



DEMOCRACY WORKBOOK

A Resource for Civic Education in Uganda



MINISTRY OF INFORMATION,
COMMUNICATIONS
TECHNOLOGY AND
NATIONAL GUIDANCE
(MoICT&NG).



Konrad
Adenauer
Stiftung

For A Democratic And Accountable Society

What is Democracy?

In a democratic country, ultimate power rests with the people.

One popular description of democracy is: 'the rule of the people, by the people, for the people'.

Principles of Democracy

- People have the power of choice and the right to elect their leaders at all levels of governance.
- Decisions are made by majority and have to be accepted by all, but minority interests are respected and protected.
- Everyone has a voice and gets an opportunity to be heard.
- Everyone has the right to participate in decision-making, regardless of gender, age, race, ethnicity or other criteria.

Basic Conditions for Democracy

- Open and fair competition
- Citizen participation in decision-making
- Respect for personal freedoms
- Sharing of democratic values such as tolerance, fairness, mutual respect, honesty, responsibility, accountability
- Acceptance of the democratic rules by all players

Benefits of Democracy

- All citizens have equal opportunities for participation in public affairs.
- Political decisions reflect the will of the people.
- Leaders are accountable to citizens and do not abuse power.
- People have the same rights and no one is above the law.
- Divergent opinions are tolerated and peaceful co-existence is enhanced.

"All power belongs to the people who shall exercise their sovereignty in accordance with (the) Constitution"

[Article 1 (1) Constitution of the Republic of Uganda]

DEMOCRACY AT HOME



We want to change schools.

Let us see what other schools there are.

Ok, we will take a decision after checking the options.

Democracy starts at home. It can only function if the citizens believe in it and share its values.

Every democracy must follow some **BASIC PRINCIPLES**:

- **Citizen Participation:** Citizens are part of the decision-making processes.
- **Equality:** Citizens are equal before the law and are given equal opportunities.
- **Political Tolerance:** Differences in opinion are accepted and different viewpoints respected.
- **Accountability:** Elected leaders or public officials have to answer to the common citizens regarding their actions, decisions or indecisions.
- **Transparency:** Leaders allow for public scrutiny into what they do while in public office and citizens have access to information.
- **Regular, Free and Fair Elections:** Free and fair elections give citizens the chance to elect leaders of their choice to represent them.
- **A culture of accepting the results of elections:** Once free and fair elections are held, and a winner clearly emerges, the results are accepted by all players.
- **Separation of powers:** The separation of powers of the three arms of government prevents the abuse of power, for example through corruption, and provides for checks and balances.
- **Human Rights:** Democracies strive to protect the rights and freedoms of their citizens from abuse.
- **Multi-Party System:** A multi-party system is a set-up where there are more than two political parties competing for power. This gives the people a wider choice of political alternatives and candidates.
- **Rule of Law:** This implies that no one is above the law and it requires that all citizens observe the law and are held accountable if they break it.
- The government, once elected, is **responsible for all citizens**, not just those who voted for the successful party.

CITIZENSHIP



Responsible citizens join together to build an even better Uganda.

CITIZENSHIP AND CIVIC RESPONSIBILITY

Citizenship is about being a responsible, caring and contributing member of society. The rights of a citizen - which are protected in a democracy - go hand in hand with responsibilities.

Responsible citizens share democratic attitudes and aim at contributing to the common good. Civic responsibility can for example be displayed through participation in voluntary groups, advocating for important causes or providing leadership, but also much more generally by respecting the law and the rights of other people. Being a responsible citizen makes everyone a part of their country's nation-building process.

NATION-BUILDING

Nations just do not happen as natural outcomes of history. They are built by men and women with vision and resolve

Nation-building is always work-in-progress: a dynamic process in constant need of nurturing and re-invention. It never stops because all nations are constantly facing new challenges.

Nation-building it is about building a political entity which corresponds to a given territory, based on generally accepted rules, norms, and principles. It is also about building institutions which symbolize the political entity – institutions such as a bureaucracy, an economy, the judiciary, universities, a civil service, and civil society organizations.

Above all, nation-building is about building a common sense of purpose, a sense of shared destiny, a collective imagination of belonging. Nation-building is about building the tangible and intangible threads that hold a political entity together and gives it a sense of purpose.

FREE AND FAIR ELECTIONS

Elections must be free and fair. No one should intimidate or bribe you.



Citizens have the power of choice and the right to elect the leaders that represent them.

PARTICIPATION THROUGH ELECTIONS

One important way of participating in a democratic system is through **voting in free and fair elections**.

Elections are important because citizens are able to choose **representatives**, change and/or replace leaders, express support for certain positions or parties as well as influence decision-making and policies.

The citizens must have the opportunity to choose/elect their representatives without compulsion or undue influence. Their choice must be a result of a **competitive process** where respective parties and all candidates openly enjoy the freedom of speech and freedom of assembly.

Citizens' participation in the political process demands that the elected representatives are accountable to the people. They must regularly return to their constituencies to update their voters as well as seek their views on any issues of contention.

Citizens have an obligation to become informed about public issues, to monitor the conduct of their leaders and representatives, as well as to express their own opinions.

In Uganda, elections are organised by the **Electoral Commission**. The Electoral Commission is responsible for organising the elections, maintaining the voters register and conducting voter education.

Ugandans can vote for their President, their Members of Parliament and their local council leaders in elections which take place every five years.

REPRESENTATION



Elected leaders listen to the concerns of the people they represent and make informed decisions in their interest.



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REPRESENTATION

Representation means that the power – which ultimately lies with the citizens - is delegated to a small number of selected people. These representatives – chosen through elections – make decisions on behalf of the citizens.

