They should encourage people to elect only good leaders.

What are the Roles, Duties and Responsibilities of Religious Leaders?

The role of religious leaders in the electoral process is supported by their divine mandate to be the voice of God among His people. They have the responsibility to protect the rights of and be the voice for the vulnerable, such as the poor, the oppressed, women, children, the sick, and the dejected (Luke 4:18-19; Surah 42: Ash-Shura: 212; Surah 2: Al-Baqarah: 256, 282).

In other words, religious leaders must make sure that the electorate is put at the forefront of the political process. It is against this background that religious leaders should ensure that the electoral process is credible, transparent, democratic, peaceful, free, and fair, and that those who present themselves for election have a clear agenda on how they want to improve the lives of the poor and other vulnerable groups.

Religious leaders must mobilize the people to elect leaders with good qualities and to participate in the affairs of their communities. They should be helped to know that leaders alone cannot develop or address all their needs. Leaders can succeed only when the people cooperate with them to develop their communities. They can do this by participating in consultation meetings organized by their elected leaders and giving their views on how they should be led; paying taxes; participating in community work; and

using such opportunities as NAADS and Prosperity-for-ALL to start income-generating activities.

People should be made to understand that, in order for them to play an active role in development and decision-making, they must elect good leaders. Religious leaders should teach them the qualities of a good leader so that they can elect the right persons to public offices.

What are some of the qualities of a good leader?

There are certain qualities that make a person a good leader and most of these are also highlighted in the Bible and Qur'an (*1 Timothy 3:8-10; Isaiah 44:24, 28; Ezekiel 34:2-4, 10; John 10:11-15; Titus 1:5-8; John 13:1-17; Deuteronomy 1:16- 17; Al-An'am 6:165; Al-Qur'an 2:124*).

A good leader, therefore, is;

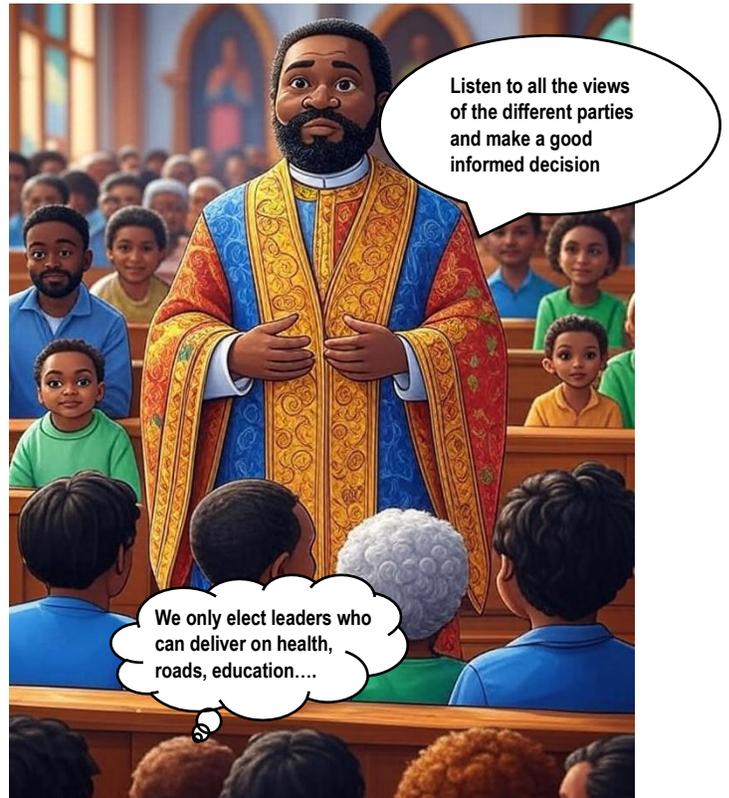
- i. **Accountable:** He/she is open in his dealings and not tainted with corruption or immorality.
- ii. **Responsible:** He/she behaves in a good manner and is capable of taking care of the people and their needs.
- iii. **Consultative:** He/she listens to the voices of the electorate, returns to them in order to get their views, and takes them to relevant authorities such as local council and parliament.
- iv. **Responsive:** He/she is sensitive to the needs and feelings of the people and acts when required to do so to ensure the people live in peace and prosperity.
- v. **Approachable:** He/she does not discriminate people because they are poor or belong to other groups but relates well with all categories of the electorate.
- vi. **Understanding:** He or she listens to the people, their problems, and their joys, and takes appropriate action.
- vii. **Accessible:** He or she does not shy away from meeting the people and makes himself or herself available to the people.
- viii. **Ready to learn from others:** He/she does not impose his ideas on the people, but listens to others and accommodates their good ideas.
- ix. **Respects self and other people:** He/she recognizes that other people are also important and gives them due respect regardless of their economic or social status in society. He/she is always an example for the people to follow.
- x. **Tolerant:** He/ she respects differences, including those of opponents competing for power against him or her. He or she recognizes that every citizen of Uganda

can compete for public office provided that they fulfill the constitutional requirements.

- xi. **Just and fair:** He/she does not discriminate people on religious and tribal lines but serves everyone.
- xii. **Law abiding citizen:** He/she obeys the laws of the land and is not involved in criminal activities.

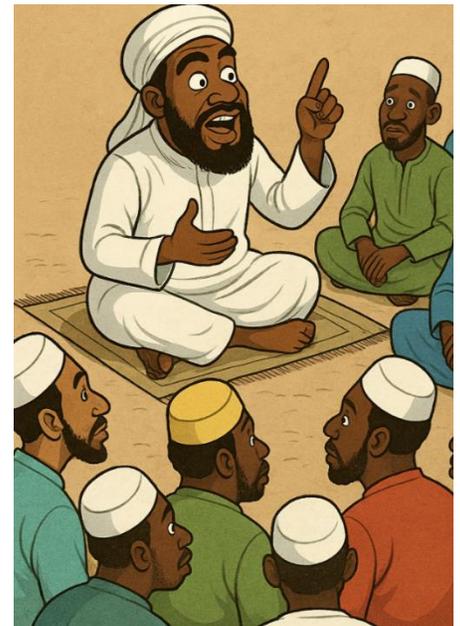
As Uganda prepares for the General Elections in 2026 Religious leaders are particularly expected to;

