



## Chapter 2

### Prevalence of Voter Inducement in Uganda's Elections

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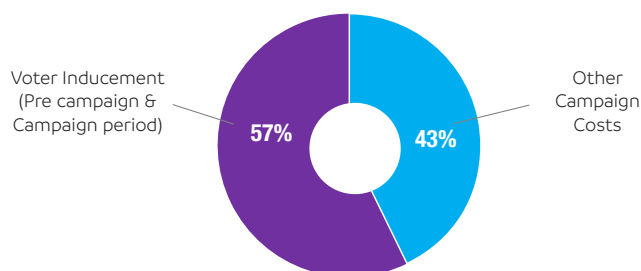


# Chapter 2

## THE PREVALENCE OF VOTER INDUCEMENT IN UGANDA'S ELECTIONS

In the context of this report, voter inducement refers to monetary and in-kind gifts donated to voters by political parties, candidates or their agents with the intention of enticing and luring them to vote or not to vote for a particular candidate or party. In the campaigns for the 2021 general elections, voter inducement took the form of cash handouts, voter hospitality where the electorate were entertained by the kind-hearted candidates providing food, drinks and other form of entertainment, community service goods such COVID-19 relief food during lockdown, grading of community roads, extending electricity and water supply lines to the electorate and credit facilities to women and youth group, and other forms of donations. Whereas section 68 of the Parliamentary Elections Act 2005 (as amended) makes voter bribery illegal, the practice is to the contrary. Voter inducement formed the largest proportion of campaign costs incurred by political parties and candidates during the campaign period.

Figure 24: Spending on Voter Inducement in comparison to other campaign costs

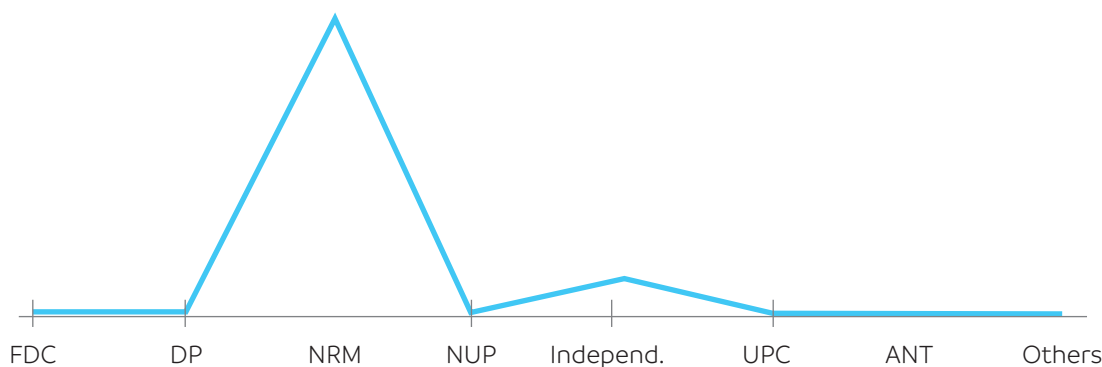


Source: ACFIM Campaign Finance Analytical Platform (2021)

### Spending on Voter Inducement by Political Affiliation

Political candidates were severally observed engaging in acts of voter inducement before and during the campaign period, the difference was in degree as illustrated below.

Figure 25: Expenditure on Voter Inducement by Political Affiliation



Source: ACFIM Campaign Finance Analytical Platform (2021)

