



BUILDING AGILE AND RESILIENT ELECTORAL COMMISSIONS IN AFRICA: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FROM UGANDA

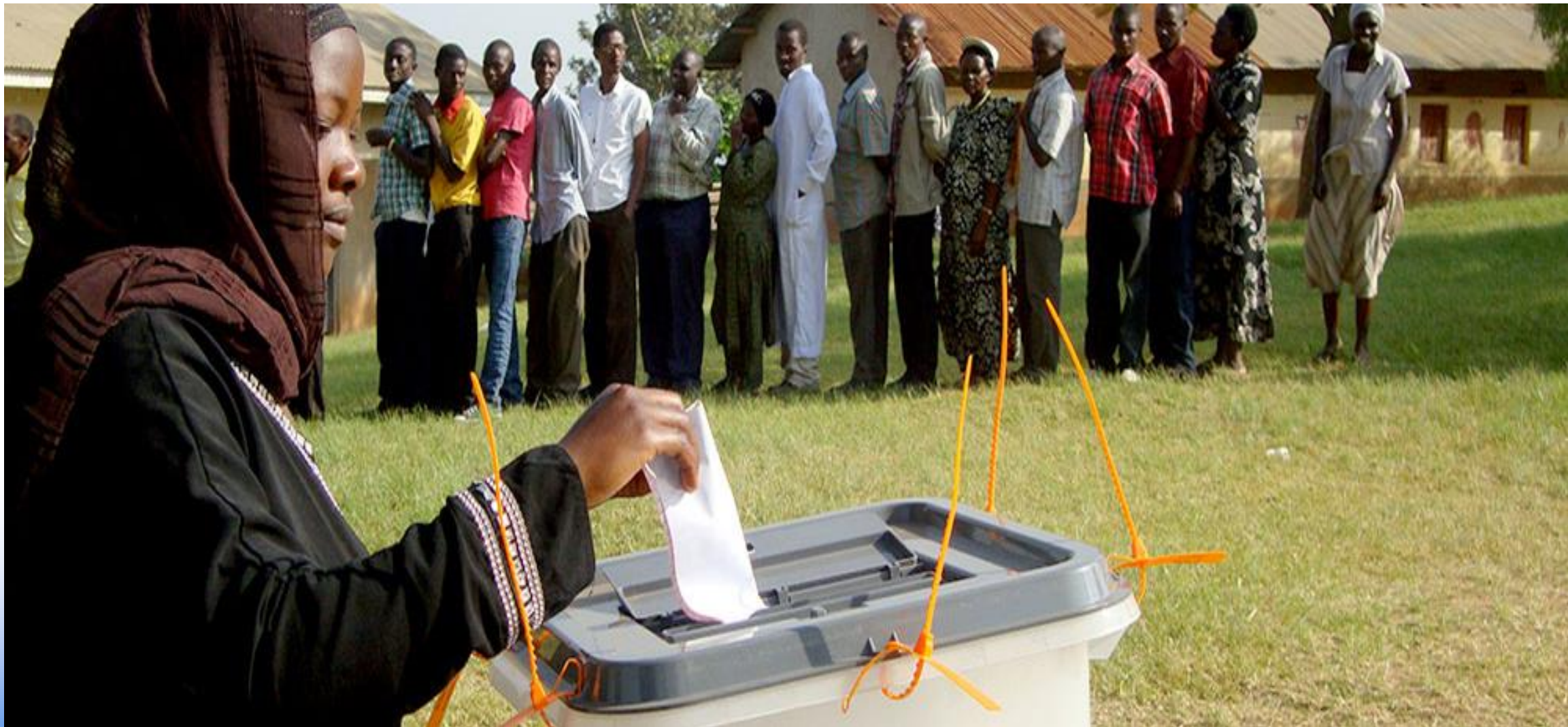
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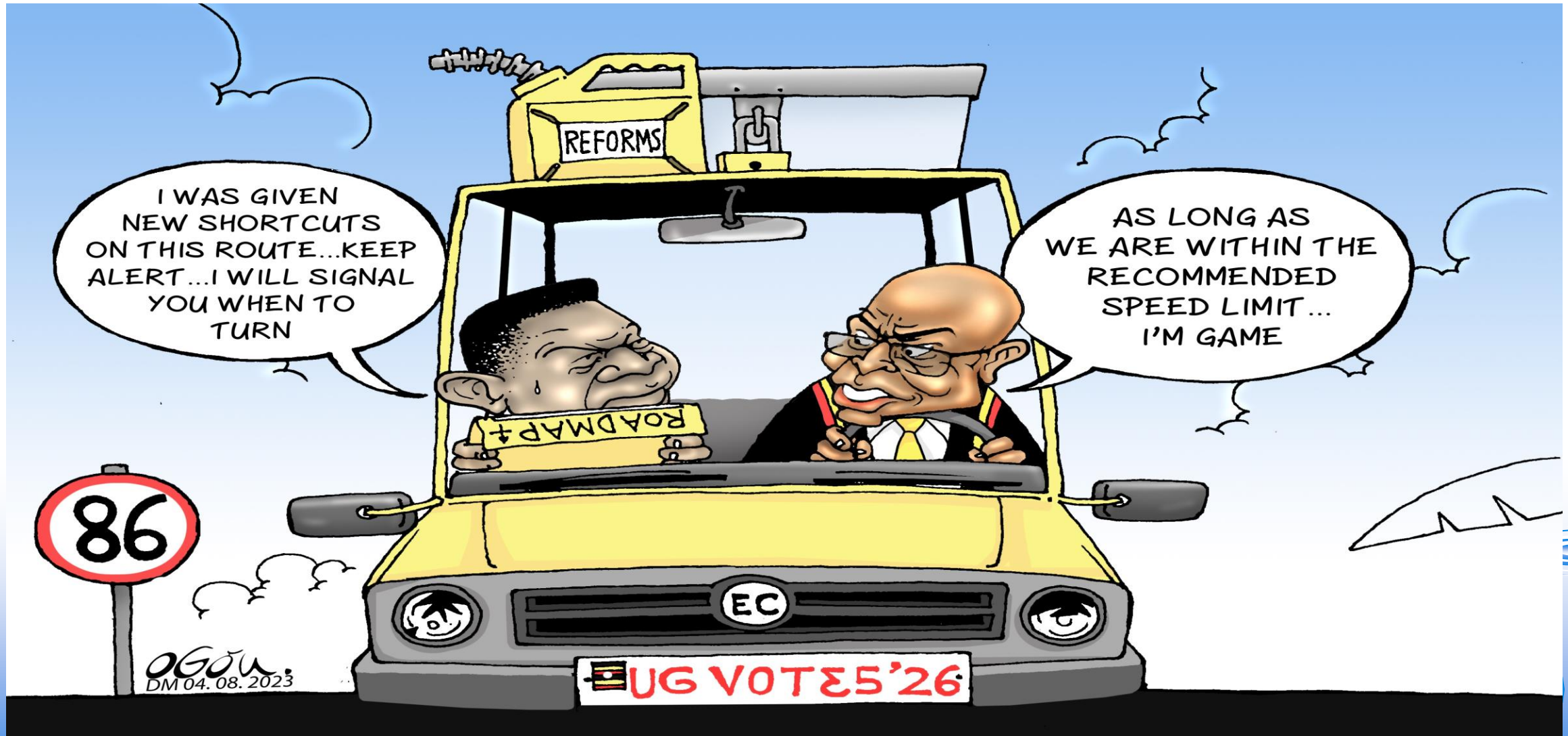
Introduction