- i. Remind the people of their responsibility in nation-building and the strengthening of democracy by encouraging active participation in all electoral activities, including voter registration, display of the register, campaigns, and voting.
- ii. Challenge and encourage both candidates and voters to uphold democratic principles and protect the fundamental human rights of all citizens throughout the electoral process. Educate candidates and their supporters to refrain from any form of violence or intimidation against those who do not share their political affiliation.
- iii. Provide impartial and balanced voter education and guidance to all candidates and voters. Religious leaders should remain mindful that their congregations comprise individuals from diverse ethnic and political backgrounds and must, therefore, avoid making statements or engaging in behavior that favors particular candidates. Failure to do so may cause misunderstanding and undermine the credibility of religious leaders among their followers.
- iv. Read, understand, and disseminate the provisions on elections contained in the relevant laws, including the Political Parties and Organizations Act, the Electoral



Commission Act, the Presidential Elections Act, the Local Council Elections Act, and the Parliamentary Elections Act.

- v. Educate citizens on what they should ask and expect from candidates contesting for various positions. Like Moses, they must remind politicians of the moral and social consequences of breaking the covenants they make with the people (*Numbers 30:1-2; Mathew 25:14-30*).
- vi. Encourage citizens to listen to all candidates equally so they can make informed choices. They should elect candidates who are peaceful, possess high integrity, and present clear agendas on key issues such as health, education, and poverty eradication.
- vii. Ensure that both politicians and voters are guided by strong moral standards throughout campaigns and elections. Encourage the public to reject bribery, violence, character assassination, and all forms of unethical behavior. Religious leaders should provide counsel and help mediate or resolve conflicts that may arise between parties or individuals contesting for leadership positions. They should also intervene in disputes with the aim of preventing potential conflicts and must remain impartial to maintain the trust of all parties.
- viii. Educate the public on the dangers of violence before, during, and after elections. Promote tolerance and reconciliation among the supporters of different political parties and candidates.
- ix. Religious leaders should collaborate with Civil Society Organizations, the Uganda Human Rights Commission, and the Electoral Commission to provide civic and voter education to citizens through their established structures and community activities such as funerals, weddings, prayer meetings, and sermons during Jum'a (Friday Islamic prayers), as well as Saturday and Sunday services.
- x. Organize joint prayers for peace and invite people from different faiths and political backgrounds to participate. In particular, design special prayers to be offered during this period as the country prepares for the 2011 General Elections.



- xi. Religious leaders should be well conversant with the constitutional provisions on the rights and duties of citizens in the democratization process. They should remind citizens of these rights and duties as outlined in the National Objectives and Directive Principles of State Policy, particularly under the Political Objectives.
- xii. Organize dialogue meetings for political parties to agree on common standards and principles of conduct during the campaign and election period.

What are some of the Rights, Duties and Responsibilities of the Citizens?

The citizens of Uganda are duty bearers. This is provided for in the Constitution of Uganda 1995 under National Objective XXIX. It states: 'The exercise and enjoyment of rights and freedoms is inseparable from the performance of duties and obligations, and accordingly it shall be the duty of every citizen: -

- a) To be patriotic and loyal to Uganda and to promote its wellbeing;
- b) To contribute to the wellbeing of the community where that citizen lives;
- c) To foster national unity and live in harmony with others;
- d) To promote democracy and rule of law;
- e) To acquaint him/herself with the provisions of the constitution and uphold and defend the constitution and the law.

It is, therefore, the duty of every citizen of Uganda;

- i. to respect the national anthem, flag, coat of arms and currency;
- ii. to respect the rights and freedoms of others;
- iii. to protect and preserve public property;
- iv. to defend Uganda and render national service when necessary;
- v. to cooperate with lawful agencies in the maintenance of law and order; and
- vi. to register and participate in electoral and other lawful exercises.

CHAPTER THREE

MULTIPARTY POLITICAL SYSTEM IN UGANDA

Introduction

The multiparty political system was re-introduced in Uganda in 2005 after a referendum. The people were asked to vote on whether to adopt a multiparty system of governance or retain the movement political system. The outcome was in favor of the multiparty political system. As expected, political competition has increased as various political parties mobilize political support in preparation for elections. Religious leaders should therefore encourage healthy and patriotic competition among the different political parties.

What is Multiparty System of Governance?

A multiparty political system is one in which two or more political parties can exist and compete for political power in accordance with the law. In Uganda, the multiparty political system is provided for in the Constitution, and the Political Parties and Organizations Act, 2005 regulates the functioning of political parties. According to this law:

- i. Citizens may form political parties or freely belong to them;
- ii. Parties shall be formed and freely carry out their activities as stated in the Constitution and the law;
- iii. No one shall be forced to belong to a party;
- iv. No one shall be harassed or discriminated against because he/she belongs to a party or does not belong to a party; and
- v. A citizen cannot belong to more than one party; and
- vi. Members of the armed forces and the police are forbidden from belonging to a political party
- vii. A multiparty system is supposed to accommodate many political parties and ideas that compete against each other for control of political power. The system generally promotes openness and transparency in the management of public affairs.

Political parties have constitutions that govern their objectives and leadership. When one party is in power, the other parties form the opposition; they monitor the ruling party's programs and activities.

Opposition political parties act as 'governments in waiting', always ready to offer themselves to be elected into power through a new election when the period set by the constitution for the ruling party to hold office ends. Sometimes two or more political parties agree to work together by forming a coalition. If they win enough support, then they form a coalition government.



According to the same law, a political party is not allowed to undermine territorial integrity, national unity, and state security; preach discrimination based on tribe, religion, language, or region of origin; or set up military or para-military organizations.

How Do Political Parties Promote Electoral Democracy?

Political parties perform several functions. The most important are:

- i. **Representing interests:** Parties are vehicles through which business, religious, or other groups can present their interests to the government.
- ii. **Political education:** They help in educating the masses on important issues relating to government, such as the performance of government and its policies. As we approach the campaign period, it is important for citizens to attend campaign meetings, listen to radio and TV shows in which candidates discuss their manifestos, and read newspapers relating to issues the parties are emphasizing to convince the people to vote for them. This will enable them to make informed choices during actual voting.
- iii. **Means of forming and changing government:** In a society where public affairs are responsive to the will of the people, government is formed and changed through the competition of political parties.
- iv. **Leadership recruitment:** Parties also play an important role in recruiting leaders from local communities through their primary elections and elevating these leaders to national leadership.
- v. **Policy formulation and implementation:** In their competition for power, political parties influence governance to formulate and implement policies and programmes on various issues affecting society, for example, poverty, corruption, and inadequate or poor services.