PRINCIPLES OF REPRESENTATION

- The ultimate power always remains with the people.
- The elected representatives do not “own” the power – they “borrow” it from the people who chose them.
- The decisions made by the elected representatives are binding for everybody.
- The power given to the representatives is limited to the task for which they have been chosen and the duration of their term.
- Ultimately, citizens remain the final judges of the government and their representatives. They can use their power at elections to choose a different representative if they have not reflected their views well.
- The representatives do not simply dictate to the people, instead they are supposed to listen to the people and make decisions in their interest.
- Representatives have a range of roles such as: decision making, budgeting, allocating resources, sharing & making public policy, informing the government and consulting with the public.

All in all, political **representatives are supposed to serve the people** who put their trust in them by electing them.

ACCOUNTABILITY



Elected leaders have to act transparently and discuss their actions and decisions with the citizens.



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ACCOUNTABILITY

Those in power need to be transparent and accountable in their dealings.

Government accountability requires that public officials, elected or unelected, have an obligation to explain their decisions and actions to their citizens.

In a democracy, there are a number of mechanisms to ensure that public officials remain answerable and accessible to the people they serve.

Rules and regulations define the powers and responsibilities of public officials. The rules also define how citizens may take action against those officials whose conduct or performance is considered unsatisfactory.

Public officials – especially elected leaders – are obliged to regularly **consult the electorate** and the different stakeholders in the country (or the district).

Regular **elections** and **fixed terms** of office make sure that the citizens frequently get the chance to decide who should occupy public offices. For example, if voters are not satisfied with the performance of a political leader, they may vote him or her out of office when their term expires.

In addition, citizens can also get involved more pro-actively to hold their leaders accountable, for example by forming interest groups, starting **community initiatives**, organising campaigns or using existing **complaints mechanisms**.

ACCOUNTABILITY MEANS:

- Being able to satisfactorily explain and defend one's actions
- Being open to scrutiny, taking responsibility and accepting consequences (e.g. possible firing, suspension or reprimand) if one has not acted appropriately
- That mechanisms are in place to ensure that a government and authorised persons can be 'called to account' and take responsibility for assigned tasks
- That the government adheres to the rule of law and does what it says it will do
- That people can seek answers from government, have access to information about decisions and can scrutinise government's actions

RULE OF LAW



Everyone has the right to a fair hearing.

RULE OF LAW IN A DEMOCRACY MEANS THAT:

- All people are subject to the same law and are equal before the law.
- Everyone has to respect the rules and obey the law.
- Anyone who violates the law will be held accountable.
- The law is fair and impartial – irrespective of ethnicity, race, gender, age, social status and other criteria. It must be enforced consistently.
- The law is interpreted and executed only by the responsible state institutions and not by unsanctioned individuals or groups.
- The application of the law must follow the principle of due process which protects the individual against arbitrary laws or unreasonable application of the law.
- Political decision making is regulated by the law.
- Leaders must respect the law. They are governed by the same laws as all other people – they are not above the law.
- Laws are written down, fixed and constant. They can only be revised under certain conditions and by following strict procedures.

RULE OF LAW PROTECTS THE INDIVIDUAL

Some examples:

- No one's home can be searched by the police without a court order showing that there is cause for such a search.
- No one can be held under arrest without explicit, written charges specifying the alleged violation. Anyone who is arrested has a right to be brought before a court within a set period of time.
- Anyone accused of committing a crime is presumed innocent until proved guilty.
- People charged with crimes should not be held in prison for protracted periods before being tried. They are entitled to have a speedy and public trial and to confront and question their accusers.
- Authorities are required to grant bail, or conditional release, to accused persons pending trial if there is little likelihood that the suspect will flee or commit other crimes.
- The police or any other agent of government may not use torture, physical or psychological abuse against suspects under any circumstances.
- Cruel or unusual punishments are prohibited.

IMPORTANCE OF A CONSTITUTION

It is important for Uganda to have a constitution because:

- It handles and operationalises all other laws of Uganda.
- Spells out the importance of the people in the governance process
- Confirms the rights and duties of citizens
- Gives the functions of the executive, legislature and judiciary
- Spells out the functions of the state under its various departments
- Identifies personalities to leading roles of leadership and how they relate with others
- Emboldens the country's democratisation process

HUMAN RIGHTS ARE FOR EVERYONE



Everyone is entitled to human rights regardless of religion, age, race, political affiliation, social status...

HUMAN RIGHTS

Every person is entitled to fundamental rights and freedoms. These **human rights** are **entitlements** that we have simply because we are human. Human rights are what every human being needs in order to be happy and healthy and to fully participate in society.

Because these are the rights of every human being, they are naturally given at birth. They are not appeals to grace or charity or love. They do not need to be earned or deserved.

Human rights protect us against people who might want to harm or hurt us. They protect our freedom and our human dignity. They also help us get along with each other and live in peace and harmony.

Human rights are **universal**. They are to be enjoyed by every human being and they apply in every human society. They do not differ with geography, political, economic or cultural system or stage of development. It is therefore the duty of every state to promote and protect all human rights.

Because of the principle of universality, human rights are legally protected at international level. The **Universal Declaration on Human Rights** was drawn up in 1948 to describe the human rights for all people at international level.

Equality of all human beings is a key principle of human rights. This also means that no one should be discriminated against.

