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GUIDELINES FOR COUNTRYWIDE REORGANISATION OF POLLING STATIONS IN PREPARATION FOR THE 2020/2021 GENERAL ELECTIONS

INTRODUCTION

Laws Applicable: -

The Constitution of the Republic of Uganda, 1995
The Electoral Commission Act, (Cap 140) as amended
The Presidential Elections Act, 2005 as amended
The Parliamentary Elections Act, 2005 as amended
The Local Governments Act, 2005 as amended

1.0 Background

The Electoral Commission in accordance with Section 12 (1) (d) of the Electoral Commission Act, (Cap 140), is mandated to establish and operate Polling Stations, for purposes of elections.

Section 33 of the same Act mandates Returning Officers with the approval of the Commission, to establish Polling Stations in each Parish or Ward within their Electoral District. This is further reinforced by Sec 30 (1) of the Presidential Election Act 2005

The Commission is planning to reorganise Polling Stations to enable voters to conveniently cast their votes. The Reorganisation of Polling Stations is based on the following:-

- Every Parish/Ward and Electoral Area must have at least one Polling Station

- The Administrative units especially Parishes/Wards/Electoral Areas at Sub County level need to be captured and aligned with the corresponding Polling Stations.
- Where no Polling Station exists in a newly created Parish/Ward, at least one Polling Station **MUST** be recommended by the Stakeholders in that area with due regard to the convenience of its location.
- Each Polling Station should have voters as close to the optimum number of 900 voters as possible.
- Locations of Polling Stations may need to change due to recent developments since the 2016 General Elections. These developments may be new roads, internal displacement and resettlements, new power stations or where physical development has taken place.

2.0 OBJECTIVES OF REORGANISATION OF POLLING STATIONS

2.1 To ensure that each Parish/Ward and Electoral Area at Sub County level has got at least one Polling Station in accordance with Sec. 33 of the Electoral Commission Act (Cap 140).

Note: The Returning Officer must ensure that each Electoral Area at Sub County level is demarcated and approved by the Commission, each Electoral Area must have at least one Polling Station.

2.2 To ensure that where possible, Polling Stations that have far less than the optimum number of voters are merged, taking into consideration proximity of the Villages, geographical features (highlands, water bodies, Swamps) and distances traveled by voters to the Polling Stations.

2.3 To split Polling Stations with significantly more than the optimum number of voters (higher than 900 voters) into two or more Polling Stations, excluding Kampala and Wakiso (may have an optimum number of 1200).

2.4 To merge Polling Stations previously split on the basis of alphabets such as Namataba A-M and Namataba N-Z and thereafter splitting the merged Polling Station on the basis of Villages provided there are reasonable

numbers of voters to form the new Polling Stations. Suitable venues should be identified in those Villages for the respective Polling Stations.

- 2.5 To re-locate in consultation with residents Polling Stations that are;-
 - 2.5.1 Located in inappropriate/illegal or contestable areas e.g. near bars.
 - 2.5.2 Located in congested Areas like market places.
 - 2.5.3 Clustered in polling centers without adequate space for polling activities.
 - 2.5.4 Inconvenient for the population to cast their votes is; resulting in voters traveling long distances to vote
 - 2.5.5 Where developments have taken place since the last Reorganisation e.g. buildings, roads, Industries, factories and places that are no longer public e.t.c. These Polling Stations will be shifted to any other appropriate and convenient location within the Parish.
- 2.6 To re-name Polling Stations to reflect their physical locations. This is of particular importance where Villages have been split and now have new names.
- 2.7 Harmonisation of Parish and Village names with the corresponding Polling Stations.
- 2.8 To ensure that all the newly-created Villages appear on the Voters Register by populating them with the respective voters.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

3.1 SPLITTING OF POLLING STATIONS

- I. Polling Stations with a voter population of more than 900 voters (or 1,200 in Kampala and Wakiso) shall be split into two or more polling stations.
 - Split the Polling Station according to their Village of residence and proximity to Polling Stations.
 - Consider the convenience of the distances to be traveled by the voters, relocate, rename and create accordingly.

- Ensure that the Polling Station relocated and created, has a clear and appropriate name; depicting the name and location of the Polling Station.

II. Polling Stations clustered into polling centers originally split on the basis of the alphabet shall be rationalized, then split and relocated considering Villages where voters come from, and the optimum number of voters per Polling Station shall apply. This may, or may not warrant creation of an additional Polling Station.

However, if the Polling Stations have more than 900 voters, for example having Polling Stations: Zinga (A-M) with 1,000 voters, Zinga (N-O) with 935 voters and Zinga (P-Z) with 1,050 voters the following should be done:

- Collapse the 3 Polling Stations into 1 so as to determine the total number of voters in that Polling Centre.
- Since all Polling Stations have more than the optimum, divide the total number of voters in the Polling Stations to obtain the number of Polling Stations at that Polling Centre.

If the Polling Centre has more than one Village:

- Rationalize the Polling Stations by Village i.e. Split the Polling Stations according to their Village of residence and proximity to Polling Stations.
- Ensure that the Polling Station relocated and created, has a clear and appropriate name.

3.2 MERGING OF POLLING STATIONS

If a Parish has more than 2 Polling Stations and the total number of Polling Stations for the 2 does not exceed 900 voters, these should be merged. The merger can only be stayed if there are peculiar issues e.g. long distances to be covered by the voters.

3.3 RELOCATION OF A POLLING STATION

- i. Congested polling centers (more than one polling station in one area of insufficient space) should be de-congested and conveniently re-located where possible provided there is enough space for each Polling Station.
- ii. Polling Stations located in contestable areas e.g. near bars and in people's homes, should be re-located and re-named where possible.

Note that; re-location can be done concurrently with merging and splitting of a Polling Station.