- vi. **Watch-dog role:** After elections, opposition parties act as watch-dog in the implementation of policies by exposing wrongdoing and/or inadequacies within the ruling party and proposing acceptable alternatives.

Challenges facing the multiparty system in Uganda

- i. **Not issue-based:** Many people do not support political parties on the basis of issues or policies which these parties stand for. Instead, people look at personalities heading them or their religion and ethnic group. Some also support a party because of financial benefit.
- ii. **Lack of a culture of political tolerance:** Individuals and groups are intolerant of people with different political views. They persecute them because they are different. This is illegal and can be punished under the current laws governing political party activities and the penal code.
- iii. **Patronage and personality:** Party politics is still largely organized around patronage and personality lines. People expect to be rewarded with different favors for supporting parties. This weakens opposition by people and parties competing for political power.
- iv. **Lack of internal democracy:** Many political parties lack internal democracy. They are characterized by irregular meetings, limited transparency in elections of party leadership both at local and national levels, lack of openness in the conduct of party affairs, especially in matters of finance, and they tend to be personalized by their founders and those who finance their activities.

How Can We Build Sustainable Multiparty System in Uganda?

- i) Respect for diversity: Even though we have a lot in common as humans, we have different cultures, interests, views and different ways of looking at things. Once this principle is recognized, it will be the beginning of a durable multiparty system in Uganda (*Romans 12:16, 14:19; John 17:11; 1 Cor 12:1-31; Quran 49:13*).
- ii) Culture of political co-existence: People should be willing to allow others to think, speak and act in ways they may not agree with since it is difficult for all human beings to act and think alike (*Quran 2:256; 1 Corinthians 12:12, 20; 12:4, 7- 11*).

iii) Inculcate a culture of respecting election results: All players in elections must always open themselves to accepting election outcomes or challenge the outcome through legal means and not violence.

iv) Political parties should not divide people on gender, religious or tribal grounds: They should instead offer a wider opportunity for debate and negotiations, which is a very important aspect of a democratic society.



CHAPTER FOUR

ELECTIONS IN A MULTIPARTY SYSTEM

Introduction

Abraham Lincoln defined democracy as a government of the people, by the people and for the people. It can also be defined as a government by the people in which the supreme power is vested in the people and exercised through leaders under a free and fair electoral system. In other words, democracy is a rule by the people.

According to Article 1, All power and authority of government and its organs come from this constitution, which in turn comes from the people of Uganda and the people shall be governed through their will and consent. The will of the people as provided for under this Article is supported by several verses in the Bible and Quran (Deuteronomy 1:9-15; Acts 6:1-7).

Elections in a Multiparty System One of the most essential values of democratic governance is organizing regular, free and fair elections for all eligible voters. Elections provide a clear and direct form of democracy where people express their power and wishes as granted under Article 1 of the Constitution. Elections provide the opportunity for people to peacefully change or renew the power granted to their leaders.

Article 29 of the 1995 Constitution provides that a citizen has freedom to be a candidate in elections to any political office in Uganda. The candidate must, however, meet the requirements of the law concerning each election. In an ideal situation, elections are meant to help people identify and vote for those who can help them meet their aspirations.

The Constitution also provides a framework for governance of the country. It prescribes rights, duties and responsibilities that apply to both the government and the citizens. It sets the basic procedures by which public affairs and elections should be managed.

Other laws governing elections in Uganda are the Political Parties and Organizations Act 2005 (as amended), the Presidential Elections Act 2005 amended), the Parliamentary Elections Act 2005 (as amended), the Electoral Commission Act, and the Local Governments Act Cap 243.

What are the benefits of elections in a Multiparty System?

i. It promotes fundamental freedoms:

A multiparty system enables people to enjoy all the fundamental freedoms throughout the electoral process without being worried about or stopped by others. People should, however, not abuse this freedom by violating the rights of other people by engaging in violent and other anti-social behavior.

People have to make sure that what they are doing doesn't harm or limit the freedom of others. For example, the Constitution provides for freedom of assembly and association, for instance, the right to join and belong to any political party. This freedom, however, does not mean that one can mistreat those who belong to other political parties.

The freedoms of conscience, expression, movement, assembly, and association are clearly enshrined in Article 29 of the Constitution of the Republic of Uganda, which states:

“Every person shall have the right to; freedom of speech and expression which shall include the freedom of the press and other media; freedom of thought, conscience and belief...; freedom to practice any religion...; freedom to assemble and to demonstrate together with others peacefully and unarmed and to petition...; freedom of association which shall include the freedom to form or join associations or unions, including trade unions and political and other civic organizations...”

Religious leaders should, therefore, ensure that these rights and freedoms are upheld and respected before, during and after elections. There should be no undue restriction on these rights and freedoms for both the candidates and the voters.

ii. Multiparty Elections Promote Accountability:

National Objective 11 (1) provides that: The state shall be based on democratic principles which empower and encourage the active participation of all citizens at all levels in their governance. This, therefore, requires that citizens at all levels be accountable to the electorate. The holy books reiterate the principle of accountability (Numbers 30:1-2; Acts 5:1-10).

Democratic elections allow people to decide who they want to lead them. Through elections, they are able to make decisions that reflect their aspirations freely and fairly, what they aim at in life, and their will. If leaders are elected freely and fairly, the people

who elected them can request information on how they are running the offices they occupy.