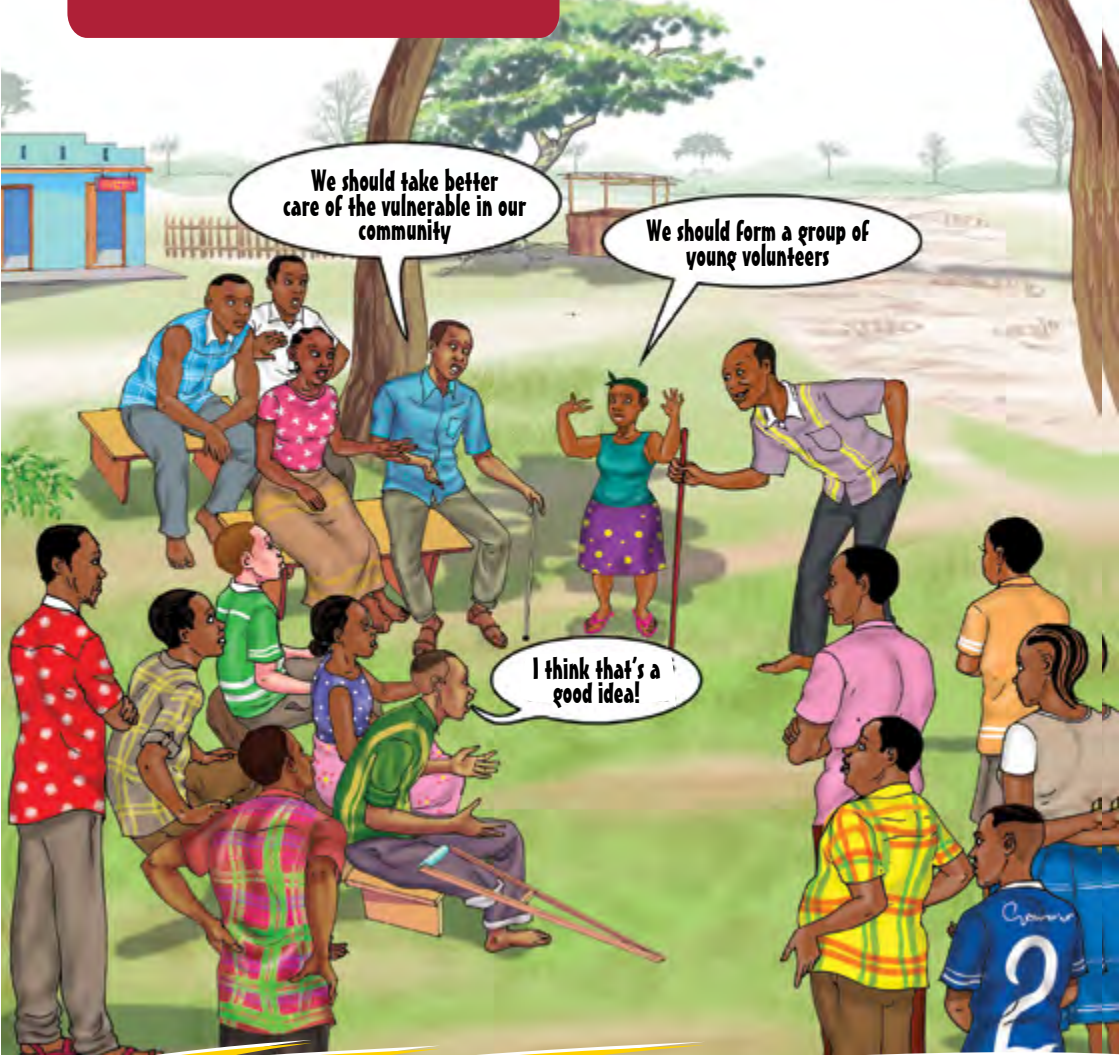
The principle of **non-discrimination** applies to everyone in relation to all human rights and freedoms. We are not allowed to treat people differently on the basis of categories such as sex, ethnicity, colour, race, language, age, religion, political or other beliefs, national or social origin, property, economic status, disability, or any other factor.

As noted in the **Human Rights Declaration** and reiterated in Chapter Four of the **Constitution of Uganda**, the citizen's rights include among others:

- Equality and freedom from discrimination
- Protection of right to life
- Protection of personal liberty
- Respect for human dignity and protection from inhuman treatment
- Protection from slavery, servitude and forced labour
- Protection from deprivation of property
- Right to privacy of person and other property
- Protection of freedom of conscience, expression, movement, religion, assembly and association
- Right to education
- Protection of minorities
- Right to culture
- Civic rights and activities
- Right to clean and healthy environment
- Right of access to information
- Right to just and fair treatment in administrative decisions



MINORITY RIGHTS



Everyone has a voice and gets an opportunity to be heard.

FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY



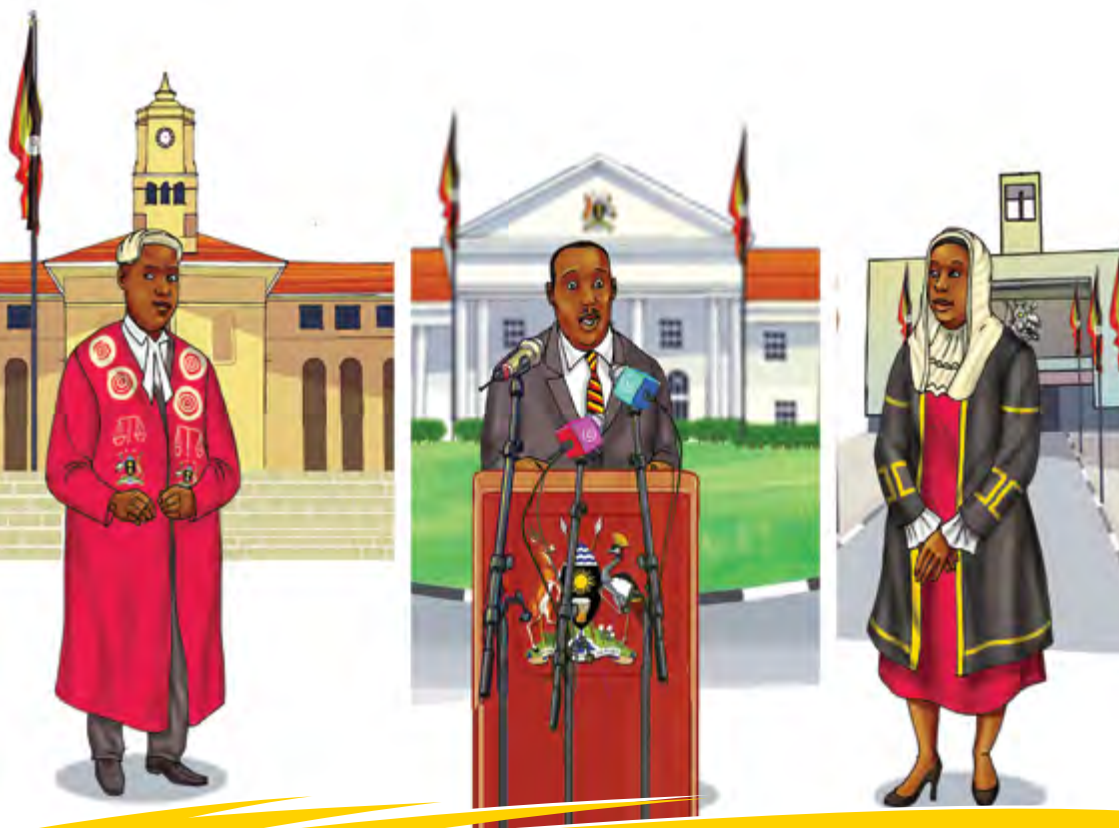
Everybody has the right to organize and participate in peaceful meetings.

FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS

In a democracy there are basic freedoms which include:

- **Freedom of conscience and religion.** This involves the right to hold and practice your religious or other beliefs, as long as they do not threaten the safety or well-being of others. An example of this would be the right to wear religious garments including crucifixes or a hijab and related religious symbols in a public or private place.
- **Freedom of peaceful assembly.** Citizens are free to gather, protest, and demonstrate support or displeasure, either individually or in a group. This freedom should however be exercised as stipulated in or under the national laws governing the state.
- **Freedom of speech.** Citizens are free to express themselves publicly. This is a fundamental part of living in a free and open society. It is also necessary in terms of being able to exchange issues and ideas. **Freedom of the press** is also included when we talk of freedom of speech.
- **Freedom of association.** Citizens are free to associate by way of doing business, socialise politically or otherwise and meet with others in different forums. Such forums could take for example the form of political clubs, political parties and economic, social or cultural associations.

THE THREE ARMS OF GOVERNMENT



In a democracy the three arms of government work separately and independent from each other to prevent the abuse of power.

DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS

The success of democracy in a country is dependent on having strong institutions. These institutions include the three arms of government:

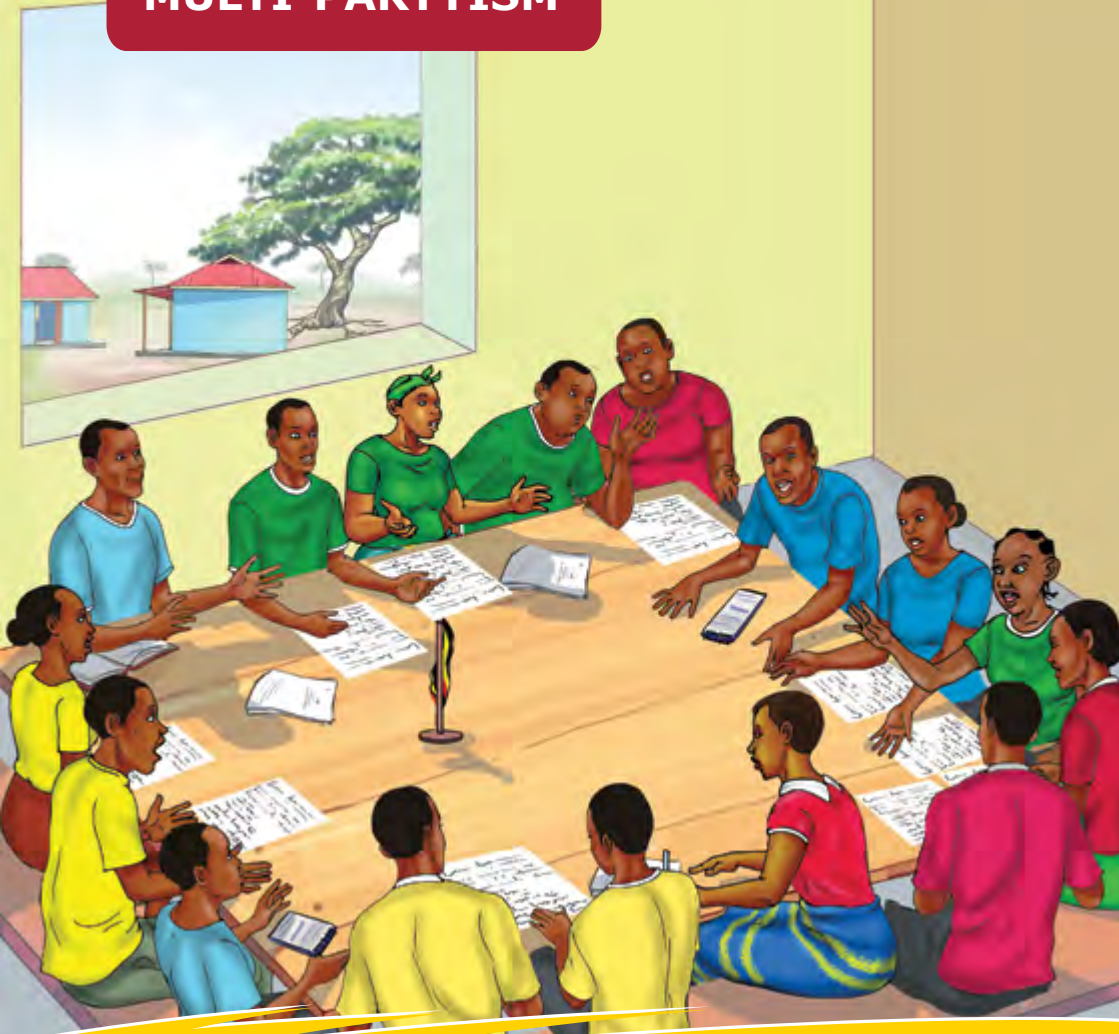
- **Legislature:** The assembly of the citizens' elected representatives (Parliament) is for example responsible for making laws on behalf of the people, passing the national budget and checking the activities of the Executive.
- **Executive:** The executive arm of government is mainly comprised of the President and the Ministers. It is responsible for providing political leadership for the country and for implementing laws and policies.
- **Judiciary:** The Judiciary through its respective structures such as courts interprets the law.