3.4 RE-NAMING A POLLING STATION

Renaming a polling station shall be done where:-

- i. Polling Stations whose names have changed due to re-location as in 3.1, 3.2 and 3.3
- ii. Polling Stations that do not portray the area name where they are situated.

3.5 CREATION OF NEW POLLING STATIONS

In case of an Electoral Area or new Parish with no Polling Station, at least one Polling Station shall be established at a suitable location(s), depending on the number of voters in that location, taking into account;

- i. The optimum number of voters
- ii. The need for at least one Polling Station for each Electoral Area for the election of Directly Elected Councilors and/or Women Councilors.

3.6 UPDATING VILLAGES ON THE REGISTER

Provision of correct village aligned using RPS 3 (Register) of each voter on the National Voters Register to ensure that they belong to the right Parishes and are allocated Polling Stations **on the basis of residence as per list of the Villages provided by EC.**

4.0 REORGANISATION MATERIALS

1. A copy of Reorganisation guidelines
2. Form RPS 1 (packing list with location of polling station, new polling stations and GIS)
3. Form RPS 2 (re-locating, renaming, splitting & merging of Polling Stations)
4. Photo bearing National Voters' Register (NVR), as Form RPS 3. This will be required only where it is necessary for splitting of Villages.
5. Form RPS 4 (Returning Officers' Summary Sheet on Reorganisation of Polling Stations).
6. Packing List and Control Form RPS 5 (a checklist to be used for verification of returns during submission at EC Headquarters).
7. A list of Electoral Areas for any newly created Local Government Units effective 2019/2020 which were received by the Electoral Commission by 31st July 2019.
8. A Template of the Attendance List for the persons attending the Reorganisation Meeting and a Template for Minutes of the Meeting.

5.0 PROCEDURE FOR REORGANISATION

The exercise will entail the following activities or actions:

- i. Identification, by the Returning Officer, of Parishes/Wards and Electoral Areas without any Polling Stations.
- ii. Identification, by the Returning Officer, of Polling Stations for splitting, merging, renaming, relocation or closure.
- iii. Reorganisation Meetings to consider proposals and adoption of recommendations for creation of new or splitting, relocations, merging, closure of Polling Stations.
- iv. The Reorganisation Official shall compile all the recommendations on the RPS 1 & RPS 2 Forms, sign and submit returns to the Sub County Supervisor.

6.0 REORGANISATION MEETINGS

The Reorganisation meetings will be held at Parish level. The following shall attend the meetings:

- Parish Supervisor as the Reorganisation Official who shall chair the Reorganisation meeting.
- Village Residents
- Local/Opinion Leaders
- Representatives of registered Political Parties/Organisations within the Parish.

Note:

- 1. The Sub-County Supervisors shall oversee the Reorganisation exercise in all Parishes in their respective Sub Counties.**
- 2. In case of Parishes/Villages/Electoral Areas at Sub County without Polling Stations, meetings will take place at the mother Parish or Village where current Polling Stations are located.**

7.0 RETRIEVAL OF REORGANISATION RETURNS

1. The Reorganisation Official shall fill in the forms, sign as required and submit them through the Sub County Supervisor to the District Registrar/Returning Officer.
2. Upon receipt of the reorganisation returns from the Sub County Supervisor, the District Registrar/Returning Officer shall sort, verify, sign/stamp and file the forms by Sub County.
3. The District Registrar/Returning Officer shall fill in RPS Form 5 and deliver the returns directly¹ to the Electoral Commission headquarters in the Voter Data Management department.

¹ To expedite the delivery, the District Registrar/Returning Officer shall submit the returns directly to Voter Data Management.

8.0 DUTIES OF REORGANISATION OFFICIALS

8.1 Parish Supervisor/Reorganisation Official

- Receive reorganisation materials from the Sub County Supervisor
- Mobilize voters and publicize the activity to the residents.
- Chair the Reorganisation meetings
- Educate the public on the Reorganisation process
- Account for Reorganisation materials
- Compile and sign RPS Forms 1 & 2
- Submit all the reorganisation returns to the Sub County Supervisor within the prescribed time.

8.2 Sub County Supervisor

- Receive Reorganisation materials from the Returning Officer
- Support the Parish Supervisor in mobilizing voters and publicizing the Reorganisation Exercise.
- Educate the public on the Reorganisation process
- To supervise the Reorganisation Exercise in her/his Sub County and account for Reorganisation materials within the respective Sub County
- Verify and sign RPS forms 1 and 2 and then submit the reorganisation returns to the District Registrar/Returning Officer within the prescribed time

8.3 Returning Officer

- Receive Reorganisation materials from Electoral Commission Headquarters.
- To mobilize voters and publicize the Reorganisation Exercise.
- Educate the public on the Reorganisation process
- To supervise the reorganisation exercise in her/his District.
- Account for Reorganisation materials
- Verify and sign RPS forms 1, 2, 4 and 5.
- Submit the Reorganisation returns to the Voter Data Management department at the EC Headquarters within the prescribed time.

8.4 Party Agents and Local Leaders

- Assist Reorganisation Officials in mobilizing voters and residents
- Attend Reorganisation meetings.

9.0 Confirmation of the capture of Recommendations

There shall be a Confirmation of the List of Polling Stations, i.e. the Packing List for each District, by every District Registrar/Returning Officer at the end of processing of the returns to enable the District Registrars/Returning Officers ascertain whether or not the recommendations arising from the Reorganisation Exercise were effected or not; and if so, that they were captured accurately.

N.B: The updated list of all Polling Stations in a Parish/Ward or Electoral Area will be displayed after the confirmation, in 9.0 above, in order to publicize the Polling Stations to the Voters.

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CHAIRPERSON, ELECTORAL COMMISSION