



Chapter 3

Pre-Campaign Spending

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This chapter interrogates the expenditure patterns of political aspirants during the pre-campaign period. In the context of this report, the pre-campaign period spans from November 2019 to October 2020. This was also the period when political parties conducted their primary elections.

The sample frame for monitoring pre-campaign expenses covered 939 political aspirants and five political parties at national level and 14,169 villages/cells out of national total of 70,626 villages. The scope of pre-campaign monitoring was restricted to political parties that were preparing to field candidates at Presidential, Parliamentary and Local Government elections for the 2021 national elections. These include National Resistance Movement (NRM), Forum for Democratic Change (FDC), Alliance for National Transformation (ANT), National Unity Platform (NUP), Justice Forum (JEEMA), Uganda People's Congress (UPC) and Democratic Party (DP).

Aspirants were observed spending on community projects and personal support initiatives. Pre-campaign spending takes many forms including but not limited to; social service provisioning, political advertising⁵, media campaigns and direct monetary or physical support to the individuals or groups.

Highly Monetized Pre-Campaign Period

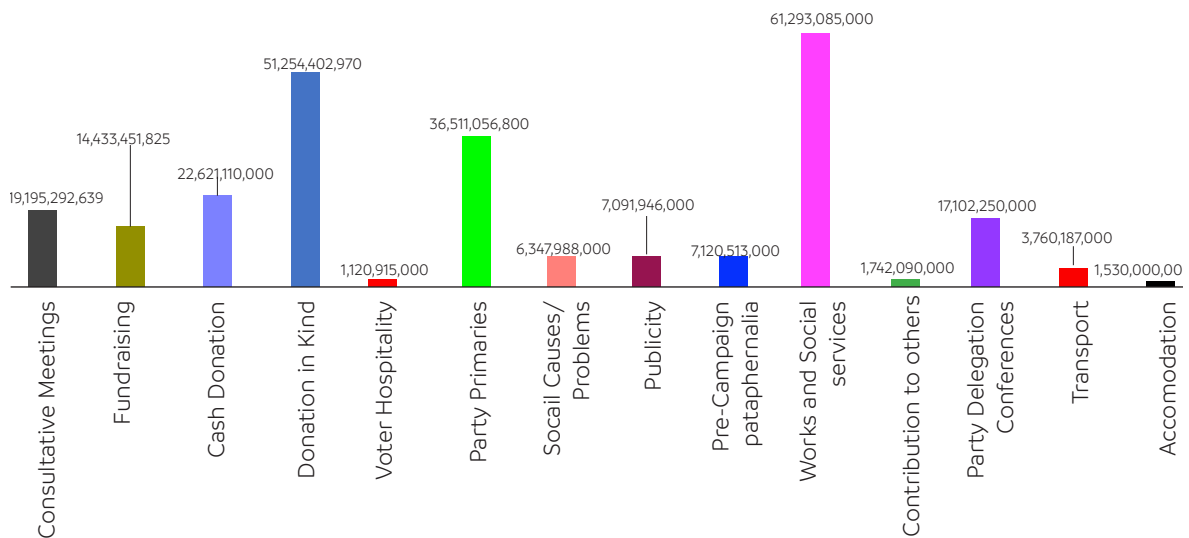
The pre-campaign trail was highly monetized. For political parties like the NRM that held national primary elections, money determined electoral outcomes in over 85 percent of the party primary races. From the onset, spending was directed to voter inducement activities and items. Aspiring candidates invested in social service provisioning and economic empowerment schemes including but not limited to: purchase of ambulances and community commuter buses, grading of feeder roads, renovation of water sources, provision of credit facilities for various community groups, scholastic materials and payment of school fees for voters' children that joined secondary schools in February 2020.

The COVID-19 pandemic and the resultant national lockdown put a new dimension on pre-campaign spending. Suddenly, aspiring candidates and to a larger extent the incumbents, had to spend on procurement of food items (mainly posho) which they either donated directly to their constituents, or delivered the relief items to the national and district COVID-19 taskforces.

⁵ Political advertising is advertising whose central focus is the marketing of ideas, attitudes, and concerns about public issues, including political concepts and political candidates.



Figure 28: What did Aspiring Candidates Spend on During the Pre-Campaign Period (Amount in UGX)



Regional Variations in Pre-Campaign Spending

Whereas in western and central regions, aspiring candidates provided physical community benefit goods such as grading of community roads, extension of electricity and water supply lines to the electorate, and construction of houses for the vulnerable members of the community among others, in northern and eastern regions, aspirants provided intangible services such as payment of school and medical fees, contribution to funeral costs and personal support. The common denominator across all regions though, was provision of ambulances and credit facilities to groups of women, youth, market vendors, and artisans among others.

