

Low voter up, delays, violence mar mayoral, local council polls

BY MONITOR TEAM

COUNTRYWIDE. The elections for city mayors, district chairpersons, municipal council mayors and councillors were marked by low voter turn up, and ballot errors that led to suspension of the voting exercise in some districts across the country yesterday.

Uncertainty hung over Wakiso District yesterday as voters turned up in low numbers to elect a new district chairperson (LC5) and district councillors, raising questions about voter confidence and participation in local government elections.

The closely watched race for the LC5 seat pits National Unity Platform (NUP) candidate Nasif Naja against ruling National Resistance Movement (NRM) party flag bearer Ian Kyeyune and Democratic Front (DF) contender Flavia Nakafeero.

Although Wakiso is widely regarded as an NUP stronghold, the low voter turnout and the presence of an experienced former district chairperson in the race appeared to complicate predictions about the outcome.

Mr Kyeyune, who previously served as Wakiso District chairperson, campaigned on a message of reconciliation and experience, arguing that the district needs inclusive leadership to address its growing population and administrative challenges.

In Butebo District, the Electoral Commission (EC) suspended the election of the chairperson and councillors following reports of malpractice, including violence and ballot stuffing.

According to the letter seen by the *Daily Monitor*, signed by the chairperson of EC, Justice Simon Byabakama dated January 22, 2026; the postponement was due to reports of serious interruptions to the electoral process.

Sources said violence erupted in several sub-counties as the supporters of opposing candidates fought using sticks and stones, leaving several injured.

Elsewhere, voting for the Fort Portal City Female Councillor was cancelled in several wards across the Northern and Central divisions after some polling stations received the wrong ballot papers, while others received ballots that were mixed up in candidates' details.

The Fort Portal City Returning Officer, Mr Isaac Byamugisha, told this publication that the EC cancelled the elections in the affected areas due to the errors. He added that a new voting date would be communicated before February 4.

Ms Josephine Komuhimbo, one of the affected female city councillor candidates for Fort Portal City West, expressed disappointment with the EC, saying the mistakes were avoidable since nominations were conducted more than five months ago.

However, the voting in Central and Northern divisions generally experienced delays, largely due to low voter turnout. Out of about 190 polling stations, voting in most centres started after 8am.

Affected areas included Nyabukara, and Rwengoma as well as Central South wards of Bazaar, Kasusu, and Kijanju in Central Division.

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ointment with the EC, saying the errors were avoidable since nominations were conducted over five months ago.

In Kagadi District and the greater Kibaale area, including Kakumiro District, candidates for the district chairperson positions expressed concern over the low voter turnout, fearing it could affect election outcomes.

Although polling materials were delivered to designated polling centers on time, voting did not start early in some areas due to the absence of witnesses required to flag off the exercise.

Voter apathy.
Many people here voted for their candidates and were not announced winners. So, they feel it is now useless to take part in another round of election where they don't expect to fairness," - Salim Asiiimwe, a NUP supporter in Lyantonde

In Masaka City, the low voter turnout was prevalent even at polling stations like Fork Land, Bata Cell that have many voters.

Mr Jason Erick Ludigo, the presiding officer at Bata Cell LUC to NAKK Polling Station said only 62 voters had cast their votes by noon out of 475 registered at the polling station.

At Kirumba Health Centre II M-NAL polling station, only 31 out of 460 voters had shown up by noon.

In Lyantonde District, two independent district LCV contenders - Cleophas Tukamarwa, a former journalist and James Nemeye, a businessman pulled out of the race on election day, leaving NRM's Moses Ali Ssemmanda and NUP's Edward Katerega to tussle it out.

Mr Salim Asiiimwe, a NUP supporter attributed the low voter turnout to voter fatigue. "Many people here voted for their candidates and were not announced winners. So, they feel it is now useless to take part in another round of election where they don't expect to fairness," he said.

Mr Imon Tusiime, the district returning officer said: "When the BV-VK machines failed to work in some sub-counties during presidential and parliamentary election, we got a technical person who helped to fix them and all are now working at all the 144 polling stations."

In Mpigi District, voters in Kamengo Sub-county refused to vote for the direct district councillor following a mix up of party symbols with the bus put against NUP candidate Ronald Kaggwa Kibirige's name while Joseph Mugatte Kasule of NRM was given an umbrella.

Mr Kasule said the EC officials had apologised for the mix-up and promised to organise fresh elections in the area.

In Mukono and Kalangala, several polling stations remained largely deserted throughout the day, raising serious concerns about voter mobilisation and civic education.

Mr Moses Nyombi, the chairman of Wantoni Cell in Mukono Municipality, said his constituency has approximately 1,800 registered voters but no voting had taken place by 10am.