

WAIRUGALA FRED MOSES WAGA (2014 – MO62 – 20017)

Low Voter Turn up and the Right to Vote: A Case Study of Kamuli Village Kireka Parish.

There has been a steady increase in the number of registered voters in Uganda since the first parliamentary election at independence in 1962. Despite the increase in the number of registered voters, there has been a marked decrease in voter turnout. The objectives of the study aim to establish why citizens are keen on registering but do not turn up to vote and how this impacts on the right to vote. The thesis aims to describe and analyse why registered voters shun elections increasingly. The material was gathered in a single case study through qualitative interviews with registered voters in Kamuli village, Kireka parish, Kira municipality in Wakiso district and key informants in stakeholder organisations like Citizens' Coalition for Electoral Democracy in Uganda, the electoral commission and local leaders. The material has been presented according to the three themes, namely: motivational factors to register to vote, perception of the right to vote and reasons for the low voter turnout. The study was conducted through a single case design in Kamuli village. Forty six respondents were interviewed through random and purposive sampling by use of interview guide designed to help the researcher probe and acquire the necessary information. The data was processed, managed and analysed through the qualitative interpretative approach and transcribed into the various categories and themes to match the study objectives of motivation to register to vote, perception of the right to vote and the reasons for low voter turn-up. The study found that citizens register to vote because of emotional attachment to certain fixations such as candidates rather than a civic duty to enhance development. The right to vote was not appreciated as a civic constitutional right because of the glaring hatred and ignorance of the entire electoral process. The low voter turnout was found to be caused by social, political and economic factors which ranged from intimidation, poverty, electoral maladministration and ignorance among others. The study recommends that citizens be sensitised and provided with civic education to enable them appreciate the civic duty to register to vote and the corresponding right to vote. It is further recommended that the electoral commission be facilitated sufficiently so that it carries out its constitutional duty as required. The institutional short falls in the electoral body should be addressed to make the electoral process attractive. Lastly, individual issues which cause voter apathy be addressed by the concerned government agencies to make the right to vote attractive.

Key Words: Low Voter, Right, Kamuli District.