



THE AFRICAN-AMERICAN INSTITUTE AFRICA REGIONAL ELECTORAL ASSISTANCE FUND

AAI - UGANDA COUNTRY PROGRAM DEBRIEF ON CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS

I. COMMISSION/UJCC/NOCEM

a. BACKGROUND

AAI's involvement can be traced to the in-depth assessment of the Ugandan political process conducted in May 1993. The report of our findings was published in August of the same year. The purpose of the report was to serve as a useful guide to international donors and Ugandans alike, through cataloguing an expert evaluation of the political process that was unfolding in the country. The assessment included interviews and discussions with Ugandans of all walks of life (from farmers to local government representatives), and provided important insights on Ugandan political self-perception.

The African-American Institute's (AAI) program included providing support for training and deployment of Ugandan civic education trainers and Ugandan election monitor trainers. In addition, AAI sent an international observer delegation to the elections and provided technical and commodity assistance to the Constituent Assembly (CA) Commission the body responsible for organizing the CA elections. AAI began its work with two NGO groupings, the National Organization for Civic Education and Monitoring (NOCEM) and the Uganda Joint Christian Council (UJCC). However, NOCEM was told by the Commission to stop its civic education program, amid claims of politically partisan membership and behavior, and thereafter AAI worked almost exclusively with the UJCC (although NOCEM was consistently invited and even participated in training sessions hosted by AAI).

AAI's project activities began in August 1993, with the arrival of the Field Coordinator in Kampala. In coordination with the USAID mission and the U.S. Embassy, the Field Coordinator set about doing the following:

- * Evaluating the support and training needs of the Election Commission's civic education personnel, and those of NOCEM and the UJCC;
- * Assisting in the design of a civic education program with a national scope;
- * Providing commodity assistance to both NOCEM and UJCC civic education and election monitoring teams as well as those of the Commission;
- * Conducting the initial training of trainers sessions for NOCEM and UJCC which covered the entire 39 districts of Uganda through training provided to

District Coordinators and representatives;

- * Demonstrating the usefulness of the Parallel Vote Tabulation (PVT) mechanism through verbal and computerized training sessions with members of the CA Commission, NOCEM, and the UJCC; and ultimately
- * Facilitating the training and deployment of over 16,000 domestic elections monitors.
- * Consulting with and delivering commodities to the CA Commission, (including a discussion of the feasibility of the established elections time table);

AAI would like to acknowledge the invaluable assistance and guidance provided by both the Mission and the Embassy, in particular Norm Olsen and Ambassador Carson. The level of coordination established among AREAF, the UNDP, CA Commissioner Steven Akabway, NOCEM and UJCC Monitoring Teams, the EU, and the Embassy and AID Mission was superb. Special credit for the smoothness of this multipartite relationship in the field should be attributed to the success of the donors' meetings, which laid a solid foundation for effective donor spending.

II. CIVIC EDUCATION

There were deficiencies in the civic education campaign as carried out by the Commission, the UJCC and NOCEM. Indeed, many people would say that no amount of civic education would really have prepared the people for an exercise as complicated as a Constitutional drafting convention. All involved can be satisfied that with approximately US\$1.5 million we managed to provide civic education and training for some 7.5 million people.

The civic education effort in Uganda was important for several reasons. The first is that it was a reaffirmation of the commitment to local capacity building on the part of AAI and the AREAF project. AAI accomplished this goal in Uganda through the timely provision of assistance to domestic civic organizations, which in turn spread their expertise around the country. In making the monitoring and responsibility for elections the primary responsibility of Ugandan citizens, the UJCC and NOCEM, and all Ugandans affiliated with them claimed ownership of the process. Secondly, the size, scope and complexity of this operation gave the UJCC and NOCEM the chance to develop substantial organizational capacity.