Access to information is a fundamental human right provided for under Article 41 of the Constitution and the Access to Information Act of 2005. Therefore, if elected leaders are not effective, then the people who elected them can vote them out. This is further supported by Directive Principle No. XXI of the Constitution, which states: All persons in positions of leadership and responsibility shall, in their work, be answerable to the people who elected them into office.

iii. **Democratic elections promote equality:**

In a democracy, everyone is equal before the law. Article 21(1) of the Constitution states: All persons are equal before and under the law in all spheres of political, economic, social, and cultural life and in every other respect. This provision explains why in all democratic elections there must be one vote for every person who is a Ugandan citizen by birth. Every person who is a Ugandan citizen by birth is free to contest for any elective position after fulfilling the requirements.

iv. **Multiparty elections promote peace and political stability:**

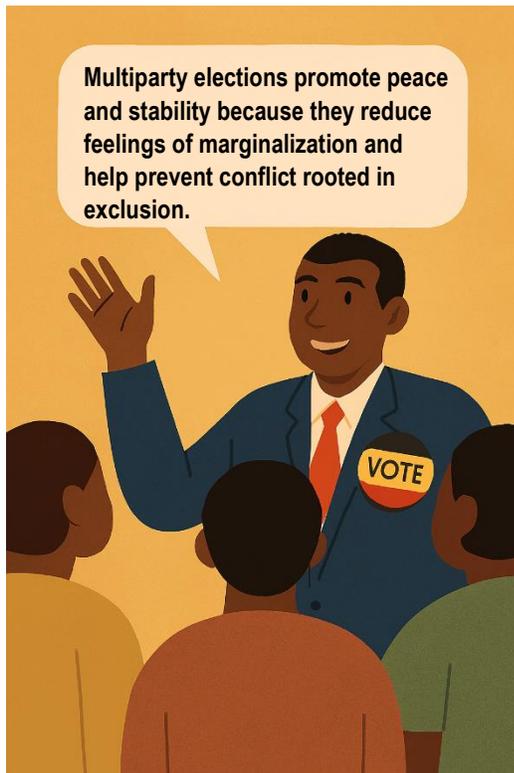
Democratic elections provide us with clear procedures to be followed in changing from one government to another or from one form of governance to another. The Constitution of Uganda provides that government can only be changed through legal and peaceful means, namely, elections. Under Article 3 of the 1995 Constitution, it is prohibited for any person or group of persons to take or retain control of the Government of Uganda, except in accordance with the provisions of the Constitution.

Therefore, in the interest of peace and stability, every Ugandan should peacefully participate in the forthcoming general elections. Article 3 also provides for mechanisms of resolving conflict, namely through negotiation, compromise, and dialogue. This requires that the candidates and the people are open to each other and to public scrutiny (*Deut 1:16; 16:1820; Lev 19:15; Quran 4:135*).

v. **Multiparty elections promote good governance:**

The practice of good governance in a multiparty system ensures that people elect those people they feel will best represent their interests.

Good governance requires tolerating different views, listening to and considering the interests of all groups within the state. This promotes conditions for living together with common purpose in the same society, even when people may be having other differences.



Good governance provides a platform for changing leaders through free and fair elections that enable people to elect good representatives from a variety of political parties and remove those who do not perform in line with people's wishes. In other words, leaders do not impose their decisions on the people.

During the forthcoming multiparty elections, it is important that religious leaders guide the people to choose good leaders to represent their interests. For example, if a leader is known to be corrupt, citizens must know that they have the power not to re-elect such a person to manage their affairs.

What are some of the Conditions for Free and Fair Elections?

- i. A timely enactment of the law to guide the preparation and conduct of the elections.
- ii. Impartial Electoral Commission that is constituted in a representative and transparent manner enables all the voters to register.
- iii. A system which makes it possible for a register to be updated in an open and transparent manner in order to remove names of people who should not be on it, and include names of new eligible voters.
- iv. Existence of free and fair campaigns in which election candidates, parties and voters are not intimidated, threatened or bribed.
- v. Competing parties and candidates have equal opportunity to be heard. All candidates and parties have equal access to timely, relevant and vital information through the media such as radio, newspapers, TV and posters.
- vi. Campaigns focus on political and socio-economic issues rather than personalities, and their ethnic and religious affiliation.

- vii. Contestants conduct their campaigns in accordance with a commonly agreed code of conduct.
- viii. Voting and counting of votes are done in a transparent manner that enables all voters to participate and provide for accurate counting and free announcement of results.
- ix. xi. Timely mobilization of financial and other resources to avoid last minute crises in planning and organizing the elections.

General Elections

Article 69(2) of the Constitution of Uganda provides that the political systems in Uganda shall be the Movement or multiparty system or any other democratic and representative system. Under Article 69(1), the people of Uganda have a right to choose a political system of their choice through free and fair elections or referendum.

According to the 2005 Referendum, the people of Uganda opted for the multiparty system of governance. The electoral process is governed by the Constitution of Uganda and other laws enacted for the purpose of guiding the elections in question. The law provides for the presidential elections to be held on a separate date from parliamentary and local government elections. Voting is a civic duty and the right to vote is provided under Article 59 of the Constitution of Uganda.

Only Ugandans who are above 18 years and are registered by the Electoral Commission for this purpose will have the right to vote.

The electoral process involves registration, nomination of candidates, campaigns, voting, vote counting, and announcement of results. All the stages in the process are important in contributing to free and fair elections.

Who is Responsible for Organizing and Managing Elections?

The Electoral Commission is the constitutional body with authority under the law to conduct national elections. The Commission draws its power from the 1995 Constitution (Art. 61) which spells out its responsibilities. Key among these responsibilities is to organize and conduct presidential, parliamentary and local government elections and be responsible for all matters relating to the conduct of such elections. It also has to maintain the voter register.

Who is a registered voter?

Article 17(1) of the 1995 Constitution of Uganda provides that it is the duty of every citizen of Uganda to register for electoral and other lawful purposes. A registered voter, therefore, is any person who is a citizen of Uganda, 18 years of age and above and his/her name appears on the voter roll.

Voting in elections

Citizens have the right to vote in elections if they satisfy the following conditions: i. Be a Ugandan by birth or naturalization; ii. At least 18 years and above; iii. Have registered and their names appear on the voters' register; and iv. Have a voter's card.

Why is a voter's card necessary?

The voter's card is important because it proves that one is a registered voter. It serves to identify someone as a voter. As such, the card must be kept in a safe place, and if it is lost the Electoral Commission should be informed in time.

In the Presidential, Parliamentary and Local Council Elections, a photographic voters' register will be used. Those found with cards that do not belong to them (as each card bears the photograph of the voter) can be arrested and tried in courts of law for committing an electoral offence.

Who can take part in the campaigns?