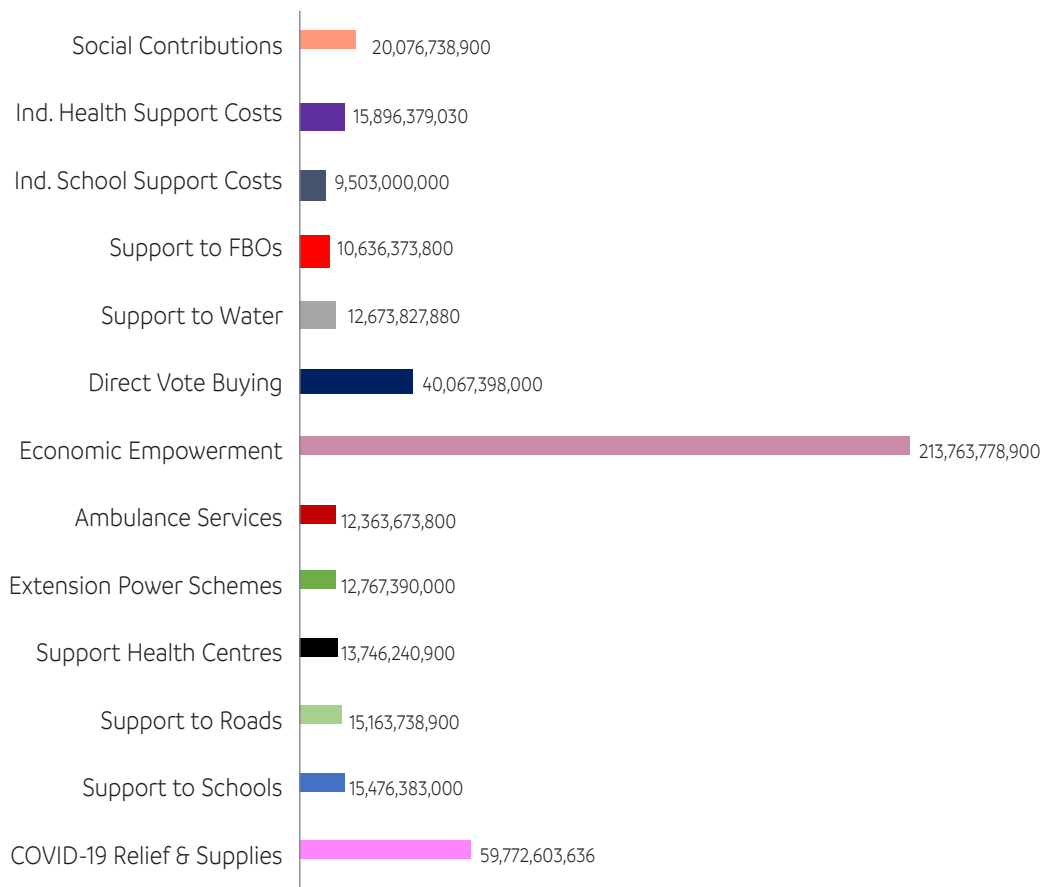


### How did Voter Inducement Manifest?

The most prevalent form of voter inducement was economic empowerment to groups of youth, women and others through extension of credit facilities to village saving associations, donation of motorcycles (bodaboda) to youth, and microfinance for market vendors. This accounted for 47.3 percent of the total reported spending on this variable, followed by provision of COVID-19 relief and supplies including food to the electorate during national lockdown, transport for the sick to access medical services and hand wash facilities. This accounted for 13.2 percent of the spending on voter inducement. The third most common form of voter inducement was spending on voter facilitation, also known as vote buying where candidates donate cash to the electorate prior to and on Election-Day in anticipation that the recipients will vote for them.

Details are provided in the figure below.

**Figure 26: Analysis of Voter Inducement in UGX**



Source: ACFIM Campaign Finance Analytical Platform (2021)



## The Ground War on Ambulances

There was a rush among parliamentary candidates, to procure and donate “Ambulances” to transport COVID-19 patients to hospitals. These ambulances were emblazoned with candidate’s names and photographs as shown below.





### What explains the Prevalence of Voter Inducement in Uganda's Electoral Politics?

Uganda's politics is not issue-based yet. There is a sense of political cynicism on the part of the voters informed by the growing perception that political office holders are selfish, fortune seeking, corrupt, and that politics is a dirty enterprise where politicians go to enrich themselves. It is recalled that in the 2016 general elections, there was a candidate in Rubaga South constituency, Kampala Capital City who told voters pointblank that he is seeking election so that he can also "go and eat", and they voted for him. This cynical view of politics is further accentuated by behaviors of legislators in past Parliaments who are widely perceived to have traded legislation for money. The Ugandan public makes reference to the amendment of Article 102(b) of the national Constitution which removed the provision on age limit for a someone to be nominated as Presidential candidate, thus allowing Gen. Museveni to contest in the 2021 general elections. It is believed that Legislators in the 10th Parliament traded the amendment for UGX 200 million (\$56,000) each. Thus, extracting money and gifts from political candidates in exchange for their votes has become one of the ways by which the electorate take their own share.



*Jinja West Parliamentary candidate, Hon. Moses Balyeku Grace who was very active in the amendment of Article 102(b) of the Constitution of the Republic of Uganda to remove the provision on age limit, poses for photo moment with a group of youth he donated cash to. One of them (2nd from right) is holding a bundle of UGX 10 million (\$2,702). Candidates target female voters because there is a perception that once a women has received a kind gesture, she will most likely return the favour.*

During campaign period, the messages of political candidates are not issue based, rather they hand out money, groceries, ambulances and spending on social services so that they can appear to be "nice". There is a sense in which political candidates believe that donating cash, in-kind items and services is the best way of being liked and supported by the electorate. The perception of spending to become attractive is contributing to the growing monetization and commercialisation of electoral politics in Uganda. In addition, there is a growing perception that being elected in political office is a sure way of moving the wheels of fortune. It is as if being elected a member of Parliament is analogous to hitting a jackpot.