Perhaps the most telling thing about the Ugandan civic-education campaign was that it was designed and carried out by Ugandans themselves. AAI provided technical assistance in designing the civic education and monitor training, but the systems of delivery, the modalities of presentation and the methods of proofing the product were all indigenous.

a. The UJCC

The UJCC had a natural constituency , through the church and its congregation. Once it was decided that we could all work together it was quickly deduced that if we wanted to reach the maximum possible number of citizens necessary to make the civic education campaign a worthwhile exercise, then the church (multi-denominational), would play a pivotal role. The Reverend James Canon Ndyabahika was the UJCC coordinator. It was his task to work through the Orthodox Church, the Church of Uganda, and the Catholic Church to identify and train election monitors.

b. NOCEM

NOCEM was made up of the educated elite of the country. In its ranks were doctors, lawyers, dentists, teachers and civil servants. Due to their composition, their constituency was naturally much smaller than that of the UJCC, however, they were invaluable in the cities. NOCEM was also to include the Muslims, although last minute infighting which tended to have a destabilizing effect on the entire civic education campaign made it necessary to invite them to withdraw.

III. POLITICAL PARTIES - ATMOSPHERICS AND HIGHLIGHTS

a. Uganda People's Congress (UPC)

The UPC top leadership splintered amid internal accusations of divided political loyalties. Celia Ogwal, acting Secretary General, and party Chairman Haji Badru Wegulo were the most visible of the party's 'combatants'. Ogwal accused Wegulo of supporting her rival, Sam Engola, a prominent businessman with reportedly close ties to the NRM, for the Lira Municipality CA seat, to which Ms. Ogwal aspired. In turn, Wegulo accused Ogwal of having "closer" ties to the NRM, of having benefitted financially from the supplying of food to the National Resistance Army (NRA) during the insurgency in 1989 (which pitted the NRA against rebel forces in north-eastern Uganda), and of other abuses of her office. The Topic that Celia Ogwal has asked the party's leader-in-exile, Milton Obote, to sack the Chairman, Haji Badru Wegulo, after their public (or at least highly publicized) altercation.

The UPC attempted some damage control by characterizing the high level in-fighting as a "normal administrative approach". A joint press release was issued, encouraging party loyals not to be "diverted from their noble goal" .. while the warring officials reaffirmed their "unreserved support" for the party's leadership and its machinery.

- Shortly thereafter the UPC launched a three-pronged political attack:
- * it published its party manifesto
- * released several press statements attesting to the health and well-being of the party, and

* staged a televised debate to which it invited representatives of President Museveni's National Resistance Movement (NRM).

These three acts resulted in the arrest of the party's chairman on sedition and slander charges (these charges refer to allegations by the UPC that the NRM is dominated by Rwandan refugees. A second arrest was made a few days later. The party chairman, Haji Badru Wegulo, was held over the weekend and released on USh 1 million bail (around \$1000) on Monday, March 7.

In response to the widely publicized UPC allegations, President Museveni gave the breakdown of the NRA (the army), noting that it was ethnically balanced, and contained no known Rwandans. He also stated that the government was not dominated by Banyarwanda (Ugandans of Rwandan origin). In light of the President's response, the UPC was invited to make a joint appearance, but declined. The President displayed anger at both the charges, which he painstakingly refuted, as well as at UPC's refusal to turn up for the rebuttal, and was alleged to be investigating the possibility of bringing slander and/or defamation of character charges against the UPC leadership.

b. Democratic Party

The Democratic Party (DP) fell on hard times as auctioneers closed and locked its Johnstone Street premises for non-payment of rent, reportedly totalling USh. 15 million (around US \$15,000). A staunch DP member in Kabale Municipality, Josephat Kapere, surrendered his party membership card to the NRM for safekeeping until after the proposed five year extension of Movement (i.e., NRM) rule, as outlined in the draft constitution. The DP Secretary General, at the same meeting, reportedly shied away from committing himself to support for multi-party politics immediately, indicating that he would support whatever consensus emerged in the CA.