The **separation of powers** states that the three main functions of government (legislation, execution and interpretation) are assigned to the separate branches of government. The purpose of this is to ensure that no branch of government has too much power. There are systems in place that enable each branch of government to keep the others in check and to balance power between them. In this way, the branches are interdependent, which means they need each other for government to work effectively.

Apart from the government institutions there are also **other important actors in a democratic system:**

- The **opposition** as a "government in waiting" which offers political alternatives and scrutinizes government.
- The **political parties** who present alternative political programmes and who can field candidates for elections.
- Independent and diverse **media** who provide the citizens with crucial information and means of communication.
- **Interest groups** and **Civil Society Organisations (CSOs)** in which the people organize themselves, for example in order to promote their interests, influence government policies or serve the needs of the community.

MULTI-PARTYISM



Political competition is organized through political parties. Each has its own ideas and opinions which should be discussed freely and fairly.

POLITICAL PLURALISM

Political pluralism refers to a political system where a **diversity of opinions** exists and where different groups are free to express themselves and promote their ideas and interests. It is an important characteristic of a democratic system.

Uganda has fully embraced the idea of political pluralism with the introduction of the **multi-party system**. This means that:

- Ugandans are free to form and belong to different political parties and to hold different political ideologies.
- The different political parties or groups are free to compete for political positions (power) at all levels -national and local.
- The people are free - whether as individuals, social groups or political organizations - to express their opinion on different aspects of politics and governance.
- An individual's or group's opinion cannot be disregarded simply because it contradicts the view of the government or party in power. All views have to be listened to and respected. State authorities do not interfere in the exercise of civil and political rights of individuals and diverse groups.

THE ROLE OF POLITICAL PARTIES

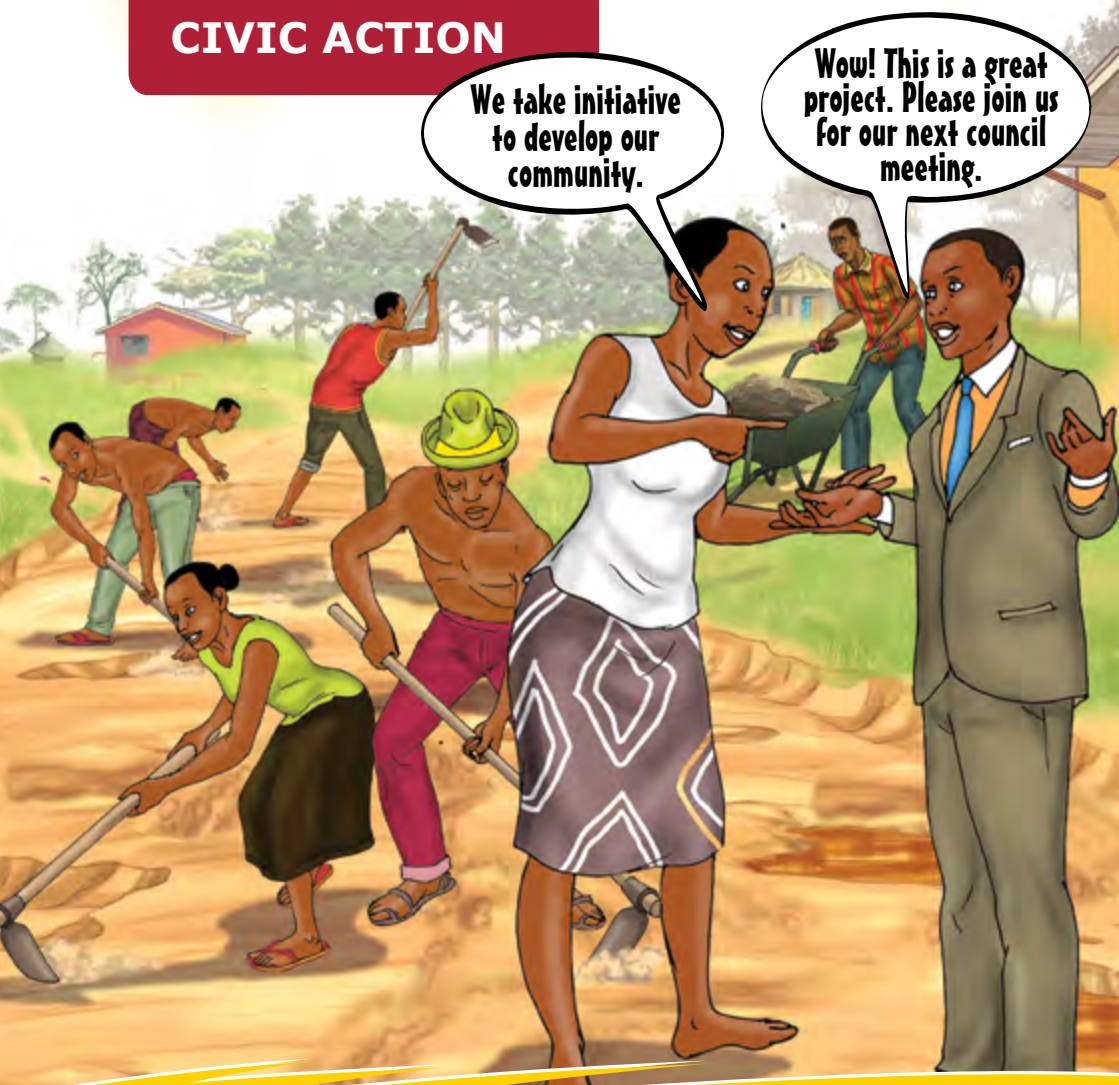
A political party is an association of like-minded people who pursue common political goals. Political parties seek to influence government policy and to gain power.