Candidates or their agents may hold campaign rallies for the purpose of convincing voters to vote for their respective parties or organizations or themselves in the case of independent candidates.

How can the campaigns and elections be peaceful, free and fair?

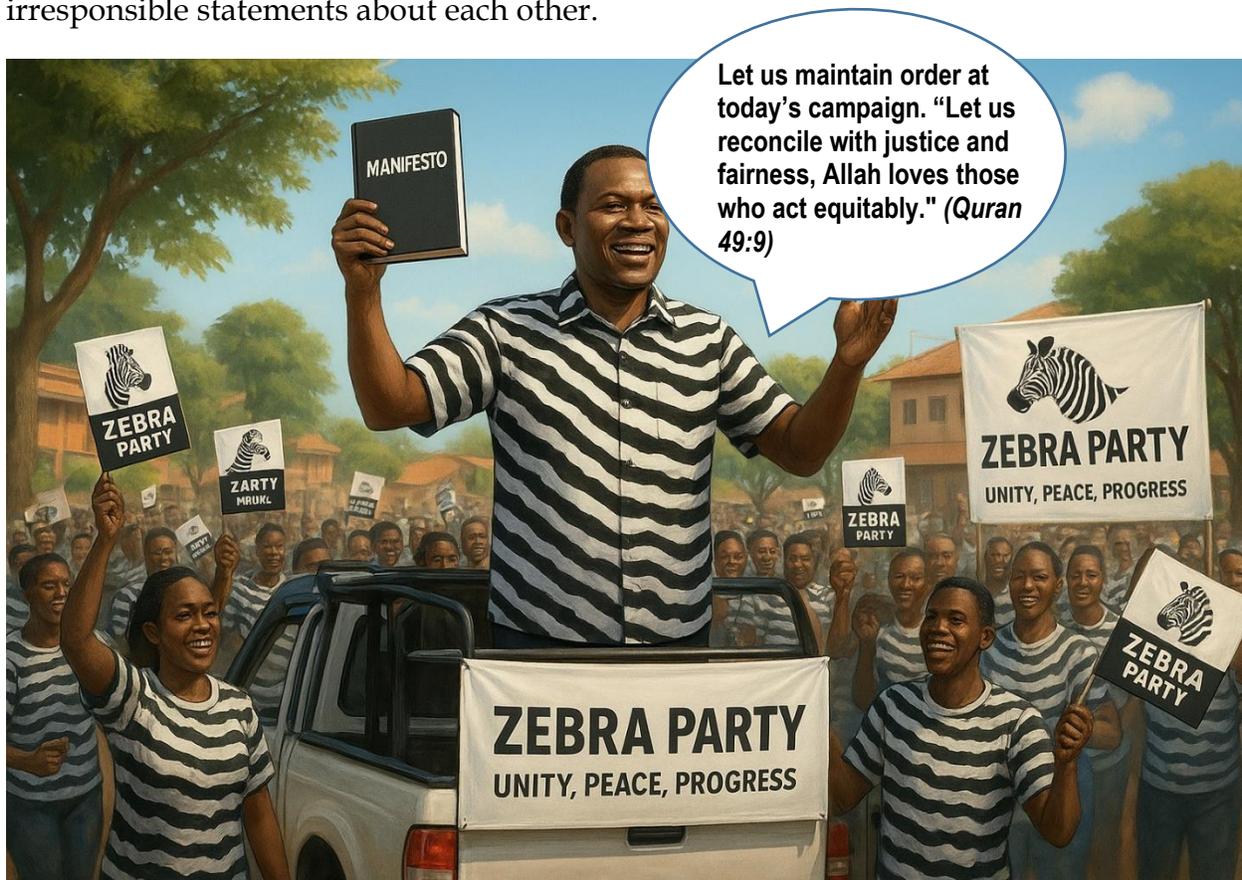
i. **Obey the law:** The Electoral Commission has personnel in all the districts to supervise the electoral process including the campaigns, and ensure that all candidates, their agents and supporters respect the law.

The electoral laws provide penalties for any illegal practices that may be committed during the campaigns and elections in order to ensure that they are free and fair, for example, vote buying, causing violence, and voting more than once.

ii. Observing elections: Local and international observers accredited by the Electoral Commission usually observe the elections, including the campaigns, and report any anomalies to the Electoral Commission, police and other relevant government authorities.

It is the duty of every citizen to observe the electoral laws and report any law breakers to the police or Electoral Commission. In exercising these rights and duties, citizens contribute to the holding of free and fair campaigns and elections.

iii. No incitement: Campaigns must not be used to incite the public to cause disorder. The citizens have a role to play by not allowing the contestants to make false or irresponsible statements about each other.



Those who are found guilty of electoral offences are punished in accordance with the law. Punishment is usually in form of a fine or imprisonment or both.

iv. Access to state-owned media: The candidates have a right to equal access to state-owned media in order to enable them present their programmes to the people. This means that the Uganda Broadcasting Corporation (radio and television), Bukedde TV, and the New Vision, Bukedde and other Newspapers which are state-owned should

provide airtime and space, respectively, to allow the candidates convince the people to vote for them and their parties/ organizations.

How does a voter decide which party or candidate to support?

Civic education provides non-partisan information to give the people a better understanding of the elections. Radio and TV programmes are aired to inform the voters about the elections. The people can attend campaign meetings of different candidates in order to listen to their manifestos before they can decide which side to support.

However, sometimes some people vote for certain candidates simply because the candidate or agent offered them free soap or salt. This is a crime punishable under the electoral laws. Besides, if such a candidate wins, he/she will do everything he/she can to recover the expenses he/she incurred while running for office, at the expense of development programmes he/she could have promised to initiate.

Voting

It is only the Electoral Commission which is mandated by Voters should be aware of small gifts that candidates might offer as these could the constitution to announce and gazette days for voting. Voting is carried out on the basis of one person one vote, and is done through secret ballot for leaders at all levels.



The law provides that polling stations should be in the open or places that are easily accessible.

What are some of the offences or illegal practices during elections?