The DP Mobilizers (the most confrontational faction of the DP) resurfaced with a demand that the government fund the activities of the political parties since they are "national public institutions." They denied that the appeal for funds was related to the closure of their national party headquarters for non-payment of rent. They condemned the arrest of the UPC leaders, especially the fact that it was done on a weekend (thus denying them bail until Monday morning.) The press conference that they held was attended by a number of mainstream DP officials, including the party's Publicity Secretary, Dr. Ojok-Mulozi. The Weekly Topic editorialized that the DP Mobilizers demand for government funding of parties was irrational until the CA sorted out the issue of whether parties were to be reinstated.

IV. PARALLEL VOTE TABULATION TRAINING (PVT)

Having made the case to the CA Commission about the usefulness of the PVT mechanism, AAI fielded a three-person team to provide a three day oral and computerized training session to the UJCC (NOCEM was invited, but chose to send only one participant).

The UJCC was particularly interested in the mechanism for its own merits, but also because it saw it as a potential means of maintaining popular interest in and support of the process.

[A parallel vote tabulation --or PVT-- is an effective means of deterring fraud and building popular confidence in an election. Of course, simple administrative errors may occur in the transmission of results from individual polling stations to the official counting center. A PVT helps to ensure that the final announcement of results at the national level reflects the sum of the true numbers recorded at polling stations around the country. By using the statistical technique of representative sampling, the PVT provides a check against the threat of accidental --or purposeful-- human error with the power of science.]

The response to the training was positive and enthusiastic. Some forty-five UJCC field representatives traveled to Kampala to participate. Once the concept of PVT was grasped, the sessions shifted to simulation exercises, which provided a practical method of anticipating potential problems on election day. The simulation exercises also encouraged the development of rapid problem solving skills. In conducting the PVT exercise, the UJCC:

- * Chose a representative sample of polling stations from which to collect data;
- * Appointed and trained data collectors (from the UJCC constituency) to be assigned to the polling stations in the sample;
- * Appointed and trained back-up data collectors;
- * Arranged for alternative systems of communicating results where telephones or radios were not available;
- * Established a PVT nerve center (to which results were reported and then entered on the computer) at UJCC headquarters in Kampala.

V. INTERNATIONAL OBSERVER TEAM

a. Pre-electoral assessment

At the invitation of the Ugandan government, AAI fielded an 18-member observation team. Some team members arrived two weeks prior to the elections to conduct a pre-election assessment. From March 14 through March 25, three two-person teams conducted a pre-election assessment visit throughout the eastern, southwestern, and northern regions of the country. The purpose of this tour was get a better sense of the state of preparedness, and to meet with UJCC and NOCEM regional representatives to assess the impact of the election monitor and Parallel Vote Tabulation (PVT) training on the local officials. (The previous week, AAI had held a three day training session for the regional representatives of the UJCC and NOCEM on the role and usefulness of Parallel Vote Tabulation an election exercise.) The areas covered included Iganga and Mbale in the east, Fort Portal, Kabale, and Mbarara in the southwest, and Gulu and Lira in the north.

b. Deployment

The deployment of international observers was carried out by the UNDP in collaboration with the CA Commission. With the exception of some minor confusion caused by the UNDP's last-minute request for in-depth reports from each person deployed (which often left little or no time for AAI team members to write their own reports as they went along), the international community was satisfied with the arrangements made by the UNDP, in particular the security measures taken to ensure physical safety.

c. The AAI team

AAI was proud to have fielded a diverse international team of academics, electoral officials (from Africa and the US), parliamentarians, and scholars. Team members included nationals of Benin, Cameroon, Ghana, Tanzania, and the United States.

The AAI international observer delegation that the CA elections were not without flaws. While there were some problems related to voter registration, registration certificates, the late announcement of the polling places and the failure to display voter registers before the election in some areas of the country, there was no evidence of any systematic attempt to manipulate the outcome of this exercise. The AAI delegation further noted that these administrative weaknesses did not affect the election results and can be easily remedied before future elections are held.