- ECs supposed to conduct of free, fair, and credible elections.
- ½ of African elections are unlikely to be competitive
 - Heavy-handed management of the electoral process by well-entrenched incumbents.
- In Uganda, the EC
 - Is formally independent from other branches of government
 - Conducts Presidential, Parliamentary, LG elections, referenda, By- elections
 - Demarcated constituencies, electoral areas and reorganized polling stations
 - Next election slated for 12th January – 9th February 2026



Background

- **Banning Fundraising During Campaigns**
- **Regulating Freedom of Speech and Assembly**
- **Stricter Measures Against Public Servants Engaging in Political Activities**
- **Limiting Military Involvement in Elections**
- **Use of Technology in Elections, Compulsory Electronic Voting**
- **Ceremonial President, Proportional Representation, Upper House, Size, LOP**
- **Simultaneous Elections**
- **Commissioner selections**



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Methodology

- **Mixed-methods approach**
 - **Convergent Parallel Design**
 - **Interviews, FGDs, Systematic Review**
 - **Survey**
 - **Case study**
 - **Appreciative inquiry**
 - **Analytical Generalisation**





Challenges faced by the EC

- **Political challenges:**
 - Unresolved issues from Political Party Primary Elections
 - Pressure from political figures or parties to influence election outcomes
- **Legal and Regulatory :**
 - Delayed enactment/amendment of electoral laws leads to awful elections
- **Commercialization of Politics:**
 - Corruption and unfair advantages for wealthier candidates or parties.
- **Logistical Issues:**
 - Late creation of administrative units
 - Inadequate office accommodation and storage facilities



Challenges faced by the EC

- **Low Voter Turnout and Voter Apathy:**
 - Linked to a lack of public trust and engagement in the electoral process.
- **Election-Related Violence:**
 - Threat to the safety and integrity of the electoral process.
- **Underfunding:**
 - Impacts voter education and election logistics.
- **Inadequate Voter Education:**
 - uninformed electorate and poor participation in elections.
- **Technological Challenges:**
 - Cybersecurity risks and technical glitches.



Strategies for Building Agility and Resilience

- **Developing risk mitigation strategies**
 - Develop contingency plans and conduct regular risk assessments on cybersecurity, political interference, and logistical issues .
- **Upholding transparency and accountability**
 - Use transparent procedures, be accountable and engage with stakeholders
- **Increasing adaptability capacity**
 - Regular training and capacity-building programs for EC staff.
- **Immunizing against political interference**
 - Strengthen legal frameworks and establish oversight mechanisms.



Strategies for Building Agility and Resilience

- **Promote value-based elections**
 - Conduct elections based on principles of fairness and integrity.
- **Leveraging technology**
 - Adopt electronic voting systems and enhance cybersecurity measures.
- **Engaging in Meaningful Dialogue**
 - Organize regular consultations with political parties and stakeholders.
 - Culturally sensitive to the diverse values and traditions





Opportunities of the EC

- **Independence and legal framework**
 - Established as an independent body, which is crucial for maintaining impartiality and credibility in the electoral process.
- **Technological integration**
 - Biometric voter registration and electronic results transmission, which have improved the accuracy and efficiency of elections.
- **Stakeholder engagement, public awareness and voter education**
 - Actively engages with political parties, civil society organizations, and the public to ensure transparency and build trust in the electoral process
- **Professionalism and strategic planning**
 - Comprehensive strategic plan and road map on the electoral process.



Rest of Africa

➤ The Electoral Commission of Ghana

- Praised for its independence and effectiveness in managing elections.
- Special voting arrangements for individuals who are unable to vote at their designated polling stations on election day (security personnel and election officials)
- Voter registration throughout the year, allowing eligible citizens to register at any time, rather than being limited to a specific period

➤ The Independent National Electoral Commission of Nigeria

- Transparent accreditation of CSOs (monitors), ensuring unbiased election oversight
- Use of University Staff as residential electoral commissioners promoting impartiality
- Use of National Youth Service Corps as residential electoral commissioners promoting accountability



Rest of Africa

➤ The Electoral Commission of South Africa

- Recognized for its efforts to promote voter education and participation
- Collaborates with tertiary institutions to launch campaigns focusing on educating young people about their voting rights and encouraging them to register to vote
- The IEC's annual national campaign targets students in tertiary institutions to improve their understanding of democratic processes and encourage their active participation in elections.





Conclusion

- **Agile and resilient electoral commissions are essential for the sustainability of democratic processes in Africa**
- **Challenges faced by the Ugandan Electoral Commission underscore the need for increased adaptability, protection against political interference, and strategies to mitigate risks.**