*Community coaster that was donated by Hon. Moses Balyeku to the people of Jinja west constituency*



*Group of youth expressing happiness by showing UGX 10,000 (\$2.7) Banknote each of them received from one of the candidates during the campaign period.*

Positions for Member of Parliament were perceived to be highly incentivized and this explains a higher proportionate spending for candidates standing for the same positions. The study establishes that voters have redefined the role of political positions from provision of leadership, policy direction, budgeting and oversight to direct service provisioning. In the Ugandan strand of democracy measurement and evaluation of performance of political aspirants is determined by;

- a. With ability of the aspirant to give direct cash to as many voters as possible
- b. Who supports to social contributions
- c. Who supports community members overcome personal challenges e.g school fees and medical bills
- d. Who makes contributions to religious institutions and
- e. Who supports social service projects such as opening and maintaining community roads, setting up or equipping health and education facilities, and economic empowerment programs among others.

On the contrary, this has compromised the performance of politicians deviating from performing their constitutional mandate, and serving national interests to appeasing, individuals and institutions that supported them during campaigns.



If they win electoral races, the costs would be recovered lawfully through salaries, allowances and incentives and unlawfully through political corruption and tenderpreneurship<sup>4</sup>. In an ideal political environment, a good candidate/aspirant is one that has the following:

- a. A good message,
- b. Resources
- c. Structures on ground and
- d. Ideology.

Uganda's political environment does not look at the above in determining which candidates to vote. The heaviest cost of money in politics is bringing economic agents into the political and electoral arena where political campaigns and deliberations are equated to "market place economics" of willing buyer, willing seller.



*A truck carrying wheat flour, that was donated to the electorate in Sheema Municipality*

### Regional Disparities in Voter Inducement

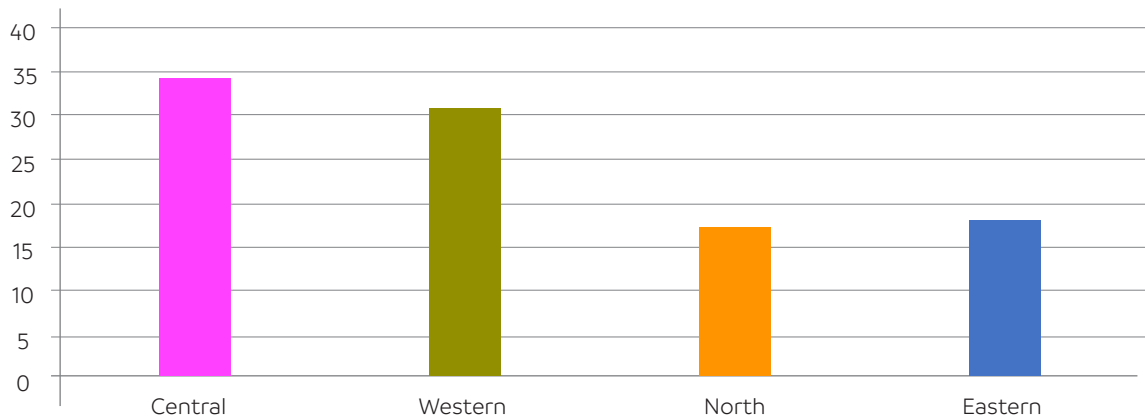
Candidates in western and central Uganda spent more on voter inducement than their counterparts in eastern and northern region. Analysis indicates that central and western Uganda accounted for over 65 percent (UGX 516.4 billion) of the total cost of campaign spending with central spending 33.7 percent (UGX 269.1 billion) and western art 31.1 percent (UGX 247.4 billion). Eastern and Northern Uganda spent comparatively less. Particularly, the NRM party primary elections were extremely competitive and very expensive. "Voters only responded to the scent of the Banknote as most of them were brand new notes".

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<sup>4</sup> Politicians that peddle influence acquisitions of public contracts using their positions to influence processes



Figure 27: Spending on Voter Inducement by Geographical Region



Source: ACFIM Campaign Finance Analytical Platform (2021)

In central region, candidates spent on local economic empowerment projects to counteract the household financial distress caused by the COVID-19 containment measures mostly in urban areas. Conversely, the spending by candidates of other political affiliations was intended to counteract the popularity of NUP party candidates who were riding on the popular “people power, our power” mantra.



A bus donated by one of the candidates vying for member of Parliament in Central Region. This is a used vehicle imported from Japan. The cost of this bus on the open market is UGX 135 million (\$36,489)