VI. LESSONS LEARNED:

a. Early Assistance

AAI's ability to become involved early in the process was key. Through the AREAF mechanism, AAI was able to provide a rapid response to the Ugandan government's request for assistance. There was enough time to establish solid relationships with the CA Commission, NOCEM, and the UJCC. On the basis of trust and mutual respect, we were able to enjoy a positive and productive working relationship.

b. Candidates' Meetings

The Candidates' meetings, often a source of humor in the Ugandan political community, broke new ground. Serving as a forum where issues, and not personalities, were discussed, the candidates' meetings (as close to a political rally/campaign event as one could get in Uganda) transformed the level of debate in the Ugandan body politic.

Based on attendance at several candidates' meetings it is our view that they were conducted fully in accordance with the relatively restrictive rules governing these meetings. The Presiding Officers were meticulous in explaining the rules of the debate and arranged the order of speaking by random lottery drawing. They were also scrupulous in allowing equal

amounts of time for questions. Those who asked questions clearly felt under no restraint when asking candidates to justify their qualifications or interrogating them on their views on constitutional and other broader issues (it was particularly notable that the government officials, including ministers, were subjected to the closest scrutiny).

c. Donor Coordination

The level of coordination among AREAF, the UNDP, the Election Commissioner, the EC, the U.S. Embassy/USAID Mission and the UJCC and NOCEM was superb. The donors meetings were innovative in that the NGOs were consulted with respect to the programmatic dispensation of funds.

d. Polling Station Design

The open air manner in which the polling stations were set up encouraged citizens to cast their ballots. Colorful UJCC posters depicting the proper set up of a polling station (including instructions on how far to stand from the voter in front of you) were well-displayed at all stations visited. The Ugandans were fortunate that the weather favored this type of design.

VII. PROJECTION

a. Possible Deal In The Making

The NRM has been having "intense conversations" with various political forces in the country geared toward avoiding a "messy fight" in the CA (this might well include avoiding the referenda over certain "contentious" issues). The consensus emerging is that the CP, the DP and several traditional kingdoms will support the extension of the movement system for another five years -- but that after that there should be an automatic return to party politics without a referendum. The NRM is reportedly well disposed to cutting any deal which can secure this outcome, with the exception of the dismantling of the NRA or any alteration in its operational structure, which was a central issue of the campaigns in the north and the east.

(Gerald Ssendawula, Deputy Minister for Trade and Industry, supported the emerging consensus on a further five years of NRM rule followed by the reintroduction of political parties, without going to referendum. Many candidates in the Masaka region [part of a traditional kingdom and a DP stronghold] have been putting forth the same views. All ten CA candidates in Bundi-bugyo [another important city in the region] have reportedly endorsed the proposed extension of the movement system for another five years).

GLOSSARY OF NAMES AND TERMS

- I. The Uganda Joint Christian Council (UJCC): a group made up of the Church of Uganda, the Catholic Church, and Orthodox Church. Their mandate was to monitor the elections and carry out civic education.
- II. The National Organization for Civic Education and Election Monitoring (NOCEM): The make up of NOCEM was the professional classes of Uganda. Their mandate was also to monitor the elections and carry out civic education.
- III. Mr. Norman Olsen: USAID Program Officer for democratization, and election related activities.
- IV. Ambassador Johnnie Carson: United States Ambassador to Uganda.
- V. Mr. Steven Akabway: Commissioner of Elections Republic of Uganda
- VI. Mr. Vincent Chibuka Musoke: Deputy Commissioner Technical (i.e. the Commission's lawyer).
- VII. Mr. Robert Henderson: UNDP technical advisor to the Election Commission
- VIII. Reverend Cannon James Ndyabahika: Coordinator of the UJCC and its domestic monitoring team.
- IX. Ms. Salome Bossa: President of the Law Society and chairwoman of NOCEM
- X. Ms. Judith Geist: USAID contractor and technical assistance specialist.