- i. Defacing posters of candidates;
- ii. Use of government resources for campaign;
- iii. Interfering with the election activities of other persons e.g. compelling a candidate to withdraw his/her candidature;
- iv. Threatening a candidate or voter
- v. Using undue means to gain unfair advantage over another candidate;
- vi. Promoting hate campaign on tribal, religious and other grounds;
- vii. Impersonating a voter;
- viii. Obstructing a candidate from reaching the nomination centre;
- ix. Procuring prohibited persons to votes such as non-citizens and people who are below 18 years of age;

- x. Publication of false statements as to illness, death or withdrawal of a candidate; and Bribery and undue influence by candidates or voters.
- xi. Voting or attempting to vote more than once. If found guilty, a voter is punished under the law. The other consequences of voting more than once is that the person disadvantages the candidate because if an election petition is lodged and it is found that the voters cast ballots more than once, the candidate may lose the seat he/she has been elected to.

What is expected of voters and candidates after elections?

The Electoral Commission is supposed to announce election results as soon as possible. It should be noted that it is only the Electoral Commission which has the power under the Constitution to announce results. Any other media can only announce such results as provisional and not final and this should be stated clearly.

The announcement of results means that one person or party will emerge the winner and the other, the loser. It is always important for people who go for elective positions and their candidates to know that there cannot be more than one person for any single post.

*The Uganda
we Want*

The challenge in Uganda has been that winners celebrate and use their means to humiliate the loser. This is not acceptable. Instead they should congratulate them for participating in the campaigns and promise to work with them even if they will be outside the system. The same should apply to losers. Some losers contemplate causing violence if they lose an election. This is wrong because violence only worsens things and leads to loss of lives and property and can derail the young democracy in Uganda.



Religious leaders should, therefore, ensure that they intensify their efforts for elections to ensure that all parties involved in the elections cooperate and unite around the winner to develop their areas and address the needs of the people.

CHAPTER FIVE

PEACE AND TOLERANCE IN A MULTIPARTY POLITICAL SYSTEM

Introduction

Both the Bible and Quran provide the basis of pluralism by presenting humans and society as diverse. Islamic teaching sees the diversity of race, tribe and nation as a deliberate design by God to enrich his creation (*Quran 49:13*). Similarly, the Bible stresses the multiplicity of nations and individuals and provides several guidelines for interactions among them (*Romans 3:22-23, 11:11-12; 1Corinthians 1:10-17*).

One most important and basic attitude for respecting political diversity in our society is tolerance or accommodating one another's differences in order to have a situation where people with different views, beliefs and interests live together peacefully. Religious leaders must help the people to understand this important aspect in order to avoid intolerance and sectarian violence.

Building peace involves creating harmony between and among people or groups with different political, ethnic and religious beliefs. Respecting diversity involves developing a culture of tolerating respecting and accepting one another's opinions and beliefs, and thus agreeing to live together without quarreling or fighting.

Our collective responsibility as Ugandans, therefore, is to ensure that the different ethnic, religious, political, cultural and other groups live together in peace and harmony to promote the common good. Without tolerance, there can be no peace and without peace there can be no development or democracy. For people to live together they must be able to meet and talk over issues and differences that may cause conflict between them.

In order to promote tolerance in society, dialogue must be promoted. Dialogue involves consultations to build agreement on important decisions. A multiparty democracy in Uganda means that there are many political parties and, therefore, competing political ideas. Competing ideas and values can lead to conflict if parties do not tolerate and respect the ideas expressed by others.

In order for multiparty democracy to succeed, we all must be tolerant of views, beliefs, and ideas of others. Those in power must respect the right of those on the opposition to participate in the affairs of government.

In case of any election dispute, we should avoid resorting to violent means, instead, we should seek peaceful means like Courts of law. The Bible is rich in peace and tolerance messages. It prescribes different peaceful ways by which humans should resolve their conflicts. The New Testament is radical in its approach; it disregards violence in any of its forms. In fact, Jesus replaces the Old Testament concept of just war and revenge with love of enemy (*Mathew 5:38-39, 6:12, 5:21-24; Colossians 3:13; Ephesians 4:32; 2 Corinthians 2:6-7, 10*). Similar teaching is found in the Quran where forgiveness and love of enemy is emphasized (*Quran 8:61; 8:1; Al-Furqan 25:72; At-Taghabun 64:14*).

Political tolerance recognizes that minorities are entitled to political rights protected within a democratic society. Although in a democracy the majority rules, the minority must be allowed to organize and speak out. This means that individual citizens and politicians must be tolerant of each other, respect all people and their divergent views. Candidates, voters and government organs such as the Army and Police must be reminded that a free and fair electoral process requires an atmosphere free from intimidation, bribery, violence, coercion or any other act that is intended to subvert the constitutional will of the electorate. Voters should be in position all the time to cast their vote for candidates of their choice without any fear of being victimized for such a lawful action. Supporters of a particular group/or party must not be harassed and intimidated.

How should Religious Leaders Manage Conflicts Before, During and After Elections?

Religious leaders have the duty to promote peace and tolerance during the forthcoming elections. They have a number of options to deal with conflicts that may occur during the electoral process. Although the methods of managing and resolving conflicts always vary from one type of conflict to another, negotiation, arbitration and mediation should be used because they are less costly.