In order to win government power political parties compete in elections through the candidates they nominate.

Political parties fulfil the following **functions** in a democracy:

- Mobilise support for political ideas and positions and recruit membership;
- Nominate and campaign to elect public officials;
- Compete for power within the democratic rules;
- Draw up policy programs for the government if they are in the majority;
- Offer criticism and alternative policies if they are in opposition;
- Mobilise citizens to participate in political and developmental processes;
- Articulate the interests of different groups in society;
- Educate the citizens about public issues.

CIVIC ACTION



Citizens should participate beyond elections. For example by organizing groups and activities that support local development.

CITIZEN PARTICIPATION

Participation is a central principle in every democracy.

Citizen participation develops and strengthens democracy by enabling citizens to influence and make changes. They can do this directly or indirectly. Participation gives them a voice and ensures that they maintain power or at least control what happens to the power that they have given to others who act on their behalf.

Through participation citizens can help ensure that elected officials are being kept accountable. Citizens can highlight when officials use more power than they have been given or when they go against the interests and wishes of those they are representing. Citizens can demand to see the reasoning behind decisions and examine these.

PARTICIPATION BEYOND ELECTIONS

In a democracy people do not only participate through elections. There are many other ways in which people can participate in social, economic and political affairs.

Some **examples** for these other forms of participation are:

- Involvement in community projects, self-help groups or charity initiatives
- Communal activities designed to support public programmes
- Membership in religious groups and churches, sports clubs, traditional associations
- Involvement in traditional and cultural activities and events;
- Membership in political parties
- Formation of interest or lobby groups
- Organising community meetings, dialogues and debates with elected leaders
- Formulating petitions
- Involvement in public planning and budgeting processes
- Organising campaigns and legal protests
- Using the media for raising awareness and publicly expressing opinions.

NO TOLERANCE OF CORRUPTION



**Corruption is a roadblock to development.
It is illegal and punishable by law.**



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CORRUPTION

Although there is no comprehensive or universal definition of corruption, it is most commonly described as the misuse or the abuse of public office for private gain.

Corruption as an umbrella term includes many different forms of misconduct. Popular examples are the misuse of political power for illegitimate private benefit, decisions of government officials that are influenced by vested interests, or illegal exchanges of money or favours in public services.

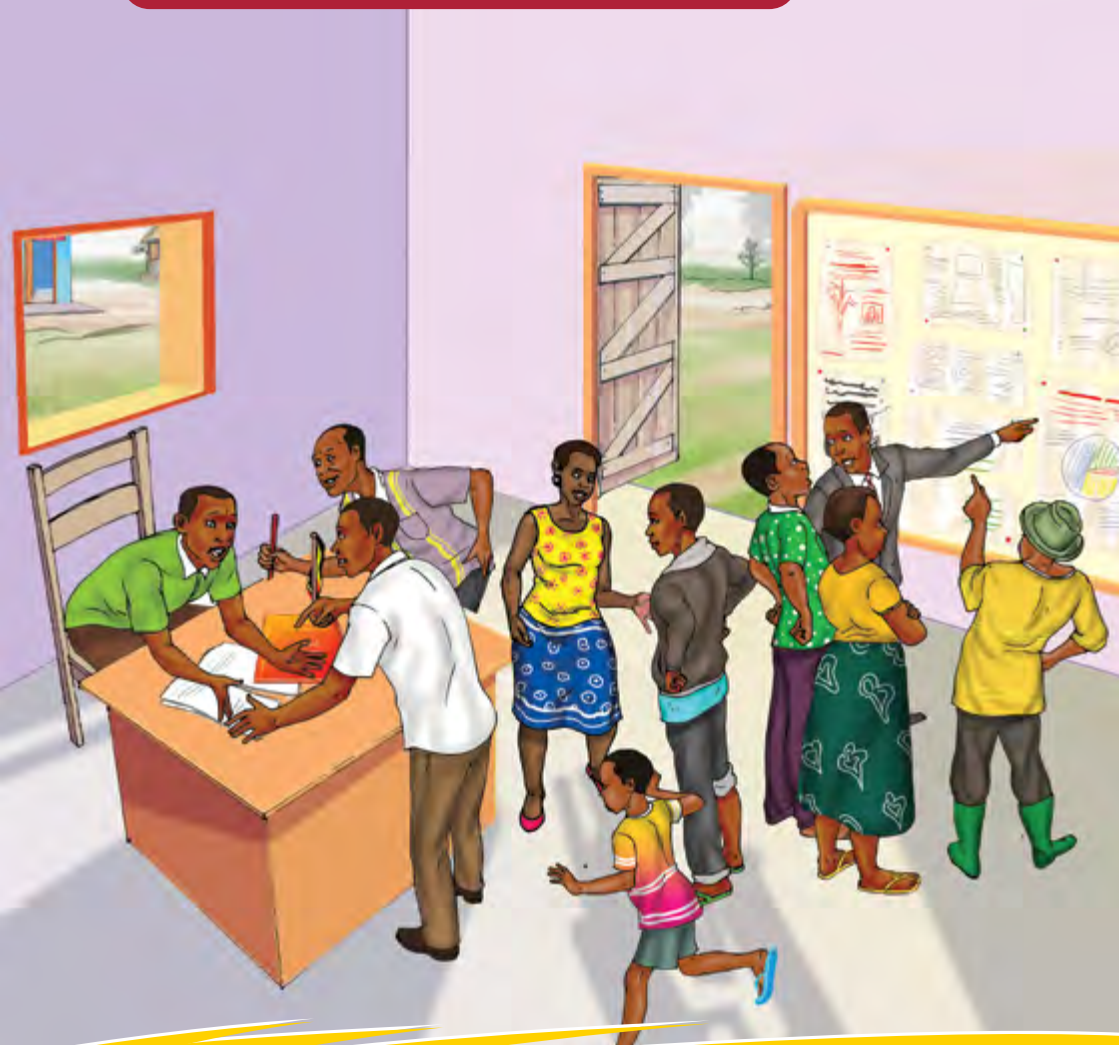
Corruption is commonly attributed to the public sector (government, public officials, elected representatives). But it also exists in the private sector (business) and other organisations such as NGOs or political parties.

