

CEON-U Update: Preparing for Election Day

February 16, 2016

With Election Day just two days away, the Citizen Election Observers Network Uganda (CEON-U) is prepared to deploy its systematically-trained observers across the country to promote participation, deter fraud and impartially assess the process. CEON-U commends the Electoral Commission and civil society for all they have done to prepare for Election Day. However, CEON-U has also identified several risk factors, including significant increase in voter bribery, which demand attention from all stakeholders as the elections approach.

Reporting Accurate and Impartial Information about Election Day and Post-Election Processes

On Election Day, CEON-U will deploy more than 1250 well-trained, non-partisan citizen observers to all 290 constituencies. CEON-U will employ sample-based and hot spot observation methodologies. Sample-based observation (SBO) is an advanced election observation methodology that draws on proven statistics to allow CEON-U to present an accurate and comprehensive assessment of the Election Day processes.

CEON-U also used data from its long-term observation to identify 10 hot-spot constituencies, where we will deploy more than 200 hot spot observers to help deter fraud and mitigate violence. The constituencies are Rukiga County, Fort Portal Municipality, Bunyole West County, Tororo Municipality, Jinja Municipality West, Lamwo County, Kumi County, Mukono County South, Bwamba County and Vuura in Arua.

CEON-U observers will also immediately report critical incidents about serious problems that may occur. Reports will be processed in real time by a sophisticated database, which will also enable rapid communication with observers to ensure completeness and accuracy of observer reports.

CEON-U will issue statements and evidence-based findings at key points during Election Day and the period immediately following. Below are some of the issues CEON-U aims to report on.

Set-up and Opening

A statement on the opening and set-up of polling stations on Election Day, **February 18, at 11:00am at the National Information Centre in Africana Hotel**. This will include accurate information on the percentage of polling stations that open on time, whether procedures are followed, and whether critical materials are present.

Voting

CEON-U will be observing key aspects of voting will release some of its key findings on the voting process to the media and on social media¹ as the evening of Election Day progresses. This will include nationally representative information on:

- whether voters are checked for indelible ink before voting;
- the functioning and operation of the Biometric Voter Verification System (BVVS);
- presence of unauthorized personnel;

¹ [facebook.com/CEONU](https://www.facebook.com/CEONU), @ceonuganda

- whether secrecy of the vote is ensured; and
- extent of intimidation, harassment or violence.

Overall Election Day Process

CEON-U will issue a preliminary statement on the conduct of the elections at **10:00am on Friday, February 19 at the National Information Centre in Africana Hotel**. This statement will bring together our preliminary findings and conclusions on Election Day conduct. This will include assessing the closing, counting and declaration of results processes, such as the presence of party agents during the counting, whether candidate agents sign off or refuse to sign off on results, as well as the conduct of counting procedures.

Tabulation

CEON-U will issue a statement on the conduct of the tabulation process following the Electoral Commission's official announcement of results. This assessment will draw on reports from CEON-U's tabulation observers at all 112 district tabulation centres. CEON-U will report on the credibility of the tallying process, including whether disruptions, intimidation, or violence occur. CEON-U will not announce any results projections.

CEON-U will also issue a final, comprehensive report in the weeks following Election Day.

Long-term Observation Findings: February 8 - 14

CEON-U has been observing the pre-election period since September 2015, including 223 long-term observers (LTOs) across all 112 districts. In the past week (February 8 – 14), CEON-U's LTOs noted the following issues, which could affect the conduct of Election Day.

Voter information: Voter information activities increased since previous weeks, with 94% of observers reporting voter information campaigns in their constituencies. This increase is encouraging, since it is critical that voters have information about where, when and how to vote, particularly given the introduction of the Biometric Voter Verification System (BVVS).

Voter bribery: As campaigns ramped up this past week, voter bribery also increased. It was reported in 53% of the constituencies observed. This was particularly the case among NRM parliamentary candidate agents, with 48% of observers reporting such activities. Voter bribery was highest in Mid Western (78% reported vote buying) and West Nile (62% reported vote buying) regions.

Security agents: There has been an increase in deployment of security agents in advance of elections, as reported by 28% of observers. However, no intimidation or violence by security agents was reported. We hope this continues through Election Day.

Violence: The campaign environment the past week was mainly peaceful this past week, with only 2% of observers reporting attacks on campaign rallies. However, hate speech based on ethnicity, gender and religion continued to be reported in approximately 10% of constituencies observed.

CEON-U encourages voters to participate and all candidate and parties to behave peacefully.

For more information about CEON-U contact Dr. Martin Mwendha on 0788929052 or email cahimbisibwe@ceonu.or.ug or visit our website at <http://www.ceonu.or.ug>.

CEON – Uganda – Towards 2016: Conducting a Unified, Comprehensive and effective election Observation Mission in Uganda. You can also visit the FHRI offices in Nsambya.