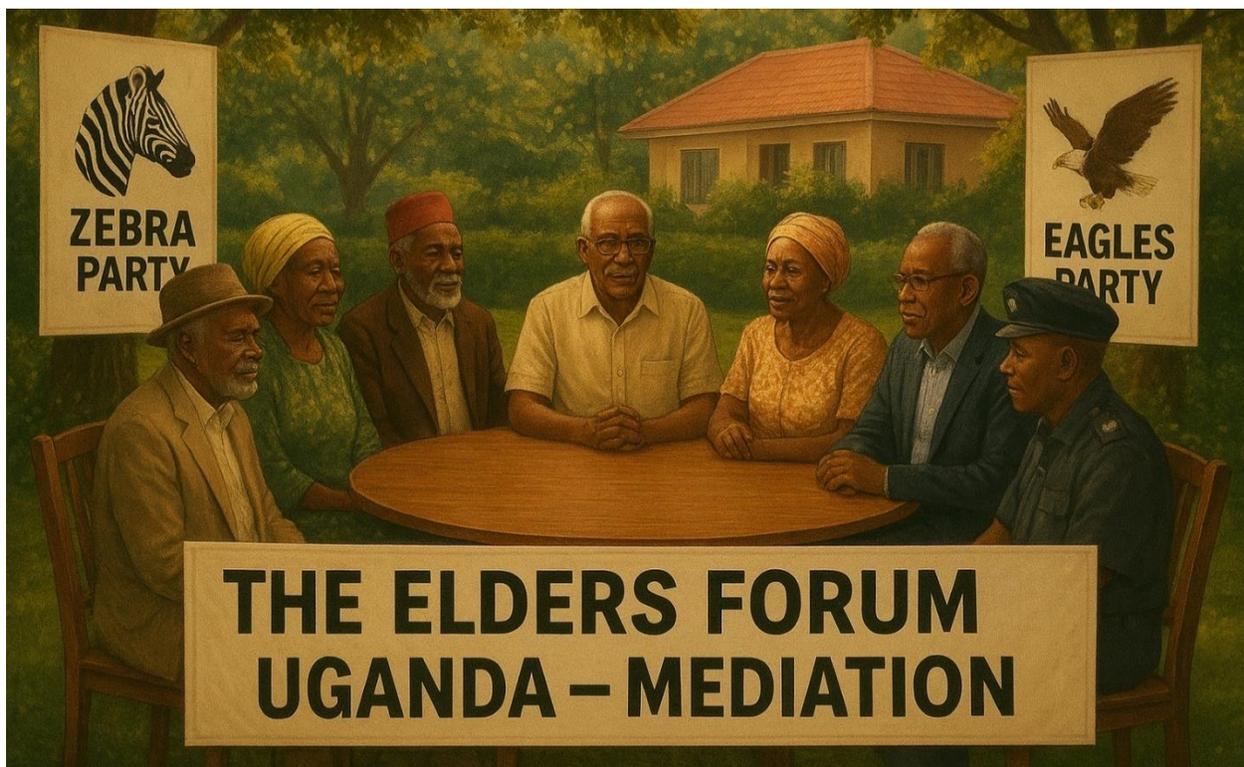
Reconciliation, a product of negotiation and mediation, is another method ensuring that peace between parties that have resolved their conflict is restored. Religious leaders should organize post-election reconciliation prayer meetings and invite all political parties or candidates to participate. They should use such platforms to encourage reconciliation and cooperation between the losers and winners.

Religious leaders should also know that in managing conflicts, they must be impartial in order to command the respect and trust of the conflicting parties. They must ensure that their mediation and reconciliation activities are prepared properly and are preceded by a state of calm where there was violence and building of trust between and among the

conflicting parties. They should use their respected positions to call the parties and urge them to stop violence and reconcile.

Women, Youth, and Elders: Game Changers in the Electoral Processes

Both women and the youth constitute a sizeable portion of Uganda's population. Therefore, the institution of the Women of Faith and Youth Inter-Faith Committees in the IRCU governance structure is a lucid testament to the numerical strength of these two categories. Equally, The Elders Forum Uganda plays a pivotal role in guiding intergenerational dialogue and nurturing a culture of peaceful political engagement. Certainly, there is need for more concerted efforts to empower women, youth, and elders with civic and voter education. This approach is proactive if Uganda is to have peaceful, violence-free elections before, during, and after the electoral seasons. Working through their regional and sub-regional forums, women, youth, and elders should be champions of peace, unity, and national reconciliation. There is no doubt that the involvement of women, youth, and elders is both a moral and political imperative. While, in many cases, women happen to be victims of socio-political violence, the youth on the other hand, tend to be authors of violence as they are prone to manipulations by self-seeking politicians. Elders, through The Elders Forum Uganda, can provide moral authority, mentorship, and mediation that bridge these divides and strengthen social cohesion.



Key Terms and Methods in Peace building

Conflict Prevention: Conflict prevention involves making a deliberate move to prevent or stop a conflict from arising.

Conflict Management: This is a deliberate effort made to stop conflict escalating into violence.

Conflict Resolution: Conflict Resolution is a situation where the conflicting parties enter into an agreement that it is a situation where the conflicting parties enter into an agreement that has made them fail to work or live together, accept each other's continued existence and cease all violent actions against each other.

Negotiation: Negotiation involves face-to-face discussion between parties to a conflict with the view of reconciling issues that cause disagreement between them. It does not involve any third party. Parties to the conflict decide on how best to resolve their differences.

Mediation: It involves the use of a third party (someone or some group that is not part of the conflict) to encourage the parties to end the conflict. The third party may be an individual or individuals such as a religious leader or a cultural leader.

Arbitration: In arbitration, parties to a conflict take their case to an impartial third party, who hears the case and delivers his/her decision. Arbitration mainly involves interests of parties rather than sources of conflict.

Reconciliation: The term 'reconciliation' generally refers to the process of developing mutual and friendly relations between amicable relationship to which may be established after a break in a relationship due to a conflict. Reconciliation is a highly religious concept and practice which is well presented in both the Bible and Quran. It includes reconciliation with oneself, the community, with God and with the entire creation. In both cases, reconciliation presupposes a broken personal relationship between God and man manifested in one's behavior towards other people and creation as a whole.

As a religious leader you are, therefore, expected to involve yourself in promoting peace and reconciliation during this period when Uganda is preparing for elections. You have every opportunity to communicate messages on peace and tolerance to the people through your sermons and other pastoral and spiritual exercises. You must know that our people believe in religious leaders and they throng to churches, mosques and temples

to listen to the word of God through you, the medium. This is a perfect opportunity for you to integrate the word of scripture with what is expected of every leader and citizen in order to build a country pleasing to God because the people live in harmony and are healthy and prosperous.



ANNEXURE

GLOSSARY OF KEY WORDS

Accountability: When a person or a leader is answerable to the people he she leads. It is when leaders allow themselves to be monitored and asked questions about their decisions, promises and actions.

Citizen: Inhabitants of a country recognized by the constitution of that country as citizens.

Civic Education: A form of non-formal and formal education which facilitates the acquisition of knowledge, skills and general awareness which citizens need to play their role effectively in the affairs of their society or country.

Constitution: The Supreme law of the land, with reference to which other laws are made and or/corrected.

Community: A group of people living together and sharing common problems, needs and resources.

Democracy: A system of government in which power belongs to the people. In principle the people may rule directly, but in many cases they rule indirectly through elected representatives.