Some common forms of corruption include:

- **Bribery** - offering or accepting gifts or favours in order to influence decisions,
- **Extortion** - abusing a position of power to obtain money or services through coercion or threats,
- **Nepotism** - favouritism based on acquaintances and familiar relationships,
- **Patronage** - favouritism because of political affiliations or connections,
- **Fraud** - intentionally deceiving someone to gain an unfair or illegal advantage and
- **Embezzlement** - exploiting an office to use funds or goods for personal enrichment.

Petty corruption reflects the everyday abuse of entrusted power by low- and mid-level public officials in their interactions with ordinary citizens, who often are trying to access basic goods or services in places like hospitals, schools, police departments and other agencies.

ACCESS TO INFORMATION



Citizens have the right and duty to become informed about public issues and government programmes.



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ACCESS TO INFORMATION

The right to information forms part of human rights and freedoms and is important in every democracy. It is essential for citizens to be able to access information from public authorities in order to exercise their rights. Information allows people to hold their leaders accountable and it is a basis for informed debate.

By taking measures to make their affairs transparent governments can strengthen the general trust in public institutions. This can be done by proactive publication of information, release of information upon request, and by involving the public in decision making, policy formulation and implementation (for example through open meetings, public hearings and consultations, formation of committees etc.).

“Every individual shall have the right to receive information. Every individual shall have the right to express and disseminate his opinions within the law.” [African Charter on Human and People’s Rights]

“Public bodies hold information not for themselves but as custodians of the public good and everyone has a right to access this information, subject only to clearly defined rules established by law. The right to information shall be guaranteed by law.” [Declaration of Principles on Freedom of Expression in Africa]

In 2011, the Ugandan government put in place regulations to implement the Access to Information Act (ATIA) that had been passed by Parliament in 2005. The ATIA grants every citizen the right to access information held by the government and other state agencies except when the release of information affects state sovereignty or interferes with privacy rights.

FREE AND INDEPENDENT MEDIA



Free media is important to give fair coverage to all issues and help people make informed decisions.



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ROLE OF THE MEDIA IN A DEMOCRACY

The media play an important role in every democracy. They provide a platform for communication and exchange of information that is accessible for all people.

The media includes radio, television, newspapers, magazines, books and more recently the internet.

The media are crucial for people to enjoy their right of **access to information and freedom of information** as well as their **freedom of expression**.

For the media to contribute positively to the development of democracy, it is important that all actors in the political system respect and protect the **freedom of the press**.

It is also important that the media remain **independent**, so that all information can be presented and all opinions heard.

Free and independent media fulfil a number of very important **functions in a democratic system**:

- Provide accurate and objective information for all citizens
- Provide a platform for exchanging and discussing diverging viewpoints and opinions
- Monitor the activities of government and other public/political actors and expose malpractices (watchdog role)
- Inform the population about government programs and positions as well as alternative positions, e.g. by opposition parties or civil society actors
- Provide a platform for political actors to present their ideas and positions (particularly during election time)
- Educate the citizens about their rights and responsibilities
- Enable the citizens to make informed decisions and choices.

FREEDOM OF WORSHIP



Democracy allows diversity, based on shared values of mutual respect and tolerance of other people's views and beliefs.



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TOLERANCE AND DIVERSITY

Democratic societies follow the principle of pluralism, which means the acceptance of diversity or multiplicity.

The shared values of **mutual respect and tolerance** of other people's views are the basis for a pluralistic society. This means we respect other people's opinion regardless of whether we agree with them or not.

As human beings, we are all born with the same rights and we are all entitled to our own opinions and beliefs. We must therefore not discriminate against others or judge them unfairly just because they are different to us or have a different opinion.

