



2026 UGANDA ELECTIONS: CHILD RIGHTS ISSUES UGANDAN POLITICAL PARTIES AND CANDIDATES SHOULD PRIORITISE



The Uganda Child Rights NGO Network, Uganda Human Rights Commission, the National Initiative for Civic Education and UNICEF, guided by the Children's Manifesto prepared by Ugandan children, invite all political parties and candidates in the 2026 Uganda Election to prioritise the following child rights issues in their election programmes to improve the wellbeing of Uganda's children:

Invest in and Promote Children's Rights



Children represent the future of Uganda. Political parties must ensure that every child has access to quality basic services and commit to increased funding for social services that benefit children, in line with national laws and international commitments such as the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child. Investing in child-friendly social protection programmes is essential to break the cycle of poverty and exclusion. Political parties should prioritise budget allocations to child-focused sectors and advocate for comprehensive social safety nets.

Promote Child Participation and Voice



Children have the right to participate in decisions affecting their lives. Political parties should actively support and strengthen platforms for child participation—such as children's parliaments, councils and the Ministry of Gender's child reference group—to empower children and ensure their voices shape policies and programmes.

Tackle Teenage Pregnancies



Uganda continues to face high rates of child marriage and teenage pregnancy despite legislative progress. Parties should support full implementation of the National Strategy to End Child Marriage and Teenage Pregnancy and strengthen enforcement of relevant laws, while ensuring young mothers are actively involved in interventions tackling the high number of teenage pregnancies. Parties must invest in practical measures that keep girls in school, such as improving WASH facilities, ensuring menstrual health management, enhancing school safety, and preventing violence and exploitation in and out of schools. Interventions must meaningfully involve adolescent girls, including young mothers, to ensure programmes respond to their realities.

Improve Access to Quality Education



Uganda's education sector faces persistent challenges, including poor school facilities, high fees, inadequate teacher capacity, and long distances to schools. Parties must prioritise universal access to quality, affordable education—especially for marginalised groups—and invest in Uganda's human capital through strong education systems. Education must be a top national priority.

Promote Access to Early Childhood Development Services



Uganda has low enrolment in quality Early Childhood Development (ECD) services. To give every child a strong start in life, parties should invest in Early Childhood Development, make pre-primary education compulsory, and implement readiness assessments to improve primary completion rates, supported by the Early Childhood Care and Education Policy. They must reduce reliance on private providers by establishing standards for quality and safety, and easing the financial burden for parents to ensure equitable access.

Ensure Child's Good Health



Health remains a major concern nationally, with critical gaps in child healthcare, nutrition, and access to essential services. Political parties should prioritise investments in child health systems, nutrition programmes, and ensure affordable healthcare for all children, so that no child is left behind.

Prioritise Nutrition for Children



Preventing malnutrition must be a national priority. Parties should promote balanced diets for every child and commit to reducing stunting and underweight among children 0-5 years of age through targeted nutrition programmes and community based interventions.

Promote Birth Registration and Ensure Legal Identity



Low birth registration rates undermine children's access to services and legal protection. Parties should commit to universal birth registration and the removal of barriers to obtaining legal identity documents, ensuring every child is recognised and protected under the law.

Protect Children from Violence, Abuse, and Exploitation



Violence against children, including child labour and sexual abuse, remains widespread, especially in rural and impoverished communities. Parties must commit to robust prevention, response, and monitoring mechanisms to safeguard children before, during, and after elections. They should work with private sector to eliminate exploitative child labour, promote safe and dignified livelihoods for families, and prevent all forms of abuse and exploitation, including online. Businesses should ensure their operations do not harm children and actively support child protection initiatives.

Inclusion of vulnerable children



Parties must prioritise protection and access to services for the most vulnerable children, including out-of-school children, children with disabilities, girls, street-connected children, children living with HIV, and those in contact and conflict with the law. Uganda hosts one of Africa's largest refugee populations, most of whom are children. Parties should uphold the country's open-door policy and ensure continued access to social services for refugee children and children in host communities.