Why Aspiring Candidates invested Massively in Politics?

Politics is currently one of the best paying office in Uganda. For example, a councillor at Kampala Capital City Authority whose qualification is a mere advanced certificate of education (the equivalent of high school) earns more than the Inspector General of Police (IGP) while a Member of Parliament whose minimum qualification is a senior six (high school) certificate, earns a lot more than a medical consultant at the National Referral Hospital and more than a professor at Makerere University. As a consequence, the penchant for politics has heightened. Candidates stake anything and everything to enter the political club and that explains the higher expenses.

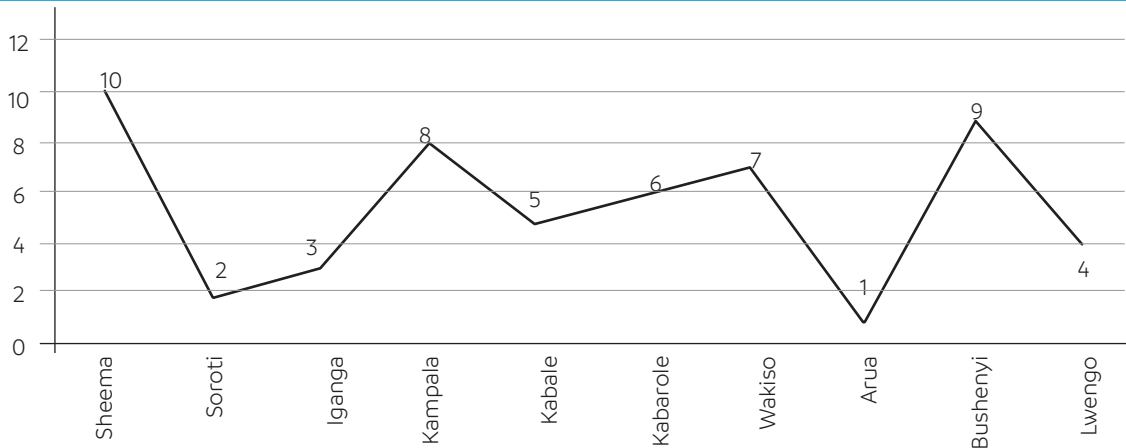
Ranking by Region and District on Pre-Campaign Spending

Ranking the regions and district was based on the aggregate of total expenses and category of projects, services and activities invested in by the candidate. As indicated earlier western regions contributed the highest proportion and percentage of pre-campaign expenses because aspirants invested in high value social service and economic empowerment projects. These included Ankole (15.0 percent), Kigezi (12.0 percent), Bunyoro (10.0 percent) and Rwenzori at



10.0 percent in a pecking order. Whereas greater Masaka alone has 9.0 percent contribution, if combined with Kampala, Wakiso and Mukono the two make aggregate of 18.0 percent. Kampala, Wakiso and Mukono are given special status in this analysis because of the population factor. Lango (5.0 percent) Acholi (5.0 percent) and Sebei (4.0 percent) were ranked lowest.

Figure 29: Top 10 Districts in Posting Campaign Spending Figures



Source: Analyzed Data Sets (2020), Campaign Finance Application

Sources of Political Funds for Pre-Campaign Spending

Whereas there is no provision in Uganda’s electoral laws that requires political candidates to declare the source of campaign money, ACFIM made an effort to solicit for voluntary disclosure through interviews with candidates. It was found that the main sources of pre-campaign finance were as follows:

1. Personal savings
2. Contributions from friends and well-wishers
3. Credit from Financial Intermediaries and Lenders
4. Contributions from business persons
5. Pension Schemes
6. Property Sales

Transactional Politics is almost Ingrained in Uganda

The candidates made a raft of donations (in-kind and cash) to the electorate to induce their support instead of using innovative political ideas to convince individuals to vote for their party or candidate. Inversely, there was a strong demand from the electorate to aspiring candidates in form of cash and/or private and public goods. This behavior continued through the general elections. At the time of writing this report, most of the former candidates –



winners and losers alike, were said to be homeless having sold of their residences and other personal properties in the futile pursuit of electoral victory.

The methods of open-air voting where the electorate line-up behind preferred candidates did not only violate the democratic principle of ballot secrecy, but also facilitated open-air vote buying. Candidates' agents stood near the lines and openly paid every voter that joined the line. In the words of former Principal Judge Justice James Ogoola, "the NRM primary elections turned into automatic teller machines (ATM) where currency notes were flying almost everywhere".