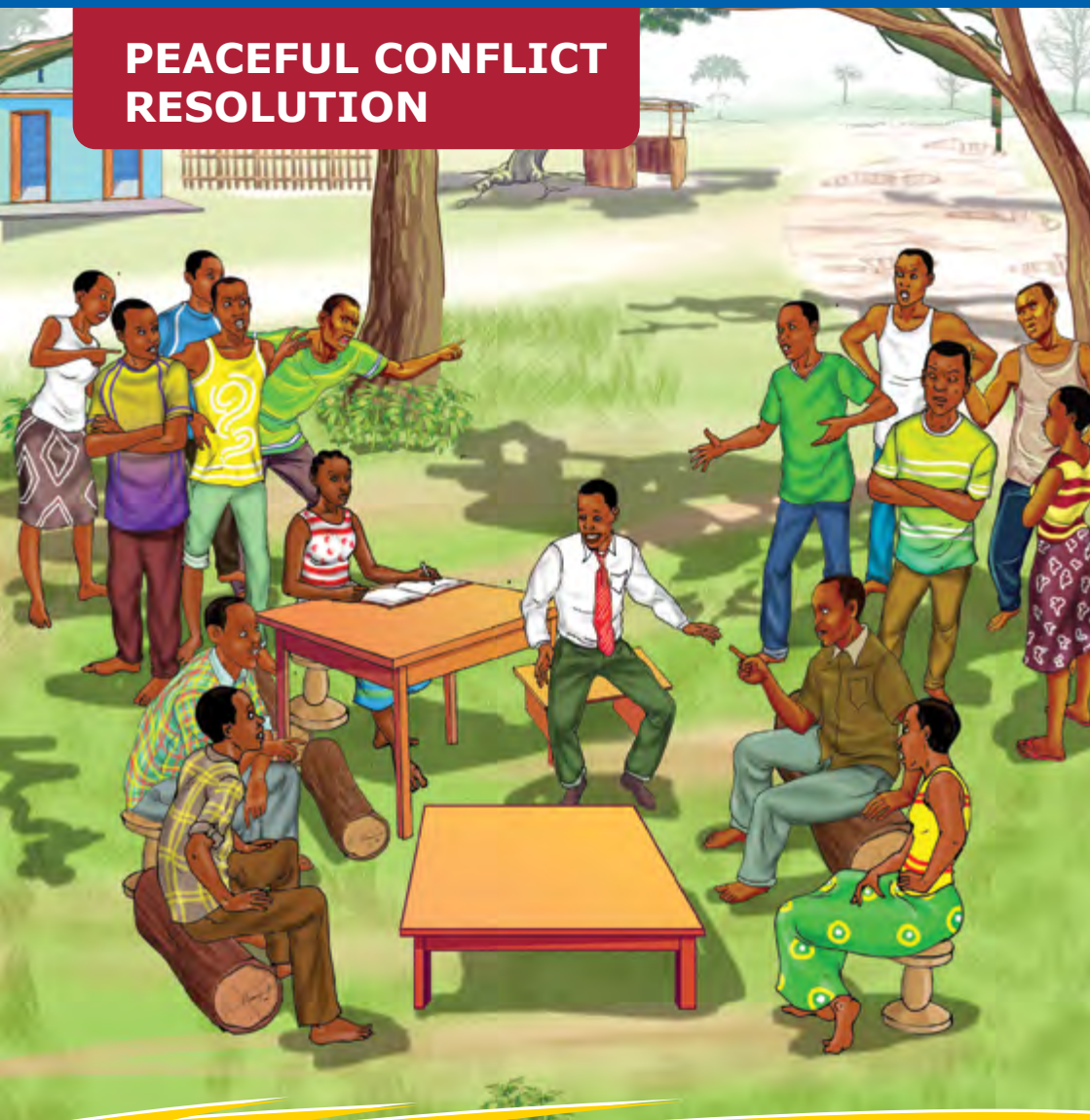
If we practice tolerance, people can live together in diversity and harmony, despite differences in culture, religion, political ideology and so on.

FREEDOM OF RELIGION

For many people, religious and other beliefs are a source of hope and consolation. They can provide orientation in life and moral guidance on how we should behave and treat each other. Religious values can, therefore, help us achieve peace and understanding. However, we can see that religion is also often a source of tension and conflict. This is a result of religious intolerance and discrimination.

Despite their differences, most religions share a number of common values which can help us reach an inter-religious understanding. These include, for example, the sanctity of life, the need to respect each other and the need for justice in our societies based on rules and moral values.

PEACEFUL CONFLICT RESOLUTION



Community leaders should support the peaceful resolution of conflicts through dialogue.

PEACEFUL CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Conflicts are a natural part of all relationships. Conflicts occur when humans with different ideas, interests and perceptions interact. In a pluralistic and democratic society we often have to deal with conflicting interests.

As long as we deal with them in a responsible and constructive manner, our differences and disagreements can actually help us in making decisions, reaching consensus, solving problems and ultimately finding the best solutions for society as a whole.

The way we deal with conflicts can determine whether or not they lead to a constructive resolution or whether they will escalate or even lead to violence. Responding to conflicts productively requires patience and understanding and willingness to **dialogue**.

Peaceful conflict resolution requires people to work together in order to de-escalate, resolve and process their conflicts. This means we should avoid aggressive confrontation or passive avoidance of conflict. Rather we should:

- courageously address conflicts directly and peacefully,
- share our feelings and needs in an open and honest manner,
- listen to each other's views and show compassion and empathy for the other side,
- work together in a collaborative spirit in order to find a solution.

When a dispute arises it is usually advisable to enter into negotiation in order to resolve the disagreement. The negotiation aims at producing a solution that is acceptable to all sides and to improve the relationships between the conflicting parties.

Community leaders and elected representatives have an important role to play in the management of conflict in their communities and constituencies. They should lead by example and support the peaceful resolution of conflicts through dialogue.

Democracy in Uganda

Uganda is a **Republic**. The political system is defined in the Constitution of 1995. Power is separated between the executive, legislative and judicial branches.

The **President** functions as Head of State, Head of Government and at the same time Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces. He is directly elected by the people every five years.

Apart from the President, the **Executive** is made up of the **cabinet**. The cabinet **ministers** are appointed by the president under the approval of parliament. According to the constitution, the cabinet consists of the president, the **vice president** and an amount of ministers depending on the discretion of the president. The **prime minister** supports the president in guiding the cabinet.

The **legislative power** is implemented by parliament as the legitimate representation of the people. The members of the **Parliament of Uganda** are elected every five years. The majority of members represent constituencies in the districts, while additional seats are reserved for women representatives as well as representatives of the youth, workers, people with disabilities and the military.

The Ugandan **judiciary** operates as an **independent** branch of government. It consists of magistrate's courts, high courts, courts of appeals, and the Supreme Court. Judges of the three higher levels are appointed by the President with the recommendation of the Judicial Service Commission and the approval of parliament.

From 1986 to 2005, Uganda was under the **Movement political system**. This system applied the principle of individual merit to those aspiring for political office. Everybody was by law a member of the Movement and candidates stood and campaigned on their own merit. With the Referendum of July 2005 a **Multi-party political system** was adopted. Since then, candidates for political office can stand either as independents or on a political party ticket.

The **Constitution** of the Republic of Uganda, adopted on 8th October 1995, is the supreme law of the country. It stipulates the limitations of power and the procedures that regulate the exercise of power. Chapter 4 of the Constitution spells out the people's human rights and fundamental freedoms.

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