Diversity: Differences or variety in culture, religion, ethnicity, gender, disability, political beliefs and so on.

Electoral Process: Refers to the different activities done to prepare an election. They include update of voter's register through registration of new voters and elimination of ghost voters, display of register, campaigns and voting.

Manifesto: The policy, proposal or program of a political organization upon which voters decide whether to vote for or against it.

Participation: The process by which community members actively take part in problem identification, planning and decision making, resource mobilization, implementation, as well as monitoring and evaluation of activities that concern and benefit them.

Pluralism: The existence of many different groups in society who maintain their identity but are able to live together in peace and mutual respect.

Political Party: A group of people organized to gain political power and use it to run the government. A political party usually has a written constitution, manifesto and a leader.

Tolerance: The ability to allow or accept something that one does not necessarily agree with. It involves respect for the rights, beliefs and opinions of others.

Voter: A person who is registered to vote in an election.

Voting: The process of choosing leaders or representatives by ballot or other means.

Voter Register: A list of names of people who are eligible to vote in an election.

Voter Turnout: The percentage of eligible voters who actually cast their votes in an election.

Women of Faith: A forum within the Inter Religious Council of Uganda (IRCU) that brings together women leaders of different faiths to address issues affecting women and to promote peace and development.

Youth Inter-Faith Committee: A forum within the IRCU that brings together youth leaders of different faiths to address issues affecting the youth and to promote peace and development.

Peace building: Actions aimed at addressing the root causes of conflict to prevent recurrence.

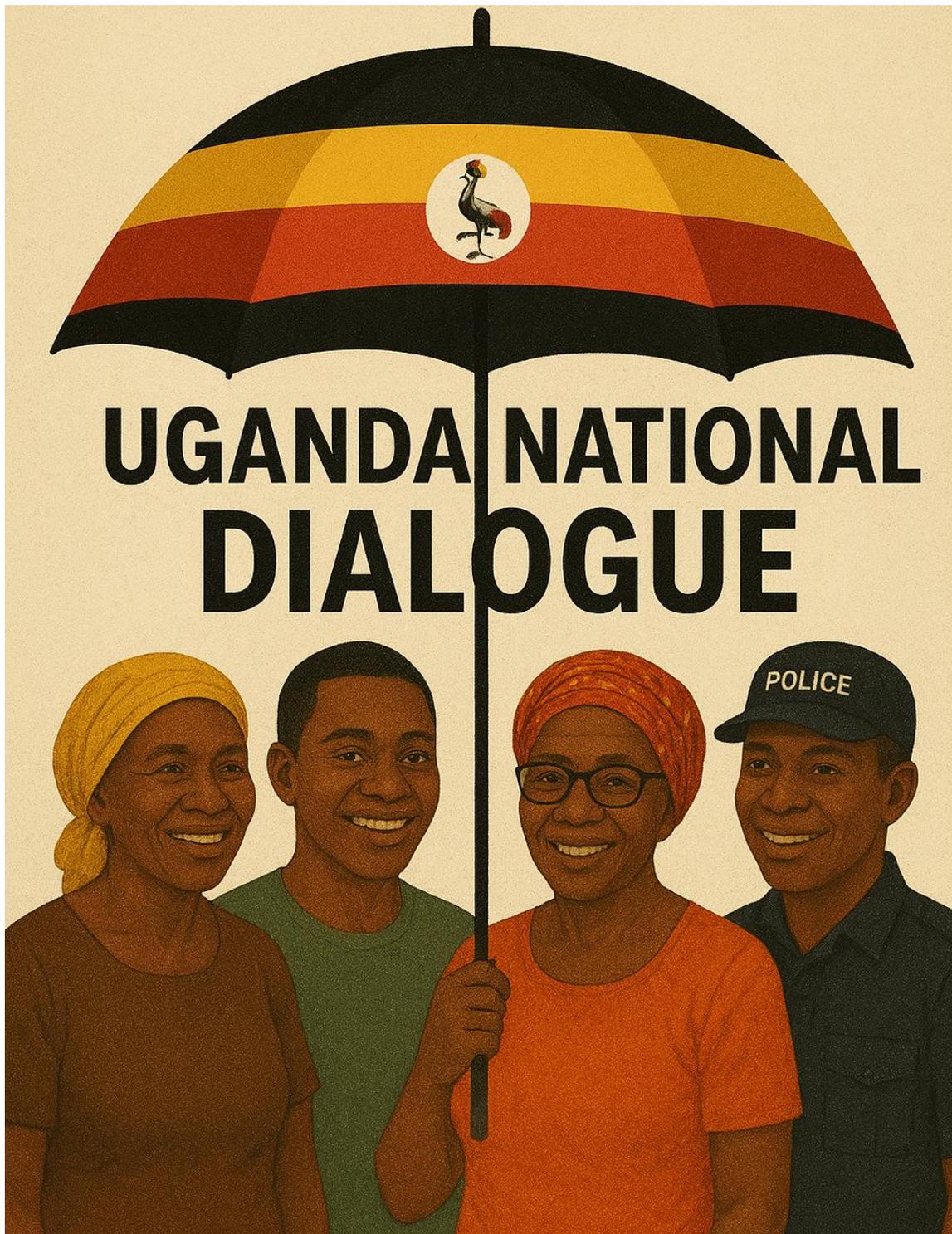
Politics: Activities related to the use and distribution of power within government or social organizations.

Referendum: A direct public vote on a national issue.

Reconciliation: The peaceful resolution of conflict by bringing together opposing individuals or groups.

Values: Ideals and moral principles cherished by individuals or communities.

Tolerance: Accepting and appreciating differences in thought, speech, and behavior among others.





Religious leaders must recognize their responsibility toward the nation. Politics and economics cannot be left solely to the political class, as their outcomes affect the lives of all citizens, including religious leaders themselves. It is therefore incumbent upon spiritual leaders to ensure that political and economic systems serve the broader population rather than a small elite intent on capturing or retaining power.

Leaders and institutions of government must be held accountable for their decisions and actions. Religious leaders, as the moral and prophetic voice of society, have a duty to call out wrongdoing with the aim of correction and the restoration of harmony within the community. They should also empower citizens to demand accountability and quality service from their leaders. By doing so, religious leaders will stand on the right side of history.

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